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Editorial: Make it NOW! – Learning, Exploring and Understanding

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Editorial

Make it NOW! – Learning, Exploring and Understanding

Introduction

In September 28-30, 2016, the NordFo conference *Make it NOW! – Learning, Exploring and Understanding* Conference were held in Rauma Finland. Organized by Rauma Unit of Turku University's Department of Teacher Education, the conference was a part of the anniversary celebration of 120 years of teacher education in Rauma as well as a part of the official program of the Finnish presidency year 2016 in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The aims of the conference were presented on the conference website:

Make it NOW! Learning, Exploring and Understanding -conference aims to provide an arena for discussions on craft, design and technology as an innovative combination of knowledge and skills related to eco-social values in altering the world according to human needs and wants.

The active and creative process of making is a key element when combining knowledge and skills in order to meet human needs and wants. In the 3D-world, the challenges of the constructed environment will be even more multi-material in the future.

Societies need active citizens who can collaboratively solve the problems and challenges arising and these individuals need meaningful experiences to develop the requisite knowledge and skills. Recently, research has emerged on the learning, exploring and understanding of the physical and material aspects of making as well as on the mental capital that individuals need and acquire when using craft, design and technology in order to transform their ideas into material. (International NordFo Conference in Rauma, 2016)

The Nordic forum for research on arts and craft education (NordFo) organizes regular international conferences. This *Make it NOW!* -conference was one such, following up discussions from the previous conference, *Making, Materiality and Knowledge*, held in 2012 in Notodden, Norway. Also this previous conference was followed by theme issues in scientific journals: in *FORMakademisk* (Gulliksen & Homlong, 2013), in the New Zealand-based *Studies in Materia Thinking* (de Freitas & Lutnæs, 2013) and the Nordic journal *Techne A-Series*, published by NordFo (Johansson & Porko-Hudd, 2013). *Techne A-series* also publish articles from the Make it NOW-conference (Lindfors, Rönkkö & Carlsen, 2017)

The main topic in this issue is articles with an emphasis on the theme *Researching embodied making and learning - New methodological vistas on Making*, however this did not exclude papers from other sessions. The Editorial Team behind this issue is Siri Homlong (Sweden), Jaana Lepistö (Finland), Anniken Randers-Pehrson, Mari-Ann-Letnes and Marte Sørebo Gulliksen (Norway). Gulliksen was the Section Editor and leader of the group.

The theme session Researching embodied making and learning - New methodological vistas on Making

Behind the proposed session is a group of researchers from the international research group consortium Embodied Making and Learning. The group has organized sessions at two international conferences earlier: LearnXDesign2015 in Chicago and DRS-world congress in 2015 in Brighton. A special issue of FORMakademisk was published in spring 2016 (1/2016) and feature articles based on papers from the Chicago-symposium at LearnXDesign2015.

The theme session at the Make it NOW! Conference was described in the program like this:

Embodied making and learning can be explored through a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives. The knowledge in the process, of the process and of the learning through the process has been approached via reflective, introspective, phenomenological, ethnographic and descriptive qualitative methods, via case methods and artistic research methods, and recently also from experimental and scientific methods from educational neurosciences and other fields.

This proposed session theme will invite researchers to present papers on contemporary and future challenges for researching embodied making and learning related to three topics: 1) Inter- and transdisciplinary research methods which today seems to carry a promise to generate new insights on embodied making and learning. 2) New research methodological possibilities through media and technology which today seems to present new approaches towards studying embodied making and learning. 3) New ways of articulating embodied making and learning through the means of new technology. Nowadays there are many tutorials on YouTube and similar media where practitioners are explicating their experiential knowledge in much details. Video seems a useful tool in three ways: analysing, presenting and receiving craft knowledge. This technical advancement might bring new insight into the understanding of the cognition and embodied making and on the concept of tacit knowledge.

To each topic we ask the question: what are the main challenges in this topic and how do we approach them? We encourage researchers who have conducted or are in the process of planning studies in the area of embodied making to present the challenges they faced/faces. We would in particular welcome practical, empirical research presenting innovative approaches in the field.

Eight papers were accepted and presented in this theme session, abstracts available at <http://www.utu.fi/en/sites/nordfo2016/call-for-proposals/Documents/vistas.pdf>

The theme session was chaired by (in alphabetical order) Kari Carlsen, Biljana C. Fredriksen, Marte. S. Gulliksen and Camilla Groth. The first three are all from the research group Embodied Making and Learning at University College of Southeast-Norway, while Groth was at the time finishing her PhD-thesis at Aalto University, Helsinki.

From Conference to publication

This special issue of FormAkademisk contains submitted articles based on contributions at the Make it NOW! conference. As the online open Journal system allows us to publish one article at a time, this editorial will present each article as it is published. All articles are peer reviewed according to FORMakademisk's double blind peer-review policy.

Minna Huotilainen, Mimmu Rankanen, Camilla Groth, Pirita Seitamaa-Hakkarainen and Maarit Mäkelä, authors the first article in this section. Based on the Keynote speech of Minna Huotilainen, the article *Why our brains love arts and crafts: Implications of creative practices on psychophysical well-being*. In this article, the authors propose and discuss arts and crafts making as a highly beneficial activity. By integrating knowledge from the field of cognitive neuroscience and the arts, they shed lights to how our brains may benefit from arts and crafts making activities. The authors propose that the handling of material can help regulate our mental states, they focus on how it plays an important role in controlling stress and enhancing relaxation and how it enable us to fail safely and handle emotions. Further, they propose that the plasticity of our brain ensures life-long learning of skills and that art and craft can facilitate social activity for people at risk of social isolation.

Kari Carlsen is the author of the second article titled *Visual Ethnography as tool in exploring children's embodied making processes in preprimary education*. This article presents and discusses visual ethnography as a methodological approach to research on embodied making and learning in preprimary education. Children's making processes with materials and tools are visible; what children learn in and through these processes is not necessarily visible. The empirical material referred to includes children from one to six years old and staff in a Norwegian kindergarten as participants. Ethnographic methods are frequently used in educational research focused on learning cultures.

Marja-Leena Rönkkö and Juli-Anna Aerila are authors of the third article in this section, titled *Humor supporting preschoolers in designing and making crafts*. This article presents a study that aims to examine the learning outcomes of preschool children produced in holistic arts-based learning process in which the humor was the core theme. The soft toys children created were funny, well-meaning characters with comic features. Craft making with humor motivates children and gives them story ideas. Additionally, the stories highlight the meaningfulness of the soft toys to the children.

Māra Urdziņa-Deruma is the author of the fourth article titled *Assessment of Craft Products' Creativity in the Latvian Textile-Handicraft Competition for Pupils*. The article presents an analysis of photos, designs and textile products from an annual competition in textile-handicraft in Latvia for pupils of Forms 6-9. The purpose of the research is to explore the results of pupils' creative activity in the work items, and to find out trends in the creation of the textile products.

Independent articles fitting the scope of this theme issue

This special issue contains articles submitted to FormAkademisk independently and nevertheless fit the scope of making and research.

Maarit Mäkelä and Nithikul Nimkulrat authors the first article in this section, titled *Documentation and Reflection in Practice-Led Craft Research*. The article reviews and discusses the processes of documentation and reflection in practice-led research. Through tree cases, the authors examine the role that the documentation and reflection of creative processes and products performs in these studies. They conclude that any means of documentation in the context of practice-led research functions as conscious reflection on and in action, and can serve as a mode of reflection.

Camilla Gåfvel is the author of the second article in this section, titled *Colour and Form-Changing Expressions of Vocational Knowing Within Floristry Education*. This article investigates how expressions of vocational knowing regarding colour and form changed in

Swedish upper secondary floristry education between 1990 and 2015. An analytical approach is used which falls within the framework of a sociocultural interpretation of educational activity. Through a discussion of various aspects of contemporary Swedish floristry education, the article illuminates the complexity of long-term changes in vocational knowing.

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