

# **Troubled Youth in Nemoland**

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## **No Trouble at All!?**

**A research on the needs and wants  
of experiential learning programs abroad,  
offered by umbrella institutions for youth welfare**

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Troubled Youth in Nemoland ~ No Trouble at All!?

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# Preface

During almost five months I have been working on this thesis, almost all the time with full enthusiasm and 100 per cent devotion.

The purpose of this report is to determine whether Nemoland in Poland is suitable for attracting the experiential learning market. I have limited myself to Dutch umbrella organisations for youth welfare that offer experiential learning programs to troubled youth.

Hereby, I want to thank Marjolein Visser for her valuable suggestions and involvement for the realisation of this report. Without her additions this report would be of less quality.

I also want to thank the commissioner, Nemo, in particular Peter Spruijt, for all his time, devotion and especially enthusiasm and 100 per cent confidence in me. I want to thank Theo Ruikes for the provided data and cooperation. I hope the results of this report will have some meaning for the Dutch development of experiential learning.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank Ronnie Timmer for her time, effort and helpful insights.

I hope this report provides you a clear understanding of experiential learning and Nemoland in Poland.

With kind greetings,

Eline Lommen.

## Summary

Experiential learning is a form of assistance which is totally different from the traditional welfare. This methodology assists people by letting them experiencing, or performing certain things. When you know that of what one does, one remembers 90 per cent in comparison to what one reads, one remembers only 10 per cent, shows what people learn by experiencing things.

Nemo was already familiar with experiential learning when it asked me to do a research about it. It wanted me to do research on the needs and wants of Dutch umbrella institutions for youth welfare for experiential learning programs abroad. The participators of these programs should be troubled youth and the kind of program experiential learning hikes. Nemo is interested in the results since it has a location in Poland, called Nemoland, which would be a suitable location for offering experiential learning programs, according to Nemo. But Nemo does not know the specific needs and wants of the market. In this situation the definition of the problem of the thesis is formulated:

## **The overall objective of the thesis is:**

In order to achieve the objectives, research questions were defined. The main research questions that needed to be answered in order to reach the goal of the thesis are:

- What is experiential learning?
- What are the characteristics of the target group troubled youth?
- What are the needs and wants of umbrella institutions for youth welfare concerning experiential learning programs abroad?
- What is their opinion about Poland and Nemoland?
- What does Nemoland offer concerning experiential learning hikes for troubled youth?
- Is the existing supply of Nemoland capable to answer all the demands of this market?
- If not: How can the existing supply be further developed/adapted in order to cater for this market in a better way?

In order to be able to answer these questions, data is collected via a theoretical and a practical part. The first part consists of a literature study (desk research, secondary data). The aim of this part of the research is to find into-depth information about experiential learning and troubled youth. The information was also necessary in order to draw up questionnaires for the second part of the research. The second part, the practical part, consists of field research by which primary data is obtained. The needs and wants for experiential learning hikes abroad is obtained by qualitative research, small scaled, via into-depth interviews with representatives of umbrella institutions for youth welfare and experts interviews with experts of experiential learning. All information about Nemo and Nemoland is obtained by consultations with Peter Spruijt, coordinator of Nemo.

Chapter two is an introduction of the commissioner of the research, Nemo. The information obtained by the theoretical part of the research is processed in chapter three. This chapter describes both the methodology experiential learning and the target group, troubled youth. In chapter four is the general offer of Nemoland in Poland expressed, but most important for this report, the offer for experiential learning programs. Chapter five illustrates the outcomes of the practical part of the research; the needs and wants for experiential learning hikes of umbrella institutions for youth welfare.

The conclusions of these two chapters are confronted with one other in chapter six. From the results of the confrontation of the offer and demand, conclusions are outlined in the first part of chapter six. The second part provides recommendations for Nemoland.

Nemoland offers a suitable location because of a good natural environment, good possibilities for activities, good facilities, little stimulants in its environment, it is contradictorily to the participants' home situation, possibility for escape, available transport and Nemoland has knowledge of the environment, language and it has contacts with some local actors and . All these qualities are aspects of a good location according to the institutions for their experiential learning programs. Although, at this point, none of the interviewed institutions find Nemoland an interesting location for organising their experiential learning hikes in the future. They miss surplus value; Nemoland does not offer more than thousands of other locations in Europe. Another negative aspect of Nemoland is the distance and its tourists in summer. The negative aspects exceed the positive aspects and Nemoland should therefore adapt its offer. Institutions will then possibly spend their little money, time and qualified personnel on it.

The main recommendations for Nemoland are focused on offering surplus value. Nemoland should offer Dutch, qualified accompaniment. The accompaniment should have knowledge about the methodology and about troubled youth, they should also be qualified in out-door activities. The second way of offering surplus value is by organizing a combination in live-work experience program and experiential learning programs. During the research, I have noticed that almost all of the institutions offer both kinds of programs. Nemoland should furthermore offer all demanded facilities, get close contact with actors, should work on improving ideas about distance, should notify important aspects to each participating institution and in order to help the development of experiential learning in the Netherlands, Nemoland should register the programs.

Because Nemoland is very mouldable and has money to spend, it could therefore work on these recommendations and execute them. But on the other hand, Nemoland has to take into account that the Dutch experiential learning market is very small. It should decide whether the investments in this market are wise or not.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

It is impossible to start and finish a thesis properly without a well narrowed-down definition of the problem, which consists of a question and an objective. In order to answer the question and to achieve the objective, research questions were defined. To answer the research questions it is necessary to gather and analyze different kind of information and to use different methods of research.

### 1.1 Background of the Thesis

Before association Nemo and I met, Nemo was already quite familiar with the term experiential learning. Nemo is aware of the fact that experiential learning becomes more and more popular among welfare institutions around the world.

But also in The Netherlands, several institutions apply this distinctive method of assistance for several years already. It is used in the education sector, in socio-cultural education, in therapeutic methods and in the assistance.

Nemo has already specific knowledge of the sector of troubled youth assistance. One of the founders of Nemo has many years of working experience. Because of this, and the particular interest in experiential learning of Nemo and the increasing interest of several organisations in experiential learning, Nemo thought that institutions for youth welfare is a potential market for Nemoland. Nemo thinks that Nemoland and its typical Polish environment and nature, can offer a therapeutic environment for experiential learning programmes for troubled youth. Since this part of the offer of Nemoland, experiential learning programmes, is in the very first stage (product development stage ), this research and report are very interesting in order to form the product in the way the institutions like it to.

To make it more specific, Nemo thinks that institutions that are interested in applying experiential learning on its troubled youth, is a potential market for Nemoland in the near future. But since it was not clear for them which umbrella-institutions want to or could go abroad with troubled youth for programmes of experiential learning, what their needs and wants are, and their specific pre-conditions, Nemo asked me to do research on this. Nemo will use the outcomes of my research by using it as a foundation for offering the right product to the interested institutions, and by developing the right facilities for them.

Before I started to do my research, Nemo explained me what experiential learning is all about and what a product should include for attracting institutions for youth welfare. After reading more about experiential learning I was in the belief that Nemoland offers a lot what a good environment for experiential learning demands. That is why I became interested in this subject and I wanted to do research for Nemo. I have carried out a potential market analysis and product analysis, and confronted the findings of these two.

## **1.2 Definition of the Problem**

The definition of the problem of the thesis is:

When the answer to this question is 'yes', I will conclude with what the resemblances are between the product Nemoland offers for this market and the needs and wants of this market. Furthermore, I will give recommendations when necessary, what (extra) facilities need to be developed or adapted and which steps need to be undertaken in order to satisfy all needs and wants completely.

When the answer is 'no', so Nemoland is not suitable for attracting this market (yet), I will explain why. I will give recommendations about what facilities should be developed or adapted and which steps need to be undertaken so that maybe in the future this market can be attracted.

## **1.3 Objective of the Thesis**

The overall objective of the thesis is:

Experiential learning is a term, which needs clarification. In my report this term applies on Dutch troubled youth. I will apply the definition of Ruikes, 1994 :

“Experience-based learning is the creation of a specific situation, which enables youngsters to acquire concrete experiences on account of where he/she gets motivated and is able to reflect his/her own situation. A good combination between concrete experiences and the reflection on this, leads to new learning processes, which eventually enables the youngster to acquire autonomy, where he/she obtains a new perspective of the future”.

Chapter three describes experiential learning and troubled youth extensively.

For my research I will analyse umbrella institutions for youth welfare in the Netherlands who work with troubled youth. They must be active in supporting troubled youngsters with re-integrating them back into society and by organizing experiential learning programs for them. Chapter five presents all necessary information about the experiential learning programs of umbrella institutions for youth welfare.

Nemoland is owned by Nemo and is situated in Poland, in the Stara Kamienica region that comprises the municipality Stara Kamienica and some other very small villages. It is situated close to the Iser-Mountains in the Sudete area of Polish Lower Silesia, not far from the German and Czech border, in South West Poland. In chapter four I go in much more detail about Nemoland. Chapter four offers more information about Nemoland and its supply.

Nemo is my commissioner, a Dutch association that is a very important actor in the Stara Kamienica region in Poland for sustainable tourism development. Chapter two supplies more details about Nemo.

## 1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the set objectives, the following questions need to be answered:

Questions concerning Nemo:

- Why is Nemo interested in this market?
- What are Nemo's goals and future perspective concerning this market?

Chapter two "Nemo" answers these questions.

Questions concerning experiential learning:

- What is the theoretical background?
- What is the description of the methodology?
- What does it involve, concerning accompany, activities and environment?
- How to organise and implement experiential learning?
- What is the target group of this methodology?

These questions will be answered in chapter three "Experiential Learning and Troubled Youth".

Questions concerning Nemoland (offer):

- What does Nemoland offer concerning experiential learning programmes for troubled youth? (Accompany, transport, lodging, safety, environment, special care, activities, seasonality, supply for how many participants)
- What are the goals and future perspective of Nemoland concerning this market?
- Why is Nemo suitable for offering experiential learning programmes to troubled youth?

These two questions are answered in chapter four "Offer of Nemoland".

Questions concerning umbrella institutions for youth welfare (demand):

- What organisations fall in this category and how many?
- What are their experiences with experiential learning programmes (abroad)?
- What are their needs and wants concerning experiential learning hikes abroad?

(Accompany, transport, lodging, safety, special care, activities, for how long, amount of participants, specific pre-conditions)

- What is their opinion about Poland and Nemoland? In chapter five "Demands of Umbrella Institutions for Youth Welfare" these questions will be answered.

The questions to be able to draw conclusions and provide recommendations:

- Is there enough interest from the organisations to come to Nemoland?
- Why is Nemoland attractive for the umbrella organisations?
- Is Nemoland capable to attract the market (in the future)? (In terms of the needs, wants and critical pre-conditions of the organisations)
- Is the existing supply of Nemoland sufficient to attract the market?
- If not: How can the existing supply be further developed/ adapted in order to cater for this market in a better way?

Chapter six "Conclusion and Recommendations" provides the answers to these questions.

## 1.5 Methods of Research

The thesis comprises a theoretical as well as a practical part. The first part of my research is the theoretical part. This part consists of a literature study (desk research, secondary data) to experiential learning and troubled youth. The aim of the desk research is to gain in depth information, since I am not familiar with these two subjects, but also to provide Nemo with background information of experiential learning programs and troubled youth.

I have searched in libraries for books and magazines, but also on the Internet for newspaper articles and other articles. While I made use of desk research, I always kept in mind what the interests were of the writer and if he or she were less objective because of this. Also on what way the information was collected and with what purposes.

After reading several books, articles and consultations with Nemo, I was ready to continue with the second part of my research, the practical part.

The practical part of the research consists of field research, primary data. The main source of primary data is obtained by qualitative research, small scaled, in umbrella institutions for youth welfare. Qualitative research is most suitable since I need very detailed information of the institutions, which I do not obtain via quantitative research. Furthermore, my time and budget is too limited to conduct a quantitative research all by myself. It would be possible for Nemo to conduct a quantitative research if my outcomes are satisfying and the product is 'adopted' by the institutions.

The primary information is gained via interviews, consultations and expert interviews. The information I gathered via the theoretical part, was crucial to draw up a good questionnaire that comprises everything I needed to know. It is essential to know a lot about a subject when you are going to talk with experts about it. Besides this, I needed the information to compare and analyse it with the data collected in the theoretical part.

All necessary information about Nemo and Nemoland was gathered through interviews and consultations with Nemo. The information about the wants and needs of institutions for youth welfare is collected via interviews with representatives of the experiential learning programs, the executives.

Through expert interviews, I have collected theoretical background of the needs and wants of the institutions. I have furthermore been to a lecture on experiential learning the University of Nijmegen.

More about this part of the research in chapter five Analysis of Research page 54. In addition, appendix 13: Reflection of Research, page 102, indicates the positive and negative aspects of the research.

While conducting field research I considered the interview, respondent, instrument and sample bias .

I interviewed every person once, but I always had the ability and permission to e-mail or call with questions. I always interviewed everyone face to face and I came to their office.

In order to make an appointment for an interview I always first called the organisation to ask which person was responsible for the experiential learning programmes. When I got his/her e-mail address, I sent a general e-mail in which I introduced myself and requested for an interview. When they did not respond within a week I would call them and requested them personally. About every invited expert was enthusiastic about my research and was willing to be interviewed. I think this is because people who work with experiential learning are always looking for situations to learn from. But also because the more locations to choose from the

better according to one of them. Three days before the interview, I sent an e-mail with a confirmation of date, time and place.

In order to improve the quality of the interview I always e-mailed the interview topics one week in advance so the person could prepare him/herself. With the purpose of thanking the interviewees, I offered everyone a gift coupon. This was to thank them for their time and effort but also to make them more loyal when I would need more information from them. The objective of the interviews was first to get to know more about the experiential learning programmes but the main goal was finding out what their wants and needs are for an experiential learning program (abroad). Moreover whether they think Poland is a suitable country for experiential learning or not and whether they are interested to come to Nemoland for this or not.

To get the most specific and interesting results out of the interviews, I used the technique of an open interview. The interviews were non-directive. I guided the interviews as less as possible; I let the interviewee guide the interviews. The only directive technique used in the interviews was a scheme with subjects of discussion. (See: appendix 1 Interview Scheme for Experiential Learning Experts from Institutions for Youth Welfare, page 80 and appendix 2 Interview Scheme for Experiential Learning Experts, page 82).

Because I used besides the scheme, a couple of formulated questions, this style of interviewing is also called a half closed or semi-structured interview.

The technique I used for asking questions was the third person technique. This is a technique in which I try to find out, via an indirect approach, the motives and opinions of the interviewee.

I have taken two different types of validity into account; internal and external validity.

Internal validity says something about whether the used methods of research, the definition of the problem and its limits, results and analyses, all have produced that what we measured, what we wanted to measure. By avoiding and restricting all kinds of mistakes, I strived for a highest internal validity as possible.

External validity says something about whether the obtained research results are valid outside the borders of the cases investigated. My aim is that Nemo can use my results for other sorts of organisations and for others areas of Poland as well. By other organisations I mean for example welfare institutions that work with people who receive disability benefits, re-integrators and provide general education. Nemo has particular areas in Poland where they are interested in and want to build their own Nemoland over there as well.

A characteristic of market research is it limited external validity, what applies to my research. If Nemo wishes to use my drawn conclusions and recommendations for not yet researched groups and situations, then this needs to be done with care. It should need more research on a qualitative and quantitative level, my research and way of handling things would be very useful for this.

## 1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 Nemo ~ this chapter is an introduction to Nemo, the commissioner. It provides general information of Nemo, furthermore what they offer in The Netherlands, in Poland, to what target groups and what its future perspectives are.

Chapter 3 Experiential Learning for Troubled Youth ~ this is the theoretical part of the thesis. It includes information about what experiential learning is and involves and it describes the target group, troubled youth.

Chapter 4 Offer of Nemoland ~ in this chapter, the present situation of Nemoland is illustrated. Furthermore, what Nemoland offers in general but most of all what it offer for experiential learning programs.

Chapter 5 Demands of Umbrella Institutions for Youth Welfare ~ chapter five presents the wants and needs of umbrella institutions for youth welfare.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations; No Trouble at All!? ~ I will confront the demands of the market with the offer of Nemoland. Conclusions and recommendations are presented.

# CHAPTER 2 Nemo Walk, and be nobody!

## 2.1 Introduction

Nemo is a Dutch association for ‘the free walker’ and the commissioner of this research. It is founded fifteen years ago, on the 11th of November 1988, by volunteers. The main office is located in Amsterdam. Nemo is an association of nature-oriented walkers with around 1300 members.

Promoting rambling, sustainable tourism, and to protect the countryside are the aims of Nemo. Nemo means “nobody” in Latin, a nick name for travellers, ramblers and explorers, called after Jules Verne’s’ Captain Nemo, and Windsor McKay’s cartoon-character Little Nemo. In Holland the association organizes walks supported by own minibuses weekly, publishes magazines and brochures and has developed into a national pressure group that works for the interests of walkers. Nemo is commissioned by local and regional authorities to produce plans for walkways and promoting sustainable tourism. The association has an office in Amsterdam with three fulltime staff members and many volunteers. Nemo is a non-governmental, non-profit organization financed by its members and receives no subsidies. Nemo does not have commercial activities.

The first ten years Nemo was only active in the Netherlands. The volunteers have made an inventory of walking tracks in rural areas. They also organised walks in the Netherlands of a maximum of hundred kilometres distance from Amsterdam. Nemo also supports the interest of the walkers; for better supply and protection of vulnerable walking areas and tracks. Steunpunt Voetpaden was created for trying to re-open tracks. The specialty of Nemo is the production of plans of walking tracks. Nemo designed these plans for the province of Noord-Holland. Nemo stands up for the interests of the walker both in political lobbies and in court.

In fifteen years, Nemo has organised 944 walks of a day, 71 evenings in the Walkers' café, 76 weekends and 64 walks of a week, 2725 different people have in total participated in 16269 times walking activities. Nemo has had three thousand seven hundred thirty eight members in fifteen year.

This chapter describes the objectives of Nemo as well as the characteristics of its members, its activities, Nemo's developments and plans for the future and Nemo and experiential learning is illustrated.

## 2.2 Objectives

The five objectives of Nemo are:

1. The improvement of free walking and to stand and fight for the rights of the interests of the walker.
2. The upgrading of the juridical and actual accessibility of rural and urban areas for walkers.
3. The promotion of conservation and restoration of valuable rural, ecological and culture-historical elements and structures of the walker.
4. To make initiatives possible to, without intentions to profit, organise environmental friendly and small scale walks outside the common routes.
5. To give reputation to, and to inform about possibilities to walk freely and possible limitations.

Nemo works together with organizations and with governmental bodies on project basis in order to be able to realise these objectives. Nemo has no partner organization and it is not a member of an umbrella organization like the 'Wandelplatform'. But it is a member of the provincial and urban environment federation.

## 2.3 Characteristics of Members

The target group of Nemo is very broad and diverse. This is because their activities are very different from each other.

The average Nemo member is fifty-one years old, has followed a high level of education (eighty nine per cent has followed an education on HBO or University level), earns a modal salary and is single. About the half of the 1387 members of Nemo lives and comes from Amsterdam. Eighty per cent of them are older than forty. Since the majority of the new members fall in the category of 40+, Nemo seems to be aging slowly.

The most important motive for the member to become a member of Nemo is walking (eighty per cent). Other important motives are the preservation of unpaved paths (fifty seven per cent), and love for nature (fifty one per cent).

Of all activities Nemo offers its members, the day walks are most popular. About forty three per cent of all members do join these walks now and then. Besides the day walks, the Walkers' café and the more than one-day walks are most popular among the members. Walking in Poland and more than one-day walks to eco-farms do attract a bit less members.

About five years ago, most of the participants of the walks were female, about ninety percent. Nemo wanted to change the image of only attracting females to walks and has succeeded in this. Nowadays the division in female and men is fifty-fifty.

More and more members of Nemo are the one's who in the past participated in expensive walking trips in the summer, with like SNP or Sinbad, and who used Nemo's walks for practice and training. They went abroad for expensive trips but Nemo attracted a lot of them by its adventurous and low budget.

People can become a member of Nemo for Euro 11, 50 per year. For this fee, the member can participate in special member-activities like walks, trips and has an entrance to the Walkers' café. A member also receives the magazine. By paying the contribution the member supports the goals and looks after the interests of the association and of its diverse projects.

The members also get a reduction on the price, which they have to pay for the walks. When one is not a member one can still join a walk but one pays the full price.

## 2.4 Activities

Collecting of walking routes off the road ~ Nemo has discovered hundreds of walking routes and made an inventory of them. The routes are available for members. Because they are often difficult to access or are vulnerable, they are not published. Nemo specializes in paths of the countryside, farmers' walking routes. Nemo also combines footpaths with poems and stories. Organized walks ~ every weekend there are small-scaled walks organized with self-made routes, if possible off the road. Transport with Nemo's own small buses, maximum 100 km from Amsterdam. There are also regular walking weekends and weeks in Holland and abroad. The walks are the basic activities of the association.

Promotion of walking ~ through Steunpunt Voetpaden Nemo works for better facilities for walkers and protection of vulnerable walking areas. Local initiatives to solve bottlenecks are supported. The main interest is in preservation and accessibility of footpaths. Nemo campaigns for a better road law.

Poland Project ~ besides activities concerning the Netherlands, Nemo has also a project in Poland since 1998. This project is thoroughly described in chapter four Nemoland.

Publicity ~ Nemo applies different forms of publicity in order to let its members know what is going on and where Nemo stands for. Nemo gets publicity via:

- Magazine 'The Free Walker': this magazine functions as a newsletter to promote and inform members about walking in the Netherlands and sometimes as a theme magazine for assisting main activities. The Free Walker is published twice a year.
- Walkers' café: The Walkers' café is an open stage and meeting-place for walkers. On a regular base there is an evening in Amsterdam, about themes, which have to do with walking. Often the themes are linked to a walk. There is a Polish Pub twice a year.
- Internet: the Internet becomes more and more important and therefore Nemo has developed its own website, [www.pz.nl/nemo](http://www.pz.nl/nemo).

Information-centre and member service ~ the Nemo Centre in Westerpark is an information-centre, where everybody can have a look at walking routes, maps, handbooks, policy-papers, magazines and travel guides. There are Nemo-walking routes, compasses and Polish products for sale.

## 2.5 Developments and Plans for the Future

In the policy for this and coming year Nemo stresses that the current policy will continue and the activities of the association will be intensified. The goals will remain the same like they are described in paragraph 2.2 Objectives.

Nemo has changed and intensified its policy on four matters:

Walking ~ Nemo will continue and expand its day walks. Together with weekends, week- and individual arrangements have the priority. Like you have read above, walking is the basic activity of the association. In addition to the existing supply of walks, Nemo develops travel programmes that fit in the Nemo-concept (walking, sustainability, culture, agro/eco, bird/natural trips). Also the supply of the walking tracks in Nemoland in Poland will be extended.

Looking after interests ~ except from specific interests for footpaths (via the Wandeloverleg in Noord-Holland, the lobby for wandering- and roaming possibilities) becomes the vanguard for the coming year.

Poland project ~ the activities concerning looking after interests are not only accomplished in Dutch projects but also in a project for regional development and better walking possibilities in South-West Poland around Nemoland in Stara Kamienica. The association Nemo has 'adopted' the Polish municipality Stara Kamienica for a basis of exchange and partnership for promoting and supporting the region as a walking area. This area is located in the Giant Mountains. This project enables Nemo to gain experience in looking after interests in practice. The essence of the Poland project is to improve the walking possibilities together with Polish organizations, which functions as a tool to conserve valuable cultural landscapes. Nemoland is made possible by participation of members of Nemo. This project in Poland is described in more detail in chapter four Nemoland.

Concrete plans for the future concerning Nemoland is described in chapter four Nemoland.

Profile and main activities ~ association Nemo will profile itself more like an organization which stands for wandering- and roaming possibilities. The following activities apply on this:

1. Transgressing day walks, weekends/weeks and individual walking arrangements;
2. lobby for the right to wander and roam.

Publicity ~

- Magazine 'The Free Walker': this magazine as a newsletter can be further expanded as a theme magazine to promote the main activities of Nemo.
- Walkers' café: although the interest for this café decreases, the biennial Polish Pub is a success. The café and the formula of the evenings are very valuable. The number of visitors will probably increase when the themes are intensified and join up the main activities.
- Internet: because the Internet becomes more important, Nemo will renew and give its website more functions.
- Company logo/brochure: Nemo will invest in a new company logo that will fit its profile. For every main activity there will be a brochure designed and printed in a professional way.

Personnel ~ in the past the fixed staff of Nemo worked according the I/D-agreement. But because of problems with this agreement and the higher costs concerning these I/D jobs, the future is uncertain. New vacant posts cannot be fulfilled and new I/D jobs cannot be requested. This settlement is guaranteed until July first, after this the future is uncertain. Nemo is always in search for new volunteers, because without these people Nemo would not longer exist.

## 2.6 Nemo and Experiential Learning

The two founders of Nemo have both worked many years in social care. He was a psychiatrist and she worked with troubled youth, in the youth care. They are both very interested in helping both adults and youngsters. Because of their interest and history with adults who have personal problems and troubled youth they came up with the idea that Nemoland could be a suitable location in helping people who needed to leave their present situation for a while. It would be a setting to organise and re-order thoughts or to learn something from a new and different situation than home.

In their opinion Nemoland is a perfect setting for people in different kinds of situations, not only troubled youth. Since one of the founders has worked with troubled youth in the past, Nemo is familiar with the methodology experiential learning. But troubled youth is not the only new market Nemo is focussing itself on. It would also like to attract people who are in the disablement insurance act and sit home but want to do something with their spare time, people who have quite their jobs and need some time apart from home and friends, people who are chronically ill but are able to do some work and people who want to go back working but are not quite ready for this. These are some examples of different kind of people in hard situations which Nemo likes to attract to Nemoland.

Nemo would like to have done the same research for all these different markets like the research is done for the market of experiential learning hikes for troubled youth. This in order to know what their needs and wants are and if Nemoland is suitable for them and the ideal spot to relax and re-order thoughts.

## 2.7 Conclusion

Nemo is an association which is founded by nature-oriented walkers fifteen years ago in Amsterdam. This association is founded for the interest of free walkers in and around Amsterdam. Its main objective is to improve free walking in the Netherlands by registering rural and urban walking tracks. It has 1387 members who can join Nemo's organised walks, which are from one day until a week but also international trips.

Since 1998 Nemo has bought a house and a piece of land in Poland. Only members of Nemo (a contribution of €11, 50 a year) can stay overnight at Nemoland. Chapter four, Nemoland, is dedicated to this Poland project of Nemo.

The majority of the members of Nemo is around fifty, had followed a high level of education, earns a modal salary and is single. About the half of them comes from Amsterdam. The main reason to become a member of Nemo is walking, but also their love for nature is an important motive.

Nemo informs its members about all its activities, progresses and new developments by a magazine which is distributed twice a year, it has its own café and via the Internet, a website. Nemo's interest in experiential learning for troubled youth has to do with the background of two of the founders. Both have worked with either youngsters or adults with problems. Nemo considers Nemoland as a suitable place for people, both adults and youngsters, who suffer with problems or situations with which they are not happy or in which they are functioning well. Nemoland would be the location where people can re-order thoughts or learn from a new environment. To find this out for one of the markets, experiential learning, Nemo wanted a research done.

## CHAPTER 3

# Experiential Learning and Troubled Youth

*'I hear*

*and I forget;*

*I see*

*and I remember;*

*I do*

*and I understand.'*

*Ancient Chinese proverb*

### 3.1 Introduction

Experiential learning has been practiced for centuries. Think of the pilgrimage in the middle ages, the youngsters who served one's apprenticeship like mates for a master, troubled youth who went like cabin boys on foreign trade to West- or East-India and the origin of care-farms in the eighteenth century. These examples show how important the combination of a healthy environment and physical exertion has been seen as a beneficial effect to physical, psychological and social problems throughout the centuries. With the increase of technology and medicines, for every problem there was a medicine or institute available. But the insight that the environment is at least responsible for social and psychological problems arises in the seventies. This led to more focus for the creation of a healthy and therapeutic environment. This healthy and therapeutic environment is an alternative for the environment, which particularly confronts the problems. In addition physical exertion is considered as the way to improve and keeping up to the mark of the spiritual and physical health. Health is searched in the challenge of a deserted, rough terrain in a natural environment.

Experiential learning is a total different form of assistance than the traditional assistance. There are two aspects that it differs itself from: activating the positive possibilities of the youngsters, and the responsibility of the youngsters. It is called 'empowerment' in the American literature.

This chapter explains the concept of experiential learning for troubled youth, its development in time with a theoretical background. The methodology will be illustrated, as well as the conditions and basic principles of experiential learning. Before the target group, troubled youth, is portrayed, the organisation and implementation and the comments and positive results of experiential learning are described.

### 3.2 What is Experiential Learning?

'Learning by experience' refers to an ancient principle that states that people learn by practical experience, by experiencing or undertaking certain things. This thought is the foundation for the way people picks up certain skills and knowledge for centuries. But with the increase of civilization of our society the cognitive side of human being dominated more and more. Especially in education learning became a cognitive business and the practical experience was applied less and less. Education and learning was all about teachers telling the students what to do without the chance to practice with the learned in a practical manner. It became more and more a tradition to learn by heart.

Experiential learning adds 'learning with your hands' to this, which expresses that it is essential for a better understanding of the learned to practice with this. A rule of thumb for this is: of what one reads, one remembers 10%, of what one hears, one remembers 20%, of what one hears and sees 50%, of what one says and writes 70% and of what one does 90%.

### 3.2.1 The Origin of Experiential Learning & Definitions

In the late seventies, beginning of the eighties, in the Netherlands several welfare institutions for youth welfare were in search for an expansion of their offer of care what would appeal to the heaviest target group of residential institutions for youth welfare. They introduced different activities into their normal treatments; adventurous hikes and work/learn projects. In search for a suitable term for this activating way of care, they came up with 'experiential learning'.

Writers on the theory of experiential learning like Keeton (1982), Kolb (1984) and Wilson et al (1989), agreed that the chronically progress of modern experiential learning theory begins with John Dewey (1859-1952) and his 'Experience and Education' (1938). Dewey has said: "An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory..."

However, Keeton is in the belief he traces the roots of experiential learning to Aristotle, who, in ancient Greece, observed phenomena at first hand, reflected, and discussed with others to advance his knowledge.

Dewey in attempting to formulate a philosophy of progressive education as opposed to traditional education, he concludes:

"I take it that the fundamental unity of the newer philosophy is found in the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education".

In this thesis there will be concentrated on experiential learning in the youth welfare, in an institutional context and not in the context of for example alternative punishments like trainings by experts.

There are different definitions of experiential learning, but those are general definitions and do not specifically apply to experiential learning for troubled youth.

One of them is formulated by Kolb (1984), who was an acknowledged leader in the field of the theory of experiential learning. His definition:

"Experiential learning has been defined as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of the experience of the leader who is at the centre of the learning process".

He also provides us with a definition of learning:

"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience".

Erkamp, 1986, gives the most general definition of experiential learning. He describes experiential learning as:

"Gaining of knowledge, attitudes and skills about yourself and about your environment by own perceptions and participation in concrete situation and by systematic thinking about those situations, whether or not with accompanying" .

Because this definition is rather general and it does not say what those concrete experiences are and which concrete goals need to be reached and how, a more aggregate definition is used in this report.

Finally there is a definition from the worldwide Association for Experiential Education (AEE), Luckmann (1996) on experiential education, often used instead of experiential learning in the United States of America:

“Experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences”.

#### 3.2.1.1 Definition Used

In this report the definition of Ruikes (1994) is used, since this one applies specifically to experiential learning and troubled youth:

“Experiential learning is the creation of a specific situation, which enables youngsters to acquire concrete experiences of which he/she gets motivated and is able to reflect his/her own situation. A good combination between concrete experiences and the reflection on this, leads to new learning processes, which eventually enables the youngster to acquire autonomy, where he/she obtains a new perspective of the future” .

In this definition several elements of experiential learning are used, which are seen as the basic-characteristics. That means that without these characteristics there is no speaking of experiential learning. These basic-characteristics, which are in italics in the definition, need further explanation.

*Specific situation* ~ this could be in one’s own country, but mostly abroad. Most of the time it concerns isolated and deserted areas, it resembles in no means to the same situation as home. It is a situation that offers challenges, and forces to learn with a very clear structure. It is a physical environment, which forces action, with a clear program (a correlated whole of different projects ) and structure of the day and there is no escape possible.

A specific situation is necessary because there is no change in behaviour possible otherwise.

*Concrete experience* ~ the concrete experiences are linked with authentic experiences.

Authentic experiences are necessary because in this way youngsters will be confronted with their selves and will learn from this. Examples of concrete experiences are: successful cooperation, successful physical actions and that you can trust other people. The emphasis lies on functioning independent permanently. Concrete experiences are the basis for Kolb.

*Reflection* ~ by reflecting a situation a link is formed between the concrete experience and the development of the perspective of the future. Reflection is not only to reflect something but also to make experiences discussable and to make choices from that point for the perspective of the future of themselves. The attention is focused on four aspects of life; personal development, family situation, school/work situation and the leisure time situation.

*New learning processes* ~ the specific situation and the concrete experiences enable the youngster to gain skills on cognitive, social, emotional and communicative level. The concrete experience leads to reflection and forces to make a choice of new behaviour to function better in society.

*Autonomy* ~ the most important goal of development in the adolescence is to gain a new identity and autonomy. The youngsters need to make their own choices about how to fill in their own life, which relationships he or she chooses and which education to follow and which job to take. Autonomy can only arise when the development in the earliest childhood went well, a basic level of safety is developed and the youngster gets the space to experiment with their new behaviour. Experiential learning provides these youngsters a new chance for development, by what they create a new perspective of society.

*Perspective of the future* ~ the aim of experiential learning should be that the youngsters become able and to maintain independent in society. Youngsters need to understand that they are worth it and think of useful activities for themselves, this means to get a perspective of the

future. The goals need to be redefined by the individual youngster and the goals need to be realistic and feasible.

Appendix 3 Basic Model, page 84 illustrates the experiential learning process in which these basic characteristics are applied.

### 3.2.2 Founder of Experiential Learning Kurt Hahn

...I consider it culpable neglect not to impel the young into life-giving experiences.

Experiential learning has had many advocates this century, and after John Dewey, possibly none as influential as Kurt Hahn. The German social pedagogue is very important in the history and development of experiential learning. He is the founder of all the activities and projects, which fall under experiential learning. Hahn was born in Berlin in 1886. He was in the belief that youngsters can discover themselves by gaining experience. These experiences contribute to their upbringing, which is focused on the development of the whole personality of the youngster, as well as social, emotional, cognitive, physical and moral.

According to Hahn, youngsters will learn best by confronting them with their own barriers. Most is learned in situations in which youngsters find themselves in trouble. His basic idea concerns a somehow crisis way of learning, namely to burst through boundaries.

To him, there are three basic objectives in experiential learning projects. The first one is vitality (learn to obtain will-power, physical ability, psychological endurance), second authenticity (to make own decisions on personal and real experiences), and thirdly co-existence (to learn to life and work together). The train of thought is that vitality is the fundament, upon which by authentic experiences the possibilities for co-existence become stronger.

A fourth ideal that has again found continuous support in all Hahn based programs is solitude, preferably in a wild setting. Hahn saw solitude as both time to reflect but also as a time to develop memory.

In his time, Kurt Hahn was the founder of some very successful projects. The most important one is the Outward Bound project. In the thirties (1934), he started the first Outward Bound School in England. In the first year the school trained hundred youngsters in four different programs; physical training (lots of sports), performance of certain tasks (demand patience and care, and are performed alone or in a group), expeditions (one- or more days hikes on foot, by bike, canoe or sailing ship) and rescue services (first aid, reanimation, rescue swimming, etc.).

More national schools like this one in England did arise all over the world since. The first national Outward Bound School in The Netherlands was developed in the beginning of the seventies. After this, different institutions for youth welfare has built their Outward Bound School and came in first contact with experiential learning. Theoretical deepening of experiential leaning took place in the United States of America especially.

Today, around the world, Outward Bound programs still include outdoor adventure travel, with community service, to help develop program participants.

Hahn, like Dewey, Locke and Aristotle before him believed that people construct their intelligence, their knowledge, based on their experiences .

### 3.2.3 Two Main Forms of Experiential Learning

There are only two main forms of experiential learning:

- experiential learning hikes;
- live-work experience programs.

Experiential learning hikes ~ with this form of experiential learning projects, the participation of challenging activities is central. In literature, this form is mostly indicated as survival trips. A trip could be a couple of weeks, consisting of different and altering activities. Features of this form of experiential learning are:

- mainly in groups;
- the process is of most importance;
- activities are adventurous and sportive;
- activities are performed in a rough environment;
- continuous accompanying by (professional) social workers;
- conversations are in a group or individually;
- projects are mainly meant to break through the negative spiral and to order it.

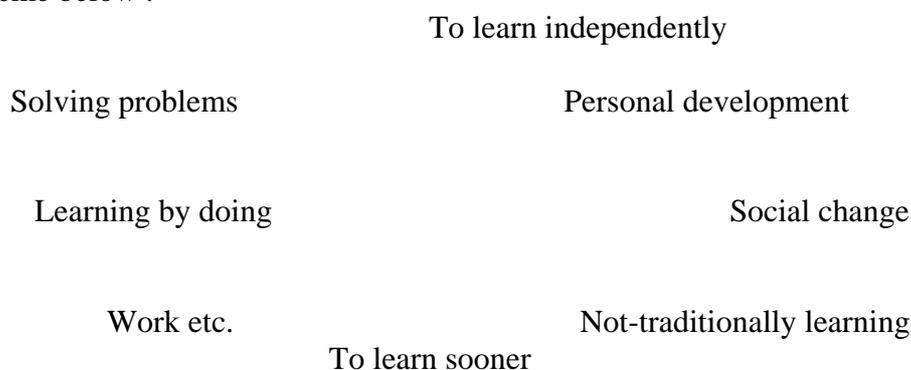
Live-work experience programs ~ the purpose of this form is that youngsters gain new experiences and learn new behaviour, while they are working in both rough nature and in a business. Familiar examples of these projects, in which youngsters work for a business for a couple of months, are working at a farm, for a production company or in hospitality. This category also includes the restoration of historical buildings, making paths accessible, cleaning forests or other service work.

Features of this form are:

- especially individual work;
- the product is of most importance;
- working for a business;
- living at the business;
- accompanying is not continuous, this means that conversations with social workers is not daily but a few times a week;
- projects are prolonged;
- projects are meant to order and to determine a new perspective of the future.

It is of course possible to develop combination forms. They can alternate each other. Live-work experience programs can be alternated by adventurous and sportive activities. There is also a combination possible, which consists of first an experiential learning trip, and after this a live-work experience project. The experiential learning hikes will be used for determining whether the live-work project will work or not.

Within both forms, different sorts of experiential learning encounter. The American researcher Henry came up with an outline of methods of experiential learning, indicated in the scheme below :



To learn independently ~ is about self-control on the learning process.

Personal development ~ is affective, cognitive, and social and is mostly acquired by personal experience. Instruments like conversations and keeping a diary are important.

Social change ~ is about discussion groups and to accomplish social changes.

Not-traditionally learning ~ consists of a combination of diverse forms of learning, like learning independently and problem solving.

To learn sooner ~ this concerns learning experiences gained in the youngsters' childhood and are still relevant for daily live.

Work etc. ~ working in diverse settings will teach you practical skills.

Learning by doing ~ is focused on doing and consists of executing activities and projects.

Solving problems ~ is a well-known way of learning. First, the problem is investigated, then ideas for a solution are brought up, third a choice will be made and will be executed, and the result will be evaluated.

In the Netherlands there are two different contexts in which experiential learning is applied . The first context is group leaders in a perspective of a residential institution operate; the second is in the context of for example an alternative punishment by training, organized by specific experts. The second context is not about a fixed group of youngsters, like in the first context, but about group individuals.

### 3.3 Conditions of Experiential Learning

All forms of experiential learning need to enclose several conditions. The main one is that the learned needs to have value of realism for the youngsters in order to enable them to apply the learned in daily live. Besides this main one, there are other criteria a program has to meet :

- the program has to be executed by every youngster from beginning till end (both physical and mental);

- the program has to result in a clear and recognizable product for every youngster;

- it needs to comprise enough challenge and alternation;

- it needs to lead to a positive experience of a completed achievement;

- elements of interaction and cooperation;

- the program needs to be both financially and practically feasible;

- the program needs to contribute to the growth of the youngster and its relationship with

his (direct) environment;

- the program needs to be constructed so that it fits individual goals of treatment of the participants;

- programs need to contain enough elements to learn from;

- programs need to be structured gradually;

- programs need to be safe for the youngsters.

Mulder (1962), who wrote the first Dutch publication on experiential learning, advises for the compilation of the group to have some youngsters who have little faith in themselves and some youngsters who do not have those problems. This is in order to create a stabilized element.

Both the Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek en Dokumentatie Centrum of the ministry of Justice and Cason and Gillis (1990) have concluded two things after evaluating several experiential learning projects. They concluded that with a too short experiential learning project and following training the obtained positive results with the youngsters do not maintain very long. The youngsters fall back in their old behaviour. So the longer the project, the more result (the average period of a project was three weeks) and the younger the participant the less effect (the average age of the participants was 15, 8 years).

Another study shows that youngsters who have most learned and benefited by experiential learning where the less able-bodied with a weak personality and verbally limited.

### 3.3.1 Accompanying

Accompanying is an essential aspect for a successful experiential learning project.

Accompanying is as important during the project as after.

The social worker needs to understand the basic principles of experiential learning but besides this his or her attitude needs to be according basic principles. Which are openness, want to learn, not afraid to take distant, and to point self-responsibility, look critical to themselves, and work for results. But they also need to have experience in the welfare work, need to be physically and psychologically strong, being able to work under stress and to be creative. See: appendix 4 Tasks of Accompany, page 86, for the tasks of the accompany.

### 3.3.2 Environment

In experiential learning the environment has a crucial role, "it cooperates together with the welfare work" according to Jan Klamer, managing director of Centre Aurillange an organisation for training and education experiential learning in France. By choosing a specific environment, it is important to create a situation in which new experiences can be faced. The experiential learning environment should consist of more than only an adventurous environment. The physical environment (the location where the experiential learning activities take place) is just one of the aspects of the environment.

Besides this the environment is formed and determined by the group of people with whom the activities are undertaken and by the supervisors but also the institution for welfare and by the process that takes place during the project.

The physical environment needs the most attention in case of most of the activities. Although mainly the most adventurous environments are chosen for experiential learning, the key for change is not only determined by the adventurous as well as the new and challenges. It should be possible to do things which are not possible at the home situations, mostly cities. So besides the physical environment there are also other aspects of the environment that is important. All these aspects together form a situation in which the chance for change increases. Features like hope, effort, trust, a constructive level of uncertainty, a feeling of unfamiliarity and impossibility to predict and the experience of risk increase the alterations. Also the experience that there are similar goals and striving in the same direction within a group will be new to a lot of the participants. An environment what creates an imbalance, stimulates the youngster to change and adept. Therefore the environment should be almost the opposite of the environment the participants are used to at home. When organizing experiential learning projects in very rough and primitive environments (like Nemoland) which are in large contrast with home, the participants are quicker forced to make use of other behaviour, which is for most of the youngsters very hard to do.

### 3.3.3 Activities

It asks a lot of creativity from the supervisors to choose for the right and effective activities.

The supervisors need the knowledge and skills of how to solve the problems of the youngsters with the technique of experiential learning.

When formulating activities and tasks, several aspects need to be taken into account:

- in the first place they need to be realistic and contain problems which are concrete, solvable and challenging;
- secondly, the activities and tasks need to be tuned to the goals which are in harmony to the problem analysis of the youngsters;

- thirdly, they need to be linked with the stage of development of the youngsters, but also linked with the possibilities and limits of each individual;
  - fourth, the activities and tasks should be simple in the beginning of the project but become more and more difficult along the project;
  - fifth, they do not need only to appeal to the physical possibilities of the youngsters but also to the cognitive, social and affective sides of the participants.
- The nature of the activities is very dependent to the chosen themes like courage, trust, persevere, physical contact, taking responsibility, work together, adaptation and so on. Activities that are physically, psychologically and group demanding should be alternated by activities, which are more relaxing, pleasant and more easily but still have a strong positive effect on the youngsters. This will stimulate the process and keep the youngsters more willing and enthusiastic. The activities should be more used as a tool than as a goal.

### 3.4 Organisation and Implementation of Experiential Learning

According to Barnhoorn and Walda (1992) implementation means: “Introducing, carrying through or renew a change in such a way that this gets established into a new routine and which is not experienced as new anymore”.

Since experiential learning is a rather new methodology in the Netherlands, it has only been introduced several years ago, there has been little research done about the procedure and effects. In the beginning of the nineties the government became interested in experiential learning projects and wanted to increase the quality and effectiveness of the youth care. They started an experiment with four institutions for youth welfare to do research on the working method and the possibilities for implementation. The report provides guidance in how to organize and implement the methodology experiential learning.

The methodology, experiential learning, consists of four phases. Every phase has different steps/activities, which the social worker carries out in order to decrease the problems of the youngster and for developing and extending the positive and strong sides of the youngster. Phase one is introduction and preparation, two is project phase-execution, three training and phase four is aftercare. See: appendix 5 Description of Methodology, page 85, for more information about these four phases.

#### 3.4.1 Stimulating and Limiting Factors with Implementation

Van Dijk and Hilhorst describe several stimulating and limiting factors for the implementation of experiential learning.

Stimulating factors are:

- the institution and her employees have the need for change, methodologist supplements etc.;
- the implementation of experiential learning takes place in a small and clear part of the institution;
- the internal implementer functions adequately;
- the management of the institution has experience with the methodology and is convinced of the possibilities of it;
- good reporting;
- good situation and spatial lay out of the department/institution;

- the formation of a squad (management or staff) which is primarily occupied with the development of experiential learning in the institution;
- provides financial resources;
- investment of spare time of the employees.

Limiting factors described are:

- unclear introduction of the experiential learning project;
- impose implementation from the management team which gives not enough basis for the staff and employees;
- an infrastructure which is too democratic, little energetic decision making;
- a not optimal functioning coordination and/or consultative body (e.g. management staff);
- little willing for change and renovation with staff;
- a large falling of personnel in the institution;
- insufficient difference between external developments and internal change in policy;
- experiential learning is seen as extra, on top of normal work;
- the team who implements the experiential learning projects is not very enthusiastic;
- insufficient possibilities to compare the new way of working of experiential learning with the existing way of working, this could be because of a lack of adequate description of the methodology;
- existing roll patterns, based on rest, safety and stability are maintained too much;
- to want too much in a short period, a too large scale approach;
- a moderate, too brief or insufficient reporting, because of this the process can be hardly followed;
- partial view on outdoor activities;
- compensation of the extra time investment of the employees works in a disadvantaged way on the continuity of the project.

Taking the view of the stimulating and limiting factors, several recommendations for organizing the projects and further implementation within an organization can be given. See appendix 6: Recommendations for Organisation and Implementation.

### 3.5 Comments and Positive Results

When Kurt Hahn transformed his ideas into the first Outward Bound schools in Great Britain in the early Forties, he could not know that his ideas would have so many imitations. But with the enormous spread and further development of this methodology throughout the years, some comments can be made.

The first one is that experiential learning is applied with youngsters with diverge problems. In first instance this methodology was developed for not-problematic youngsters. After this, there is made a step towards youngsters in residential institutions for youth welfare. Because of the diversity of target groups, which are reached these days, it seems to a cure, which can work and be applied for every youngster. This causes both enthusiasm and suspicion.

The second one is about the implementation of experiential learning in different projects and programs. Every institution is applying it in its own way. It is a problem that there is a lack of

standard programs, for certain target groups. Researchers find it a problem that programs are not or hardly comparable with each other.

The description of the project is the third comment. What happens during activities and projects and how these activities have worked for the youngster is rarely registered. This makes it really hard to evaluate projects but also to compare results of different experiential learning projects.

The last comment is that of inconsistent research results. Research done on the effects of experiential learning so far show that that the results are different for every problematic position a youngster is in. There are almost as much as projects, which show evident success as project, which do not. The inconsistent research findings are a result of a different use of research instruments, with the research on different effect criteria and especially with the diversity of programs and target groups.

Besides comments, which can be drawn with experiential learning, there are also positive experiences and results from practice. In practice, both the youngsters and the professionals experience the beneficial effect of experiential learning. This appears from different reports and from research material. Behaviour like running away and the number of vandalism decreased significantly after there was worked with the youngsters in an activating way. But also the self-esteem of participants of experiential learning projects and their independency increased. Form the outcomes from different initiatives for experiential learning one can conclude that when experiential learning is applied this has a surplus value for the youngsters, experts and institutions for youth welfare, than other methods. Implementation of this method can have a quality impulse for both personnel and treatment.

### 3.6 Target Group Troubled Youth

Experiential learning is most often seen as a methodology to help the group of people with the most severe problems. Literature describes youngsters who follow an experiential learning program as 'youngsters who cannot be helped by traditional social care anymore; the most difficult category; youngsters who have failed more than once in families, at school, at work and in the social care'. But other sources (like interviews with social workers and managers) reveal that experiential learning is useful for other target groups as well (like students, delinquent youngsters, psychiatric patients and disabled youngsters), but it is exceptionally suited for this target group, because most of the times it is the only option left for assistance. So the main target group for experiential learning is youngsters who are in frequent and lengthy problems, for which there are no solutions in the existing assistance anymore.

The main aspects of the target group are:

- problems on more than one aspects of life: plural problems.

This turns out from among other things:

- a negative self image and because of this creates a feeling that there can not be changed

anything (anymore) to their own situation;

- possess insufficient adequate coping skills to stand one's ground in society on a positive

and societal acceptable way;

- a limited perspective of the future and because of this have a bad prognosis when they are

without help;

- when they received already a long period of assistance.

Plural problems ~ youngsters live in three different environments, which have influence on the development of his/hers personality. The environments are:

- the first environment is the family;
- the second is school or work situation;
- the third environment is spare time.

Every experience a youngster has in these environments has their influences on the personality of the youngster and the way it will be formed. They have also a decisive influence on the origin of troubled behaviour.

It is for example acknowledged that the first interaction between child and its environment, the parents, determines the origin of confidence. A possible miss of basic security leads to uncertainty, a negative self-image and little adequate choices for behaviour.

Van der Ploeg and Scholte designed a model that describes several risk factors within the person, the family, school and in the circle of friends, which can lead to troubled behaviour . These risk factors (See: appendix 7 Social-ecological development model for troubled behaviour by Van der Ploeg and Scholte, page 89) can lead to either externalized or internalized troubled behaviour. Externalized troubled behaviour is focused on the outside world, like restless behaviour, aggressive behaviour or anti-social behaviour. Internalized behaviour is focused on the youngster him/herself like dejected or depressive moods, frightened behaviour and social draw back behaviour. The main factors, which will lead to one of these troubled behaviours, are :

- the self image of the youngster;
- the level of self-determination;
- in control of oneself/ coping.

A fourth cluster, which is not mentioned above, namely consciousness disorder, is more linked with psychological problems. The risk factors are different and these youngsters will generally not be considered for experiential learning projects.

Youngsters who join experiential learning have problems on all four factors that lead to troubled behaviour (self image, self-determination, in control of oneself/coping and consciousness disorder). Experiential learning is focused on the person in the first place. The primary goal is to give youngsters a perspective of the future, by providing enough capacity and possibilities on order to influence their own environment. The environment of the youngsters can be divided into three different upbringing-milieus; the primary milieu (the family), the secondary milieu (school/work situation) and the tertiary milieu (the spare time/the circle of friends).

### 3.6.1 Other Characteristics of Target Group

Gender ~ in principle all projects are for both boys and girls. But some physical activities could be too hard for girls. And boys can be more attracted to some of these activities than girls.

Age ~ experiential learning projects are offered to youngsters with generally an age above 13 years. This has to do with the maturing process of the youngster. The basic principles of experiential learning tell that being able to reflect own acting and conversations are important elements. Besides this it is necessary that youngsters can make their own choices. The youngsters need to be able to determine what is good and bad for them, and what he/she is capable of. And he/she needs to be able to complete physical activities successfully. In general youngsters above 13 years old, the start of puberty, do have in general these characteristics.

Handicaps ~ youngsters with physical or mental handicaps cannot take part in experiential projects. They are not able to join physical activities or to reflect, which the two main elements of experiential learning are.

Psychological problematic ~ experiential learning projects are in general not suitable and meaningful for youngsters with psychological problems, youngsters who have lots of fear, are uncertain, and who are very neurotic.

In conclusion experiential learning projects are offered to youngsters who find themselves in plural problematic situations. Most of these youngsters got some sort of assistance but without success, and experiential learning seems the only way to change their situation.

Age is a criterion since for a successful experiential learning project a good level of reflection capabilities is required and this is only developed in the puberty.

### 3.7 Conclusion

Experiential learning is applied in many different contexts throughout the world. It is applied on regular students in education (also called experiential education), on adults. But it is also used for youngsters who cannot be helped by normal welfare anymore, and then it is a total different kind of welfare than the traditional one.

These youngsters have difficulties and do not get the help they need. That is why some of those youngsters are sent abroad or somewhere in the Netherlands to work and live separately from others, but also sent on survival trips abroad or in the Netherlands with a group of youngsters. It is mainly the group youngsters who are most difficult to help.

The participants will learn from experiences, from activities which they would never have done at home. They will be confronted with their own barriers in order to use other skills of which they did not know they had those. The main condition of experiential learning is that the learned is realistic and should be able to be applied by the youngsters in daily life. Along the whole track, there are people who accompany them and guide them in their learning process. Accompany is a critical success factor for an experiential learning program, the accompaniments should therefore possess several skills and have different tasks.

The primary goals of experiential learning projects for the youngsters is that they become able to cope with their past, to get insight into their own problems and troubled behaviour, to obtain a positive self-image and that they attain a perspective of the future.

The environment has a crucial role in the success of a program. An environment should offer new experiences, from which new skills are developed. Tough activities should be alternated by more pleasant activities but they should still offer learning moments. Activities should not be over the top for a youngster, they need to be realistic but challenging.

In the Netherlands, there has been done little research on this rather new methodology. This chapter describes the stimulating and limiting factors with implementation. It shows that there are more limiting factors than stimulating ones. That is why experiential learning programs are not offered very much in the Netherlands yet. That is why this chapter provides recommendations for organizing projects.

For this report, there is focussed only on experiential learning hikes abroad applied in groups, not on individual live-work experience programs. The target group for this report is troubled youth. These youngsters suffer most often with plural problems. There are three main factors which will most often lead to troubled behaviour. These are; the self image of a youngster, the

level of self-determination, in what way a youngster is in control of oneself (coping) and consciousness disorder which is more linked to psychological problems. Participants of experiential learning programs suffer generally with problems on all four factors. In principle, the participants of programs are most often boys in the age above 13 years. Youngsters, who suffer with physical or mental handicaps, can most often not take part in experiential learning programs. But also youngsters who have a lot of fear, who are uncertain or are very neurotic do often not join these programs.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Nemoland**

### **For whoever loves walking or nature**

#### 4.1 Introduction

Nemo started in 1988 as a lobby association with an integral approach for the protection of the landscape for walkers. In the early period one of their activities was the organisation of walking holidays in the Netherlands and other European countries. In 1990 Nemo travelled to Poland and in 1998 Nemo opened an information- and visitors' centre in Miedzylesie, Stara Kamienica, Poland, for its members, called Nemoland (See: appendix 8 Map Nemoland, page 90, for location of Nemoland). As a foreign association legally cannot buy land in Poland, some Polish people also have shares in the project. The centre should be a part of a broader project for rural development in the district of Stara Kamienica. For the administration of the centre Nemo has founded a separate organization: Fundacja Nemo. This Polish legal body owns and manages the centre and the execution of the projects.

The final idea is to create a Polish structure which will own the farm. This year the project has been turned into an official Polish foundation.

Ever since the farm has been bought, the Nemo-members have been working on the farm to improve the facilities there (building group accommodation, camping site, restore former walking paths, doing research on local natural values).

The Nemo foundation offers a kind of holiday where the living-conditions are simple and the visitors are encouraged to take part in all kinds of activities. A holiday at the Nemo-project means experiencing local nature and culture. Through a community-based approach all kinds of activities are offered like having diner at a local farm and educational programs with local schools. The project attracts more and more people each year.

Nemoland is an international meeting point for travellers and visitors who want to experience the unspoiled nature, historical landscapes and find hidden treasures. Nemoland presents its region as a treasury of local legends and road map for ramblers and explorers. Lying in the borderland of central Europe, Nemoland is a crossing point for exchange and education activities focused on local culture and nature. By offering this, Nemoland wants to contribute to the appreciation and the development of the region by means of projects for conservation, protection and promotion of its culture and ecological activities. Nemoland is a non-profit organization, managed by the Polish Fundacja Nemo, run and financed by volunteers and members of the Dutch Nemo-association. From May 2003 the existence of Nemoland was threatened by mining plans, which also threatened the environmental and natural values of the area, and could have eventually meant the bankruptcy of Nemo in Poland, if the Polish authorities would have approved the mining plans. The project plan of Fundacja Nemo aimed

to be an alternative for the mining plans and has succeeded in this. On March 24th of 2004 the province administration has announced not to give permission for the mining plans in Stara Kamienica.

Chapter four Nemoland starts with the objective of Nemoland, what it offers in Poland, the characteristics of its members, followed by the developments and plan for the future which includes the plans for 2004 concerning experiential learning and troubled youth. This chapter continues with Nemoland and experiential learning in which is illustrated what Nemoland offers for the experiential learning market and is finished with a conclusion.

## 4.2 Objectives

By creating Nemoland, Nemo started a project for sustainable development for rural tourism in Poland, Stara Kamienica. This project is about sustainable recreation and tourism and regional development. By promoting sustainable rural tourism Nemo wants to get attention for the conservation of nature, landscape scenery, culture and the local economy. Together with Polish organisations, Nemo tries to stop the process of neglecting of the rural area and unemployment. Besides this Nemoland, aims to promote tourism that contribute to sustainable development of the region, preservation and appreciation of its rich natural and cultural landscape, its local economy and culture.

Nemo tries to stop the processes, of neglecting of the rural area and unemployment, by introducing new sorts of rural industry, like manufacturing of local products and the development of eco/rural tourism. Nemo has bought a house and a piece of land in Międzylesie, called it Nemoland, close to the Giant Mountain in South-West Poland. Together with Polish organisations, Nemo develops opportunities for walking by restoring the rural and cultural landscape of this region. Besides these walking tracks, Nemo has built a campsite, cabins and it has its own caravans for the guests to stay in summer. Nemoland is the only project for tourism in this region since II World War.

The goal of Nemoland is to improve sustainable tourism (walking, agro/eco, cultural historical and care tourism), with which tourism will contribute to sustainable development of the region (preservation and appreciation of the natural cultural landscape and the economical development of the region). Besides this, Nemoland executes different sub-projects like organising exchange programs (with for example schools and via concerts), supports artists, develops walking track networks, organises walks from farm to farm and constructs a legend-centre, which functions as a place for collecting local myths and legends .

Nemo expects this project in Poland to produce experience, knowledge and possibilities that can be applied at a later stage in other parts of Poland, in the Netherlands and in other European countries.

## 4.3 Offer

Nemoland is open for guests in summer. Only Nemo members can visit and stay at Nemoland. But it is very easy to become a member, because one has only to pay Euro 11, 50 extra. Guests can stay in either one's own accommodation on the campsite in the orchard or in the field or one can stay in one of the different accommodations Nemoland has to offer, like the guesthouse (separate rooms or dormitories), in a caravan or log cabin.

There are hot showers, sinks and three dry toilets. The 32-hectare-property includes a kitchen garden, orchards, fireplaces, brooks, pastures, hills and forest. Local Polish meals are

provided in neighbouring farms or in the Nemo house itself. There is a possibility for self-catering, since there is a kitchen with all facilities, and there is a shop in the village, which is within fifteen minute walk. There is also a café and a meeting place with terrace and open fireplace for the guests.

Peace and quietness are characteristics of Nemoland. During the day most guests are out walking, and at night there is nothing but the sound of the stars. Another important feature of Nemoland is that the accommodations and facilities are sober, basic. There is nothing which can be found in Nemoland which is luxurious.

All these qualities of Nemoland are what the guests attract. The guests are not looking for luxurious things but are looking for rest, and beautiful nature. And for walking, this area in Poland is most suitable. One can roam endlessly, taking in silence and nature. There is a broad choice of walking routes. Maps, background information and guides are provided by Nemoland. Nemoland also offers dozens of day trips and longer walks from farm to farm/mountain cabin. But also small trips to various castles, historical cities, health resorts, a monastery, natural reserves, concentration camp Gross Rosen or the artists' colony of Wollimierz. There are also adventures for children like searches, tracking, cabin building in the children's forest, in search of the mountain ghost and the witch Aga on the Witch Mountain, building dams in the brook. Sometimes children may stay with volunteers of Nemoland for a short time while their parents explore the neighbourhood.

The main activity of the visitors is walking, and therefore Nemo sets out many walks in the area. Visitors have many options of different kind of tracks and arrangements. There are individual and group arrangements. Walking tracks can go for one day or for even eight days. The group arrangements can take longer, up to nine days and are in a group of seven participants.

The tracks are around Nemoland but also go from farm to farm in the region. The arrangements can be combined, extended/shortened and adjusted to all wishes. Additional supplies like taxis and guides are always possible. All walks are tailored to suit either beginners or experienced walkers.

Besides walking, there are also other activities which are offered by Nemoland. These are: workshops with regional artists, horse riding, searching for crystals and language courses. In high season there are excursions by Polish guides who know everything about the region's history, flora, fauna and geology. Nemoland is always looking for new contacts with the Polish habitants of the village. That is why Nemoland has made it possible for guests to eat real Polish with the locals. The guests appreciate this very much.

Nemoland, like Nemo, is always looking for volunteers to help with cleaning and small jobs. Small jobs are the best way to get into contact with the Polish surroundings, nature and landscape. Help is needed since the area is one big wilderness at the moment. The volunteers take part in construction and maintenance. There is no compensation but it is appreciated very much. Most of the visitors enjoy the combination of holiday and occasional work. Work can be done in the house, in the garden and on the land. For example mowing, pruning of trees, path-maintenance, painting, masonry etc. These volunteers also accompany Nemo-walks and provide necessary transport for guests.

Nemoland also organises working holidays for everyone who is interested. The holiday is a combination of working in and around the Nemo Centre and walking by which one gets to know Polish nature and culture. One can work half days, or a couple of days in a row. The work depends on the interests and ability of the volunteer, and of what needs to be done.

#### 4.4 Characteristics of Members

The guest who visits Nemoland has always been interested in nature, rural or agro aspects. The main purpose for the visitor to come to this area is to walk and enjoy the beauty of the unspoiled nature. They also want to see the way of living of local inhabitants, which includes their traditions, culture and folklore. The guest of Nemoland likes to be involved with the local farming; it is a very active guest who likes to volunteer as well. This kind of visitor does not need luxury in any kind. They sleep in their own tent or in the lodges of Nemo. They try to experience Poland in the most authentic way. This pioneer comes either by train or car with their small families with younger kids or with their partner or by themselves, individually. They stay approximately a couple of days till a week. They try to see as much as possible in their time in Stara Kamienica. This group of people do not have much money to spend but it contributes to the area by helping the local community with their voluntary jobs.

Other groups of guests, but a much smaller market, are the elderly and the mentally or psychically ill people. Also some Dutch scouts have stayed at Nemoland to build a bridge; this was an exchange program which Nemo had organised.

Between 1998 and 2003 Nemoland has welcomed 927 Dutch visitors. These guests can be divided into individual guests and groups. In 1998 Nemoland has received 26 individual guests, in 1999 and 2000 both years 93, in 2001 155 guests, in 2002 170 and in 2003 250 guests. The number of members of groups was in 1999 20, in 2000 40, in 2002 80 . The total overnights were in 2002 1667 and in 2003 2051 nights.

#### 4.5 Developments and Plans for the Future

In five years operating in Poland, Nemoland has made an inventory of all walking tracks, has organised walking and farm arrangements and a Dutch biologist has made an inventory for a nature-management plan. An exchange program between a Dutch and Polish school has been organised. Nemo has developed a computer-project and has written a conservation-plan for a castle ruin in Stara Kamienica together with a German cultural organisation and there are good contacts with the German Vertriebenen. Volunteers and guests have restored many footpaths and Dutch scouts have made two foot bridges. More about the activities of Nemoland between 1998 and 2003 can be found in appendix 9 Additional Information 1998-2003, page 91.

##### 4.5.1 Plans 2004 of General Aspects

Nemoland ~ Nemoland aims for 2004 to restore the big barn and the mill house-barn, to furnish the mill house, the tractor and the saga centre and peace centre. But also to offer facilities for participating guests and volunteers, organizing therapeutic programs “experiential learning” for youth with social problems, building sanitary fittings, restoring the mill-stable, meant for workshops, exposition, meditation hall and theatre.

Research ~ Dutch students doing research as a placement, focused on: marketing plan for health/care tourism, reintegration activities, therapeutic activities and experiential learning, marketing plan for educational tourism, volunteer activities, school exchange programs, green schools, marketing plan for new agrarian activities, product development, transport and sale, Internet outreach (web page).

Nature and landscape ~ restoring and marking old footpaths, cleaning of dense lot overgrowth, mowing of grass land, trimming of wooded banks, getting funds and facilities for some animals (goats, sheep, horses) and a tractor.

Exchange, support and contact ~ initiating of school exchanges between a lyceum in Cieplice and a Dutch school, donation and transport of looms for local artists, organizing of working holidays for volunteers assisting in: gardening, repairing footpaths, nature protection, pruning/mowing, construction activities. Foundation Tilburg-Polen will go on with their support for village schools and donations of goods.

Events ~ organizing of Dutch Days with participation of a Dutch choir in village churches, organizing of a party for Polish youth.

Promotion of tourism ~ organizing one- and more day hiking arrangements (walking from farm to farm or to mountain huts). Organizing of Polish meals for guests at artists' and farmers' in the village, developing of program for children based on local legends, including workshops, theatre and building huts. Organizing weekly excursions focused on local history, culture, geology and biology and organizing of culture journeys for groups by culture historians Vincent Rottier and Angeline Joordens.

Employment creation ~ creating of small scale production lines by local women and promoting of products from Stara Kamienica in the Netherlands (for instance leaded glass art).

PR ~ presenting slides about Stara Kamienica by a professional photographer Hans Geerling, promotion of Poland and Stara Kamienica in Amsterdam by the Poland Café, two times a year, and production of a yearly magazine, folders and brochures.

Plans ~ cooperation in landscape and a space-plan preparation for Stara Kamienica, preparing plans and finding funds for an Attraction Park, village museum and cultural centre for local legends and history. Preparing plans and finding funds for a Model farm with production unit for agrarian products run by local women, offering facilities and training, developing regional products and practical support for new private initiatives.

Lobby against mining plans ~ active lobbying against mining plans, which threaten the environmental and natural values of areas.

#### 4.5.2 Plans 2004 for Experiential Learning and Troubled Youth

Fundacja Nemo intends to offer experiential learning programs for troubled youth in 2004.

This is how Nemo has set her plan for experiential learning programs for 2004:

“There are aspects of traditional program settings that inhibit the emotional growth and education of some individuals. Most change efforts involve verbal interchanges between staff and participant. This is not an effective way of reaching many people, especially adolescents who may be resistant to talking or who lack trust in adult authority figures. Experiential learning programs offer a physically active way for staff and participants to relate to one another, so the emphasis is not solely on talk.

Experiential learning programs also place troubled youth in unique settings where they are often quite unsure of themselves. Moving out of the usual environment sometimes serves to reduce defensiveness and change relationships with adult leaders. Many programs incorporate an element of perceived risk, thereby encouraging participants to move beyond their comfort zones and face their issues and fears. Finally, many experiential learning programs use a small-group format and encourage interdependence among group members. In expedition programs, where participants and leaders venture out into natural settings for extended periods of time, the 24-hour-a-day group experience becomes very powerful.”

Nemo commissioned this research in order to adjust their plans to the wants and needs of the institutions for youth welfare for experiential learning programs for troubled youth. That is why Nemo does not have a profound plan for experiential learning programs yet; it first would like to see the results of this report.

## 4.6 Nemoland and Experiential Learning

The objective of Nemoland is to give experiential learning a new filling-out for a broad public. That can be motivated students, but also younger persons from a penitentiary or psychiatric circuit. Or people who want to orient on their possibilities again, because they got stuck in their work or living environment. Groups from the business world, educational establishments, neighbour homes etc. can find the challenge of an active and teachable holiday in Nemoland. But also people, who want their holiday spend meaningfully, and want to gain new experiences, are welcome. Target is reintegration in broad sense: the reintegration of what is separated from each other on an unhealthy manner: feeling and mind, nature and culture, skills and self-image, individual and surroundings. So Nemoland is not only focusing itself on troubled youth but on a much broader public. This report and research limits itself to one market; troubled youth.

Except for the summer, high season for tourism, Nemoland has a supply for different groups, with a maximum of twenty participants. Nemoland is going to look for more space available at local Polish inhabitants.

There is a clinic/first aid in Stara Kamienica, which is four kilometres away. This is a doctor who treats the visitors of Nemoland as well. He normally brings the foreign clients to the closest by hospital in Jelenia Góra, only twenty kilometres away. Besides this doctor, there is a pharmacy is also close by.

In Jelenia Góra all other facilities like doctors, dentists, specialists and other clinics. But there is also a spa and a midwife. There are also alternative treatments offered. And there is a fast and good functioning ambulance-service operating. There is always an escape possible at Nemoland and environment.

There is no police office in Stara Kamienica. The local police is situated in Jelenia Góra. When there is a problem, they always come, but there is no special contact with the police. Nemoland has a good contact with the local mayor and the first aid knows Nemoland well also. But Nemoland does not have special contact with the hospital.

The reachableness of a mobile phone depends on the provider one has and the telephone contract (KPN has a perfect reach in the neighbourhood). In all surrounding villages are telephone boxes, but about every guest at Nemoland has its own operating mobile phone.

### 4.6.1 Offer for Experiential Learning Programs

Nemoland has different possibilities and activities to offer for experiential learning programs: Bivouac ~ camping on a deserted spot, close to a stream without any facilities. The group has been indicated on itself entirely and sees to foresee for its own facilities and dinner from what the surrounding nature has to offer.

Nature camp site ~ make use of the group facilities, activity rooms or theatre of Nemoland.

Primitive hikes ~ difficult, but exciting hike through bush, swamps, streams and steep slopes. The hike can be half-day, one-day or a walk of several days with overnights in free nature, on a farm or in a mountain refuge.

Working in nature ~ not long after sunrise (weather or no weather) the participants will begin cleaning neglected footpaths, reclaiming of an overgrown ground, mowing and haying of grassland, sawing trees, maintenance of the vegetable garden, recovery of elements of the landscape, building of a footbridge or working on a farm, but first a short work discussion

with clear (security) instructions and the distribution of tools. There are short breaks regularly and a big lunch and one works until four o'clock in the afternoon.

Working on a useful building project ~ there need to be different facilities built on the grounds of Nemoland, like sanitary, an activity room, workplace, studio, a reflection place, and the restoration of an old water mill. There are also a lot of jobs which need to be done on a regular and continuing basis like painting work, replacement of fence and building facilities for animals. Participants will work together with Polish workers on the Polish times (from 7.00 a.m. till 5 p.m.).

Working for the community ~ Nemo contributes to different projects for the project of sustainable development of the municipality Stara Kamienica; like conservation activities concerning the two castle ruins in the municipality, archaeological research, restorations of monuments, marking of walking tracks, restoration of community spaces, and construction of a cultural youth centre.

Workshops ~ in the villages around Nemoland live a lot of Polish artists who organise workshops for motivated beginners and advanced; like stained-glass, constructing musical instruments, making pottery, painting glass, wood and sculpture.

Educational programs ~ the region was a cultural centre in the heart of Europe for centuries. It is on the boarder with Germany, Austria and Poland. A lot of traces show a rich past. Nemo has different educational theme programs focussed on nature, culture and history of the region.

Story-program ~ Nemo has collected old stories and legends about the region which tell a lot about the history of the landscape and people who lived here in past and present. Nemo wants to revive these legends by organising story-programs, linked with theme walks, theatre shows, rituals and reading aloud at the campfire or in the theatre. The stories could offer a frame of recognition for stories of the lives of the guests and offer a creative form of inspiration and experience.

Accompaniment ~ groups take there own accompaniment with them to Poland. The administrator of Nemoland is responsible for the preparation of the activities and the provision of necessary facilities. The administrator is also responsible for the stay and activities in means of house rules and clear agreements. Together with the supervisor of the participants, the administrator coordinates the programs. Nemoland wants in the future when there is a request, the administrator to offer and coordinate individual programs. But at this stage Nemoland is not able to execute this. Nemoland should train people for this and that is only possible, according to Nemo, when they have gained experience in programs with accompaniment. When the group has its own accompaniment, Nemoland thinks that the administrator of Nemoland or a farmer in the neighbourhood only needs to offer the required facilities.

Materials ~ for each group will be decided what they take to Poland themselves and which materials are provided by Nemoland. Think of materials like required materials for the activities like tents, sleeping bag, backpacks and such. Most of them need to taken care for by the participant themselves. There are some materials which can be lent from Nemoland; every participant is personally responsible for the materials which he or she lends. Nemoland is willing to invest in materials so that groups do not need to take care of all the materials needed themselves. But before Nemoland is going to invest in materials it fist would like to know for sure if these are needed. There is no point in buying materials when they are not going to be used.

Transport ~ Nemoland offers transport possibilities to Poland including a chauffeur. It is a small bus, Nemobus, which can carry in total eight persons. When a group is larger than eight, Nemoland can hire a bus or van or can arrange bus- or train tickets.

Preparation and register ~ with every individual participant, group or institution agreements are made about the programs beforehand. The programs are tailored made and can be, depends on the demands and wishes, intense till very intense. The activities are offered all year through.

The preparation consists of:

1. Orientation, adjustment of wishes and possibilities;
2. Nemo draws up a plan and a quotation;
3. Contract about the period, facilities, prices, participants, activities, accompany, insurances, defining of emergency scenario, additional wishes (for example diets).

Subscription does only count after payment;

4. Presentation to the participants about the goal, facilities, programs and activities;
5. Definitive design programs and way of accompany and practical preparation;
6. Reception in Nemoland, introduction and acquaintance;
7. A follow-up is possible when demanded with reports, (personal) evaluation and a future course.

Like chapter three, Experiential Learning for Troubled youth, page 27, there are two different forms of experiential learning; experiential learning hikes and live-work experience programs. Nemoland does not offer the second form of experiential learning yet. The first year, Nemoland only wants to attract institutions for youth welfare which are interested in experiential learning hikes. Nemoland has not made arrangements with local families and farms in a way that Dutch troubled youth can live and work there for a couple of months. Before Nemoland is planning to do this, it first wants to evaluate how the hikes go, whether both Nemoland and institution are satisfied with its visit and how the local community reacts on the Dutch visitors. If everything goes fine, Nemoland would like to offer live-work experience programs in the future, but this also depends on the interest of the local families and farmers of course.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

Since five years, Nemoland offers sober and basic facilities and workshops to travellers and visitors who want to participate in volunteer-activities, educational, art and health-programs in South West Poland. Nemoland is not a commercial camping or hotel. The facilities are situated on an estate of 32 hectares, with gardens, orchard, creeks, meadows and woods, near nature reserves. The activities offered to its guests are walking trips, workshops, excursions, programs for children, working holidays for volunteers who help to protect the countryside, to restore footpaths and monuments. A legal Polish body is founded for the administration of the centre, Fundacja Nemo.

Nemoland's objectives concern sustainable development of the local ecological, cultural and historical heritage. It is related to conservation of nature and culture initiatives and agricultural activities in the area. Nemo aims to develop a practical model, in which realizing facilities for walkers is the catalyst for an integral development involving protection of landscape and cultural heritage, and improvement of socio-economic aspects. There is strong support of the members of Nemo for this Poland-project.

Plans for 2004 concern research, organising events, promoting tourism, creating jobs and most important promoting and taking care of sustainable natural development and promoting of getting in contact with local inhabitants.

Definitive plans concerning experiential learning programs are not made yet, Nemo waits on the results of this report. But it is clear that Nemoland offers a lot for these kinds of programs and that it is really eager to attract the market of troubled youth to Poland.

Nemoland offers a natural environment which has little stimulants and what is suitable for different kinds of activities. It offers sober facilities, transport, there is always an escape possible at Nemoland, there is contact with the local police, and there are sufficient communication possibilities.

Nemoland does not offer any form of accompaniment besides a Polish person who welcomes the group and shows them around. It does not offer many materials either, only small amount of materials which the participants can lend.

Nemoland is at this point, only able to attract the market of experiential learning hikes. It will first evaluate how the hikes go, and will then possibly offer in the future, live-work experience programs at local farmers.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Demands of Umbrella Institutions for Youth Welfare**

#### 5.1 Introduction

There are eighty-four umbrella institutions for youth welfare in the Netherlands . Of these eighty-four institutions, sixteen apply experiential learning, according to a provisional inventory of Theo Ruikes . This group can be divided into a group which offers experiential learning hikes, and another group that offers live-work experience programs. The number of the first group, experiential learning hikes, is seven; nine institutions for youth welfare offer the second kind of experiential learning programs. However, all of those seven institutions for youth welfare offer both experiential learning programs as live-work experience programs. These figures are collected by Theo Ruikes in April 2004, by sending a question list (See: appendix 10 Theme list Survey Experiential Learning by Theo Ruikes, page 94) to all eighty-four umbrella institutions for youth welfare in the Netherlands. The aim of the research was to find out how many institutions in the Netherlands actually apply experiential learning and what kind of program is offered and to whom. From the outcomes of this research, Theo Ruikes will compose a manual which shows all the results. This manual will come out in August of this year and this kind of inventory has not been completed before, and according to Ruikes there was need for. Until this point it was not clear which institutions for youth welfare offer experiential learning and what kind of experiential learning programs, to whom, where, how etcetera. This made the market of experiential learning unclear.

The response rate of Theo Ruikes' research was 59, 5 per cent. This indicates that this research can be seen as most likely valid and representative of the Dutch experiential learning market of Dutch umbrella institutions for youth welfare.

On base of own research on the Internet, eight institutions for youth welfare were found suitable for analysis for this research. They were all interviewed.

Along the research, I came into contact with Theo Ruikes provisional inventory. The inventory showed that seven institutions of youth welfare in the Netherlands were working with experiential learning hikes and were therefore interesting for this research. We combined our findings and that showed that five of those institutions were for this research not interviewed yet. On the other hand, six of the already interviewed institutions, recognized by me through the Internet, were not in the inventory of Theo Ruikes. The reason for this is the 40, 5 per cent non response and that it is still a provisional inventory.

I wanted to arrange interviews with as many institutions of the inventory as possible. In-depth interviews with these institutions for youth welfare were necessary for this research, since the inventory of Theo Ruikes only gathered basic information about the institutions. Four of the five institutions of the inventory which were not interviewed yet, were invited for an interview. One of the five was not applicable for this research since its experiential learning programs are only offered on boats. Three of the remaining four agreed for an interview, but one could not proceed because of illness. Colleagues assured me to send the answers by e-mail, but they have not although many phone calls and promises. The other one did not respond on my invitation at all, and there was not find any contact with him as well.

Also two experiential learning experts who are not linked to any institution are interviewed. These two experts have worked with experiential learning for institutions in the past but have started for their own. One of them has written one of the two only Dutch books about the methodology; the other expert was one of the founders of DOEL, a very successful project for experiential learning for troubled youth.

So for my research, there are in total ten institutions for youth welfare interviewed and two experiential learning experts. (See: appendix 11 Experts Experiential Learning Interviewed, page 96, for the list of the interviewees).

The outcomes of this research will probably give a good and valid representation of the needs and wants of the Dutch market concerning experiential learning programs abroad, since ten institutions and two experts are interviewed. The provisional inventory of Theo Ruikes shows that there are only seven institutions for youth welfare in the Netherlands which offer experiential learning hikes. But when the response rate was 100 % instead of 59, 5 % and assumed that the provisional inventory is representative, the outcomes would probably indicate that there are twenty-seven institutions for youth welfare that offer experiential learning programs (instead of the sixteen), of whom twelve (instead of seven) offer experiential learning hikes, which should be applicable for this research. This is an estimation based on the findings of Theo Ruikes' provisional inventory and indicates how small the market is.

To gain all necessary information for this research there has also been consultations with the managing director and founder of Centre Aurillange in France, a supplier for live-work experience projects, which has twenty-five years of experience. He, Jan Klamer, has given a lecture on the University of Nijmegen, about experiential learning, which is attended for this research as well.

The institutions interviewed were carefully selected on whether it offered experiential learning hikes or live-work experience programs. The majority of the institutions for youth welfare interviewed offer experiential learning hikes, since Nemoland primarily wants to

attract institutions for youth welfare that offer experiential learning hikes to troubled youth. Eight out of the ten institutions interviewed have experience with experiential learning hikes and are still undertaking them on a regular basis. Seven of them offer both experiential learning hikes and live-work experience programs to its clients, only one offers solely experiential learning hikes. The reason for this is that most of the interviewed institutions are in the believe and have learned from experience that troubled youth are most of the time not helped with only a hike or experiential learning program abroad; they need this special kind of treatment for a longer period.

Two of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare only offer live-work experience programs. These institutions were still very interesting for this research since the persons, who are responsible for the experiential learning department of the institutions for youth welfare, are very knowledgeable in experiential learning, and had interesting ideas and opinions which could not be left out of the research.

Appendix 12: Reflection of Research, page 102, indicates the positive and negative aspects of the research.

This chapter presents the results of the research in which different aspects of an experiential learning program are analysed. Chapter five continues with the needs and wants of institutions for youth welfare concerning again different aspects of these programs. This is followed and concluded by an analysis of the positive and negative aspects of both Poland and Nemoland.

## 5.2 Characteristics Experiential Learning Hikes of Institutions for Youth Welfare

### 5.2.1 Small History of Experience

Institutions for youth welfare started to offer experiential learning programs about fifteen years ago. One of the interviewed institutions started thirty years ago, but another one 'only' six years ago.

The majority of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare started with very primitive hikes to Santiago de Compostello or in France. These hikes were long, about five weeks, and were tough for the participants. It was only about walking and reaching the set finish point.

This has changed through out the years, since the institutions for youth welfare realized and found out from experience, that troubled youth, the participants, were not helped with only a tough hike. The participants did not learn much which they could use in their situation at home, in the Netherlands because the hike was nothing like it so they could not reflect anything at their home situation. That is why most of the hikes became less harsh and there was more accompaniment that arranged regular conversations and discussions during the hikes.

But also the opinion that experiential learning needed to be far away, abroad, to be successful, changed. Some of the institutions for youth welfare have the opinion that experiential learning hikes could be held in the Netherlands as well, but everyone shares one same opinion: the environment should be different than it is in participants' normal live and should have as less stimulants as possible, like cafés, supermarkets and coffee shops.

### 5.2.2 Destination

Eight of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare offer experiential learning programs evenly in the Netherlands as abroad. Half of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare because of a limited budget, limited time and qualified personnel, but most of them because

they have the opinion that experiential learning does not always have to take place abroad. And not every participant of experiential learning programs is able to go abroad. Experiential learning programs in the Netherlands are on deserted spots, in nature; spots which are not crowded with people or stimulants. Some think there are still spots like this to be found in the Netherlands, others disagree; they go exclusively abroad for experiential learning programs. The most popular destinations for experiential learning programs abroad are Germany, Czech, Belgium and Luxembourg, but the most popular one is France, like it is for the Dutch tourist as well.

The main reasons for France are that it is easy to reach, and that it used to be cheap, and it is rather close. All of the institutions for youth welfare that also offer live-work experience programs offer this in France. Most of the families or farms where their clients go to are Dutch, this is another reason to chose for France; a lot of Dutch people are settled in France and willing to give troubled youth an opportunity to work for them.

The majority of the institutions for youth welfare is always enthusiastic about new locations, although the lack of budget, time and qualified personnel. It is important that the accompaniments stay motivated, enthusiastic and challenged, but after been to a location more than a couple of times, the motivation will decrease, there is not enough challenge for the personnel anymore. But on the other hand, the more agreements an institution has made with different organisers or locations, the more obligation an institution has towards these different organisers and location; you cannot visit an location or work with an organiser only once in four years since it is in fact important to have good contacts with an organiser or location. However most of the institutions for youth welfare do not want to be obliged to do so.

### 5.2.3 When and duration

In most cases, the limited budget of institutions for youth welfare does not have any influence on the duration of an experiential learning program, especially not on live-work experience programs. It does in most cases on how many times per year it is offered to its clients. Some institutions for youth welfare go several times per year, other just once or twice. In average the institutions for youth welfare offer experiential learning programs 5, 5 times a year. But of these 5, 5 times, in average one program applies to experiential learning hikes. Thus again, the number of experiential learning hikes offered by institutions is very limited.

The duration of a living/work program is set between five and six months. Experiential learning hikes differ a lot in duration; it differs between five days (set often as a minimum) up to six weeks. But some of the institutions for youth welfare have set their maximum on ten days since their clients are still in their school-age or have important meetings and agreements with justice. The average is one to two weeks.

Because of the school-age and agreements with justice, most of the experiential learning hikes are in holidays, while the live-work experience programs are the whole year through. This is possible since the institution will make special agreements with schools and justice. Holidays are inactive periods, which can be perfectly used for experiential learning programs. But because of the weather, most of the hikes are in holidays which are in spring and autumn. Some institutions for youth welfare think the winter is too harsh to go on a hike and sleep in tents for youngsters, but others are just looking for these harsh circumstances. On the other hand, summer can be too hot and too crowded with tourists.

#### 5.2.4 Participants

All experiential learning hikes, when they are not a lead up for the live-work experience programs, are organised for groups. Groups consist of, in general, between five and ten participants with two to three supervisors. The participants are between thirteen which is rather young. It are only the children of thirteen who are tough and intelligent enough to participate and for the reason 3.6.1 Other Characteristics of Target Group of chapter three, page 39, indicates about the maturing process of children. The eldest participant is twenty three years old. But in most cases, the maximum age is eighteen, since people above this age are adults and Bureau Jeugdzorg does not treat adults anymore.

More boys than girls participate in experiential learning programs. This is because hikes are mostly rather tough, and girls do in general not need this kind of treatment. They are often helped by the more 'general' treatments of youth welfare since females are stronger and can bear more; males use their fists quicker and react more internally while females are more creative in solving their problems by themselves.

The youngsters who participate in experiential learning programs are described in chapter three, 3.6 Target Group Troubled Youth as page 37.: "youngsters who cannot be helped by traditional social care anymore; the most difficult category; youngsters who have failed more than once in families, at school, at work and in the social care' ..... So the main target group for experiential learning is youngsters who are in frequent and lengthy problems, for which there are no solutions in the existing assistance anymore".

The interviewees agree on this and indicate that participants of experiential learning programs are mostly in the last phase of youth welfare before getting into contact with justice, children who have plural problems. Social workers do often not know what to do with these youngsters anymore and how to help them; they think that experiential learning is the last kind of treatment for them which could help. These youngsters are in welfare for a long time already and in most cases everything has been tried on them already, youngsters who have already faced many failures in live and see experiential learning as a last option to learn and apply how to function normal in society.

It is important to put clients in a group who can work in a group and do not search for a particular role in the group, most of the times for leadership. Otherwise, these participants are only focussing on getting the best place in a group during the program and this distracts them from their set goals.

A suitable participant should not be scared to go abroad for a longer period. For the reason that when someone is scared, he or she will not learn anything and it will be a very negative experience. He or she needs to be able to be proud of one self by going abroad and should see it as an informative experience. These are important aspects for putting a successful group together.

#### 5.2.5 Subsidies

Departments of institutions for youth welfare which are responsible for experiential learning programs get its subsidy from the province. The amount of money is in most cases just enough and it determines how many clients can be participating in one of the projects. Most of the institutions for youth welfare interviewed were eager to help more clients but do not have the money, time and qualified personnel to do so, but most of all: they do not have the permission. If there was more money available, more clients could be helped with experiential learning. But about none of the institutions for youth welfare knew anything about subsidies and foundations or did not have the time to put any effort in it, since it is a lot of bureaucracy.

Appendix 12 Foundations, page 101, provides a list of all the foundations for experiential learning programs that came up during the research. Also more and more companies are interested in sponsoring experiential learning, since ‘undertaking socially’ (social ondernemen??) is a nice and appealing code word and companies are willing to invest in it.

### 5.3 Needs and Wants of Institutions for Youth Welfare

#### 5.3.1 Location

Deserted ~ the activities, and therefore the location, should be on a deserted spot, with as few stimulants as possible. The location should be isolated from cities and other stimulants so the participants have to make use of other skills to solve problems, skills from which they did not know they possessed them because the participants did not have to use those skills in the Netherlands. Interviewees agree with what paragraph 3.3.2 Environment of chapter three, page 31, points out “by choosing a specific environment, it is important to create a situation in which new experiences can be faced”.

Safe ~ the location should be easy accessible during calamities; close to doctors or hospitals, communication by mobile phones should be possible. When not, there should be sufficient telephone boxes in the areas where the groups are undertaking their activities or hikes.

Stimulants ~ a location should have as little stimulants as possible; no shops nearby which sell cigarettes, no big city, no cafés, no supermarkets, no neighbours. Preferably the countryside, since most of the participants has a city-mentality and has never seen a farmer in their live before. This means that, when they come in contact with a farmer, it would be a learning moment, given that farmers live totally different than people from the city.

Contradictorily ~ the location and its environment should not look like the one the participant comes from and is used to according to all interviewees and to paragraph 3.3.1 Environment chapter three, page 31. This will ensure that the participants have to use new behaviour and skills which they did not use in the Netherlands before, like asking permission politely for sleeping in the backyard of a farmer.

Challenging ~ the environment should challenge the participants, so they stay motivated along the program. Motivation is the critical success factor for an experiential learning program.

The location and environment should be as little artificial; it should force the participants to make particular ‘steps’. A location which is barren has a stimulating effect on participants.

Country ~ like stated before, seven of the nine interviewed institutions for youth welfare go abroad for their experiential learning but also offer programs in the Netherlands. Not everyone shares the opinion that experiential learning programs should be abroad, but they agree that walking hundred meters in a flat country is far less exiting as climbing hundred meters on a mountain. A foreign country offers an extra dimension to activities.

About none of the institutions for youth welfare has a preference for a country either, but it should look different than at home and it should be far enough to stop participants running away. All of them agree that a country for experiential learning programs should not be too far away, which Poland is not in many eyes.

#### 5.3.2 Accompanying

Since accompaniment is “an essential aspect for a successful experiential learning project. Accompanying is as important during the project as after”(paragraph 3.3.1 Accompanying, chapter three, page 30), everyone, except for one organisation, arranges its own accompaniment from the lead up to the follow-up of the program via its own institution. More than the half the interviewees has followed a training about experiential learning (ELAN Training, Duindam, Ruikes or via courses). The rest of them have learned through experience.

The supervisors need to be able to take experiences home and apply this in further treatment with the participants, the accompaniment will also witness how the youngster reacts and responds in different and strange situations; they will observe other behaviour. In addition, it is important the participant knows his or hers supervisors and the other way around, this enables a trusted feeling for the participants. The institutions for youth welfare are looking for accompaniment concerning knowledge of the environment, language and contacts with locals and assisting with particular activities like out-door activities.

### 5.3.3 Transport

Half of the interviewees do need organised transport, in the cheapest way as possible, which is most often a van. It is important for the supervisors to be present with the participants while driving to the destination, for the reason that during the period from home to the destination, a lot of things already happen with the participants. They start to change and react already and it is really interesting to see this and important to guide some participants in this. The other half of the institutions for youth welfare organise their own transport.

### 5.3.4 Facilities

Facilities should be basic, sober and primitive. In this way youngsters will learn to appreciate what they normally take for granted. Most of the institutions for youth welfare want to sleep in tents or self-made huts and prepare their own food in either an available kitchen or with a gas burner. Secondly, primitive facilities increase the challenge. The third important reason for basic facilities is again, the limited budget of most of the institutions for youth welfare.

### 5.3.5 Activities

Activities like useful jobs resembling cleaning and maintaining footpaths and nature, building footbridges (because otherwise you cannot cross the river and because of your job, others can make use of this bridge as well), huts for the participants themselves to sleep in. The activities should produce something and should be useful for themselves but also for all the other visitors who make use of these facilities. Other popular activities for experiential learning programs are canoeing, walking, hiking, cycling, diving and climbing.

An activity is a very important tool in order to be able to have a good and instructive conversation with youngsters. Most of the participants do not want to talk very much about themselves, but when they are busy and distracted by the activities, their mask will disappear and it is much easier to communicate with them. The activities should be hard and difficult but not over the top in a way that the participants get frustrated, they should be proud of themselves when they have completed an activity successfully by working hard. The most popular activity is hiking with a group from hut to hut altered with light physical jobs in nature.

### 5.3.6 Materials

There should be enough materials for the institutions for youth welfare to offer the participants diverse activities and to facilitate them to answer the different individual needs of the participants. Most of the institutions for youth welfare do not have its own materials and demand from the location to provide materials like tents, sleeping bags, backpacks and gas burners but also bikes, canoes and climbing materials.

### 5.3.7 Tasks of organizer

The organizer should know everything about the environment, language and should have contacts with the local community. The organiser should also be able to show the group around by describing the surrounding environment and what to expect, this would otherwise take a lot of the time of the supervisors, which they often do not have. The organizer should

also ensure 100 per cent safety. The group should be able to be at the doctor or hospital within half an hour; there should always be an escape. There should always be someone for contact 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for emergency and for general questions.

The organizer should furthermore have contacts with doctors, hospitals, police and the mayors of the villages they are passing by during hikes, because a group of ten youngsters could give problems when a village is not prepared and does not know why they are in their village. Some institutions for youth welfare ask for out-door experts for assisting activities and for people who speak Dutch and the native language of the country. It does not really matter whether this person is Dutch or Polish. It should be easy to communicate with and this person should fully understand who these children are and what they are here for and what they are capable of.

All of the institutions for youth welfare want to be involved in the organisation of the experiential learning program. The program should be organised from A to Z before the groups arrive so that the institution should not have to sort things out themselves.

Nine of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare organise the trips themselves. This means that an institution takes care of the legislation, insurance and valid identification (passport) aspects by itself.

#### 5.4 Opinions of Poland and Nemoland

It is important for Nemo to know what the positive and negative aspects of Poland and Nemoland are, according to the interviewed institutions for youth welfare. In this way Nemo knows what important aspects are of both country and location and what aspects should or should not be dealt with.

##### 5.4.1 Positive of Poland

The difference between the way Polish people and the Dutch live is large ~ most of the troubled youth have the idea that wherever you are in the world, there are shops to buy food and drinks, or there is someone else who will buy it for them. Poland will probably shock them because their idea is not right; people do not live the way they do. It is very useful, according to Warner Rikse from Cardea, to show these youngsters that the world is totally different only a couple of hundred kilometres away. According to one of the interviewees and his experience, a complete different way of living cannot be found in Germany (where they used to go to for experiential learning programs) anymore.

Inexpensive ~ institutions for youth welfare are almost always limited in their budget and favour low-budget activities and countries. Because Poland is inexpensive in comparison to the Netherlands, but also to France and Germany, this country is in a favourable position, like all other East European countries. It is not only a positive aspect for the financial part but also for the participants to see that money does not mean the same to everyone, and that you can get as much by asking politely instead of paying, and that one survives with few and simple things.

Limited rules ~ in Poland is more possible than in the Netherlands, this country does not have as many rules as the Netherlands applies. There are still possibilities to camp in the wild, which cannot in the Netherlands, but also to walk almost wherever you want to. People are free to hunt and butcher wild animals, which could be a good and challenging activity for the participants.

Distance ~ because of the great distance, the participants will think twice before running away. In the Netherlands everyone can find any transport to come home with, but in Poland this is much more difficult since the participants do not speak the language and do not know the country at all, and this is a positive facet of Poland.

Unknown country ~ Poland is an unknown country to most of the participants and this increases the challenges but also the motivation. It is really something to tell your friends at home that you 'survived' one week or a couple of weeks in Poland. About nobody speaks Polish, which makes it a greater challenge than for example France. Moreover Poland is not a well known and busy visited country, yet it is not as busy as the Belgium Ardennes and France, in annoyance to some of the interviewees who consider the Belgium Ardennes as overcrowded and spoiled.

#### 5.4.2 Negative of Poland

Distance ~ Poland has the image of a far-away destination, but most of the institutions for youth welfare did not realise that the south of France is a longer drive. It is this image which caused some negative ideas with the interviewees; they did not want to drive longer than ten hours. Nemoland is about twelve hours driving from the Randstad; this is too far for some of them. But not everyone shared this idea, especially the people who have been there before, knew that Poland is not much further than any other location in France and did not mind the distance. It is the image which should change.

For some of the institutions for youth welfare it would be a surplus value when Nemoland would be in France instead of in Poland. The location and environment with its many jobs and desertion is almost perfect. But since they have already locations in France where clients go to it would be more attractive to have a location in France. France would have a surplus value to their existing offer.

Image of Poland ~ the image of Poland is not good. Besides the image of a far-away destination, a lot of institutions for youth welfare thought that the infrastructure is old fashioned and limited (for example hospitals). It is not as bad as the outcomes of opinion poll of the Interview/NSS assigned by NOS . This opinion poll shows for that 97 per cent of the Dutch think that Poland is a poor country, 82 per cent thinks it is unsafe along with 91 per cent has an image of Poland as a little modern country.

#### 5.4.3 Positive of Nemoland

In order to get the results below, Nemoland is thoroughly described to the interviewees and is presented a brochure.

Location ~ everyone is pleased that Nemoland is located quite deserted and that it is only near to a small village, which is not very provoking for the youngsters to go to. Two of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare will actually look for some contact with locals since it is interesting to meet other cultures and ways of living, but the rest of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare will not. Also the possibility to meet other people during a hike or activities is very small.

Environment ~ the natural and overgrown woodland is an important positive aspect of Nemoland. It is a good environment for hikes, activities and small jobs like cleaning footpaths or rebuilding footbridges. This is an environment which is hard to find in the Netherlands and a contrary environment like the participants are used to.

Different facilities ~ according to one of the institutions for youth welfare (Cardea, who has been to Nemoland before for holidays) are the different facilities good to use for the participants like the silence room and group rooms. But all the other institutions for youth welfare will probably not use these facilities and stay in their own tents or huts and want to do activities outside.

#### 5.4.4 Negative of Nemoland

No surplus value ~ Nemoland does not offer any surplus value according to the opinions of all institutions for youth welfare except for one. Nemoland should offer more besides a deserted location and small jobs in nature. At this point, Nemoland has to compete with hundreds of other of these kind of locations throughout Europe, and with locations that are closer and therefore more interesting for the institutions for youth welfare. The interviewees miss the surplus value, which some locations do offer; like Dutch accompaniment from the lead up of the program, the program itself at location until the follow-up and out-door experts. But not everyone wants these accompaniments in the same amount. Most of the institutions for youth welfare are looking for a person to show them around, tell the supervisors from the institutions for youth welfare where good spots are for activities and who has contacts with local farmers. Only one institution for youth welfare is really looking for accompaniment from the start of the program until the end, so in both in the Netherlands as on location of the program.

Surplus value would be when the program is organized from A to Z; when the group arrives there is a Dutch or Polish person who shows the group around and knows which tracks to take and what jobs to do. A person who knows what experiential learning is all about and who could accompany some activities. That all the required materials and equipment for the activities and jobs are present, and that there is a person who could help the group within ten minutes when the group is lost or when there is a calamity. This person should speak Dutch preferable.

Tourists ~ in summer it would not be possible to offer experiential learning programs because this is the season Nemoland receives tourists; it would get too crowded and two different target groups would have to make use of the same location and facilities. This is a shame, since most of the institutions for youth welfare offer programs in summer as well.

## 5.5 Conclusion

According to the research by Ruikes Consultancy (with a response rate of 59, 5 per cent), there are sixteen institutions for youth welfare in the Netherlands who practise experiential learning. Seven of these institutions for youth welfare perform experiential learning hikes. The provisional inventory of Theo Ruikes shows that the experiential learning market is very small. When the response rate would have been 100 % and assuming the inventory is representative, there would be about twelve institutions for youth welfare that offer experiential learning hikes. In general, these twelve institutions offer experiential learning programs 5, 5 times a year. But of these 5, 5 times, only one time concerns experiential learning hikes. So besides a small market of institutions offering experiential learning, the number of experiential learning hikes is quite small as well.

Since in total ten institutions for youth welfare are interviewed, this research can be seen as most probable valid. But this is hard to state because it is not known which institutions are missing, which are not interviewed and it is impossible to find out whether important ideas, needs or wants are missing.

The institutions are randomly chosen throughout the Netherlands. There are furthermore two experiential learning experts interviewed.

The outcomes of this research show that the location does not necessarily need to be outside the Netherlands. It does need to be deserted and has as little as stimulants surrounding it as possible. The facilities and activities should be primitive. The organizer should know

everything about the environment of the location, should have contacts with locals, should provide basic accompany and speak the language.

Positive aspects of Poland are that this country differs in many aspects from the Netherlands; Poland has limited rules in comparison to the Netherlands, is inexpensive, is at a distance which ensures that participants will not run away easily, and Poland is quite unknown to tourists. Negative aspects of Poland in the eyes of the interviewed institutions for youth welfare are the great distance, and the image of Poland is not very positive.

After describing Nemoland thoroughly to the interviewees, they came up with the following positive aspects of Nemoland: deserted, natural environment, different facilities. On the other hand, the negative facets of Nemoland are that it has no surplus value, the limited knowledge and experience of experiential learning by the organisers and the tourism in summer.

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **Conclusions and Recommendations**

No Trouble at All!?

### 6.1 Introduction

Experiential learning programs are offered by eighty-four umbrella institutions for youth welfare in the Netherlands. Those programs for troubled youth, in the age between thirteen and twenty-three, are offered nationally as well as internationally. There are two different forms of programs; experiential learning hikes and live-work experience programs. The first form of program is analysed for this research, since the commissioner has only supply for this form until this point.

This chapter describes first the conclusions of the research which will logically lead to the recommendations.

### 6.2 Conclusions

Nemoland is situated in a location which is deserted and does not have any stimulants in its environment. Deserted and little stimulants are two important demands of institutions for a suitable location. Nemoland is also a location which is contradictorily to the home situation of the participants, which is another demand. Since the location and environment are so contradictorily, Nemoland is a challenging location for troubled youth. It has a different climate, culture, way of living, an unknown language, other food and so on. All these aspects are so different, which cannot even be found in Germany anymore.

Nemoland is situated in a beautiful natural environment in which many activities can be performed. Besides useful jobs in nature, Nemoland's environment is also inviting for hiking, walks, cycling, canoeing, climbing and horse riding. These are examples of the main activities institutions apply during experiential learning programs. A location should offer possibilities for these activities, which Nemoland does.

The facilities required are sober, primitive and basic, according to the interviewees. This is precisely the way Nemoland wants to characterise itself; its facilities are not luxurious at all, but are primitive, sober and basic.

There are some luxurious facilities like private basic rooms in Nemoland's house. But probably none of the groups will make use of this, only when the weather is too bad to sleep out side.

Institutions demand a safe environment for its experiential learning programs. An environment that always offers an escape; it should look deserted but there should always be an escape to a hospital within a couple of minutes. In Stara Kamienica there is a doctor for first aid and a pharmacy. On twenty kilometres distance there is a larger village, Jelenia Góra, which offers a hospital, clinics, dentists, specialists, spa's and midwives. There are also alternative methods of treatment available. And there is a fast and good working ambulances-service; there is always an escape possible at Nemoland. There is also good communication possible. Besides that almost everyone has its own well operating mobile phone, there are also telephone boxes in all surrounding villages.

The institutions for youth welfare are looking for accompaniment concerning knowledge of the environment, language and contacts with locals and assisting with particular activities like out-door activities. Nemoland offers all these sorts of accompaniment via a Polish employee, except from knowledge of and accompaniment for out-door activities. The institutions do not have a preference whether this person is Polish or Dutch, but it should be someone to communicate with easily. The employee of Nemoland, who organises the accompaniment, speaks German fluently, but since not every supervisor of the institution speaks German this could give communication problems.

Some institutions ask for a guide who knows the target group, troubled youth. The employee of Nemoland has not been explained what experiential learning is, what activities it involves and also nothing about the target group.

The Polish employee has knowledge about the environment, language and has contacts with the locals, which are all tasks of the organizer to offer. But this person cannot assist in out-door activities; he is not trained in this yet.

Nemoland, as the organizer, should furthermore have contacts with doctors, hospitals, police and the mayors of the villages, according to the interviewees. Nemoland has already made contact with the local doctor from the times when tourists had injuries. This doctor sends foreign patients to the hospital in Jelenia Góra, and Nemoland has therefore also contact with this hospital. In addition, Nemoland is in good contact with the major. Nemoland has no special contact with the local police.

What Nemoland does not offer yet is materials, where the majority of the institutions ask for. Materials like bikes, climbing material, backpacks, sleeping bags and tents. Nemoland is willing to buy these materials when it is sure these materials will be used, this research shows there will. But there are also institutions who take there own materials with them, because the hikes only require a backpack, sleeping bag and tent. Food and beverage will be either taken from home or will be bought in local shops by the institutions itself.

The institutions for youth welfare offer the majority of their programs in spring and autumn. There are no tourists in Nemoland during these times of the year and is therefore available for experiential learning groups.

When there is a need for transport, Nemo is able to offer this and will otherwise arrange the train and bus tickets. There is also a chauffeur who works for Nemoland who can drive with the group to Poland.

All of the institutions for youth welfare want to be involved in the organisation of the experiential learning program. Nemoland works demand oriented, and the institutions are therefore completely involved in the organisation of the programs. Nemoland makes sure that the program is organised from A to Z before the group arrives so that the institutions do not have to sort things out themselves, and this is an important demand from the interviewees.

It is good for Nemoland that Poland has many positive aspects for experiential learning programs according to the interviewed institutions. Its positive aspects are the difference between the way Polish people and the Dutch live is large, inexpensive, limited rules, distance and an unknown country.

But on the other hand, there are two negative facets which are the distance and the image of Poland. The distance is a very important negative aspect of Nemoland, according to the interviewees. It is an image which is not easily to change, but even when this is changed, it is also the financial part which plays a role with distance. Transport is an aspect on which many institutions do not want to spend too much money on. And the image of Poland is hard to change for Nemoland as well and it is not its task to do so.

The deserted position of Nemoland, its natural environment suitable for all sorts of activities and the different facilities offered, are positive aspects of Nemoland according to the interviewees. For these reasons, institutions are interested in visiting Nemoland for experiential learning programs. But on the other hand, the interviewees indicate serious negative aspects of Nemoland. These aspects are that firstly, Nemoland does not offer any surplus value in comparison to just a regular location with a beautiful natural environment, secondly the tourists in summer.

In most opinions, Nemoland is just one of the thousand locations in Europe that wants to attract the experiential learning market, without offering any surplus value. Locations like Nemoland are found closer to home, which are because of the distance, more attractive to the institutions. This is because Nemoland does not offer any kind of accompaniment. There is also no Dutch accompaniment at Nemoland, which would be a surplus value. At this point, Nemoland is a location with the same positive aspects like thousands of other locations in Europe.

The second negative aspect, the tourists in summer, is of less importance, since Nemoland does not want to attract institutions in summer and every institution offers its programs in spring and autumn as well.

These two negative facets exceed the positive aspects; since the positive aspects are not unique and can be found in locations closer to the Netherlands.

At this point, none of the interviewed institutions want or can visit Nemoland in the future. Mostly because of the missing surplus value, but also because of the lack of money, time and qualified personnel which are great problems for the institutions for youth welfare.

On top of this, all interviewed institutions indicate that the more agreements they have with different organisers or locations, the more obligations one has. But on the other hand, the majority of the institutions for youth welfare is always keen on locations, although the lack of budget, time and qualified personnel. It is important that the accompaniments stay motivated, enthusiastic and challenged. But once more, the problem with money, time and qualified personnel plays a big role.

When Nemoland would have a very strong and unique surplus value, it would become much more interesting for institutions for youth welfare to put money, time and effort in.

(Suggestions for surplus value are presented in 6.3 Recommendation for Nemoland.)

But given that Nemoland is only in the very beginning of planning and organising things for this unique market, Nemoland is very mouldable; there is nothing organised yet which cannot be adapted anymore, there is money to spend which is not spend yet. Since it is too late in the season for Nemoland to develop programs and to approach institutions, this year is planned for try-outs, networking, developing programs, target group analysis and studies. At this point there are different students who do their placement or graduation research for Nemo, which join up this research. Results of these diverse researches can be integrated in the next project plan. After summer this year, Nemo will compile a program for experiential learning programs for troubled youth, and before winter, Nemo will offer it to institutions for youth welfare.

### 6.3 Recommendations for Nemoland

Currently, Nemoland has no competitive advantages in comparison to all other deserted locations in Europe that want to attract the market of experiential learning. However, it has its disadvantages because it is far away and no surplus value is offered.

Nemoland is willing to take several actions and is still very flexibel. Nemoland could be a very attractive location for institutions for youth welfare. When Nemoland has the possibilities to execute and implement the following recommendations, the institutions will most likely spend their little money, time and qualified employees on it; but only when Nemoland offers them a surplus value. Those recommendations are:

Offer, preferably Dutch, qualified accompaniment ~ Nemoland will only be competitive when it offers a surplus value. When it offers something which the institutions cannot offer by themselves, which is a supplement to their present offer of treatment. The main one will be by offering qualified, preferable Dutch speaking, accompaniment. These persons should be qualified in out-door activities and should know the methodology and understand the target group, troubled youth. Out-door experts who have knowledge about this target group, social welfare and out-door are rare, and therefore Nemoland will have a favourable competitive advantage. All guides must have their first-aid certificate. At the utmost cases, institutions for youth welfare are only interested when an organizer designs the whole program, including the treatment. This would be too much for Nemoland to realise in this first stage of try outs. But it is a good idea for the future, in order to be yet more competitive.

Provide all demanded materials ~ for all the institutions that do not have their own materials, Nemoland should offer all necessary materials like bikes, climbing material, backpacks, sleeping bags and tents. For offering surplus value, Nemoland could think of offering exceptional materials like tandems, walking boots, compasses, walking sticks and so on.

Get close contact with actors ~ in order to guarantee even more safety to the participants, Nemoland should have very close contact with the local police and must be known and trusted in the environment. The police ought to know you and ought to know when there is a new group arriving, how many participants it has, where they are staying, for how long and what their activities are. Nemoland should also get into closer contact with mayors of surrounding villages for getting permission to cross their villages during the hikes. The local community should also be informed about the group participants, so that problems can be avoided.

Furthermore, Nemoland ought to get into contact with inhabitants in surrounding villages so that participant could maybe sleep in their backyard or do small jobs for them.

Organize a combination in live-work experience programs and experiential learning programs ~ the outcomes of Ruikes Consultancy inventory show that there are more institutions that offer live-work experiential programs than experiential learning hikes. Nemoland could do a research about the wants and needs of the live-work experiential programs, in order to offer a location for both experiential learning programs and live-work programs, by which Nemoland will attract a greater experiential learning market. This will be Nemolands' second way of providing a surplus value. So besides getting into contact with local inhabitants for the experiential learning hikes, Nemoland should get into contact with local farmers as well, for these live-work programs thus that trouble youth can live and work for them for four to six months.

Work on improving ideas about distance ~ Nemoland should point out how long it is driving to Poland, on its brochure and web site. In this way, the first idea about the distance of the institutions will become more positive and Nemoland will therefore become more appealing to them. Nemoland could compare the distance to Poland with the distance to for example France and show what the minimum difference is. This will maybe take away the negative prejudices. But also because Poland will become a member of the EU, it will possibly appear closer to Western Europe, to the Netherlands. But it will in all probability take years when the negative and biased images of Poland will amend into positive ones.

Notification of important aspects to each participating institution for youth welfare ~ there are important aspects which Nemo should notify to each institution for youth welfare before departure to Nemoland. This is in order to secure yet more safety and makes sure a program progresses smoothly. Nemoland should check whether the identity papers are valid. The group should be checked on drugs and alcohol. Nemoland should furthermore compose a letter which says what the purpose of the group for visiting Poland is and in which the leaders are acknowledged by the institution they are working for. Nemoland should also provide every participant a list with the names, telephone numbers and addresses of all doctors, hospitals, specialists of the villages the group will cross and the data of the contact person of Nemoland. A participant who needs to take medicines should have written clearly on a paper which medicine it is and when he/she needs to take them. All these lists should be written in both Dutch and Polish.

Registration of programs ~ Nemoland should encourage participating institutions to register what happened during activities and how these activities have worked for the youngsters since this is rarely registered. Nemoland should register the description of the program. This makes it easier to evaluate programs but also to compare results of different experiential learning projects. And in order to get free publicity and acknowledgement, Nemoland should cooperate with research on the effects of experiential learning. It will help experiential learning in the Netherlands, since at this point research results are inconsistent. But also when the effects on the participants seem to be positive, these results can be showed to institutions that are not offering experiential learning programs yet, and could become interested in applying this methodology. In this way Nemoland can enlarge the experiential learning market. But Nemoland can of course show these results to institutions offering experiential learning programs already and to make them interested in coming to Poland for it, then Nemoland will use it as competitive tool.

## 6.4 Conclusion

Nemoland has a good chance of attracting institutions of youth welfare to Poland for experiential learning programs when implementing the provided recommendations. Nemoland has a perfect setting for experiential learning programs but it needs to offer surplus value in order to become an interesting location for institutions to visit. Surplus value will especially be created by offering preferably Dutch accompaniment and a combination between live-work programs and experiential learning programs in the future.

However Nemoland has to realise that the market of experiential learning is very small, there are probably only twenty-seven institutions in the Netherlands that offer experiential learning. Of the twenty-seven, most likely only twelve offer experiential learning hikes. Those institutions offer 5, 5 hikes on a yearly basis, of which about one concerns groups and the characteristics which Nemoland wants and is able to attract; groups of troubled youth, working and undertaking activities in the surrounding of a location and doing hikes of several days. Nemoland should determine whether it wants to invest in this small market that does not want to go too far for experiential learning, which does not have much money, time or qualified personnel to undertake these hikes on a regular basis to different locations.

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