

THE IMAGES OF THE FUTURE OF CRAFT AND DESIGN PROFESSIONS

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ABSTRACT

Craft and design form a part in the creative industries. Consequent upon the ongoing transformation of creative economy, craft and design sector is looking for new activity models. The growth of experience economy, welfare and leisure services leads to novel customer needs. The craft and design professionals require new professional models, partners and networks to respond the changing customer needs. The transformation from product-oriented model to process-oriented and customer-oriented models presumes novel professional skills.

Nowadays craft and design students are tomorrow's professionals. How the craft and design students' expectations confront the demands of the operational environment in the future? The Finnish industry can employ only limited amount of designers. The new and innovative operational models are needed to provide for the employment of Finnish craft and design sector.

Is there call for small sized local production in the future? The need for the next door services and customized products can strengthen regional and

local craftsmanship and small business. Also the ecological values and sustainability support the philosophy of craftsmanship. The challenge in the branch is to create interesting sustainable production and service supply. Can the design education respond to these challenges?

INTRODUCTION

Creative industries are rising in importance in economy. According to the Economy and Culture report by European Commission (2006) the creative industries advance the economical and social development and innovations. Also in Finland the political and economical investments in creative industries have strengthened. Development strategy for entrepreneurship in the creative industries' sector for 2015 (2007) carried out by Ministry of Trade and Industry. In particular craft and design sector, many development projects and surveys are executed and reports are published in Finland during the last decades. (e.g. Johnsson & Äyväri 1996, The Finnish Craft Organization 1998, 2001, Luutonen & Äyväri 2002, Kälviäinen 2005, Lidh 2005, Ministry of Trade and Industry 2006, Ruoppila 2007, Luutonen & Tervonen 2008, 2009).

Craft entrepreneur's success addresses to personal skills, craft products and the mastery of the whole activity process. On the other hand, craft entrepreneurship is limited with exiguous economical and personal resources. According to many researchers (Luutonen & Äyväri 2002, Fillis 2004, 2008, Walker & Brown 2004, Simpson, Tuck & Bellamy 2004, Reijonen & Komppula 2007) the motivation and success factors in craft entrepreneurship are based on different factors compared other business sectors. Well-being and the possibilities to manage one's own life career seem to be appreciated higher than economical success.

The future of the craftsmanship is entangled with wide-ranging social change. The megatrends influence inevitable to the development of the branch but essential factors are actors' own decisions, competence to react to rapid changes and do concrete steps. On the other hand the long tradition of the craftsmanship can prevent the radical new innovations - on the other hand the continuum of maker tradition can secure survival in the unpredictable future. (cf. Fry 2011, Fuad-Luke 2009)

KNOWING ABOUT THE FUTURE?

The image of the future means the knowledge of the future situation which is based on the understanding of present and the past, interpretations, observations, beliefs, expectations, values, hopes and fears. The images of the future have a strong influence in human and society conscious and unconscious decision making. The positive or negative appreciation of the images of the future motivates and activates personal and social choices and decisions. The effect is dialectic –strengthening with contrasts: decisions made at the present influence the quality of the future, the quality of the image of the future influences the content of choices. (Rubin 2000, 16; 2003, 902 – 903)

According to Rubin (2000) the images of the future route individual's choices and motivate make her or his own future. At its best they give ways to react to the present challenges, downside they can diminish individual's ability to influence to own life. Individual's thoughts and expectations of the future are qualifying more or less the present frames of mind. (Rubin 2000, 16, Seppänen 2008, 7) The aim of the research process is also to motivate participators to evaluate values and targets and activate their decision making to new innovative future choices and possibilities.

THE IMAGES OF THE FUTURE OF CRAFT AND DESIGN STUDENTS

The data is emphasized in designer students' (n=30, 42 per cent) and vocational craft students' (n=31, 43 per cent) stories. University level students' (n=11) stories cover 15 per cent from the data. Most of the respondents (n= 50, 69,44 per cent) were in age group 20 – 29 years, 16,67 per cent were younger and 13,89 per cent older. The female respondents dominated (n=61, 84,72 per cent) the data, male respondents (n=11) were 15,28 per cent. Mostly (76 per cent) the respondents did not have previous working experience in craft and design sector, only 24 per cent of respondents had experience in branch.

The inquiry was formed so that the story was telling about the working day in September 2020. It was divided in six theme parts: 1) orientation to the working day 2) operational environment and changes 3)

professional key competences 4) operational model and business ideas 5) professional identity 6) aims and dreams.

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Some global megatrends emerged clearly in the data. Changes in product manufacture in Finland were essential risks in the branch. The automation and production in cheap imports countries are seen often as threats to design and craft production. Employment opportunities in Finland were seen uncertain and many respondents resulted in their stories to move abroad mostly to big metropolis in Europe like London. Although the respondents were noticed that the global production might concentrate in Asia, nobody told about willingness to work as a designer in Asia or Africa. Might be so that the students commonly become conscious of the demands of professional internalization but the real steps are to daring to take for beginners. The previous surveys bring out the prudence and difficulties of small business' internalization. (Fillis 2004, 2008, Lidh 2005, Ruoppila 2007, Luutonen & Tervonen 2008, 2009)

The local working environment descriptions related strongly working on own studios, workshop or boutique. Typically the story told about the boutique in a small Finnish town or about the workshop nearby home in the countryside. The idea was to combine work and family life or to get more freedom to artistic work. The female respondents preferred more the combination with family and home life. Very few students described working in internet or taking advantage working in virtual and collaboration networks. Only two students told designing in virtual networks.

The changes in ecological values appreciated highly and hoped that the sustainable development confirms craft products' valuation. The values were associated with quality, aesthetic character, experiences and welfare. The customers hoped to appreciate personalized manufacturing of good quality. Craft making nurtures welfare, self-fulfilling and is an alternative to consumption. The craft was seen as a counterforce to hurry, economic growth and disposable culture. The craft was appreciated as a life style choice or way to manage own welfare. This conflict between life style and economic growth is essential in craft entrepreneurship as in previous research reports were founded (e.g. Luutonen & Äyväre 2002, Fillis 2004, Reijonen & Komppula 2007).

The students did not either elicit their own values or the values behind the professional identities. Nobody was thinking about the choice or situation in the future where product manufacturing would be limited or totally rejected for instance resulting from environmental catastrophes. The operational models or business ideas that would base on services or immaterial commodities were not mentioned. Also nobody wrote

about the new technologies as 3D printers which are assumed to revolutionize the personalized production.

OPERATIONAL MODELS

The changes in operational environment brought the students to think over the changes in operational models. The own working situation was seen in two ways. Part of the respondents thought that the circumstances in the branch is weakening and that makes the own possibilities mysterious in the future. The competition inside the sector assumed to tighten up and only the best can success. The increased competition was seen a consequence of multitude education in the craft and design sector. Part of the stories were discovered 'survival discourse' where the working situation founded to become better. The big challenges in the operational environment were recognized and the special possibilities in the branch were seen as a social counterforce.

The own possibility was seen in a small-scale local production. Many believed that the global sustainable development policy will support the local production and self-sufficiency. Many international forecasting organizations as Knowledge Works Foundation (2011) and Forum for the Future (2011) promote the same tendencies. The products in the future were described quite traditionally like they show up today. The students wrote the production of custom-made or tailored clothing, home decorations or instruments. Also small-scale collections and art pieces were designed and produced. Services were design services, welfare services, guidance and teaching and styling consultancy. Typically the living was understood to earn from multiple ways as own production, subcontracting, teaching and even working in other fields.

The product manufacturing was expressed with craft techniques as sewing, weaving, glassblowing, pottery, instrument building and cloth printing. The artisan students wrote about repairing and service of the products. Specially clothing artisans used concepts like remake, redesign and tuning. The work included also customer contacts and consulting in different occasions. The physical customer service was mostly connected with tailoring and fitting. The guidance and teaching were seen mostly as an extra income.

Marketing manners and channels were quite traditional following the situation in nowadays in craft and art sector. The internet, web pages and web shops were the most popular marketing channels. Also visibility in the media and references were seen important. Would have expected that the young students would see marketing in the future more innovative while they use social media fluently.

The determination of customer segments notably proved difficult. The respondents either had not yet studied trading and marketing or the design studies are not very customer oriented. Mainly in the stories were told the

basic operational model that the customer comes to the shop or work shop unprompted to look the products or services. The students did not analyze exactly the real target groups, some student even mentioned how disagreeable they feel when thinking customers. In spite of all should it be quite important during the education analyze the potential customers and customer orientation for design and production? There still exists illusion in craft and design sector connected with the product oriented thinking that the products are mostly made by maker preference. Marketing is seen an operation with helps to sell products to unallocated customers. This trend was seen both in artisan and design students profiles.

PROFESSIONAL KEY COMPETENCES

When analyzing the competences, the students' stories follow partly the curriculums in craft and design education. The objectives of educational institutes naturally emphasize quality, success and professionalism. The professionalism and criteria of success are defined as multi skillfulness and networking capability in diverse collaboration. The training programs highlight the different professional possibilities and occupations which follow after the training. Expertise, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial attitude and creativity are connected with success.

The students were asked to write about know-how and skills they will need in the future work. The manufacture skills were strongly emphasized in the stories. It might depend on the artisan students (43 per cent) share of the data. The product making, craft skills and material expertise were in remarkable role. Almost equally important competences were collaboration, interaction and network skills. Interaction was understood important in customer service like tailoring and custom-made products. The design skills were seen core competences especially by design students, they were more willing to share the other parts of the business like accounting and marketing with other actors in the networks.

The entrepreneurship dominates career in craft and design sector, traditional paid work is limited and exists mostly in design, retail, marketing, teaching and guidance. Though the business competences were mentioned important in every curriculum and training programs, they were not remarkable in the students' stories. It is noteworthy that the entrepreneurship as professional identity was very strong in the students' future scenarios but the business competences were not. They saw craft and design entrepreneurship more like self-fulfillment.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The personal success factors were mentioned self-confidence, courage, perseverance, humanity, learning

potential, creativity, open-mindedness, carefulness and trustworthiness. These characteristics are naturally suitable for entrepreneurship or expertise. (see Ruohotie 2002) In the stories the confidence in own talents and great faith in success were emphasized. The success demands courage, perseverance and social competence and in the competition you must believe yourself and fight for the success.

Mostly the students wrote about desirable and successful professional future. The working day in September 2020 was busy but rewarding. The working environment was described comfortable and supportive, the worker is in right place in a right time. Also many stories told about the busyness and long working days. Exhaustion was recognized but it was determined turned down believing own possibilities to control the workload and working times.

The own welfare was very important. One choice to control it was entrepreneurship. The craftsmanship and craft identity were equated with self-regulation and freedom to rule the time use and life style. Especially the female respondents told hopes associated with family and children. Some preferred the family life more important than work in the future. The desirable life style should be slow life and the ambition was slow down and jump away from the treadmill.

DISCUSSION

The students' future stories tell about the hopes and fears of the newcomers in the branch. The future offers possibilities but also threats. The spectrum of the possibilities is wide which makes the decision making difficult. On the background exists the decent needs for security, the pressure for the success and balance between different roles in life. The future opens as a multi professional path which naturally cannot be pieced together at this time. The professional growth is continued mostly on employing oneself as an entrepreneur or continuing the studies.

The strong entrepreneurial note is quite natural in the branch. Although the dreams were related to famous brand designer status, this kind of future path seem to be available seldom. The basic operational model might be a small business in local networks. The standing out in the branch demands forceful investments in the tightening competition. The unemployment is a distinct threat in craft and design sector.

How the craft and design students' expectations confront the demands of the operational environment in the future? The opinions of the experts in the creative industries see limited possibilities if the branch cannot profile over the operational models and get new collaboration with and over the creative industries.

At the moment 94 schools in different levels are offering education in culture field. The education in culture field covers 12 per cent of youth age group. The

education in branch seems to be overestimated in the whole country because the unemployment is bigger in branch as it is approximately. The problem is that the education in culture field does not respond to the needs in working life. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, 12 – 18; 26 – 28)

The education of the craft and design sector (part of the culture sector) in Finland qualify big amount of degrees in vocational, polytechnic and university levels. The labor of craft and design sector was 29 448 persons in 2008 where unemployed were 12,4 per cent. At the same year were qualified 1340 vocational degrees, 613 polytechnic degrees and 281 university degrees in craft and design sector. That means 2000 workers more every year. In the intermediate evaluation of the education in culture field (2010) the education was estimated oversized and the starter amount was pitched to 2120 starters approximately. The oversized education exists mostly in vocational level in craft and communication. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010, 12 – 18)

The creative and culture industries are growing. However the problem is that the education does not face up with the labor markets. In the craft and design sector the reason can be still rather product oriented education. The art and unique production can cherish limited amount of professionals and the remarkable growth of call cannot be expected. The call of new services might exist in the welfare and tourism sector adapting craft and art for different action and experience workshops.

The young peoples' expectations and visions for the education in branch do not necessarily match the reality in the labor markets. The strong trend of individuality has supposedly strengthened the attraction of craft and design education. The images of creativity and self-fulfillment are emphasized highly. Also the students described same objectives. Mostly the students in this inquiry planned to start entrepreneurship in local networks in a place of domicile. The orientation to work abroad was mostly recognized by the design students.

So the dilemma is how to combine the global and local possibilities and risks. The Finnish industry can employ only limited amount of designers and the global design are predicted to move to Asia. The new and innovative operational models are needed to provide for the employment of Finnish design. On the other hand is their enough call for small sized local production? The need for the next door services and customized products can strengthen regional and local craftsmanship and small business. Also the ecological values and sustainability support the philosophy of craftsmanship. The challenge in the branch is to create novel, interesting and sustainable production and service supply.

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