

CRAFT AND MANUALITY: REASON FOR EXISTENCE IN CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE DESIGN

THESES

In this paper I examine why *the craft* has not been receiving due attention in the world of universal inclusive design and why has inclusion not been represented more strongly in handicraft. In terms of inclusive design and planning, craft and manuality are relevant through their products and the procedures involved in the production.

In my view inclusion hasn't yet been given its proper role in craft (and its education) because the products of craft reach much fewer people than those of industrial modelling art – the latter being therefore the more plausible option for representing inclusion. Craft is not always capable of reacting to economic or social changes, for its fundamental purpose is to follow tradition rather than everyday topics, so the objects it brings to existence very rarely reflect on the latter. The pieces of craft reach fewer people because – being produced in much smaller quantities and sold at significantly higher prices – they are exclusive artefacts. However, either in their procedures or their products, craft and manuality have untapped potential, and their inclusion into education may be of great value in terms of integration.

Industrial design and architecture of the man-built environment affect huge numbers of people and may even have negative effects on them. As such, this area is much more strictly controlled by rules, laws, recommendations and subsidies, and so may more effectively be directed towards goals of integration than the various products of craft. Industrial art is much more susceptible to the market as well. As opposed to mass-produced articles, the products of craft can only have a much lesser potential to have a negative or damaging effect on people, therefore it hasn't been given necessary emphasis in the area of inclusive design either.

Accessibility and equal rights are the better known areas of inclusive design in today's Hungary, but their incompleteness is still significant. This is immediately obvious from the sheer necessity of making things and places accessible when universal or inclusive design is itself rooted in a preventive approach that should make later accessibility issues unnecessary. In Hungary the built or designed

environment is typically not accessible while the products of craft and handicraft are only available for a small segment of society. In other words, they are only for those above a certain standard of living, by which I don't mean just financial standards, but an opportunity of equal chances in society. At the moment, craft and manuality fall within the range of recreational pastime or cultural activity, and as such are only available for universal inclusive design in those areas where people's basic needs have already been met. Nevertheless, inclusion does indeed appear in craft, only not as often and as definitely as in architecture or industrial arts, or in other words: not as much in its products as in its principles. To verify this hypothesis I first present and analyse the major concepts, groups and organizations regarding the area of disadvantages, thus creating the framework wherein I examine the relevance of craft and manuality.

The disregard for the viewpoint of inclusion in craft may be connected to the several-decade-long loss of role and power of handicraft itself and the weakening of its legitimacy within the society; while the fast-changing environment on the other hand generates a need and demand for permanent and enduring values. This also explains the reappraisal of handicraft traditions in these days; the latter creating new opportunities for the inclusive approach in sustainable planning. The want for handicraft relates to the need for being personal, the loss of practical know-how, and the rediscovery of certain traditions. Craft in this context embodies quality, emotional value, and a more personal relationship with the creator and the object. Through the experiences of my two areas of expertise, creation and education I present the role of inclusion in craft as well as the emergence of themes gaining renewed interest in the paradigm of sustainable design.

Handicraft or the arts serve the purposes of integration in a mostly indirect way contrarily to industrial design, where inclusion comes true in an accessibly-designed environment, or in one where additional work for accessibility is almost unnecessary, for those concerned are integrated with the help of the designer and by the designed environment itself. In education, equal chances in obtaining information and knowledge are considered to be the tools of closing up, thus adequate and personalized teaching and learning methods become the medium of integration.

Art within education may serve integrative purposes, either through the products themselves or their interpretations and the discourse they generate. Creative arts are relevant in this area by their reflective nature, craft is relevant by its role of upholding traditions, and manuality is relevant by its psychological effects. Manuality has a key role in both craft, design and creative arts, therefore I regard it as the common thread.

Designer culture raises products of mass culture from their own world, making them more successful than the “anonym” products; as a result the given object becomes status symbol. In my view this equals the observation of certain objects being able to increase social inequality solely by their symbolic relevance and aesthetic values. In this case we can also assume that certain objects or works of art may also be able to reduce these distances and start a process of social integration – aided by holistic approach, careful planning; the use of traditional techniques and reserving and locally practicing the knowledge that of; and the central role and educational value of manuality. Proving this point I present an important segment of my creative work: a series of bronze statues and braille info-boards that aid the blind in the Budapest Zoo.

In conclusion of the relating chapters I present the aspects of education connected to universal inclusive design, namely the potential role of art, craft and manuality in education, their possibilities in the shaping of students’ personalities and their integrative potentials. In my opinion the regulation binding the practice of industrial design to the acquisition of qualification influences the degree of social inclusion; not only by the vocational training itself and the acquirement of the principles of universal inclusive design incorporated within, but the community- and attitude-forming powers of the school itself. By that I mean the phenomenon of a given topic – in this case inclusive design – appearing among the students’ works and when met with a positive welcome, generating mass-occurrence of the same topic, becoming fashionable, so to speak.

Craft and (fine) arts are explicitly relevant in this topic because – beyond their traditional role in education – they include significant possibilities of integration. As I show in subsequent chapters of this paper, several elements of these methods (e.g.

handicraft activities, therapeutic creative work and other manual activities) are currently used for this purpose.

Beside the literature, in these chapters I sum up and present my own educational observations and the thoughts and ideas shared with me by even more experienced colleagues in order to show the possibility of bringing about positive changes by directing the creative process. With the help of educational methods connected to craft and manual arts, via familiarizing the students with different materials, tools and techniques, and by the power of *creatio ex nihilo*, we can also serve the higher purposes of integration and thus take steps toward inclusive design and design.