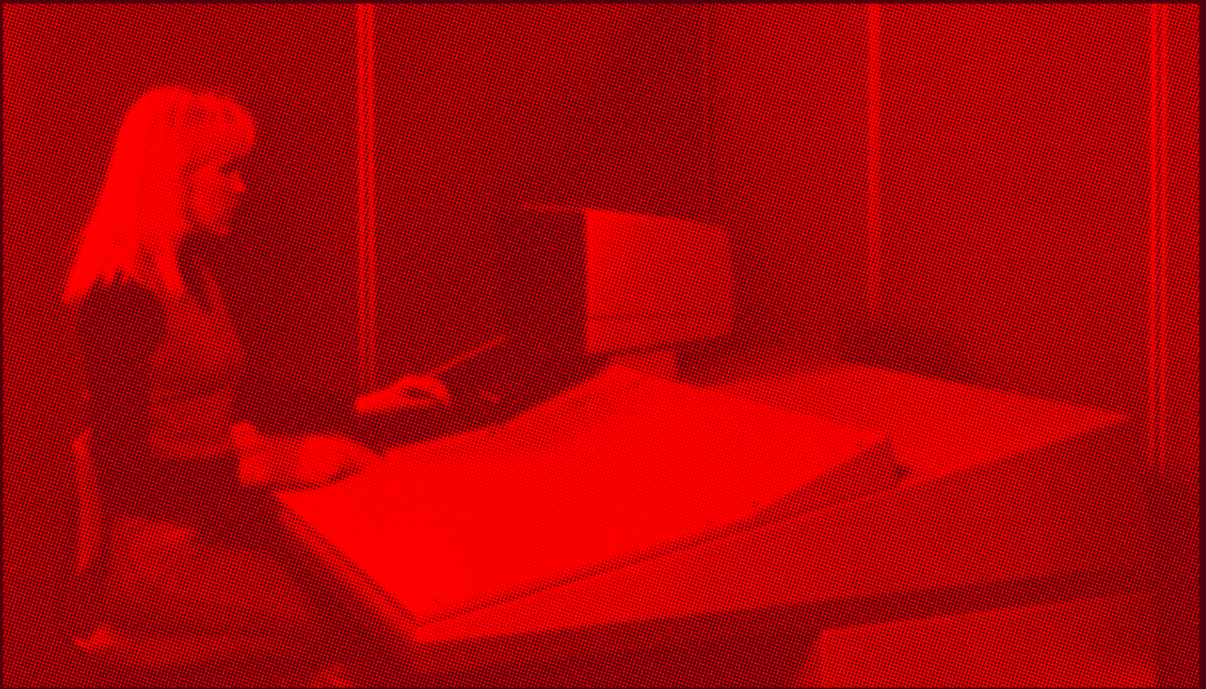

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'DISRESPECTFUL THOUGHTS ABOUT DESIGN'

Social, political and environmental values in Finnish design, 1960-1980

A! Aalto University

KAISU SAVOLA

‘DISRESPECTFUL THOUGHTS ABOUT DESIGN’

Social, political and environmental
values in Finnish design, 1960-1980

Doctoral thesis

‘DISRESPECTFUL THOUGHTS ABOUT DESIGN’

Social, political and environmental values in Finnish design, 1960-1980

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ABSTRACT

In the field of design history, there is a shared understanding that the design profession was born alongside the capitalist ideology of maximising profit, and with the purpose of fulfilling industry's needs to produce desirable products effectively. This doctoral dissertation explores a generation of design students and design professionals in Finland, in the 1960s and 1970s, as they became aware of the two contradictory faces of design: one that is complicit in overproduction, overconsumption and social inequality, and the other capable of examining and addressing the very same issues it has co-created. This awareness prompted the development of design education and professional design practice not dictated by the values and expectations of industry or commerce, but shaped by feelings of social responsibility, environmental concerns and politically leftist motivations.

Based on extensive and original archival research, this dissertation provides a fragmentary yet meticulous account of how change is put into motion. The first chapter explores the emergence of social and environmental values among Finnish design students. These novel ideals led to initiatives such as seminars and publications that demanded a renewal of the conservative values of the previous generation and a more academic, research-based design field able to address urgent societal issues. The second chapter investigates how the youthful protests of the 1960s were harnessed for political purposes as a nation-wide Marxist-Leninist youth organisation connected to the Finnish Communist Party gained a considerable following among design students. This spurred the creation of design curriculum reflecting leftist values. The third and final chapter examines whether the social, environmental and political values so prominent in design education gained any foothold in the professional and promotional field of Finnish design.

This dissertation fills a gap in the history of Finnish design by giving a detailed account of not only a specific set of values developing within the field, but also of the initial steps of becoming the academic profession it is today. The purpose has been to widen the understanding of what kind of design is worthy of the historian's attention in the first place. This research therefore moves beyond the commonly seen selection of industrially produced or handcrafted, highly aestheticised objects that have become synonymous with Finnish design. Instead, it investigates and analyses anonymous student work, rural craft traditions, temporary installations, medical instruments, seminar posters, dairy distribution systems, industrial machinery, development projects and workplace ergonomics, to name a few. In an international context, the dissertation provides a geographically, politically and culturally specific account of social and environmental responsibility that swept over the global design field during the 1960s and 1970s. It also argues that, at this moment in time, there is an equally urgent need to see design as a profession able to reconsider and realign its goals and values.

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INTRODUCTION

‘Disrespectful thoughts about design’

In the Design Museum collections in Helsinki, there is a thin and wrinkled piece of paper with the headline ‘Disrespectful thougths [sic] about design.’[1] It is written by Kaj Franck, one of the most esteemed Finnish designers of the 20th century. The text on the paper contains many typographical and grammatical errors, and some of the sentences are difficult to make sense of (see figure 0.1.). There is no knowledge of what prompted Franck to write the text, or when. However, its message is clear: at the time of writing, Franck is having very ‘disrespectful’ thoughts about his profession. He is trying to explain to ‘salesmen’ that, in his opinion, the purpose of industrial design is to ‘reduce the burden of our belongings’, suggesting that design should not contribute to the creation of more objects for us to possess. But how can Franck say this without disowning his profession? Can he go on being a designer despite not accepting what it entails? The salesmen are having difficulties understanding Franck, so he gives an example of an ideal design solution based on a childhood memory. As workers took their lunch with them for the long days of haymaking, they carved a hole in their round ryebread, filled it with butter and covered the hole with the piece of crust that they had cut off (see figure 0.2.). This system meant that they did not need a separate box for the butter, which would have been an unnecessary cost and an unnecessary item to carry back and forth. The genius of the solution was not in the beauty or practicality of a designed object, but in the fact that no material resources were needed to solve the issue of keeping butter throughout a long day. ‘We cant [sic] anymore try to live like madame Pompadour’[2], Franck wrote.

In the field of design history, there is a generally shared understanding that the design profession was born together with the capitalist principle of maximising profit, and with the purpose of fulfilling industry’s needs to produce desirable products effectively.[3] As described above, it was precisely this ideology and purpose of design that Kaj Franck struggled with. In 1998, design historian Victor Margolin wrote that, beyond a few exceptions, ‘designers have not been able to envision a professional practice outside of the consumer culture.’[4] A decade later, Margolin had not seen anything to change his mind: ‘the worldwide design community has yet to generate profession-wide visions of how its energies might be harnessed for social ends.’[5] Kaj Franck’s ‘disrespectful thoughts about design’ aptly describe the two contradictory faces of design: one

1 Design Museum, Helsinki (DM), Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.2., ’Disrespectful thoughts about design’, undated sheet with personal notes.

2 Ibid.

3 This has been a central argument in a number of discipline-defining books, such as: Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1986); Penny Sparke, *Consultant Design: The History and Practice of the Designer for Industry* (London, Pembridge Press, 1983); John Heskett, *Industrial Design* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1980).

4 Victor Margolin, ’Design for a Sustainable World’, *DesignIssues*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1998), 83-92 (p. 86).

5 Victor Margolin, ’Design, the Future and the Human Spirit’, *DesignIssues*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2007), 4-15 (p. 4).

FIGURE 0.1. An undated sheet of paper with Kaj Franck's personal notes regarding his 'disrespectful thoughts about design'. Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

FIGURE 0.2. The ultimate design solution according to Kaj Franck: Finnish rye bread with a carved hole for storing butter. Date and photographer unknown. Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

that is complicit in overproduction, overconsumption and social inequality, and another capable of examining, addressing and sometimes even helping to solve the very same issues it has been guilty of co-creating. This doctoral dissertation explores how different actors in the Finnish design field, in the 1960s and 1970s, had 'disrespectful thoughts about design', which, in turn, prompted them to attempt to create something that, according to Margolin, did not exist: a professional design practice not dictated by the values and expectations of industry or commerce, but shaped by feelings of social responsibility, environmental concerns and politically leftist motivations.

Historiography

The interest towards design as a practice for creating social equality and environmental sustainability has grown alongside an increasing global consciousness of the climate crisis and social injustice. Accordingly, research tracing the historical development of social and environmental values in design has expanded, resulting in a growing number of conferences, publications and exhibitions centred around these themes. Despite this development, a commonly shared terminology or language for discussing design practices promoting social and environmental responsibility has not emerged. A large number of headlines and titles are used as a demarcation between the different motivations and goals behind design: industrial, commercial and profitable on one side and environmental and social on the other. For example, 'design activism'[6] is often used to describe design practices with sustainable and anti-consumerist goals; a book edited by designer Marjanne von Helvert explores the histories of 'socially committed'[7] design while art historian Nigel Whiteley has explored 'design for society'[8]. 'Social design' has gained its own readers, study programmes and research networks, and the history of 'radical design'[9], elsewhere called 'Hippie Modernism'[10], of the 1960s and 1970s is becoming well-known through exhibitions and publications. Meanwhile, the vast majority of primary sources from the 1960s and 1970s that I have employed in this dissertation were concerned with 'the responsibility' of design and design professionals, whether connected to social, ethical, moral, political, or environmental questions. Therefore, the terms and language I have chosen to use across this dissertation vary according to the sources in question. What they all have in common, however, is that they frame design as a practice attempting to address social and environmental interests and needs, as opposed to industrial and commercial ones. It is important to note that the distinction between these is not always clear, making the task of researching histories of design from this perspective all the more interesting.

6 For example, Alastair Fuad-Luke, *Design Activism. Beautiful Strangeness for a Sustainable World* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

7 Marjanne von Helvert, 'Introduction: A Design History for the Future', in *The Responsible Object. A History of Design Ideology for the Future*, ed. by Marjanne von Helvert (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2016), pp. 11-28 (p. 15).

8 Nigel Whiteley, *Design for Society* (London: Reaktion Books, 1993).

9 For example: Catharine Rossi and Alex Coles (eds.), *The Italian Avant-Garde 1968-1976* (Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2013); Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan (eds.), *Made in Italy. Rethinking a Century of Italian Design* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

10 Andrew Blauwelt and Ross Elfline (eds.), *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* (Minneapolis, Walker Art Centre, 2015).

This dissertation is the first wider treatment of the movement for socially and environmentally responsible design in Finland during the 1960s and 1970s. There have previously been quite a number of engagements with the mythologised humanism and democratic nature of Finnish and Scandinavian design. However, these relate mostly to the aesthetic and material qualities of designed objects, or to individual designers' work, and they have not contributed to the more multi-disciplinary and academic understanding of design investigated here. Most of the literature about the history of Finnish design overlooks, if not completely ignores, the field's prominent social and environmental ambitions, not to mention the relationship of these to the political upheaval at the University of Industrial Arts in Helsinki when a vocal group of young Marxist-Leninists turned design education into a political battlefield. For example, one of the most ambitious and thorough accounts of Finnish design to date, a three-volume history of 900 pages edited by design researcher and design historian Susann Vihma, frames the 1960s and 1970s only in terms of how the industrial design profession developed throughout these decades.[11] In the last volume, a chapter by designer Hannu Kähönen mistakenly suggests that the discussion around social and environmental responsibility was brought to Finland by Victor Papanek and Buckminster Fuller, resulting in 'nothing more than some ideological debates'.[12] Similarly, in 2011, in the introduction to a book about the history of Ornamo, the Professional Association of Finnish Designers, historian Paula Hohti states that it is 'only recently' that designers in Finland have become interested in addressing societal issues in their professional practice.[13]

Some literature does acknowledge the debates about social and environmental responsibility, but without exploring their context or consequences. For example, Professor Anna Valtonen's doctoral dissertation about the changes in the profession of industrial design in Finland in the latter decades of the 20th century summarises the phenomenon in a couple of neat sentences:

> In the 1970s, social responsibility gained a larger role in industrial design. The student revolutions, the oil crises, and strong left-wing politics all created an atmosphere where design for society and for the less fortunate became more important than design of new consumer goods. Much of the industrial design of the time was done in areas such as public transportation, machinery and special equipment for user groups such as children and the elderly.[14]

In a similar vein, the history of the Student Union at the University of Industrial Arts includes short sections about the student movement of the 1960s and the development of Marxism-Leninism in the 1970s specifically from the students'

11 Susann Vihma (ed.), *Suomalainen muotoilu 1-3* (Helsinki: Weilin+Göös, 2008-2009).

12 Hannu Kähönen, 'Kohti kestävää kehitystä', in *Suomalainen muotoilu. Kohti kestäviä valintoja*, ed. by Susann Vihma (Helsinki: Weilin+Göös, 2009), pp. 10-49 (p. 30). All translations from Finnish and Swedish to English are made by the author of this dissertation unless otherwise specified.

13 Paula Hohti, 'Johdanto', in *Rajaton muotoilu. Näkökulmia suomalaiseen taideteollisuuteen*, ed. by Paula Hohti (Helsinki: Avain, 2011), pp. 9-22 (p. 17).

14 Anna Valtonen, *Redefining Industrial Design. Changes in the Design Practice in Finland* (Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 2007), p. 69.

point of view.[15] Furthermore, a book celebrating the anniversary of TKO, a Finnish interest group for industrial designers, briefly mentions 'the political and complex relationship'[16] designers had to industry in the 1970s.

There are a couple of instances where this period in Finnish design has been explored further. In her research mapping the life and work of designer Victor Papanek, design historian Alison J. Clarke has suggested that the Finnish design field, on the brink of a transition 'from craft production and object-based design thinking to the broader interdisciplinary role of industrial design'[17], offered Papanek an idealised image of a democratic and authentic culture with admirable social goals. Some years later, Clarke concluded that 'all evidence suggests that it was a group of obscure student design activists emanating from Finland [who] bolstered Papanek's ideas and professional profile by providing him with the ideal bandwagon on which he could hitch a ride'[18], suggesting that it was Papanek who was inspired by events on the Finnish design field, and not the other way around. The most detailed account of the social, environmental and political interests of the Finnish design field in the 1960s and 1970s has been provided by design and architecture historian Pekka Korvenmaa, who has argued that the debates of the period emerged due to a new generation's frustration with the Finnish design field and its focus on beautiful, handmade objects, which symbolised 'values that were obsolete in the era of massive global problems'[19]. Korvenmaa has also suggested that, ever since its establishment in the late 19th century, Finnish design education has been polarised and marked by conflicts of interest.[20] In other words, although the 1960s and 1970s had their own specific, and important, events and debates, discussions around cultural, economic and political issues such as industrialisation, globalisation, commerce, business and international influences have been, and will continue to be, an essential part of design education in Finland.

Even though the amount of existing literature about my chosen subject could be considered modest, there is a strong consensus regarding what the 1960s and 1970s meant for the Finnish design field. Most of the literature seems to suggest that this period was merely a sidestep, a distraction, or even a hindrance, disturbing a linear process of development leading to the eventual victory of economic and technological progress. The period is seen in a distinctly negative light (with the exception of Clarke, who remains rather neutral), with the shared understanding that it not only stopped the development of design education, but also harmed the relationship between industry and the design community, resulting in a stagnation of an entire professional

15 Iida Turpeinen and Jaakko Uoti (eds.): *Tokyo 50 - Taideteollisen korkeakoulun opiskelijaliike 50 vuotta* (Helsinki: TOKYO ry and the University of Art and Design, 2011).

16 Maija Mäkikalli, 'Teollisen muotoilun ilosanomaa!', in *Tunnetko teolliset muotoilijat*, ed. by Sanna Simola and Marjukka Mäkelä (Helsinki: Avain, 2008), pp. 84-125 (p. 90).

17 Alison J. Clarke, 'Actions Speak Louder. Victor Papanek and the Legacy of Design Activism', *Design and Culture*, vol. 5, issue 2 (2013), 151-168 (p. 160).

18 Alison J. Clarke, Victor Papanek. *Designer for the Real World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2021), p. 177.

19 Pekka Korvenmaa, 'From Policies to Politics: Finnish Design on the Ideological Battlefield in the 1960s and 1970s', in *Scandinavian Design: Alternative Histories*, ed. by Kjetil Fallan (London and New York: Berg, 2012), pp. 222-235, p. 229. For the original version in Finnish, see Korvenmaa, 'Tietoisuuden tasot', in *Ateneum Maskerad. Taideteollisuuden muotoja ja murroksia*, ed. by Pia Strandman (Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu, 1999), pp. 172-201.

20 Pekka Korvenmaa, 'Sadankolmenkymmenen vuoden keskustelu', in *Ateneum Maskerad*, pp. 13-17 (p. 15).

field. Korvenmaa has argued that 'what started out as a genuine interest for widening the notion of design and making design education better led to a complete halt in the relationship between the school, industry, state and every other collaborator'[21], while Valtonen states that 'the political atmosphere made long-term planning difficult and did not improve the working conditions of the students.'[22] Design historians Kärt Summatavet and Leena Svinhufvud, after interviewing designers and design educators who studied or taught at the Institute of Industrial Arts during the 1970s, conclude that the political atmosphere of the decade affected the design field in a distinctly negative way, hindering development and creating rifts between members of the design community.[23] This argument is taken furthest by Antti Hassi, whose memoir of his time as a teacher at the University of Industrial Arts in the 1970s was published posthumously following his own request. This was due to explosive content that was expected to 'bring out the truth, which had been silenced'[24]. According to Hassi, the Marxist-Leninists in the 1970s not only represented 'blind fundamentalism and anti-patriotic treason that would warrant death penalty in military courts'[25], but also single-handedly destroyed the University of Industrial Arts, leaving behind a generation-wide gap in designers with proper professional skills and abilities.

My contribution to the historiography of Finnish design in the 1960s and 1970s in the form of this dissertation presents different conclusions. I argue that, instead of a hindrance, this period was essential in the development of the design field in Finland, leaving its mark in both the values and methods of the practice. For example, the interest towards the living and working conditions of 'ordinary' people, informed by politically leftist interests, can be seen as a precursor to contemporary user-centred design. Some of the first steps towards academic research in the field of design in Finland were taken during the 1960s and 1970s, during which the interest towards social and environmental values helped establish a practice of collaboration with the public sector, as many designers tried to find alternatives for commercial work. Instead of evaluating 'the results' of these decades according to the conventional success-failure paradigm of the existing literature, I argue that this period significantly widened the way in which design and its purpose were understood in Finland. It reframed not only the ambitions and motivations behind design education and professional design practice, but also the practice itself with its methods and products, thus extending the consequences of the change into the everyday lives of Finnish people. Undoubtedly, these decades, and specifically the years of Marxism-Leninism, were filled with tension, conflicts, frustration and extreme behaviour motivated by political dogmatism and fanaticism, harming personal relationships and leaving scars. The purpose is not to dismiss this aspect of the period. However, the combination of student activism, a globally spread movement of solidarity, nascent environmental activism and extreme

21 Korvenmaa, 'Tietoisuuden tasot', p. 192.

22 Valtonen, *Redefining Industrial Design*, p. 114.

23 Kärt Summatavet and Leena Svinhufvud, 'Takaisin 1970-luvulle - taideteollisuuden opettajahaastattelut muotoiluhistorian lähteenä', *Tahiti*, issue 3 (2014).

24 Antti Hassi, *Hassin paperi* (self-published, 2020), p. 4.

25 Ibid., p. 8.

leftist political ideologies also challenged, stretched and transformed the boundaries of design practice in Finland in the 1960s and 1970s. These two interpretations, one taking into account the possible successes and failures of the period, the other focusing on the process of a changing landscape in design education and design profession, do not cancel each other out. On the contrary, they complement each other and invite more research and findings about this fascinating period.

National and international design histories

As shown above, the existing literature on Finnish design history does not include a deep or detailed understanding of the debates about the social, environmental and political dimensions of design in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the reasons for this is undoubtedly the narrow, canonised view on what Finnish design is, and an even narrower view on what elements of design practice are worth exploring. As Norwegian design historian Kjetil Fallan argues, a 'straightjacket of mythologies meticulously woven around design from the Nordic countries by marketers, promoters and historians'[26] has resulted in a canon consisting of 'a particular and carefully orchestrated blend of gourmet objects selected from a very narrow segment of the region's design practice.'[27] Similarly, when exploring the canon of Western design history, Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler, Victoria Rose Pass and Christopher S. Wilson have stated that its narrow focus 'often neglect[s] lesser known designers and objects, sideline[s] users and intermediaries, and only superficially address[es] social and environmental justice issues'[28]. Indeed, the historiography of Finnish design largely consists of coffee-table books promoting already famous designers, 'often in concert with, or even sponsored by, the very brands that are their subject.'[29]

Beyond design history, historians Juhani Koponen and Sakari Saaritsa argue that Finnish history-writing in general has had a tendency of drawing an image of inexplicable, near-mythological events that first led to the independence of the country, and then to its successes in wealth and social welfare.[30] This tendency, according to Koponen and Saaritsa, has been 'politically expedient and psychologically pleasant'[31], and, crucially, shaped the understanding of history among the public. Once this understanding is built, it is not easy to challenge or dismantle it. In the context of Finnish design, the canonised view suggests that its 'truly great period'[32] was over by the mid-1960s, after which the field 'began to decline'[33]. This view, shared by many and

26 Kjetil Fallan, 'Introduction', in *Scandinavian Design. Alternative Histories*, ed. by Kjetil Fallan (New York and London: Berg, 2012), pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

27 Fallan, 'Introduction', p. 3.

28 Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler, Victoria Rose Pass and Christopher S. Wilson, 'Introduction', in *Design History Beyond the Canon*, ed. by Jennifer Kaufmann-Buhler, Victoria Rose Pass and Christopher S. Wilson (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 1-10 (p. 2).

29 Ibid.

30 Juhani Koponen and Sakari Saaritsa, 'Tie Suomeen. Toinen kertomus', in *Nälkämaasta hyvinvointivaltioksi. Suomi kehityksen kiinniottajana*, ed. by Juhani Koponen and Sakari Saaritsa (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2019), pp. 335-373 (p. 335).

31 Juhani Koponen and Sakari Saaritsa, 'Suomi, historia, kehitys', in *Nälkämaasta hyvinvointivaltioksi*, pp. 10-33 (p. 10).

32 Ulf Hård af Segerstad, 'Two Decades around Kaj Franck', in *Kaj Franck. Muotoilija*, ed. by Kaj Kalin et. al. (Porvoo: WSOY, 1992), pp.17-30 (p. 28).

33 Ibid.

reflected continuously in literature, exhibitions and journalism about Finnish design, might be explained with the help of Koponen and Saaritsa's theory. With protesting students, self-made publications, Marxist-Leninist ideologies and design 'products' such as medical equipment, development projects and workplace ergonomics, what happened in the 1960s and 1970s simply does not fit the pre-existing image of Finnish design, built as it was, on highly aestheticized products created by designers with out-of-this-world skills. Nor do the events of these decades reflect the narrative of Finland achieving a sought-after position as part of the cultural, economic and political context of Western countries.

According to Lees-Maffei and Fallan, histories framed by national borders have, in recent years, faced extensive criticism as being 'unsuited to a new global gaze in which […] the nation state is no longer the only socio-cultural or political-economic unit forming our identities and experiences'[34]. Despite this criticism, and even though the points of convergence with a global design culture might have offered an excellent starting point for writing a transnational design history tracing the flow of ideas and ideologies, I chose to focus on the Finnish national context for a number of reasons. As Lees-Maffei and Fallan suggest, design and national identity are inextricably linked in ways both tangible and symbolic.[35] In Finnish design history, specifically, this has meant that designers have had the task of creating material conditions for a young nation in search of its identity.[36] Due to the international success of many Finnish objects and their designers in the middle of the 20th century, design became even more connected to national identity as it 'offered a way for Finland to mark its place as a dynamic, Western market economy, industrially and internationally oriented, yet displaying an independent culture and history of its own.'[37] Understanding this is key to grasping the passion with which design and its societal role were debated in Finnish media, nation-wide, in the 1960s and 1970s. Having a national focus in my research has allowed a level of detail and an understanding of the various cultural, political, social and economic factors affecting the way in which design is understood and employed.

This focus does not mean that Finland existed in a vacuum, but was in constant exchange with the surrounding world. The goal of this research has been, on the one hand, to create a microhistory of a very specific place at a very specific time, and on the other, to connect this microhistory to a wider context of themes appearing in the Western design field in the 1960s and 1970s. As Clarke has suggested, the wave of youth movements across the world during this time, including those within design, 'shared common threads of discontent purportedly born of intergenerational conflicts, but were nevertheless deeply entrenched in the specifics of localized and broader macropolitics.'[38] Rather than comparing

34 Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan, 'Introduction', in *Designing Worlds. National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization*, ed. by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan (New York: Berghahn, 2016), pp. 1-22 (p. 2).

35 Ibid., p. 9.

36 Kerstin Smeds, '"A Paradise Called Finland"', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, 6 (1996), 62-79; Pekka Korvenmaa: *Finnish Design. A Concise History* (London: V&A Publishing, 2014).

37 Harri Kalha, 'Myths and Mysteries of Finnish Design. Reading "Wirkkala" and the National Nature Paradigm', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, issue 12 (2002), 24-47 (p. 38).

38 Clarke, *Victor Papanek*, p. 205.

differences and similarities, however, secondary literature exploring phenomena both inside and outside Finland have functioned as thematic guides to place the primary research I have conducted in a wider context. For example, architectural historian Felicity D. Scott has described the 1960s and 1970s Anglo-American design field as being defined by a turn to 'a post-industrial concept of environment' employing not only 'a significantly enlarged territorial scale, a new set of conceptual tools' but also 'a new set of doubts about the discipline's efficacy.'[39] Elsewhere, in their book *Cold War Modern*, design historians Jane Pavitt and David Crowley have extensively mapped out some of the defining themes of the era leading towards this new notion of the human-made environment, such as space travel, utopianism, technological innovation, the aftermath of the Second World War, intergenerational conflicts, the battle between capitalism and communism and the threat of a nuclear war, just to name a few elements also present in Finnish lives. These analyses have been foundational in building up an understanding of the changes occurring in the Finnish design field, as the process of industrialisation and urbanisation in the 1960s offered an increasingly technologized environment for designers to work in and with. Together, these factors, among others, led to a crisis regarding the tools and methods of the design profession that had previously leaned on artistic expression and material craftmanship and that spurred people to action and trying to make their ideologies reality.

Regarding ideologies, Pavitt and Crowley have also noted that 'in concentrating on visions and projections, we inevitably deal with the ideals (and often the nightmares) of the post-war generations rather than the material reality of their everyday lives.'[40] In this dissertation, there is, indeed, a focus on projections. A considerable amount of the primary sources employed here is centred around more or less abstract ideas on what and how the design profession 'should be' in order to create social justice and protect the natural environment. Moreover, the primary sources deal with ephemeral events such as exhibitions and seminars. Not only do these leave behind a limited amount of evidence, their impact on the surrounding culture is difficult to measure to begin with. Secondary literature exploring the relationship between design and different ideologies has provided not only fascinating accounts of abstract ideas made into reality through design practice, but also useful examples on how to investigate these primary sources. For example, Ross K. Elfline has analysed the work of Italian design group Superstudio from the point of view of Italian leftist thought and concluded that Superstudio's design projects were often devised not to solve a particular issue, but to 'help to activate the user to take full ownership'[41] over their everyday life, so rising against the oppression of the capitalist economy. Elena Formia has investigated the relationship between design and the environmental movement in Italy in the 1970s, concluding that there emerged

39 Felicity D. Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia. Politics After Modernism* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2007), p. 89.

40 David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, 'Introduction', in *Cold War Modern. Design 1945-1970*, ed. by David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), pp. 11-25 (p. 15).

41 Ross K. Elfline, 'Superstudio and the "Refusal to Work"', *Design and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2016), 55-77 (p. 61).

an understanding of design as ‘an organisational scheme, a tool, a process, rather than merely the conception and creation of objects’[42]. Interestingly, as Formia suggests, ‘this approach did not emerge in Italy uniquely from the anti-capitalist counterculture, but from a socially and politically engaged professional environment still steeped in commercial design practices.’[43] In rather different but nonetheless fascinating contexts, Katharina Pfützner has explored industrial design practice in the German Democratic Republic under the Soviet doctrine, while Tom Cubbin has studied experimental design pedagogies and practices in the post-war Soviet Union.[44] These and many other accounts paint a picture of a global design field experimenting with and pushing the boundaries of what design could do and what kinds of ideologies it could make tangible.

Sources and methods

In addition to allowing a level of detail and depth in the research process, another reason for choosing to focus on the Finnish context is the rich archival material I have located, the majority of which is presented here for the first time in the historiography of Finnish design, particularly in the second chapter about the Marxist-Leninist movement at the University of Industrial Arts. It is astonishing that the sources I discovered have not found their way into a larger number of design history research projects – the sheer volumes of material related to social, environmental and political questions within the Finnish design field in the 1960s and 1970s took me by surprise. For my Master’s dissertation in the History of Design, I wrote about the Finnish and Swedish design fields in the 1960s and the Scandinavian Design Student Organisation’s demands for a better design education. Although considerably more modest in scope and depth, the research I conducted for that helped me to seek out useful archives and materials with relevance also to this project.[45] Furthermore, I reworked minor parts of my Master’s research for this doctoral dissertation, more specifically for the end of the first chapter regarding the establishment and activities of the Scandinavian Design Student Organisation. Reworking the old material for a new purpose gave me insight into how history is written in the long term – how new sources make familiar ones appear in a new light, bringing novel perspectives and challenging previous analyses and conclusions.

The primary sources employed in this dissertation were found mainly in five different public archives in Finland: the Aalto University Archives and the Aalto University Student Union Archive in Espoo, the Design Archives in Mikkeli, the Kansan Arkisto Archive in Helsinki and the Design Museum Collection in Helsinki. I was generously allowed

42 Elena Formia, ’Forms of Human Environment (1970). Italian design responds to the *global* crisis’, in *The Culture of Nature in the History of Design*, ed. by Kjetil Fallan (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 189-205 (p. 190).

43 Ibid.

44 Katharina Pfützner, *Designing for Socialist Need. Industrial Design Practice in the German Democratic Republic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Tom Cubbin, *Soviet Critical Design: Senezh Studio and the Communist Surround* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

45 Kaisu Savola, *When Beauty Is Not Enough to Save the World. A Short History of the Scandinavian Design Students’ Organisation 1966-1969* (Royal College of Art and Victoria & Albert Museum, unpublished MA dissertation, 2015).

access to the personal archives of Catharina Kajander, Pirkko Pohjakallio, Jouko Koskinen and Yrjö Sotamaa. The source material employed in this research consists of, for example, documents connected to the planning and execution of design education such as minutes of meetings, internal memos, curricula, course outlines, yearbooks, reports, lecture slides and outlines and lecture transcriptions; material produced by design students such as publications, course and diploma work, photographs, exhibition documentation and information leaflets; material from professional and promotional design organisations such as correspondence, minutes and notes from meetings and workshops, surveys, publications, yearbooks, project reports and documents related to exhibition planning; design work such as projects, products, objects, sketches, drawings, prototypes, models, personal notes, competition entries and grant applications; documents regarding political student organisations including memos, publications, leaflets, notes, yearly reports, planning documents, election lists, member lists and correspondence. Finally, articles related to design education and design profession in newspapers, magazines and different journals form a substantial part of the primary research conducted for this dissertation.

Historian Ludmilla Jordanova has argued that 'the discipline of history is best understood as a set of practices, rather than as either a constellation of beliefs or theories, or a stable body of subject matter.'[46] In other words, there are as many ways of writing history as there are historians, although distinctions can be made according to preferences regarding the use of archives and theories, or whether a historian sees herself as someone who represents, reconstructs, or deconstructs history, for example. As detailed above, my work is centred around the archive, with its 'selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past' on the one hand, and 'the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there'[47] on the other. For this dissertation, I dived deep into archives interested in any sources connected to design, design education and social values, environmental responsibility and political motivations. In some of the places, I went through everything they had from the 1960s and 1970s, because these themes tend to appear in almost any kind of source. I found a mixture of 'chosen documentation', such as official University of the Industrial Arts yearbooks brought into this world with the specific purpose of leaving a considered mark in history, and 'mad fragments', like a set of undated drawings between designer Harry Moilanen's notes with strong socialist symbolism, beautiful and discombobulating at the same time.

The sheer volume of primary sources from the 1960s and 1970s is massive. In the Aalto University Archives alone, I went through approximately 150 archival folders of documents and hundreds of digitised images related to design education. As another example, the Kaj Franck Collection at the Design Museum in Helsinki consists of 66 archival folders, half of which I went through with care. Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio kindly carried up a dozen dusty

46 Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice. Third Edition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) p. 16.

47 Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 68.

cardboard boxes from their basement which no one had touched since the late 1970s when they had been packed up. I read through 80 issues of the Marxist-Leninist design student publications *Tokyotiedot* and *Perspektiivi*, becoming immersed in their polarised world, and traced the design debate in Finnish newspapers throughout two decades. I conducted and transcribed approximately twenty hours of interviews that I did not even make use of (as discussed below). When describing the work of making sense of primary sources, Jordanova uses verbs such as 'identify', 'read', 'evaluate', 'integrate' with the nouns 'assessment', 'comparison' and 'contextualisation'.[48] I would rather think of the process as a long and often frustrating conversation in which the parties struggle to understand each other. In order to understand, I give my time and attention to the sources, trying to fathom where they are coming from and where they are now, both in relations to my understanding of the world around us, and to the other sources I have discovered in connection to the focus of the research. After the 'conversation', I write it down to make sure I can convey to others what I have just learned. Without this last step, all the work would be for nothing: the knowledge I gained would be left unmaterialised and unshared. It's a long and painstaking process, and I relate to historian Carolyn Steedman's description of it: 'You think: I could get to hate these people; and then: I can never do these people justice; and finally; I shall never *get it done*.'[49]

Despite the vast number of primary sources uncovered during the research process, all in all the archival material was fragmentary at best and ephemeral at worst. One of the most significant elements lacking in the archives, and therefore in this research, was connected to the design practices depicted here. In their attempts to create a socially responsible profession, many designers and design students in the 1960s and 1970s turned towards people who had previously not been awarded much, if any, attention in the field of Finnish design, including members of the working class, the elderly, children, indigenous peoples such as the Sámi, and people with different disabilities. As design researcher Mahmoud Keshavarz has argued, regarding the conversation around the so-called humanitarian design practice, what is missing is 'how "the other" – his or her body, life and future – becomes the object of Western designers' consciousness.'[50] Although referring specifically to the contemporary design field's treatment of refugees across the world, Keshavarz's argument raises a relevant question for the research of the historical development of what I have chosen to call socially responsible design. In this dissertation, I describe design practices that have made different bodies and lives their objects by, for example, addressing the rights of the indigenous Sámi population to live and work according to their culture and traditions; creating medical equipment and aids for the disabled; attempting to improve the livelihoods of agrarian communities in Finland; and teaching glass-blowing to youth in rural Kenya. However, the point of view belongs strictly to the designer without exception, and we never learn

48 Jordanova, p. 206.

49 Steedman, p. 18.

50 Mahmoud Keshavarz, 'Violent Compassions: Humanitarian Design and the Politics of Borders', *DesignIssues*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2020), 20-32 (p. 30).

just how much, if any, agency these bodies and lives had in the design process. This raises the crucial question of whose voice is heard in the study of design history, and who is given the chance to speak their mind about how they have experienced the possible successes and failures of design. In an incomplete attempt to compensate for this lack of voices, I have had the intention of creating descriptive and critical analyses, hopefully providing some tools in thinking not only about the shortcomings and inequalities of design practice, but of the histories we tell about it, too.

In order to complement the fragmentary nature of the archival sources, my original intention was to make oral histories a substantial part of the methodology in this research. Oral history is not dissimilar to qualitative interviewing; as design historian and oral history scholar Linda Sandino states, it 'focuses on people in order to understand them as subjects in the socio-historical contexts of the immediate past or the present.'[51] My initial thought was that conducting oral history interviews would be especially useful for the kind of historical development that I was tracing, such as design education, the professionalisation of the field and the values behind these. In total, I conducted eight interviews with people who had been either design students or members of staff at the University of Industrial Arts in the 1960s and 1970s, with the goal of conducting even more. After transcribing the first interviews, as I began to weave them in with my archival sources, I understood that I could not make these two approaches work together and still remain loyal to the purpose I had built for this research. In the wider field of design history, and in my mind for the time being, personal narrative and the (auto)biographical approach, no matter how fascinating and important, hold an ambivalent position due to the way in which they have been used to write a certain kind of design history praising the genius of a selection of central (male) figures of 19th and 20th century design.[52] In this dissertation, I have chosen specifically not to focus on individuals (with a couple of exceptions), but rather, on the wider phenomena regarding design culture, which consists of 'agglomerations of interconnected things, people, institutions and interests, as well as material and immaterial infrastructures that connect them.'[53] Weaving in personal narratives and subjective memories took this focus away, turning it towards the vulnerability and complexity of intimate memories about being young and taking part in some kind of a revolution. This will make a fascinating research subject for another occasion.

Outline

This doctoral dissertation is not an all-encompassing chronological history of Finnish design education and design practice in the 1960s and 1970s, but rather a fragmented narrative of how change is put into motion.[54] The first chapter

51 Linda Sandino, 'Introduction Oral Histories and Design: Objects and Subjects', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No 4 (Winter, 2006), pp. 275-282 (p. 275).

52 Sandino, 'Introduction Oral Histories and Design: Objects and Subjects', p. 277.

53 Guy Julier, 'Design Culture as critical practice', in *Critical by Design? Genealogies, Practices, Positions*, ed. by Claudia Mareis, Moritz Greiner-Petter and Michael Renner (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2022), pp. 218-222 (p. 218).

54 For a detailed account of the development of Finnish design education, see Ilkka Huovio, *Invitation from the Future. Treatise on the Roots of the School of Arts and Crafts into a University Level School 1871-1973* (University of Tampere, 1998).

explores the emergence of social and environmental values in the Finnish design field, starting in the early 1960s. Social questions had been a part of design practice in the country ever since the establishment of the field during the late 19th century in the form of taking part in the creation of a national identity, and later during the reconstruction period after the Second World War. During the 1960s, due to the increasing speed of industrialisation and urbanisation, the established design methods and practices were no longer enough to satisfy a new generation of designers growing up in a markedly different society to that of their parents. Therefore, a re-examination and re-evaluation of not only the methods and practices of design, but also its values became inevitable. Due to the international success of Finnish design, a new culture of criticism was born as young designers blamed their colleagues for designing useless objects, their only purposes to look beautiful and win prizes. The differing thoughts about design's role and purpose, and an increasing generational gap, started a tumultuous period in the whole Finnish design field. This was most visible at the Institute of Industrial Arts, where ambitious students, disappointed in the quality of teaching, started to demand better study conditions and a greater understanding of design's social and environmental responsibility by organising events and protests that provoked the more conservative members of the design community. Different groups and collaborations emerged - organising seminars, exhibitions and events - with the goal of developing design towards a more academic and scientifically rigorous direction, able to address and even solve some of the most pressing social concerns in Finland and the rest of the world.

The second chapter traces the development of the 1960s student rebellion into an organised political movement promoting Marxist-Leninist ideology as, during the 1970s, it dominated much of Finland's cultural life, including theatre, literature, art and design. Becoming a Marxist-Leninist was a dramatic patricide, adding to the thrill of rebellion. Meanwhile, Finland was arguably only partly sovereign, as the Soviet Union steered much of the Finnish media and politics, a situation made possible by a nation-wide fear of military occupation. In addition to investigating how Marxism-Leninism became the leading political ideology among design students and staff, the chapter examines how it influenced design pedagogy and challenged the understanding of design's role in society. In 1973, as the Institute of Industrial Arts gained university status, its new and relatively young leadership expressed their support for equality and environmental values, instead of establishing the long-awaited union between art and industry. The new university struggled with low resources, while the global oil crisis created a national recession lowering employment possibilities. Insecurity and discontent among the staff and students gave room for the Marxist-Leninist movement to spread, offering to fix design education, improve the lives of the working class and bring world peace by means of socialism. The prevalence of leftist values at the university initially allowed a sense of democracy in which students were able to choose and create their own curricula, highlighting the social rather than the commercial dimension of design and

creating a ground-breaking design curriculum. As the 1970s progressed, the interest in developing design education waned while disruptive conflicts partly paralysed the university.

The third and final chapter investigates how the professional design field in Finland started to question economic, societal and cultural structures in ways that show striking similarity to the left-leaning students at the University of Industrial Arts. Ideas about the social responsibility of design were being transformed away from abstract debates into real-life design practices supported by professional and promotional design organisations. Meanwhile, designers also had to face the realities of commerce and industry, resulting in a clash of values and interests. The chapter examines how, throughout the 1970s, this contradictory situation produced fascinating design projects situated in the professional realm with elements of social, political and environmental activism. Many of the projects presented in the chapter appear in the historiography of Finnish design for the first time, revealing that designers managed to find or develop work that was in line with their interests and values, whether political, personal, or both. This work consisted of, for example, developing design research, working for municipalities and non-profit organisations, or taking part in development projects in the Global South. Some designers worked within the private sector designing health care and hospital equipment for companies or developing ergonomic machinery and tools for workers in industry or farming. The final chapter demonstrates how it was more or less impossible for a designer in the 1970s to escape the discussion about design's social and environmental responsibility regardless of their own disposition.

The conclusion both summarises and briefly assesses the results of this research. It suggests that the main contribution of this dissertation is to fill a significant gap in the history of Finnish design by giving a detailed account of the ways in which the field changed during the 1960s and 1970s. By focusing almost exclusively on the Finnish context, this dissertation provides a geographically and culturally specific account of the rise of social, environmental and political values taking place in the fields of design globally, while also adding to the growing research into the Marxist-Leninist movement in Finland in the 1970s.

'Out of compassion towards the world's hungry'

The world of professional design can appear as a place where prophets and tyrants tell their followers and subjects what is beautiful and practical, and educate them on how to live their lives accordingly. These tyrants are guided not so much by a passion for governance or violence as for good taste and problem-solving. When researching and writing this dissertation, the most striking aspect was the urgency in some of the primary sources, with their demand for a change in design practice and the values behind it, at the same time expressing a distinct experience of being an intrinsic part of that very

rotten system that needed to be abolished. For example, a statement written by design students in one of their seminars in 1968 reads:

> Is it possible to design good-looking gadgets when you know that people are starving and suffering; when you have begun to doubt our need for luxury; when you are scared to death knowing that catastrophe awaits just behind the door??? Out of compassion towards the world's hungry, suffering and oppressed people facing population explosion, environmental pollution and earth's dwindling resources, we want to do our best in order to make a difference by creating a growing consciousness about the world's problems and finding out what we can do about them.[55]

In my own experience many decades later, I became aware of the problematic aspects of design practice as a 19-year-old design student learning to make, create and build, but also learning to know what marketing departments in big companies wanted, what was considered good taste, where the raw materials for my designs came from, where my designs would be produced and by whom, how much waste the production process would produce, and so on. By my second year of studies, I had grown so disillusioned with the world of design and industrial production that the mere thought of becoming even partly responsible of new items being produced into the world was demotivating at best, and repulsive at worst. I quit making and started reading, and soon found myself in an art school library in London as a design history student, reading an article about Finnish design student activists in the 1960s experiencing a disillusionment I could recognise.[56]

I write this here because, as historian John Brewer put it, 'no story is innocent; all narratives involve plotting.'[57] In this dissertation, my original plot was to discover design practices in history that have challenged, stretched and broken some of the boundaries of what design has been expected to do and be. In the name of self-reflexivity and openness about some of the 'personal interests, values and experiences'[58] that affected my choice of subject, analysis and methodologies, this plot has been motivated by the above-mentioned disillusionment with the design profession and the histories told about it, together with a sense of urgency in the face of contemporary culture where we are consuming ourselves and the planet into oblivion. In the meantime, it has become clear that design is 'only' an accomplice to the powers that accept social inequality and environmental destruction, and that designers alone will neither 'save' or 'destroy' the world.

As Clarke has argued, a 'precariously ahistorical rendering of designers as "good" or "bad" downplays the complexity of design's role within the political and moral

55 Gunilla Lundahl, 'Utbildning för demokrati', *Form*, issue 7 (1968), 440-443 (p. 440).

56 The article was: Alison J. Clarke, 'Actions Speak Louder. Victor Papanek and the Legacy of Design Activism', *Design and Culture*, vol. 5, issue 2 (2013), 151-168.

57 John Brewer, 'Microhistory and the histories of everyday life', *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 7, issue 1 (2010), 87-109 (p. 97).

58 Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei, 'It's personal: Subjectivity in Design History', *Design and Culture*, vol. 7, issue 1 (2015), 5-28 (p. 6).

economies that drive social change.'[59] In other words, even if this research project began with the purpose of finding out if there is anything designers can do to 'save' the world, the end result, rather than presenting one clear answer nominating heroes and villains, is an exploration of the contradictions and entanglements of design in the face of some of the most difficult questions we face as human beings: what is the good life? How can we make the good life available for everyone? How can we be good to each other and the natural environment? When putting his 'disrespectful thoughts about design' on paper, Kaj Franck foresaw that reshaping the design profession would take 'many generations of designers.'[60] Here's to hoping that the wait will be over soon.

59 Alison J. Clarke, 'Design for the Real World. Contesting the Origins of the Social in Design', in *Design Struggles. Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, and Perspectives*, ed. by Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2021), pp. 85-98, (p. 89).

60 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.2., 'Disrespectful thoughts about design', undated sheet with personal notes.

Chapter 1

THE EMERGENCE

OF

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

IN FINNISH DESIGN EDUCATION

1.1. A CLASH BETWEEN GENERATIONS

In the spring of 1966, a group of students at the Institute for Industrial Arts were given a task to create an exhibition presenting the current activities of the school at the Finnish Design Centre gallery in Helsinki. Under the supervision of the school's art director, Kaj Franck, the students put together a showcase of sculptures, images and texts that explored the roles and responsibilities of art education, visual communication and product design in the everyday visual environment. On a late May evening, some minutes before the opening party, the Institute's rector Markus Visanti ordered the exhibition to be shut down and its contents destroyed immediately. In a fit of rage, in front of arriving guests and media representatives, he called the exhibition 'a communist celebration' put together by 'Marxists'[61]. A large and colourful plaster sculpture resembled 'a sexless egg'[62] and was therefore to be taken to the landfill. The following day, in the Pitäjänmäki landfill in Helsinki, a bulldozer destroyed the sculpture. Eino Jukkanen, operating the bulldozer, saw the plaster crumble into tiny pieces, while the dust disappeared into the landfill air.[63]

The general public never saw the exhibition in its original form: it was shut down and a new one was hastily put up. The students were made to mount other work, approved by Visanti, but, in protest, the students simply painted what was left of their original pieces black and exhibited them instead.[64] These, too, were taken down. In the end, the exhibition consisted only of photographs showcasing the school's history and previous students' works, alongside plans for establishing a university dedicated to industrial arts.[65] Furthermore, Visanti dismissed three teachers who had supervised the project for showing 'negligence towards the school and its official politics'[66]. Out of solidarity towards the teachers, Kaj Franck resigned from his post as the Institute's art director. The closing of the exhibition, destroying the students' work and firing the popular teachers caused a big storm in the Finnish mainstream media, which published daily reports of the twists and turns of the story. Many reporters and cultural commentators questioned Visanti's politics and equated his behaviour with censorship. Those journalists who had managed to see the exhibition before it was closed did not find legitimate reasons for his reaction, one critic even defended the exhibition calling it 'very successful and informative in its entirety'[67].

One can only speculate about the reasons behind Visanti's outburst. In 1965, the Finnish state had become the owner of the Institute, which stabilised the status and funding of the school.[68] It was no secret that Visanti was

61 'Ateneumin rehtori kehottaa kolmea eroamaan mielipide-erovaisuuksien vuoksi', *Sosialidemokraatti*, 24 May 1966.

62 Ibid.; Marika Hausen, 'Konvulsioner i Ateneum', *Form*, issue 6 (1966), p. 367.

63 'Näyttelyriidassa tutkiva kokous', *Ilta-Sanomat*, 25 May 1966.

64 Hausen, 'Konvulsioner i Ateneum', p. 367.

65 Leena Maunula, 'Yhteiskunnallisesta puheenvuorosta historialliseksi kuvakavalkadiksi', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 23 May 1966.

66 'Taideteollinen oppilaitos rankaisee virallisen politiikan rikkojia', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 24 May 1966.

67 Ibid.

68 Ilkka Huovio, 'Veistokoulusta korkeakouluksi', in *Ateneum Maskerad. Taideteollisuuden muotoja ja murroksia*, ed. by Pia Strandman (Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu, 1999), pp. 308-339 (p. 323).

lobbying for the Institute to gain university status, which would secure its role in Finnish society. With this in mind, the original assignment for the students had been to present the school and its activities in a way that would convince decision-makers of the benefits of higher education within design. The students' interpretation of this was to create an abstract sculpture symbolising three different departments at the Institute: art education, visual environment and product design. A wall of photography depicting the urban everyday life highlighted the importance of the visual in the built environment. A manifesto-like text declared the artist's and designer's responsibility in the creation of the environment and called for a more research-based approach to decision-making instead of blind trust in the artist's subjective views: 'More objective results are achieved through team work. […] Design is collaboration.'[69] What Visanti interpreted as 'Communist' and 'Marxist' was undoubtedly the text's anti-consumerist and anti-commercial views, such as 'product design is not materialism. […] The goal of design is liberation. […] The designer does not create needs but satisfies them. […] A product is not a status symbol.'[70]

As his reaction reveals, Visanti was not impressed by the students' work nor their 'manifesto', although there is no knowledge of all the reasons behind his fit of rage. In a statement published in Finland's leading daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*, Visanti himself explained his response:

> The exhibition did not represent the school in a way the leadership hoped for. Generally, the information offered by the exhibition was naïve and insufficient. […] As a state-owned institution, the school cannot afford useless things, and this exhibition with its contents was, in my opinion, completely useless.[71]

The dismissive way Visanti went against the students' efforts revealed a strained relationship between two generations and their values. Moreover, it revealed the urgency of Visanti's attempts at gaining respect and relevance for design in an industrialising society, even if part of the problem could also be explained via inter-personal relationships. According to Severi Parko, one of the dismissed teachers, Visanti's real issue was his power struggle with Kaj Franck, whose pedagogical goals and methods Visanti did not approve of.[72] Therefore the real reason behind firing the three young teachers was not because their 'intelligence was not adequate for the level of the school'[73], but because they were known as Franck's supporters and 'progressive thinkers'[74]. According to art historian and design writer Marika Hausen, what caused discord between the younger and older generations at the Institute were their opposing views on the designer's social responsibility and how it should be addressed in design education.[75] After the biggest waves of scandal died

69 'Texterna på den refuserade expon', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 25 May 1966.

70 Ibid.

71 'Taideteollinen oppilaitos rankaisee virallisen politiikan rikkojia', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 24 May 1966.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 'Ateneumin rehtori kehottaa kolmea eroamaan mielipide-erovaisuuksien vuoksi', *Sosialidemokraatti*, 24 May 1966.

75 Hausen, 'Konvulsioner i Ateneum', p. 367.

FIGURE 1.1. Illustration in the student magazine *Arttu* depicting the tumultuous year of 1966 at the Institute for Industrial Arts. 1967. Aalto University Archives, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection.

down, life at the Institute for Industrial Arts returned, more or less, to normal. Only some days after the exhibition opening, the fired teachers were given their jobs back and Kaj Franck returned to his position as the art director.[76] Later that year, the students depicted the scandal in an illustration for their own publication, Arttu, by placing elements from the conflict on a stage with opened curtains. In the illustration, almost all the elements are crossed over, as if cancelled, including the year 1966 (see figure 1.1.). Only ‘censorship’ and ‘authorities’ are left standing.

While this incident revealed some underlying tensions within the design community, it also started a tumultuous period at the Institute for Industrial Arts, which faced the task of redefining its role and meaning in a changing society. The generational gap and contradictory values between the staff and students did not make this task simple, while the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation taking place in Finland posed new challenges to designers and their education. The contents of the exhibition and the public discussion surrounding the scandal contained many of the key topics in the design debate of the 1960s: design’s social responsibility, anti-consumerism, generational shift, university-level design education, and the relationship between industry, design and craft. The parties in the debate seemed to agree over one thing only: Finnish design needed to evolve.

76 ’Ateneumin erot peruutettiin’, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 26 May 1966.

1.2. FINNISH DESIGN AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1.2.1. ‘Building a new land of comfort and beauty’

As historian Ilkka Nummela states, Finland was situated, economically and culturally, in the northernmost part of the European periphery well into the 19th century as an autonomous but poor part of the Russian empire: compared to the rest of Europe, the Finnish economy grew slowly due to the vulnerable nature of its agriculture and the modest size of its market.[77] Industrial production in the country did not properly develop before the mid-19th century when the Finnish forest industry became the most important source of income for the nation, together with metal industry, lasting until late 20th century.[78] Even though forest and metal industries did not offer employment to industrial artists, starting in the latter half of the 19th century, design and craft played an important part in building the country’s material reality and creating a shared national identity to be projected both domestically and abroad in the form of national monuments and international exhibitions.[79]

In the period after the Second World War, the Finnish design field started to gain new weight and importance as the country was faced with heavy reconstruction followed by a fast and intensive process of urbanisation and industrialisation. Even though Finland kept its independence, it was among the losers of the war and was forced to pay sizeable war reparations to the Soviet Union and cede over one tenth of its land.[80] This also meant a significant loss of forest areas and industrial facilities, and the relocation of around 400 000 refugees from the ceded regions.[81] According to historian Susanna Aaltonen, in addition to the literal rebuilding and replacing of what had been destroyed, designers were faced with the task ‘to compensate for the horrors and ugliness of the war’ by ‘building a new land of comfort and beauty’[82]. As Aaltonen suggests, the growth of the design profession during the immediate post-war period was a consequence of the dire need for infrastructure, and of a shared longing for psychological stability and security which well-designed private and public spaces could provide. While the need for comfort and beauty in Finnish homes was immense, the creation of interiors and furnishings for public spaces such as hospitals and schools provided work for a growing number of designers, too. Interest

77 Ilkka Nummela, ‘Väestö, asutus ja elintaso ennen teollistumista 1500-1900’, in *Suomen rakennehistoria. Näkökulmia muutokseen ja jatkuvuuteen 1400-2000*, ed. by Pertti Haapala (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2018), pp. 88-104 (p. 88).

78 Jari Eloranta and Jari Ojala, ’Suomi kansainvälisessä taloudessa 1600-2000’, in *Suomen rakennehistoria*, pp. 124-143 (p.139).

79 Smeds, ‘”A Paradise Called Finland”’, Korvenmaa, *Taide ja teollisuus*.

80 Pentti Virrankoski, *Suomen historia. Maa ja kansa kautta aikojen* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, 2012), p. 622.

81 Jussi Koivuniemi, ’Tehtaiden Suomi ja deindustrialisaatio 1900-2000’ in *Suomen rakennehistoria*, pp. 180-204 (p. 188).

82 Susanna Aaltonen, ‘Designers Are Always Needed. The Interior Architect’s Profession after the Second World War’, in *Builders of the Future. Finnish Design 1945-1967*, ed. by Jukka Savolainen and Aila Svenskberg (Helsinki: Designmuseo, 2012), pp. 62-79 (p. 79).

towards private commissions waned, and designers focused on creating standardised models which could be manufactured industrially.[83]

Design historian Kaisa Koivisto has argued that, for the design industry, the years immediately after the Second World War were characterized by a shortage of materials on the one hand, and experimentation with aesthetics and forms on the other.[84] Companies wanted to rationalise their production, having noticed already before the war that one-off products, such as art glass, were an effective way to gain publicity and boost the sales of more affordable utility ware.[85] Historian Maija Mäkikalli has suggested that, despite the material shortages, there was space for a more artistic expression based on a free exploration of form, technique, colour and materials, resulting in unique one-off pieces in ceramics, glass, textiles and wood.[86] When Finland participated in the 1951 Milan Triennial, these objects were prominently on display in the exhibition curated and designed by Tapio Wirkkala, helping it to win numerous prizes and gain unprecedented visibility for Finnish design in the international media. The success of the exhibition, commonly referred to as 'the Miracle of Milan'[87] in Finnish design history, propelled design and designers to new fame in their home country, too, and played 'a crucial role in shaping public notions of what design was all about.'[88] According to historian Harri Kalha, designers were now 'welcomed home as world champions and national heroes.'[89] Indeed, as Kalha argues, the success at the Triennial created a persistent habit of measuring design's success by counting the number of prizes and medals brought home by designers, a habit that, to a large extent, prevails to this day.[90]

The dual role of designing understated and functional items for everyday life on the one hand, while creating prize-winning craft objects of exquisite beauty on the other, dominated the Finnish design field throughout the 1950s and much of the 1960s. This duality was also the prevalent professional landscape for a new generation of designers born during the post-war baby boom. For some of the young designers studying and working during the 1960s, these options appeared promising and motivating. For others, not so much. As Pavitt has argued, the Cold War period became a 'fault-line along which the persistent tensions within modernism were found.'[91] These tensions took different forms and breaking points as design schools across the world, in the other Nordic countries[92], in Great Britain[93] and in the United States[94], to mention a few, faced varying degrees

83 Ibid.

84 Kaisa Koivisto, 'Designers, Glass Makers and Rationalisation', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, issue 12 (2002), 80-91 (p. 82).

85 Ibid.

86 Maija Mäkikalli, 'Kaunis koti', in *Maamme. Itsenäisen Suomen kulttuurihistoria*, ed. by Marjo Kaartinen, Hannu Salmi and Marja Tuominen (Helsinki: SKS, 2016), pp. 243-265 (p.255).

87 For example: Harri Kalha, '"The Miracle of Milan": Finland at the 1951 Triennial', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, 14 (2004), 60--71; Uta Laurén (ed.), *The Wonder of Milan, Finnish Design on the Way to the Top of the World. Milan Triennials 1933-1973* (Riihimäki: The Finnish Glass Museum, 2021).

88 Kalha, '"The Miracle of Milan"', p. 66.

89 Ibid., p. 68.

90 Ibid.

91 Jane Pavitt: 'Design and the Democratic Ideal', in *Cold War Modern. Design 1945-1970*, ed. by David Crowley and Jane Pavitt (London: V&A Publishing, 2008), pp. 73-93 (p. 90).

92 Ida Kamilla Lie, '"Make Us More Useful to Society!": The Scandinavian Design Students' Organization (SDO) and Socially Responsible Design, 1967-1973', *Design and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 3 (327-361).

93 Marie McLoughlin, '"The textile student needs little Giotto, (or a little will go a long way)" (Pevsner Nov. 1968). The 1970 Coldstream Report in response to the art school unrest of 1968', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 32, no. 2 (170-187).

of protest and radicalisation. In the Finnish context, the design practices of past decades did not satisfy young designers whose experiences of the world were markedly different from those of the generations before them. As explored in the rest of this dissertation, it became necessary to re-examine and re-evaluate not just the results of those practices but also, ultimately, their origins in the cultural and socio-economic reality of industrial production and capitalist consumer-culture, as well as the wider context of Cold War geopolitics and everyday life.

1.2.2. 'A form without the justification of a function'

In 1960, the American journalist Vance Packard published his book *Waste Makers*, which scandalously revealed the many ways in which the advertising industry manipulated the consumer.[95] The after effects of the book spread across the world, including the Nordic countries, and the following year the influential Swedish design magazine *Form* published a special issue focusing on consumerism and its effects on people and culture.[96] The editors saw the relevance of this discussion and prepared the issue so as to ensure the topic would enter the design field where it was of increasing importance. Despite the fact that *Form* was widely read across the Nordic design field, this debate did not resonate in Finland yet, perhaps because the rationing and material shortages of the post-war years were still fresh in people's minds.[97] According to cultural historian Minna Sarantola-Weiss, consumption had been an 'unavoidable necessity, a simple matter of satisfying basic needs'[98] for the majority of Finnish people until well into the 1960s. Instead, designers aimed their criticism at the elitist nature that the design profession had gained through the international success of Finnish design. The way in which designers were encouraged to create exquisite objects for the purpose of winning international prizes was criticized most sharply by young designer Henrik Wahlforss in the Swedish-language newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* in September 1961.[99] He did not spare his words in scolding Finnish designers, whose biggest sin was to 'search for a form without the justification of a function.'[100] Somewhat boldly, Wahlforss stated that a gold medal from the Milan Triennial did not guarantee the quality of an object. Furthermore, he demanded a new understanding of design and the designer's role: 'design is not a personal accomplishment, it is team work. A designer […] is the link between consumers, technicians, manufacturers and marketers.'[101]

Some weeks later, the newspaper *Aamulehti* published a short piece echoing Wahlforss:

94 Sharon Sutton, *When Ivory Towers Were Black. A Story about Race in America's Cities and Universities* (Fordham University Press, 2017).

95 First edition of the book: Vance Packard, *Waste Makers* (New York: David McKay Co., 1960).

96 *Form*, 2 (1961).

97 Mäkikalli, 'Kaunis koti', p. 259.

98 Minna Sarantola-Weiss: 'Finland of Ball Chair Fame' in *Assume a Round Chair. Eero Aarnio and the 60s*, ed. by Harri Kalha (Helsinki: Taidehalli, 2003), pp. 10-23 (p. 19).

99 Finland is a bilingual country with Finnish and Swedish as its two main official languages.

100 Henrik Wahlforss, 'Vår design ett äggskal?', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 15 September 1961.

101 Ibid.

> Here in Finland, we suffer from a design illness, which is the result of making design seem more important than it actually is. [...] Designers are constantly chasing new forms as special as possible [...] without thinking whether the objects they've designed fit in the Finnish home and everyday use. Design cannot become an end in itself. Above all, it needs to serve people in their everyday lives and bring beauty, enjoyment and relief.[102]

These texts suggest that pursuing international success through design was no longer seen purely as a noble quest. New voices in the discussion argued that prizes and attention had diverted designers from their true responsibilities, which were towards the Finnish people and their everyday lives. As Clarke suggests, in order to effectively fulfil these responsibilities, there needed to be a shift from 'craft production and object-based design thinking' to 'the broader interdisciplinary role of industrial design'[103], which is what an increasing number of Finnish designers began to advocate for. In other words, hand-crafted objects were now seen to exist only for aesthetic purposes, and so gained an aura of elitism. Anonymous industrial design based on team work in contrast became understood as something that took the 'real' needs of people into consideration.

In 1962, the Association of Finnish Designers, Ornamo[104], organised a seminar for its members. Possibly inspired by the new critical voices, the seminar was called 'Days of Self-Criticism', with the intention of discussing design's role and purpose in Finnish society and culture. With an emphasis on social issues, the invited keynote speakers were professors of sociology and psychology, who were expected to inform the seminar participants about recent and future developments in society.[105] In his opening speech, Ilmari Tapiovaara, designer and Ornamo's chair at the time, paraphrased Wahforss's critique expressing his concern of the prevailing elitism in Finnish design culture. He argued that design should be 'a progressive force in society and a part of everyday life'[106] for everyone regardless of their income or social status. In addition to the keynote lectures, the event included a two-day workshop, where the participants were put in working groups to discuss and debate topical themes, such as the moral challenges of being a designer.[107] However, notes from the group discussions reveal that the real concerns creating debate among the participants were the quality of design education and the lack of proper discussion about design and its importance in newspapers and other media. Any moral issues discussed by the participants took the form of statements such as 'we should design for all people'[108], or, designers are 'ideologically naïve'[109], suggesting that ideas of social responsibility were present, but overshadowed by other concerns for the time being.

102 'Teollisen muotoilun ongelmia', *Aamulehti*, 23 October 1961.

103 Clarke, 'Actions Speak Louder', p. 160.

104 'Ornamo' is Esperanto for 'ornament'.

105 Aalto University Archives (AUA), Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.85, Ilmari Tapiovaara, 'Ornamon itsekritiikin päivien avaussanat', undated speech transcription.

106 Ibid.

107 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.85, 'Suunnittelija muuttuvassa yhteiskunnassa', undated workshop programme.

108 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.85, 'Ornamon itsekritiikin päivät', undated workshop notes.

109 Ibid.

Four years later, in 1966, the debate re-emerged with increased force as Kaj Franck published a text called 'Anonymity', criticising the cult of celebrity in the design field. Franck argued that consumers should be made aware of the fact that a designed object was always a group effort, where many types of knowledge were needed, ranging from aesthetics to production techniques and materials. According to Franck, the real purpose of design was to serve people, an objective which had been clouded by the hysteria surrounding 'star designers', whose names had, wrongfully, become a guarantee of functional and beautiful objects.[110] In order to put an end to immoral marketing strategies employing these names, Franck demanded that mass produced objects remain anonymous. Furthermore, Franck wished to keep unique, handcrafted objects separate from industrial design, because they were evaluated on a different scale: craft according to its beauty and originality, and industrial design according to how well it served its purpose.[111] As one of the nation's most revered and prolific designers, Franck's words had an effect, and the question of design's purpose became an essential subject in design debates for years to come.

In addition to discussing these themes in their own circles, many designers and design professionals made efforts to educate industry representatives and the general public about the importance of industrial design. Some designers became prolific writers publishing texts in a variety of outlets, aiming to make industrial design a prominent and permanent part of Finnish design culture. One of these articles was published in a technological journal in 1967, with the title 'Industrial Design – What Is It?'[112]. The article, written by interior architect Heikki Heimala, argued that 'Finnish design is still, for the most part, elite culture', whereas the 'notion of industrial design includes everything that is industrially manufactured from toothbrushes and spanners to industrial machinery and cargo ships'[113]. According to Heimala, designers had the power to shape the perceptions of the objects they designed, in both good and bad. A plastic basket made to imitate a woven one was 'irresponsible, […] disgusting and dishonest', while 'a bulldozer should be sturdy and powerful, a portable typewriter light and neat'[114]. These examples demonstrated that the greatest responsibility of a designer was to design honest products that were precisely what they appeared to be. The general public had the right to become aware of the fact that, through products of low quality, the designers' ability to manipulate consumer perceptions was actually being used against them. As Heimala's article demonstrated, the design debate of the early 1960s focused on questions of elitism and the cult of the star designer, but soon began to take the form of criticism toward the design profession itself with its dangers and dishonesties. According to a growing number of designers, the international success of Finnish design had distorted the morality of their profession.

In her research exploring Finnish consumer culture, Sarantola-Weiss has described a design field in the face of

110 Kaj Franck, 'Anonymiteetti', *Keramiikka ja lasi*, 1-2 (1966), 2-3 (p. 2).

111 Ibid., p. 3.

112 Heikki Heimala, 'Teollinen muotoilu - mitä se on?', *Teknillinen Aikakauslehti*, 10 (1967), 55-56 (p. 55).

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

significant changes: for years, the design debate in Finland had been 'dominated by a small yet influential group of design professionals' focused on 'ideal homes, good taste and rational consumers'[115], while the latter half of the 1960s and, ultimately, the 1970s saw Finland entering a new era of individualistic and hedonistic consumer culture as private consumption trebled in the decades after the Second World War.[116] Historian Minna Autio has argued that by the early 1970s, Finland had transformed into a consumerist society, as the country began showing signs of affluence among its citizens, now able to use their income on items beyond immediate need, such as on holidays, household appliances and other products.[117] According to Sarantola-Weiss, a considerable part of the newly-found affluence was spent on the quality of living, which turned living rooms, dining halls and kitchens into 'arenas' of consumption.[118] Indeed, by 1971, 75 per cent of Finnish households had a black-and-white television, 74 per cent a refrigerator and 61 per cent a washing machine.[119]

This development did not signal the final victory of modernism and its austere aesthetics. On the contrary, individual lifestyles and different tastes became increasingly accepted and supported by the Finnish design industry. Popularised debates regarding interior decoration, taste and consumption entered the pages of a growing number of women's magazines and interior decoration magazines, while debates regarding the future of the profession and its wider meaning in Finnish culture took place in the pages of newspapers and professional publications. Sarantola-Weiss has suggested that the arrival of sofa groups in Finnish living rooms is an apt example of the duality present in the design profession at the time: manufacturers were interested in commercial products, such as sofa groups, often designed anonymously, where the production technology was optimal and revenues high.[120] Meanwhile, companies also saw the need for more unique and aesthetic products which would appear in exhibitions and design magazines with the name of the designer, supporting their reputations as producers of high quality goods. Alongside this development, as the 1960s and 1970s progressed, there emerged an active, and public, culture of design criticism, which brought new points of view into the discussion around the values of the design profession. The questions of how to best employ design, to what end, and at what cost, were discussed so heavily that Armi Ratia, designer and founder of Marimekko, penned an open letter asking for the word 'design' to be abolished on the grounds that it had become 'worn out like an old mitten'[121]. Needless to say, Ratia's wish did not come true.

In these debates, the quest for greater responsibility in the design profession remained present throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there emerged

115 Minna Sarantola-Weiss, 'Creature Comforts: Soft Sofas and the Demise of Modernist Morality in 1970s Finland', in Fallan (ed.), *Scandinavian Design* (pp. 136-151), p. 140.

116 Sarantola-Weiss, Creature Comforts, p. 139.

117 Minna Autio, 'Muuttuva kulutusyhteiskunta ja sen symbolit', in *Vaurastumisen vuodet. Suomen taloushistoria teollistumisen jälkeen*, ed. by Jaana Laine, Susanna Fellman, Matti Hannikainen and Jari Ojala (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2019), pp. 207-226 (p. 207).

118 Sarantola-Weiss, 'Creature Comforts', p. 139.

119 Autio, 'Muuttuva kulutusyhteiskunta ja sen symbolit', p. 211.

120 Sarantola-Weiss, 'Creature Comforts', p. 137.

121 'Design - pyhä lehmä', *Kauppalehti*, 10 April 1967.

no shared understanding about the preferred direction towards which the design profession should be headed. However, due to the criticism that the joint Scandinavian pavilion at the Montreal World Expo in 1967 received, there at least surfaced a strong idea of an unwanted direction. The overarching theme of the exposition in Montreal was 'Man and His World', and the Scandinavian pavilion, of which Finland was a part, was called 'Man in Unity'. Finland's section had been designed by Timo Sarpaneva, and it consisted of enormous panels presenting material experiments made by some of the most famous artists in the country. On the other side of the panels, large images presented heavy industry such as pulp manufacturing and icebreakers with the goal of 'presenting Finland as a developed and industrialised country'[122], as written in the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat.* It is unclear who threw the first stone, but the most prominent criticism came from art historian Ulf Hård af Segerstad in *Form* magazine:

> Scandinavia's failed attempt at fitting in this context can be interpreted as a bankruptcy of aestheticism. […] Expo 67 reveals what has been in the air for long: the feeling that we need to free ourselves from the lingering remains of our lukewarm and static worship of objects, our attitude of an onlooker and our puritanical-"functionalistic" formalism.[123]

Hård af Segerstad's view was shared by design journalist Marika Hausen, who was embarrassed by the impression the Scandinavian pavilion gave in comparison with countries such as the USA, Canada, Italy and United Kingdom, all of which presented their latest technological achievements and visions of the future.[124] Hausen suggested that many of the exhibits managed to make visible the increasing speed of technical development which, in turn, had caused a new 'understanding of other people's problems' and 'a sudden widening of one's consciousness'[125]. Against this backdrop, the Finnish section showed a backward attitude which symbolised 'the final pathetic exertion of an ideology that belongs in the past.'[126] As a whole, the Scandinavian pavilion was 'a complete fiasco' while Finland's contribution was 'grotesquely oversized with an overflowing need for self-assertion'[127].

These harsh words from Hård af Segerstadt and Hausen, among others, marked a clear shift in how design was discussed and perceived in Finland. Previously, designers and commissioners of international exhibitions could be satisfied if their project looked beautiful and brought home prizes. However, this was no longer the case. Design, and exhibitions promoting it, were now expected to take a stand, or at least show a consciousness of a changing world. In the spring of 1967, Ornamo, the Finnish designers' professional organisation, arranged an exhibition called 'Impulssi 67', which was marketed

122 'Suomen jättiläismäiset reliefit Pohjoismaitten Montreal-valttina', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 April 1967.

123 Ulf Hård af Segerstad, 'Världen och vi på expo 67', *Form*, 7 (1967), 439-440 (p. 437).

124 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 1.2.1., *Suomen taideteollisuusyhdistyksen vuosikirja 1968*, Marika Hausen, 'Muotoilun uudet tavoitteet', pp. 6-9 (p.6).

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid, p. 7.

127 Ibid, p. 6.

as a response to the heated debate about design's purpose. It was aimed at both the wider audience and industry with the intention of 'showing Ornamo's potential in all its glory'[128]. The goal was to present design as the generator of industrial production, highlighting its social and economic importance.[129]

The precise content of the exhibition remains unclear, but the reviews were brutal. According to an anonymous review in *Hufvudstadsbladet*, Ornamo did not manage to present anything new, and the urgent questions in the field of design, such as how consumers are being led astray with the names of famous designers, remained unanswered.[130] 'An exaggerated name cult is threatening to ridicule the whole field of industrial arts'[131], suggested the anonymous reviewer. Elsewhere, another anonymous review, with the headline 'Tired designers', stated that a 'thorough exhaustion seems to have taken over the designers, who are desperately trying to look back in history to find solutions and development. Design is still a holy cult, which elevates the object to a hermetic level while neglecting the everyday environment.'[132] The use of words such as 'cult' and 'hermetic', referring to ancient occult traditions, shows that the Finnish design field was seen of some kind of a mysterious, exclusive club governed through an authoritarianism of mythical proportions. The exhibition reviews expressed a growing frustration in the face of the design field's inability to address the criticism directed at it.

1.2.3. 'A cog in the machine'

As the decade progressed, the design debate continued with even sharper tones and a widened perspective: the subject of debate was no longer Finnish design in particular, but the global design profession and its participation in mass production, consumerism and environmental destruction. The theme of the 1967 edition of *Jyväskylän kesä*, an influential culture festival arranged each summer in the city of Jyväskylä in central Finland, was 'Technology and Humanism'.[133] The festival consisted of lectures, debates, exhibitions, concerts and workshops focussing on various forms of culture. Each year, there was a specific programme for design, which, in 1967, centred around environmental activism.[134] The event that gained most attention in the media, however, was a roundtable discussion about the designer's social responsibility. The debate was facilitated by Severi Parko, one of the teachers fired by rector Visanti at the Institute of Industrial Arts the previous year. In addition to chairing the discussion, Parko gave a provocative opening speech:

> We are trying to please the richest buyers in the richest countries. We thrive where money and elegance thrive. We are nowhere near where designers are really needed.

128 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.75., 'Ornamo-uutiset no. 7/1966', undated bulletin to Ornamo members.

129 Ibid.

130 'Impuls 67: Anonym formgivning eller signerad design?', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 2 April 1967.

131 Ibid.

132 'Impulssi 67: Väsyneet suunnittelijat', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 30 March 1967.

133 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.85, 'Jyväskylän kesä 1967', programme leaflet.

134 Ibid.

> […] In the past ten years, we have been trying to hide injustices, […] neglecting education and research, fighting over power of influence. We have produced status symbols and boosted the status of the field and its professionals. [A designer] is not a representative of humanity, he is a cog in the machine.[135]

The same urgency coloured design writer Marika Hausen's summary of 'design's new goals'[136] in the year 1967:

> Our Western lifestyle has included the right to manufacture, […] to overproduce, to destroy, to squander, to poison, to be short-sighted, to refuse collaboration, to hold on to the rights of the individual over the rights of society. We no longer have that right. […] We cannot continue like this. Our goals and means must be re-evaluated: in a way, we are at the end of the road.[137]

Parko and Hausen's words implied a new stage in the Finnish, and international, design field: a newly-found awareness of global injustice and the fear of environmental destruction through over-production and over-consumption. According to Pavitt and Crowley, these 'terrifying visions of modernity in ruins'[138] were the result of a number of seemingly uncontrollable elements marking life during the Cold War: the nuclear arms race, chemical warfare in Vietnam, over-industrialisation and accelerated consumerism. Together, these elements 'forced mankind to reflect upon the possibility of its future destruction.'[139] Pavitt and Crowley argue that in this potentially lethal mess of ideologies, behaviours and technologies, design played a central role in imagining both the destruction and survival of mankind.

The possibility of military occupation and nuclear destruction were present as the complex relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union marked Finnish everyday life in the 1960s and 1970s. The relationship had developed over centuries, but, in 1967, only 50 years had passed since Finland declared its independence during the early stages of the Russian revolution. After the Second World War, in 1948, Finland and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty for Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual assistance, meaning that Finland became committed to neutrality in the face of the Cold War battle between capitalism and communism.[140] In practice, this indicated a persistent tension in Finnish economic, political and cultural life for decades as the country attempted to avoid crossing its eastern neighbour while remaining a sovereign Western country. For example, in 1961, after his visit to the United States, the Finnish president Urho Kekkonen received a note from the Soviet Union suggesting a threat of immediate war and invoking the agreement of military assistance of the 1948 Treaty.[141] The 'Note Crisis', which coincided with the detonation of the

135 'Kerskailutavaraa keikareille', *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 11 July 1967.

136 Hausen, 'Muotoilun uudet tavoitteet', p. 6.

137 Ibid.

138 David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, 'Introduction', in *Cold War Modern*, pp. 11-25 (p. 14).

139 Ibid.

140 Virrankoski, p. 635.

141 Virrankoski, p. 647.

Tsar Bomba on an island in the Arctic ocean, the most powerful nuclear weapon ever tested, was a concrete reminder of the possibility of not only a neighbouring nuclear war, but also of becoming a satellite nation to the Soviet Union.[142]

In terms of both internal and external landscapes, Finland was changing at an unprecedented speed. Still largely an agrarian society after the Second World War, accelerated urbanisation and industrialisation began to transform the country permanently.[143] Following the trajectory of industrial development, large numbers of people left their farms and homes in the countryside and took on work in factories, which also meant moving to the rapidly growing urban areas. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Finnish cities were expanded with new suburbs filled with modular houses of seemingly monumental scale, the Pihlajamäki suburb in Helsinki as the most famous example.[144] By 1970, the number of people living in urban areas had surpassed the number of those living in rural areas.[145] At first, the new suburbs were welcomed with excitement and awe due to their spacious rooms with big windows and improved functionality, especially in comparison with the cramped apartments in old city centres and the often-modest conditions of remote rural areas.[146] However, as historian Kirsi Saarikangas has described, the suburbs soon lost their novelty and, instead, gained a reputation as centres of social problems created by 'rootless country folk', now considered passive victims of circumstance in Finnish society.[147] City centres were changing, too, perhaps most notably Helsinki as the country's capital and thus the centre for business and government. A large number of old buildings were demolished and replaced with new office buildings, while, due to the removal of restrictions limiting the import of cars, the amount of privately owned cars soared from 25,800 cars in 1960 to 602,000 in 1966.[148] Congestion and construction sites created a chaotic, noisy and dysfunctional cityscape in constant change.

Despite its later role in advancing mobile technology, Finland was, at this point, far from a country spearheading global technological development, unlike the United States and the Soviet Union with their nuclear weapons and space race. Nevertheless, along with many other effects, the radical transformation from agrarian to industrial and urban culture undoubtedly created a new consciousness of the built environment and its objects among Finnish people. Moreover, through the television set becoming an everyday item in a growing number of households together with reported advances in computation, there emerged a novel awareness of global technological development. Side by side, urban conditions and the presence of technology created what Scott has called 'a constructed realm characterized by both physical artifacts and expanding information networks', or, 'a postindustrial

142 Ibid.

143 Minna Sarantola-Weiss, 'Rakentajien maa ja hyvinvoinnin kulttuuri', in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria 4. Koti, kylä, kaupunki*, ed. by Kirsi Saarikangas, Pasi Mäenpää and Minna Sarantola-Weiss (Helsinki: Tammi, 2004), pp. 10-19 (p. 14).

144 Elina Standertskjöld, *Arkkitehtuurimme vuosikymmenet 1960-1980* (Helsinki: Suomen rakennustaiteen museo and Rakennustietosäätiö, 2011), p. 42.

145 Mäkikalli, p. 259.

146 Kirsi Saarikangas, 'Metsän reunalla. Suomen rakentaminen 1900-luvulla', in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria 4*, pp. 22-60 (p. 50).

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid., p. 48.

FIGURE 1.2. View of the 'Utopia' exhibition at the Amos Anderson Art Museum, created by art education student Maria Laukka and architectural historian Asko Salokorpi. 1967. Photographer unknown. Catharina Kajander personal archive and Laukka-Salokorpi archive.

concept of environment'[149]. This concept situated the designer 'in a significantly enlarged territorial scale', faced with 'a new set of conceptual tools […] such as systems theory, cybernetics, information theory and semiology – and a new set of doubts about the discipline's efficacy.'[150]

In the early 1960s Finland, the post-war need for beauty, comfort and security had to make room for a more conflicting social and cultural landscape which, consequently, shaped the work of designers. As Crowley suggests, the emergence of new technologies created a 'duality that was shot through Cold War modernity – the dialectics of progress and disaster of utopia and dystopia'[151]. On the one hand, there was the utopian promise of technological development, and on the other, the end of the world. These extremes were felt strongly

149 Scott, *Architecture or Techno-utopia*, p. 89.

150 Ibid.

151 David Crowley, 'Looking Down on Spaceship Earth: Cold War Landscapes', in *Cold War Modern*, p. 251.

in post-war Finland transforming into a welfare state while constantly on its toes striving to stay in good terms with its eastern neighbour. Numerous architects, designers and design collectives across the world began exploring the boundaries of their practice in the face of this Cold War duality. Some of these experiments were presented alongside historical examples in an exhibition at the Amos Anderson Art Museum in Helsinki, in 1967, created by art education student Maria Laukka and architectural historian Asko Salokorpi (see figure 1.2.). The exhibition, simply titled 'Utopia', consisted of large image panels, which depicted architectural utopias from the past centuries together with quotes from thinkers such as Karl Marx, Lewis Mumford, Buckminster Fuller and H.G Wells. The exhibition defined utopias as technological progress, but also as 'architecture with social goals'[152].

The purpose of the exhibition, according to Laukka and Salokorpi, was to make Finnish audiences more aware of utopia as a tool for social development, but also to 'ensure that the actions of a new generation of architects and designers are broadcast through proper channels.'[153] No responses to the exhibition and its contents have been preserved, and it is worth wondering just what the visitors made of, for example, Archigram's visions, some of which were created 'simply to excite the public about the future.'[154] According to architectural historian Simon Sadler, the group's themes and imagery, such as 'The Walking City' from 1964, gladly repurposed military technology giving it 'loveable, googly-eyed countenances.'[155] According to Crowley, projects and plans by groups such as Archigram were, already in their own time, often accused of 'empty utopianism', but these accusations were often deflected by emphasising their 'visionary' or 'experimental' nature.[156] This framing presented design no longer as a problem-solving activity rooted in everyday reality, but as a critical practice which commented on contemporary conditions by putting audiences face-to-face with alternative realities. As Crowley argues, many of these practices were derived from 'already existing technologies, albeit developed in the context of the space race, deep-sea exploration and mining rather than conventional architecture.'[157]

152 Personal archive of Catharina Kajander, *Utopianäyttely*, undated exhibition leaflet.

153 Ibid

154 Simon Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture without Architecture* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2005), p. 39.

155 Ibid., p. 155.

156 Crowley, 'Looking Down on Spaceship Earth', p. 257.

157 Ibid.

1.3. DESIGN EDUCATION AND NOTIONS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

1.3.1. ‘Industrial design is not the same as industrial arts’

Finland was not a participant in the contests to conquer the Moon or to develop nuclear weapons. However, as suggested, massive and permanent changes in societal structures upended Finnish everyday lives, while a growing mass media was broadcasting global developments in technology and politics. For example, the first film material from the Surveyor 7 spacecraft’s lunar landing on 10 January 1968 was broadcast on Finnish television the same day.[158] Such events highlighted how old-fashioned was the focus on domestic objects prevalent in the Finnish design field, and they led to pressures to address, or become a part of, the rapid technological changes taking place in the world. Meanwhile, an increasingly industrialised and urbanised culture offered plenty of new opportunities for the design profession. Despite many differing opinions regarding the direction in which the field should be moving, there was a shared understanding of what were the obstacles standing in the way of development: the state of design education and the limited skill sets of designers graduating from the Institute for Industrial Arts.

Transcribed notes from a 1964 seminar exploring future collaboration between design and industry reveal that the state of design education was alarming. According to the industry representatives invited by the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts (*Suomen taideteollisuusyhdistys*), Finnish design was merely ‘decorative arts made for useless purposes’[159] and Finnish designers were ‘unprofessional bohemian artists who, in spite of their talent, cannot be used in the mundane and disciplined work of the industry.’[160] There emerged a shared understanding that

> industrial design is not the same as industrial arts. An industrial designer is a socially, technologically and economically responsible designer, who is capable of creating the majority of the human environment together with the engineer and by following the development of science and industry.[161]

Furthermore, the seminar participants agreed that the key to producing competent designers, able to cater to the needs of industry and economy, was a university-level design education.

The 1964 seminar echoed a discussion of the purpose of both design and its education in Finnish society dating back almost a hundred years. The development of design

158 Henrik Meinander, *Samaan aikaan. Suomi ja maailma 1968* (Helsinki: Siltala, 2019), p. 15.

159 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 66, ’Muistio teollisuuden edustajien ja muotoilijoiden yhteisestä neuvottelupäivästä’, memo dated 11 September 1964.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid.

education in Finland began in the late 19th century, when the School of Arts and Crafts was opened in Helsinki in 1871. According to historian Ilkka Huovio, the inspiration for the establishment of the school came from Sweden, when C. G. Estlander, a professor at the Helsinki University, saw how educating industrial artists could benefit Finland's industry and economy.[162] Estlander secured support from industry representatives, powerful businessmen and politicians, which resulted in a new school educating artists able to raise the quality of industrially produced goods, making them better suited for export. With the purpose of maintaining the school, the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts was founded in 1875.

Ninety years later, in 1965, the school remained at the level of vocational training, with departments in graphic art, photography, ceramics, metal art, fashion, textiles, interior design, as well as art teacher training.[163] Plans for a university-level institution emerged first in the 1940s and 1950s, but it was not until the 1960s that preparations for the transition began. As Korvenmaa suggests, the most important factor behind the decision to establish a university dedicated to industrial arts was Finland joining the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1961, which fuelled the country's export numbers to other Western countries such as Great Britain and United States and gave a push to the growth of Finnish industries.[164] Meanwhile, design education and the designers it produced remained focused on the idea that design consisted of technical expertise and artistic vision. Regardless of the beautiful and prize-winning objects, this understanding of design was not enough to fulfil the needs of an urbanising and industrialised nation, let alone growing export and more complicated manufacturing processes. Thus, according to Korvenmaa, the role of the international success of Finnish design was two-fold: on the one hand, it was preventing design education from evolving, while on the other, it made industry become interested in design and its role in boosting sales, which added pressure on the development of design education.[165]

1.3.2. **'The conscience of Finnish Design'**

During these pivotal years of development at the Institute for Industrial Arts, Franck, in his role as the artistic director, had a profound influence on both the content of the teaching and the new generation of design students coming of age in the 1960s. This section both explores his teaching activities and presents him as an example of a designer whose work was influenced by strong ideas of social and environmental responsibility. As one of the most prolific and successful designers of 20th century Finland, Franck has been the subject of many books documenting and analysing his life, work and extensive travels. In these accounts, Franck's teaching practice and his design ideology have been explored mainly through the personal memories of his former students,

162 Huovio, 'Veistokoulusta korkeakouluksi', p. 308.

163 Ibid., p. 323.

164 Korvenmaa, 'Tietoisuuden tasot', p. 173.

165 Ibid.

favouring description over analysis and painting a picture of Franck as not only a charismatic and admired teacher but also a mentor and, in some cases, a life-long friend.[166] In the unusually analytical take on Franck's work from a critical point of view, design historian Harri Kalha has framed him as 'one of the central icons of a mythified "Golden Age" of Finnish Design'[167]. In other words, before Franck and his importance can be re-evaluated, he must first be 'de-ritualised and de-iconised'[168]. In Kalha's analysis, Franck was a dictatorial modernist who represented 'the elite of taste initiated into the project of modernism' involved in spreading 'authoritarian propaganda enforcing a politics of good taste.'[169] Kalha is right when arguing that the depiction and historical analyses of Finnish design, of which Franck's work forms a substantial part, have been stripped of any references to the realities of bodies, power, politics and gender, resulting in narrow accounts of heroic designers.[170] However, framing Franck as a prisoner of modernism neglects the vast and contradictory nature of his long career, which started in the 1930s and continued until his death in 1989. Here, the focus is on Franck's own and often conflicting words, as discovered in interviews, lectures and personal notes regarding his role and responsibility as a designer. Together, these paint a picture of a designer occasionally struggling to make sense of his profession, but who also found freedom in asking questions and continuously educating himself.

Franck's career as a designer and teacher was marked by a strong interest in questions of social and environmental responsibility. The often-repeated posthumous view of him as 'the conscience of Finnish design'[171] originates from a 1971 magazine article describing him as 'a pioneer in social responsibility'[172] who had inspired a new generation of designers to break free of the constraints of the elitist aestheticism still defining Finnish design. The emergence of Franck's quest of creating social equality through design can be traced to the late 1940s, when he expressed his wish to 'blow up' old-fashioned and decorative dinner services, which he found impractical and unsuitable for the modern home.[173] At this time, his work was strongly moulded by international modernism and its goals of producing beautiful, high-quality objects for everyone regardless of their social status. According to Franck, the moment that gave shape to the ideals was a study trip to Sweden in 1930, where he visited an exhibition showcasing items embodying the modernist 'more beautiful objects for everyday life' ideology.[174] The social goals present in the exhibition left a lasting impression on Franck, although he did not return to them until after the Second World War, when he, in his own words, 'matured as a designer'[175], and created the *Kilta* tableware for Arabia with its famously austere aesthetics meant to modernise Finnish kitchens. However, in a 1973

166 For example, in 2011, the Design Museum in Helsinki staged a retrospective exhibition about Kaj Franck. The accompanying digital publication, *B1 5 - Kaj Franckin oppilaat*, documented the memories of around 30 of Franck's students, praising his charisma and intellect.

167 Harri Kalha, 'Kaj Franck and Kilta. Gendering the Aesth(-ethics) of Modernism', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, 10 (2000), 28-45, (p. 29).

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid., p. 31.

170 Ibid., p. 29.

171 Ibid.

172 'Kaj Franck - suomalaisen muotoilun omatunto', *Anna*, 8 June 1971, p. 17.

173 Maunula, 'Smash the services', p. 47.

174 'Kaj Franck - suomalaisen muotoilun omatunto', p. 19.

175 Ibid.

interview, Franck admitted to regretting the elitism and arrogance of his earlier work, and even revealed his approval of all kinds of decorative 'knick-knacks', as long as their production did not harm the environment.[176]

A couple of years earlier, he had even renounced the importance of the design profession:

> I have been a person focused on production and design. This is something that we must try to escape. […] Design cannot be an end in itself. […] I have believed in the designer's power to build a better environment for people. Now I see these things in a much softer way. Every human being should be allowed to participate in the building of their own environment.[177]

This statement, among many others, expressed Franck's conflicted thoughts about the design profession, which were far from the modernist belief in making the world a better place through objects. Furthermore, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, in his writing, teaching and other professional activities, Franck often questioned, challenged and even criticised his own profession and the design field in general. He was critical not only of the elitism of designers, but also of the consumerism encouraged by industrial production.

In his 1966 text called 'Anonymity', Franck urged companies to stop marketing products with the names of designers leading consumers astray and giving an untruthful image of design work. In an undated lecture about the same subject, aimed at his fellow designers, Franck argued that Finnish companies, and Finnish designers, promoted a warped understanding of the purpose of design by manufacturing more or less anything as long as sales figures kept going up, ignoring the quality of the objects or real everyday needs. The proper purpose of design was to 'serve people', while the current situation had 'people serving designed products'[178]. In the same speech, Franck suggested that 'the ideal object is born […] when we have solved a problem without making an object', arguing that 'the most ideal material for a designer'[179] was, in fact, air. Design was at its best when it provided immaterial solutions, and Franck had a number of examples illustrating how to use air successfully in designed objects. Geodesic domes developed by Buckminster Fuller and inflatable chairs and mattresses allowed the transformation of life from 'static' to 'dynamic'[180], while the shared city bikes in Amsterdam made 'the freedom of traveling and the ideal of no possessions' a reality.[181] Inflatable objects and an economy based on sharing, not owning, would enable a nomadic lifestyle, which, for Franck, represented ultimate freedom from settling down and becoming bound by possessions.

In the late 1960s, Franck prepared 'The Utopia of Antimaterial', a lecture that he gave on numerous occasions

176 Irina Oksanen and Jukka Jänis, 'Taiteilija Kaj Franck suosii yksinkertaisia muotoja - hyväksyy myös rihkaman', *Uusi Nainen*, 3 (1973), 10-11 (p. 11).

177 'Kaj Franck - suomalaisen muotoilun omatunto', p. 19.

178 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.2., undated notes for an untitled speech, p. 3.

179 Ibid., p. 4.

180 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

181 Ibid., p. 6.

both abroad and in Finland, including the first seminar arranged by the Scandinavian Design Students' Organisation in the summer of 1967, after which the lecture was published in the Swedish design magazine *Form*. In an English translation of the text, Franck described the contradictory feelings of a designer living in an age of overproduction and overconsumption:

> A designer feels at the same time both guilty and powerless against the accelerating series of events which by and by break down the scenery of a nature and quickly change it to a new material, conglomerate culture waste heaping up drift-like over our world in the flow of the rivers and in the bottom of the sea. It is true that man has always endeavoured to change nature. But his 'slow shaping of daily life' has now been switched on to an automatically functioning system of extracting, producing, distributing and consuming which cannot be stopped without serious damage to the mechanism of society.[182]

Franck was not only worried about the guilty feelings of designers. He demanded 'a new view on a man's existence [...], a view not based on material possessions'[183], and insisted that those who wanted to be free had to make everyone else free first. With this, he referenced the development of 'the northern hemisphere becoming richer and the southern hemisphere becoming poorer', while the gap between ownership and non-ownership was widening. In other words, the consciousness of social injustice made the designer reconsider 'whether there is any purpose to keep on making new types of objects in a constantly increasing speed.'[184]

Before his fixed appointment as artistic director in 1960, Franck had already worked as a lecturer at the Institute for Industrial Arts for a decade.[185] Throughout the 1960s, one of his primary responsibilities was to plan and execute the Institute's year-long introductory course, which was compulsory for all students entering the school before continuing to their chosen study paths. According to the school's 1964 yearbook, the introductory course was 'a derivate of the preliminary course developed at Bauhaus' with the aim of directing the students to fight against 'convention' and 'prejudice'[186], while the overarching goal of the course was to unleash the students' creativity and become familiar with the field of industrial arts in general. Over the years, Franck's thoughts about social responsibility and the use of materials and their impact on the natural environment became increasingly explicit in his teaching, perhaps most visibly in the assignments that he gave to the students in the general introductory course.

Many of these assignments combined questions regarding materials and social responsibility in a fascinating way: in 1966, the students' task was to design and build temporary shacks in Jätkäsaari, a derelict area on the Helsinki

182 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.1., 'The Dictatorship of Material', Paris, La Metropole, lecture transcription dated 16 September 1967, p. 1.

183 'The Dictatorship of Material', p. 3.

184 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.2., undated notes for an untitled speech, p. 7.

185 Leena Maunula, 'Smash the services', in *Kaj Franck. Muotoilija*, ed. by Kaj Kalin et. al. (Porvoo: WSOY, 1992), pp. 31-66 (p. 59).

186 AUA, The Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, Hb 13 kuvalliset vuosijulkaisut, *Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen vuosikertomus 1964*, unpaged yearbook from 1964.

FIGURE 1.3. A temporary shack built by students in Jätkäsaari, Helsinki. 1966. Photographer unknown (possibly Kaj Franck). Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

FIGURE 1.4. Students and a pile of waste materials from a near-by construction site. 1966. Photographer unknown (possibly Kaj Franck). Aalto University Archives, TaikV_45_07_010.

coastline (see figures 1.3. and 1.4.). The materials were claimed from a refuse dump where building companies left their waste material.[187] According to Antero Salminen, one of the students on the course that year, the building of the shacks was conducted in groups of up to ten students, the work lasting for days.[188] There are some different views regarding the purpose of the shacks: some remember that the idea was to build shelters for the city's homeless, whereas Salminen suggests that initially the shacks were used as a party location for the students, and only after 'the beach-bums who hung about the area'[189] took over the buildings, did authorities become involved, forcing the students to tear the shacks down. According to Salminen, the students

> razed the shacks and returned to civilisation, realising that by barbecuing sausages on a rubbish dump we had got close to cracking the delicate veneer of bourgeois life. 'Not such a long leap', Franck reckoned, 'it could happen to anyone'.[190]

Another assignment attempting to remove 'the delicate veneer' took place the following year, when Franck gave his students the task of building a playground on an unbuilt property in the Kallio area in Helsinki, which, at the time, was inhabited by working-class families living in austere conditions. Again, the materials used for the playground were mostly recycled or found on location, such as scrap cars which were disassembled and welded back together to form a car to be played in.[191] Blocks of concrete were employed as a craft station, and an enormous edible sculpture was made of bun dough, while the concrete floor of the site acted as an enormous canvas for chalk drawings and paintings. Other elements included a trampoline, puppet theatre and a cave to crawl in. The playground stayed in place for three days, and images from that period show children engaged in play, overjoyed (see figures 1.5.-1.8).

Franck's pedagogy and wider design philosophy were undoubtedly influenced by his travels in Asia, and, especially, to the United States where he visited around 20 design schools to explore American design education and the legacy of Bauhaus emigrees.[192] However, reading through the vast archive of Franck's personal notes and a number of interviews conducted with him throughout the 1960s and 1970s, it becomes evident that Franck's life experiences and worldview were crucial in shaping his thoughts on design's purpose and social responsibility. Franck was vocal about some of these experiences, such as his childhood summers spent in the rural region of Antrea in Southern Karelia, which Finland ceded to the Soviet Union in the Second World War. In a 1973 interview, Franck placed his distaste for clutter and unnecessary objects to his time spent in Antrea, where, according to him, the farm houses had very

187 Antero Salminen, 'The Teacher', in *Kaj Franck - Muotoilija* (pp. 275-291), p. 288.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid., p. 289.

191 AUA, The Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, *Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen vuosikertomus 1964*, 'Leikkikenttä keväällä 1967 - peruskurssin työ', unpaged.

192 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.2., 'Taideteollinen oppilaitos', undated note.

FIGURE 1.5. Children playing in the temporary playground built by students at Kaj Franck's introductory course in Kallio, Helsinki. 1967. Photographer unknown (possibly Kaj Franck). Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

FIGURE 1.6. Edible bun dough sculpture at the Kallio playground. 1967. Photographer unknown (possibly Kaj Franck). Aalto University Archives, TaiKFranck_79_014.

FIGURE 1.7. A rewelded and painted scrap car at the Kallio playground. 1967. Photographer unknown (possibly Kaj Franck). Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

FIGURE 1.8. Local children enjoying the Kallio playground. 1967. Photographer unknown (possibly Kaj Franck). Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

few but well-made, purposeful and functional objects.[193] An interest in the vernacular followed Franck throughout his career: his travel photos and lecture slides depict a deep fascination with the work of craftsmen and with everyday objects across the world, such as solutions for egg packaging (see figures 1.9. and 1.10.). Moreover, Franck's notebooks and reading lists revealed an interest in ethnography and anthropology, with books about, for example, indigenous crafts and pastoral cultures.

Kalha has argued that Franck's often-expressed interest in the vernacular was merely a way to make the austere objects that he designed more marketable, resulting in a recreation of 'a nationalist-primitivizing rhetoric'[194]. However, an undated text suggests that Franck saw a return to craft and local production as an antidote to the 'moral hangover' left by consumer culture:

> industry is spewing new products at an accelerating speed, ignoring the fact that the ideal of no possessions is spreading in welfare countries. Reasons for this: boredom, moral hangover, the fast pace of new products, increasing mobility and the change of interest from objects to events. Return to tradition, craft, small series production.[195]

Furthermore, reading Franck's personal notes and lecture outlines reveals a deep fascination with histories of everyday life and material culture in all corners of the world, including Finland. For example, one specific set of lecture slides, headlined 'Material from the Environment', presents hand-carved wood objects by anonymous makers from the Joensuu region in Eastern Finland, while another detailed the making of straw baskets in images taken by Franck himself (see figure 1.11.).[196] Among books about craft and folk art, there are references to research about the history of the Finnish peasant and the material reality among which they lived, with accounts on the use of different traditional materials such as linen, local wood types, fishing and weaving alongside books about Finland's economic history, urban development and social history.[197] In contrast to Kalha's claim of a commercially-driven interest in the vernacular, Franck's long-time fascination with histories of material culture and everyday life has been well documented not only in public-facing interviews and lectures, but also his personal notes.

However, an undated note, curiously written in English (Franck's first language was Swedish), suggests that there were some events in Franck's personal life, which he had preferred to keep to himself, but that nonetheless had influenced his design philosophy in a significant way. In the note, Franck started to outline an autobiography describing the key events in his life and their impact on his career. For unknown reasons, the text stopped short, but it did describe his experience in the Second World War:

193 Oksanen and Jänis, 'Taiteilija Kaj Franck suosii yksinkertaisia muotoja', p. 11.

194 Kalha, 'Kaj Franck and Kilta', p. 36.

195 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.1., 'Esineen morfologia', undated note.

196 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.1., 'Diasarja Joensuu', undated note.

197 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.1.1., untitled page in Kaj Franck's personal notebook.

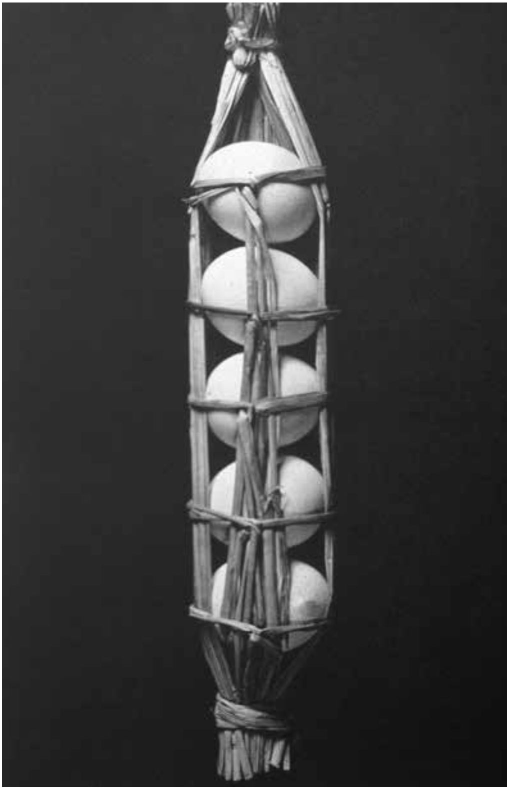

FIGURE 1.9. and **1.10.** Two slides from Kaj Franck's teaching materials presenting a juxtaposition of different ways to store eggs. Date and photographer unknown. Aalto University Archives, TaiKFranck:38:013 and TaiKFranck:38:015.

FIGURE 1.11. Four images from a wider set documenting the traditional technique of making strawbaskets. Date unknown. Photographer Kaj Franck. Design Museum, Kaj Franck Archive.

> 1939 in august I was taken in the army coastartillery because of the political situation. I was on a small island south from Helsinki. Then it was war and hell in many places. Half a year I was out of the uniform and than back again in the new war and there is no reason to talk about the war. Most of the time I spent waiting on small islands with a little groop of men and too small and bad canons. And it happened seldom things but when it happend it was awful.

Before it cuts off abruptly, the text describes the impact the war had on how Franck viewed not only the way he lived his life, but also the way he saw his profession:

> When I came out from the war in winter 1945 I felt it it extremely silly to draw fabrics with tulips and pigeons [...]. I had no success but i had a strong conviction and I worked stubbornly and my ideal was social and not esthetical. I used geometrical forms like in the thirties and not smooth formes and streamlines, like the others. I was a typical angry young man, the only difference was that I was allready over 30 yeares.

> […] I was revolutionary. I spent much time on the street with invalides and alcoholics and putanas and homeless people.[198]

This self-analysis suggests that Franck's wish to take his students behind 'the delicate veneer of bourgeois life'[199] had its roots in a personal desire to look beyond the conventional and conservative façade of post-war Finnish culture. It seems that Franck wished to keep this part of his life private, although, in a 1968 newspaper interview, he revealed that his greatest source of inspiration was to sit in a run-down pub by the Helsinki railway station, where he could meet people 'from all walks of life'[200]. He admitted to enjoying the company of young people, because they were not 'rigid' in their ways of being or thinking. Moreover, the headline of the interview declared Franck as 'a participator' and 'an idealist'[201], an image further strengthened by Franck expressing his resentment towards violence and racial segregation, but also voicing his deep belief in humanity.

In order to reframe Franck's work and to 'de-iconise' the person behind it, Kalha has argued that one must 'set aside the lulling democratic rhetoric […] and look into the history of philosophy, particularly the discourse of classicism'[202], which creates an interpretation of Franck's work through a lens of gendered rationality. Kalha has also suggested that Franck's 'gospel of moderation and self-discipline' were a sign of 'repressed anxieties'[203] connected to his alleged homosexuality. Moving into speculative territory, Kalha has stated that the Kilta tableware, for instance, with its 'flawless and antisensual purity […] may itself have been an effect of a (closeted) sexuality of its creator.'[204] Viewing Franck's personality and work through a gendered lens might generate such hypothetical interpretations. Similarly, when discussing Franck's sense of social justice, his sexuality and how it influenced his everyday life could provide a thought-provoking background: being gay would have meant spending a lifetime on the fringes of society despite great professional success and respect, since homosexuality in Finland was both a punishable crime and an illness warranting treatment well into the last decades of Franck's life. To assume that this would have, at least partly, added to Franck's sensitivity towards questions of social justice is indeed speculative, but perhaps also justified. What remains clear, is that making space for Franck's own words and thoughts reveals an evolving and conflicted designer doubting the role of his profession in the world.

1.3.3. 'Serious development of ideas'

In 1965, the Finnish state became the owner of the Institute for Industrial Arts, which meant that the status and funding of the school were secure. Under the leadership of rector Markus Visanti and Kaj Franck, the curriculum and pedagogic

198 DM, Kaj Franck Archive, B.2.2. untitled and undated note.

199 Salminen, 'The Teacher', p. 289.

200 'Kaj Franck - osallistuja, idealisti', *Savon Sanomat*, 15 June 1968.

201 Ibid.

202 Kalha, 'Kaj Franck and Kilta', p. 37.

203 Ibid., p. 39.

204 Kalha, 'Kaj Franck and Kilta', p. 39.

strategy focused increasingly on responding to the needs of an industrialised society.[205] In the 1950s, designer Tapio Wirkkala had made attempts to introduce specific studies dedicated to industrial design, but it was not until 1961 that a study programme called 'technical design' was opened for students as a part of the Metal Art department. This development was influenced by the change in Finnish industry towards the manufacture of heavy machinery and household appliances and it was established that the skills of a designer were more useful in these areas rather than the fields of forest and metal industries.[206] Throughout the 1960s, a number of reports and surveys were conducted to examine the prospects for industrial design within different industries in Finland. A survey commissioned by the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts in 1967 examined the reality of industries using design in their product development processes.[207] The more traditional branches of Finnish industrial arts, including ceramics and textiles, were left out of the survey and labelled too artistic and individual to be useful to industry. According to Pekka Korvenmaa, the survey revealed that industry representatives saw design's role as increasing the export of goods, which, in turn, meant that the quality of design education was to be evaluated from this perspective.[208] In other words, it was expected that the designer change from an artist into a commercially-minded product developer.

This expectation, and the changes it brought could be seen in the way in which student work developed throughout the decade. A report from a 1960 graduate exhibition, written by 'inspector' J.S. Sirén, reveals that the display included 'serious ecclesiastical themes', 'tiles in pastel hues', 'pieces based on classical shapes' and 'charming embroidery'[209]. Inspector Sirén was impressed by the overall appearance of the exhibition, besides which, in his opinion, the mosaic decorations demanded closer attention. Furthermore, there could have been a more visible progress in the development of 'a cultivated taste' among the students.[210] In 1964, an exhibition review of the annual graduate exhibition, published in newspaper *Uusi Suomi*, noted a new-found interest in objects that 'take industrial design into consideration', especially in the areas of ceramics, interior design and product design.[211] Two years later, in 1966, the reviewer at *Uusi Suomi* noticed that industrial design was now the main focus of the yearly spring exhibition, with an emphasis on the research work and 'the serious development of ideas' conducted by the students, instead of the aesthetic qualities of the final pieces.[212] This time, there 'was an air of serious studies' in research projects conducted in collaborative groups regarding, for example, ergonomic seating or bathrooms in urban apartments.[213] Another review in the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper, in 1967, also highlighted the serious nature of the research and the way in which the processes and results

205 Huovio, 'Veistokoulusta korkeakouluksi', p. 323.

206 Korvenmaa, 'Tietoisuuden tasot', p. 174.

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid., p. 175.

209 AUA, The Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 66, 'Tarkastajan raportti', inspector's report from the 1960 student exhibition at the Institute for Industrial Arts, 1 June 1960.

210 Ibid.

211 Untitled article, *Uusi Suomi*, 24 May 1964.

212 'Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen keskeytetty vuosinäyttely', *Uusi Suomi*, 21 May 1966.

213 Ibid.

were presented.[214] These reports suggest that there was a significant development not only in the methods but also the goals of studies at the Institute for Industrial Arts throughout the decade. However, perhaps the greatest change happened in student culture, as the events of the latter part of the decade show.

1.3.4. 'To design is to ruin life'

In his discussion of Finnish society and culture in the 1960s, historian Jukka Relander argued that material and cultural conditions changed dramatically as both infrastructure and social structures were recreated in a whirlwind of mass media, entertainment and the radicalisation of youth culture.[215] Indeed, the emergence of a rebellious youth culture was among the most debated themes throughout the decade, as young people began to abandon established social hierarchies by behaving, thinking, speaking and dressing in ways that, to the older generations, appeared inappropriate.[216] Already in the 1950s, *Ylioppilaslehti*, the student magazine at the University of Helsinki, began publishing controversial texts, such as articles promoting conscientious objection and openly ridiculing Finnish national heroes.[217] In 1966, the growing student movement was given widespread attention and became a hot topic in the Finnish media when the University of Helsinki student theatre performed *Lapualaisooppera*, a pacifist piece that explored many taboo subjects, such as the 1918 civil war and communism.[218] In addition to resisting conservatism and supporting freedom of speech, the youth movement in 1960s Finland had a strong anti-war focus, which, in turn, immensely provoked older generations who had lived through a civil war and a world war. Despite its intentional provocation, the youth rebellion also received support and acceptance, most notably from the country's president, Urho Kekkonen. He often praised the radicalism of Finnish youth in his speeches and was regularly in touch with leading figures, partly out of interest, and partly in order to stay *au courant* with the movements and their causes.[219]

The student movement at the Institute for Industrial Arts originated in a strong discontentment with the quality of education and the conservative and hierarchical values prevalent in the studies. Teachers ruled the school in a seemingly arbitrary manner, as described by student Lasse Naukkarinen in his editor's letter for one of the Student Union's publications:

> The current teachers are mostly utterly incompetent for university-level teaching. […] In spite of this, the school still houses the old guard who have lost contact with the present moment and its demands a long time ago. Year after year these mentally outdated elders sit in their

214 Leena Maunula, 'Värillisiä tutkimuksia ihmisistä ja ympäristöstä', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 9 May 1967.

215 Jukka Relander, 'Jäähyväiset Snellmannille', in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria 4* (pp. 138-67) p. 140.

216 Meinander, *Samaan aikaan*, p. 170.

217 Matti Klinge and Maunu Harmo, *Ylioppilaslehti* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 1983), p. 301 and p. 326.

218 Relander, 'Jäähyväiset Snellmannille', p. 157.

219 Meinander, *Samaan aikaan*, p. 174.

> empty classrooms […]. At certain departments, students simply do not trust the head teachers' views.[220]

Similarly, Maria Laukka, who studied graphic art and art education, has given a vivid description of the methods of studying in the 1960s:

> We had a schedule from 8 to 5 every day, on Saturdays the day was slightly shorter. [We were] working silently by our desks, received very few instructions, and almost no readings. […] The teachers did their rounds once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The rest of the time they sat in the teachers' lounge, smoking. […] While teaching, they gave oracle-like instructions. The most commonly heard comment was an absent-minded 'carry on'.[221]

In other words, while the content and emphasis of the studies at the Institute might have been changing, the students, like so many of their peers around the world, began to demand not only that their teachers' old-fashioned attitudes and hierarchies be abolished but also the stuffy conservatism of the aesthetic, intellectual and political beliefs of the Institute and beyond. The student activism emerging in the 1960s at the Institute thus became an intriguing mishmash of pop culture, social critique and visions of new roles for art and design in society.

Although the Institute for Industrial Arts had had a strong student culture throughout its existence, it took a more organised form when an official student organisation was founded in the spring of 1961. The first issue of their magazine, *Arttu*, was published a year later. Rather innocent compared to later issues, it included a report of the students' excursion to the Nuutajärvi glass blowing village, an essay on the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, a report from the students' trip to Paris the previous year and an article about the blossoming Finnish jazz scene.[222] Already in 1965, the contents included critical commentary on the state of the school, when the editor's letter written by Maria Laukka noted that 'theoretical teaching and university-level approach is needed at each department at the Institute for Industrial Arts. The students are waiting impatiently for the realisation of the plans to establish university education.'[223] An accompanying essay explored the development of design education, starting with William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement and ending up in Bauhaus with an analysis of the teaching philosophies of Johannes Itten and Lászlo Moholo-Nagy.[224]

As the decade progressed, the magazine took on a more critical tone. The 1966 issue revolved around social criticism with material produced for *Visuaalinen Varietee*, a performance piece written, designed and produced by students as a part of the first-year compulsory introductory

220 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1967, Lasse Naukkarinen, 'Viime vuosi'.

221 Maria Laukka, 'Ihanteiden vallankumous', in *Ateneum Maskerad*, pp. 203-206 (p. 203).

222 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1962.

223 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1965, Maria Laukka, 'Korkeakoulu on tärkeä'.

224 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1965, Liisa Rekola, 'Peruskurssi'.

course taught by Kaj Franck. In the magazine, *Visuaalinen Varietee* was introduced as 'collaboration at its best, creating connections beyond the departmental boundaries' and 'a way to escape the idiotic silo mentality of design and offer a channel into society.'[225] The issue consisted mostly of youthful criticism of a modern society dominated by industrial production and consumerism, crystallised by Maria Laukka in the lyrics to her song 'Who Determines':

> Who commands the machine
> what the machine produces
> How could the buyer
> trust the manufacturer
> Who makes the tableware
> Who makes the clothes
> Who determines
> how the human lives[226]

A poem called 'The Suburb', written by graphic design student Tapio Vapaasalo, described the dullness of everyday life in the modern world, in the 'modular house […] in the new suburb not really anywhere, not in the countryside, not in the city.'[227] The poem evoked the feeling of alienation when riding an elevator, riding a car, writing on a typewriter, counting with a calculator, watching old houses being demolished from the window of an air-conditioned office, watching television with its news of space travels, sports stars and wars.[228] Another poem, written in a stream-of-consciousness style, declared:

> to design is to ruin life
> […]
> oh, free us from design, from corbu's systems[229]

These poems summarised the students' anti-consumerist, even anti-design views, and voiced their criticism on how Finland was being built and what kinds of lives people were encouraged to live. As Pavitt and Crowley have argued, the generation that came of age in the 1960s, grown up in somewhat safe and affluent surroundings, developed a critique of 'the twin props of Cold War modernity: consumerism and militarism.'[230] Furthermore, as Pavitt suggests, design formed such an essential part of consumerism-based freedom and democracy that it was a logical target for young designers and their protests 'against the alienating effects of capitalism'[231]. However, although the protesting students at the Institute for Industrial Arts connected emptiness, purposelessness and alienation directly to capitalism and consumerism, their revolt did not take any party-political form

225 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1966, 'Taideteollisen korkeakoulun oppilaskunta'.

226 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1966, Maria Laukka, 'Kuka määrää'.

227 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1966, Tapio Vapaasalo, 'Lähiö'.

228 Ibid.

229 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.01, *Arttu*, 1966, Kari Karmansalo, untitled poem.

230 Crowley and Pavitt, 'Introduction', p. 22.

231 Pavitt, 'Design and the Democratic Ideal', p. 82.

yet. For the time being, the focus was on opposing the prevailing culture with its conventions and restrictions.

The student revolt at the Institute for Industrial Arts reached a peak in the summer of 1966, when the exhibition that rector Visanti had shut down in the spring, described in the beginning of this chapter, was to be mounted at the Jyväskylän kesä culture festival accompanied by performances of *Visuaalinen Varietee*. The exhibition content was the same as before but with added shock value: a sculpture in the shape of a penis, apparently inspired by Visanti's earlier 'sexless egg' comment (see figure 1.12.). The sculpture created outrage among the festival goers, and again, the exhibition was shut down almost as soon as it opened. The performance of a young artist called M.A. Numminen was interrupted and the police were called to question him due to the explicit nature of the lyrics of his songs, which were taken directly from a sexual education book.[232] The following days, student Maria Laukka repeatedly defended *Visuaalinen Varietee* and the exhibition in newspapers and television, explaining that the students had been given free rein by the festival representatives, who, in turn, blamed the students for inappropriateness and promiscuity:

> Upon the opening, it became clear that the exhibition was not up to our standards, and that the related performances were not within the limits of propriety. Some of the performances were substandard, infantile and contrary to the goals of the festival.[233]

Maria Laukka was later expelled from the Institute for the duration of one semester, which caused widespread outrage in the media, although some also blamed the students for futile and childish provocation. One of the most vocal defenders of the students' actions was Kaj Franck, who made a supporting statement that expressed his support and stated that the social and moral protest that the students' work voiced was a good fit with the festival's progressive image.[234]

As a response to these events, the Student Union of the Institute arranged an exhibition called 'Protest', in Helsinki in the autumn of 1966. It consisted of anonymous artworks, sculptures, paintings, drawings and collages 'opposing war and comparable societal phenomena.'[235] One of the pieces, a giant plaster hand hovering above a faceless human figure, illustrated the mutilating effect of intolerance (see figure 1.13.). A review in the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper argued that the exhibition should be taken seriously, because it showcased and summarised the thoughts of a generation growing up in the 1960s amidst 'the fake world of comic books and the infernal reality of the Vietnam war.'[236] Another review was more sceptical, stating that the actual target of the protest was left unclear:

232 'Jyväskylän kesä: ei leikkiä, ei seksiä', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 13 July 1966.

233 Personal archive of Catharina Kajander, undated press release, Jyväskylän kulttuuripäivät.

234 'Jyväskylän kesä: ei leikkiä, ei seksiä', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 13 July 1966.

235 Raimo Reinikainen, 'Protestin päivät', *Kansan Uutiset*, 22 October, 1966.

236 'Näyttely ja myötälause', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 October, 1966.

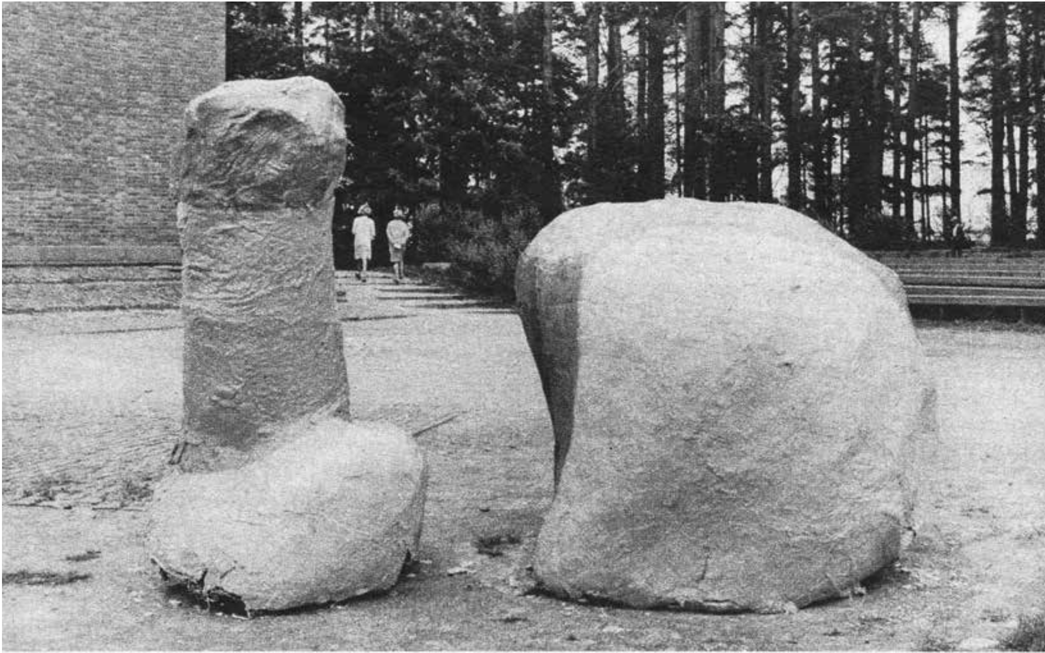

FIGURE 1.12. The infamous penis sculpture made by Maria Laukka, Teemu Lipasti, Catharina Kajander and Asko Salokorpi at the Jyväskylän kesä culture festival. 1966. Photographer unknown. Undated newspaper clipping, Catharina Kajander personal archive.

> There are some anti-war images. [...] In one image, a human's brain consists of mycelium, and a mushroom has grown on top of it. One possible interpretation of this image is that humans have invented the atom bomb and that this is a protest against the invention of the atom bomb.[237]

Indeed, as historian Henrik Meinander has suggested, the youth movement in Finland mostly consisted of 'turbulent and emotionally charged arguments between generations'[238]. Any concrete goals, or plans on how to reach them for that matter, were markedly absent at this time. Either way, perhaps tangible results were irrelevant, and what mattered was to make one's voice heard. As the design students' activities developed and became more established, there emerged more organised efforts aimed directly at changing not only design education, but also the design profession with its practices and values.

237 'TTO:n oppilaskunnan protesti', *Ilta-Sanomat*, 20 October 1966.

238 Meinander, *Samaan aikaan*, p. 141.

FIGURE 1.13. An artwork at the 'Protest' exhibition representing the effect of censorship and intolerance. The exhibition was created by Maria Laukka, Aulikki Jylhä, Olli Tamminen and Catharina Kajander. 1966. Photographer unknown. Catharina Kajander personal archive.

1.4. THE SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN STUDENTS' ORGANISATION

1.4.1. 'A much-needed action that did not exist before'

While the wider youth movement rebelled against cultural and societal conditions, design students had, in addition, their own agenda: renewing the design profession. In February 1966, a group of design students across Nordic design schools, including the Institute for Industrial Arts, met in order to exchange thoughts and experiences about the state of design education. The students shared each other's grievances regarding the quality of teaching, outdated curricula and a hierarchical atmosphere in the respective schools. These experiences prompted the group of students to establish the Scandinavian Design Students' Organisation (SDO), which, despite its relatively short existence, became an influential force for change across Nordic design cultures.

Present in the first meeting in Stockholm, in early 1966, were student union representatives from six schools in four countries: the Swedish *Konstfack* and *Konstindustriskolan* (School of Industrial Arts), Norwegian *Kunsthåndverkskole* (School of Arts and Crafts) and *StatensHåndverks- og kunstindustriskole* (State School of Industrial Arts), Danish *Kunsthåndværkerskolen* (School of Arts and Crafts) and Finnish *Taideteollinen oppilaitos* (Institute for Industrial Arts). The meeting was initiated by the *Konstfack* student union, 'in the hopes of producing a small but concrete result that could bring together the Student Unions and create a platform benefitting students in the respective schools'[239]. According to the minutes of the meeting, the roles of the Student Unions in each school varied from arranging parties, exhibitions and Christmas markets to solving conflicts between teachers and students.[240] A more substantial meeting took place in Oslo already a couple of months later. This time, 40 students participated in pre-planned activities during the course of five days. The programme included debates about the state of design education, lectures, visits to museums and, importantly, dinners and parties.[241] Through discussions, more concrete plans for collaboration emerged, including exchange study programmes, summer schools and collaborative exhibitions. Furthermore, the debates and lectures went beyond questions of design education and into discussions about the role of design in society. The Oslo meeting was reported in two significant Swedish newspapers: *Svenska Dagbladet*, who mentioned it shortly, and *Dagens Nyheter*, who published an enthusiastic text arguing for the students' right to protest and stating that the younger generation has a special understanding of the challenges facing society.[242]

239 Aalto University Student Union Archive (AYYA), University of Industrial Arts Collection, TOKYO Student Union, minutes of a student meeting at Konstfack, 4 and 5 February 1966.

240 Ibid.

241 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, minutes of a student meeting in Oslo, 13-17 April 1966.

242 'Konstfackskolorna I Norden', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9 April 1966; Carl Gunnar Wallin, 'Nordiska konstfackare kräver ett forum för studiedebatter', *Dagens Nyheter*, 19 April 1966.

The collaboration between Nordic design schools was not a coincidence. The first issue of SDO's magazine stated that Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden form 'a historical, geographical, political, industrial, artistic and economic entity.'[243] While strongly exaggerated, this statement reflected an interest towards collaborations of different kind between the Nordic countries in the decades after the Second World War. For example, the Nordic Passport Union was introduced in 1952, creating a shared labour market and free movement across borders.[244] In the field of design, the concept of Scandinavian Design was promoted across the world alongside the idea of Scandinavia as a safe, democratic haven. Thus, there were undoubtedly many reasons for collaboration beyond geographical proximity and shared history.

Six months later, in October 1966, another meeting was held, resulting in concrete actions. A joint Student Union for the six Nordic design schools would be established. *Konstfack* in Stockholm and *Konstindustriskolan* in Gothenburg became responsible for producing and printing the Union's first publication, a magazine about design education.[245] The tone of the magazine was to be colloquial, with an emphasis on generating debate and new ideas. Visually, it was important that the content and its design were of high quality in order to become distinguished from other student magazines at the time. According to the plan, 5000 copies of the magazine was set to be published in April 1967. Each school had 10 pages of dedicated content, but the editorial team had the right to rearrange the space to accommodate material of high quality.[246] The process of selling and marketing the magazine was carefully planned, and, perhaps in case of some scandalous content, there were some debates whether the articles should be signed with real names or remain anonymous.[247]

As planned, the first issue of the students' magazine was published in April 1967. The cover sleeve of the issue explained that the magazine's title *&* was 'a concept, a symbol for everything that was never said, a much-needed action that did not exist before.'[248] A manifesto filled the first page of the magazine, where the students' goal was framed as 'creating better preconditions for a wider understanding of industrial arts.'[249] Most importantly, the students wanted their studies to reflect the reality they lived in. It was impossible to

> continue standing outside of today's, not to mention tomorrow's, society. We want to break free from the isolation, which, in a society dominated by specialists, is about to suffocate us.[250]

The issue explored the themes of design, its education and the surrounding society through the students' own viewpoints. One article explained the need for Scandinavian collaboration,

243 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, issue 1 (1967), Jaakko Halko, 'Några synspunkter'.

244 Seppo Hentilä, Christian Krötzl and Panu Pulma, *'Pohjoismaiden historia'* (Helsinki: Edita, 2002), p. 280.

245 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, minutes of a student meeting, 13-15 October 1966.

246 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, minutes of a student meeting in Stockholm, 19-20 November 1966.

247 Ibid.

248 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 1 (1967), 'Introduction'.

249 Ibid.

250 Ibid.

while another one focused on industrialisation and the changes it created in a society. Additionally, interviews with established designers and design educators investigated the current design field across the Nordic countries. However, an overarching message shone through in all of the content: in order to develop design into a discipline in touch with the surrounding world, its teaching would have to change.

The magazine included some examples of what design and its education might look like in interaction with society. One article provided an analysis of the political situation in South Africa before describing the journey of two *Konstfack* students who had moved to the country to start a school specialised in teaching arts and crafts.[251] Another text investigated the difficulties experienced by disabled children attempting to communicate with the world around them, and discussed how art pedagogy could help overcome some of the barriers.[252] Furthermore, a detailed article explored the role of design in the manufacture of new kinds of prosthetic limbs, created to look and feel as natural as possible.[253] All in all, the themes presented in the first issue of the magazine, such as educational reform, social and political awareness, interest in people previously overlooked by the design field, including children and the disabled, marked the organisation's activities in the course of its short, but intense, existence.

SDO organised its first seminar in July 1967, in the University of Technology campus designed by Alvar Aalto, in Otaniemi, outside Helsinki. The seminar was called 'The Nordic Symposium for Industrial Arts', and the theme, chosen by the Student Union of the Institute of Industrial Arts, was 'Working Environment'. There were approximately 150 participants from across the Nordic countries, and the funding came from the Finnish state, the Nordic Culture Fund and private businesses and organisations.[254] A large part of the presentations, focusing on occupational health and ergonomics, were given by established engineers, doctors and psychologists, focusing on the mechanised and automated work environment and its influence on the human body. There were also significant international guests, including 72-year-old architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller and design provocateur Victor Papanek. Fuller presented his perhaps most famous invention, the geodesic dome, which had been on display at the Montreal World Expo earlier that year, while Papanek introduced his tin can radio and made statements such as 'Scandinavian Design should be sold at jewellery shops because, either way, only the wealthiest can afford it'[255].

The seminar and the students' agenda of renewing design education were noted in the Finnish media, in both local and nation-wide newspapers. *Helsingin Sanomat* printed quotes from the first issue of SDO's magazine, and stated that the seminar would liven up the summer of 1967 with 'fresh, young and interesting programme'[256], while many

251 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 1 (1967), Per Westberg, 'Tyranniets lagar'.

252 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 1 (1967), Brita Norrvi, 'Kontakt'.

253 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 1 (1967), 'Ett socialt samarbete'.

254 Konstfack Archives (KA), Draken, 3 (1967), Magnus Silfverhielm, 'Nordiskt fortbildningsseminarium för industriell konst', p. 25.

255 Ibid.

256 'Työympäristö teemana pohjoismaisessa seminaarissa', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 6 July 1967.

newspapers published interviews with Papanek or profile pieces on Fuller. In a report from the seminar, design writer Marika Hausen stated that 'the speakers created a prairie fire in the auditorium'.[257] The agenda of the design students was noticed not only by their fellow students and the wider design field, but, at least to some extent, by wider audiences. By putting design together with subjects such as engineering and psychology, the students made a conscious effort to push their field closer to other, more scientific ones. Moreover, both Fuller and Papanek presented design work as participating in the solving of complex societal issues, illustrating in concrete terms precisely the direction that the students wanted design to take.

Meanwhile, the Finnish members of SDO were preparing the next issue of the organisation's magazine to be published in 1968. It was a clear departure from the previous issue, as was visible already in the science-fiction-inspired cover design by Timo Aarniala. The imagery formed a chaotic vision of the future consisting of deserted landscapes and planetary views, populated by half-naked women and clothed men, frozen in melancholic admiration or panicked distress (see figures 1.14. and 1.15.). A girl sat helplessly on Planet Earth while another, dressed in superhero costume, held the Moon above her head. Spaceships and missiles flew through sunrises, over empty beaches and snow-topped mountains. The back cover showed a man kneeling in prayer, surrounded by apparitions. Waterfalls, mystical human figures, the Statue of Liberty, birds and a sand castle formed a background for the message: 'SAVE THE EARTH'. Continuing the spirit of an impending natural, or military, catastrophe, the first page of the magazine presented the students' new manifesto. Instead of the concern for design education in the previous issue, the new text dealt with Planet Earth, humanity and their inevitable destruction. 'Man's own nature and its discontent with the world he was born into' was about to abolish the human kind, although 'men with fore-sight in several branches of science are urging the intiation [sic] of emergency measures to ensure that this planet is not poisoned or ravaged beyond human use'[258]. However, a glimmer of hope existed in the form of a new science, which formed a union with nature instead of aiming to conquer it. This 'non-morbid' science was described as 'erotic rather than sadistic in aim', with 'exuberance' as its goal. The manifesto ended with a bleak reminder of the fact that 'we either come to terms with our nature […] or else mankind, by one means or another, will surely die by its own hand.'[259]

The contents of the issue explored what this new science able to save the earth was, and, importantly, the role that design played in it. Several pages were dedicated to Buckminster Fuller and his 'World Science Decade' documents, which explored his comprehensive ideology ranging from existential inquiries ('Has man a function in universe?') to practical applications of theory ('Prime design initiative').[260] Victor Papanek was present, too, with a text, 'Do-It-Yourself-Murder', that anticipated his most famous

257 Marika Hausen, 'Utmaning till designer', *Form*, 7 (1967), pp. 460-461 (p. 460).

258 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 1 (1967), 'Introduction'.

259 Ibid.

260 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 2 (1968), Buckminster Fuller, 'Design Strategy', pp. 8-23 (p. 10).

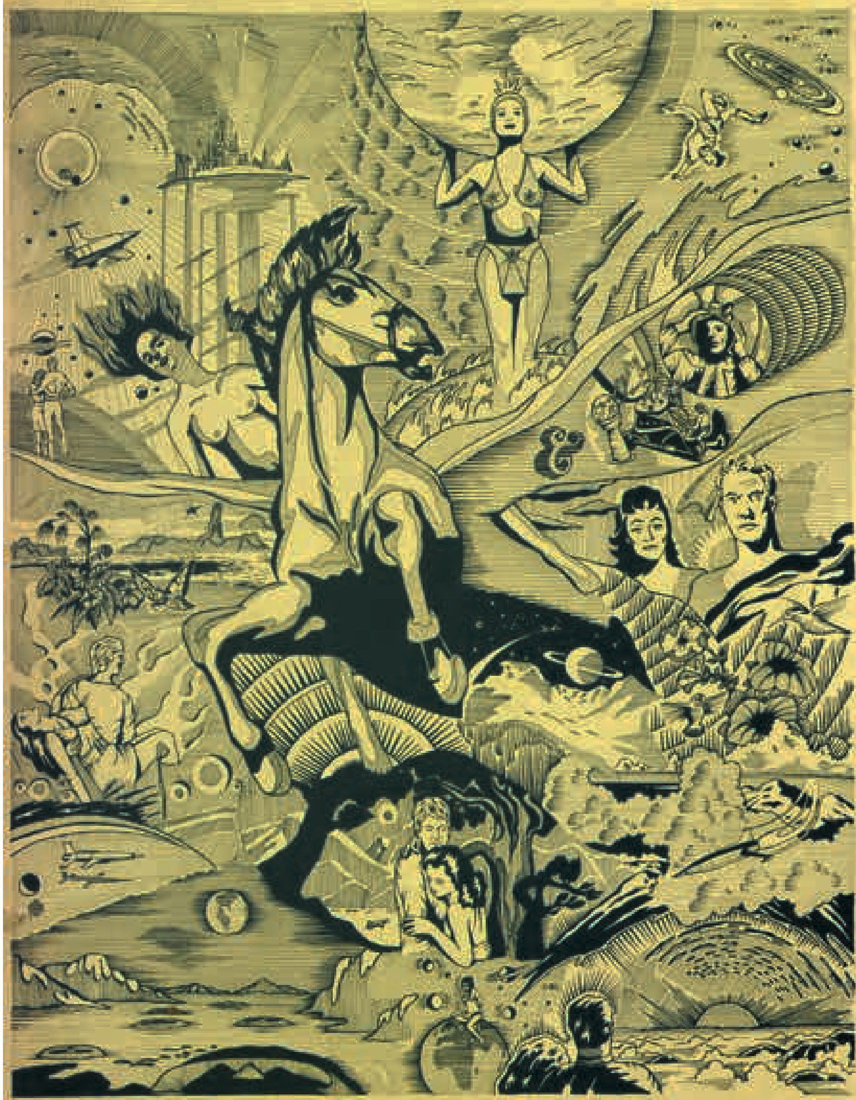

FIGURE 1.14. The front cover of the second issue of *&*, designed by Timo Aarniala. 1968. Yrjö Sotamaa personal archive.

FIGURE 1.15. The back cover of the second issue of *&*, designed by Timo Aarniala. 1968. Yrjö Sotamaa personal archive.

work, *Design for the Real World*, which was to be published a few years later. Papanek argued that while industrial design had become 'the most important tool ever given to man'[261], it was fatally misused and wasted on 'over-styled, jewel-encrusted, latent coffins, which we laughingly refer to as automobiles'[262]. In addition to generating fraudulent needs at the cost of real ones, industrial design created 'killing machines and [put] murder on a mass production basis.'[263] The remaining content in the issue included artist and sociologist John McHale's ideas about world university and outer space and designer J. Christopher Jones' systematic design methods. Moreover, there were texts by Finnish engineers and sociologists exploring the consequences of urbanisation and automation, but also an interview with The Who and artworks by the students, including a photo reportage depicting the changing urban environment in Helsinki.

In addition to a strong sense of urgency, the whole issue was marked by a certainty over the fact that humanity was on the brink of imminent destruction. This was undoubtedly influenced by not only the impending nuclear war, but also a newly-found concern over the conditions of the Finnish natural environment. According to environmental historian Heta Lahdesmäki, the 1960s were marked by an increased understanding that Finland was no longer a pure and innocent haven with untouched nature as industrialisation had 'revealed its dirty face.'[264] Concerns over air pollution, eutrophication and chemicalisation were discussed in newspapers, pamphlets and on television, putting the blame on industries while agriculture was still largely seen as an essential livelihood, which was only tending to nature.[265] As sociologist Esa Konttinen suggests, despite the nation-wide visibility of the debate over environmental conditions, only a very small number of Finns engaged in protests and concrete actions as 'the nation at large, which had experienced the period of post-war distress, now enjoyed a rise in material well-being.'[266] In other words, the design students lived in an increasingly contradictory world: unprecedented affluency made lives more comfortable and boosted the design profession. Meanwhile, there was an increase in new knowledge about the cost at which this affluence was built. In the face of this conflict, alongside a gnawing consciousness of the threat of a new war highlighted by the Soviet Union's invasion of Prague in 1968, the students' frustration over their future profession appears, perhaps, obvious. The second issue of the magazine, then, seemed to demand the acknowledgement and control over these massive issues facing humanity. This could not be achieved by sculpting the perfect chair or mastering the art of pottery. The creation of a rational design discipline based on science, research and statistics meant that a designer could at least try to 'save the earth'.

While the 1968 issue of the students' magazine was impressive in its ambition and range, it is impossible to

261 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, &, 2 (1968), Victor Papanek, 'Do-It-Yourself-Murder', pp. 26-31 (p. 26).

262 Ibid.

263 Ibid.

264 Heta Lähdesmäki, 'Susirajalla ja metsäkiistoissa', in *Maamme. Itsenäisen Suomen kulttuurihistoria*, pp. 351-370 (p. 356).

265 Ibid.

266 Esa Konttinen, 'Four Waves of Environmental Protest', in *All Shades of Green. The Environmentalization of Finnish Society*, by Esa Konttinen, Tapio Litmanen, Matti Nieminen and Marja Ylönen (University of Jyväskylä, 1999), pp. 20-46 (p. 22).

evaluate the numbers of its readership nor its true impact. Yrjö Sotamaa, the issue's editor-in-chief, had great plans for the magazine. He had found the previous issue too modest and traditional, without 'anything special about it.'[267] However, the end result did not meet his expectations: while the planned number of copies was 25,000[268], in the end, only 8000 magazines were printed.[269] The Scandinavian Design Students' Organisation had run into financial difficulties and was not able to pay the printer for the printed magazines, which then ended up stuck in the printers' storage space for months. Finally, in February 1969, the edition was fully paid for and could be distributed. Later that year, Sotamaa admitted that his plans might have been too ambitious.[270] There were a number of reasons behind these difficulties: correspondence between the students reveals that neither their collaboration nor their communication, always ran smoothly. Every now and then, a wish to exit the collaboration was thrown in the air.

1.4.2. 'Industry, Environment, Product Planning'

Despite the obstacles, a number of successful events took place before the eventual demise of the Scandinavian Design Students' Organisation. The first of these, a seminar called 'Industry, Environment, Product Planning', took place in Suomenlinna, a small island outside Helsinki, in July 1968 (see figure 1.16.). It was arranged by a group of design students, engineers and architects, and funded by SITRA, the newly established Finnish Innovation Fund. According to the seminar programme, the idea for the event was born in the summer of 1967, inspired by 'conversations between individuals interested in questions related to product design.'[271] The seminar continued the discussion around a much-needed change within design education, and the goal was to increase cross-disciplinary collaboration because

> industry with its functions and products is the factor that effects our environment in the most powerful way. The inadequacy of the current product design education leads to deficiencies in our built environment. Weakness of education makes design practice ineffective and unstable, while reducing industry's ability to compete.[272]

Highlighting design's connection to industrial competitiveness was a clever way to generate enthusiasm and funding for the seminar. As described earlier, throughout the 1960s, there was a growing interest from industry's side towards developing design education with the goal of creating better products and strengthening export.[273] However, the seminar combined commercial goals with social and environmental

267 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, letter from Yrjö Sotamaa to Per Johansson, 14 August 1967.

268 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, letter from Yrjö Sotamaa to unknown recipients, 27 November 1967.

269 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, 'Lähetysluettelo', 18 January 1969.

270 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, letter from Yrjö Sotamaa to Per Johansson, 18 October 1969.

271 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, 'Teollisuus ympäristö tuotesuunnittelu', undated seminar programme, p. 8.

272 Ibid., p. 1.

273 Korvenmaa, *Finnish Design*, p. 221.

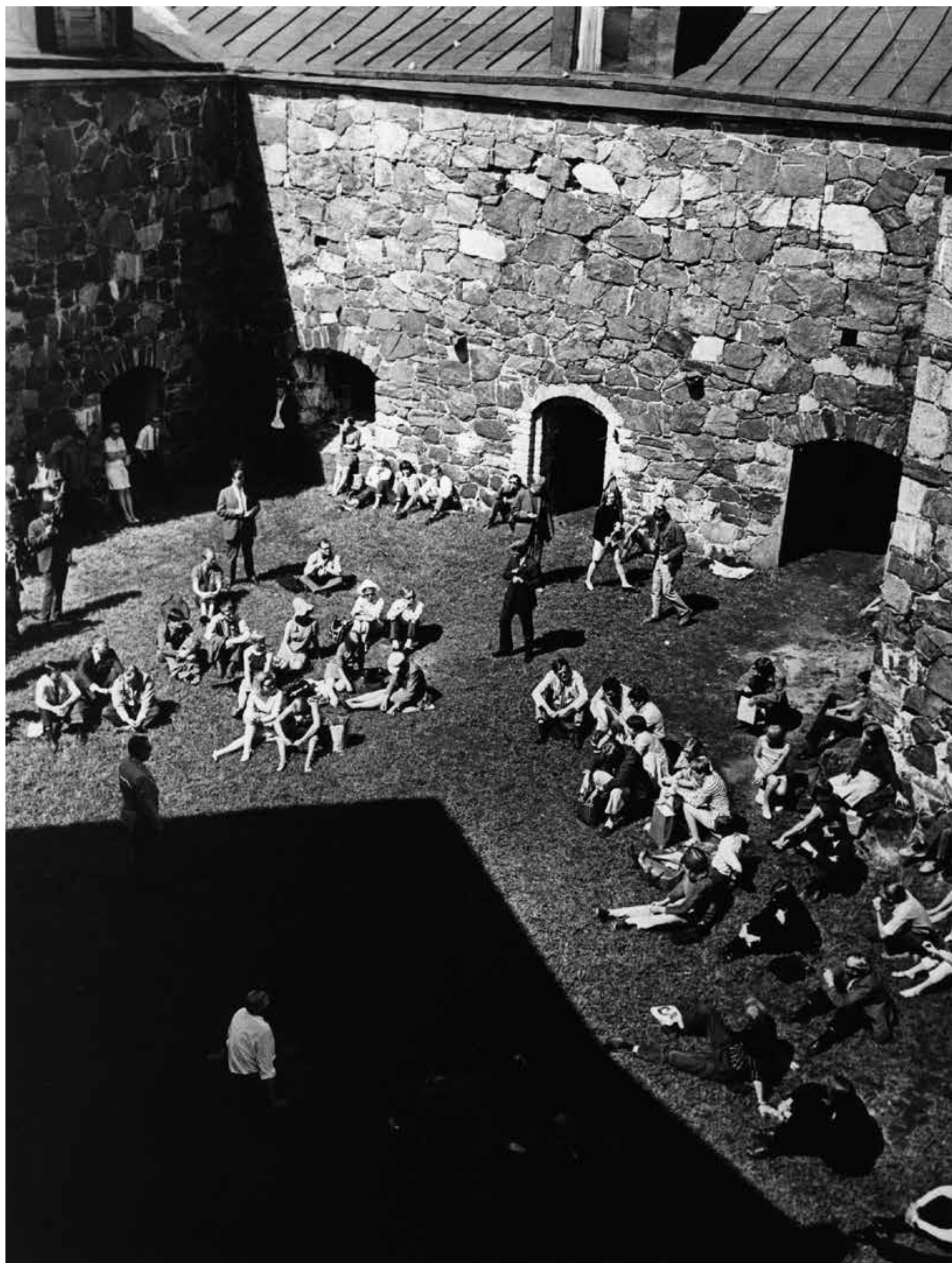

FIGURE 1.16. Audience at the 'Industry, Environment, Product Planning' seminar in Suomenlinna, Helsinki. 1968. Photograph by Kristian Runeberg. Yrjö Sotamaa personal archive.

values in an interesting way: according to Swedish design writer Gunilla Lundahl, who participated in the seminar and covered it for *Form* magazine, the most visible theme in presentations and discussions was 'a consciousness of the threat against the environment and our existence.'[274]

The seminar was arranged in two week-long parts, the first at the beginning of July, and the second one at the end of July. According to the seminar programme, the first part focused on industrial design, social responsibility and the prospects of technology, while the second part focused on design methodologies and processes as well as design education.[275] The interdisciplinary approach could be seen in the range of invited speakers, who included, again, Buckminster Fuller and Victor Papanek, but also a group of researchers from the Design Research Unit at London's Royal College of Art, the famous Swedish environmentalist Hans Palmstierna, Finnish Minister of Labour Jussi Linnamo and psychologist Jan Kronlund, to name a few. The international guests were joined by Finnish experts in engineering, business and architecture. In the programme leaflet, the themes of the seminar were thoroughly presented, with connections and links made between industry, society and education while discussing product design, technology, innovation, methods and process. Importantly, the Finnish word for designer, *muotoilija*, which translates as form-giver, was replaced with *suunnittelija*, a planner.

This put the seminar at some distance, as the students wanted it to, from hand-crafted objects presented at internation exhibitions under the Finnish flag, and started to develop a more scientific and systematic approach to design, along the lines of what had famously been developed in the UK at the Royal College of Art and in Germany at the Ulm School of Design. In her summary of the seminar, Gunilla Lundahl suggested that its most significant accomplishment was, indeed, to bring a different understanding of design to a wider audience in Finland.[276] Design historian Nigan Bayazit has argued that the emergence of the so-called 'scientification' of design, promoted at the Suomenlinna seminar, can be dated as far as the Dutch De Stijl group and the heyday of international modernism in the 1920s.[277] In the 1950s, the horrors of the Second World War together with rapid developments in both technology and mass production had produced a renewed interest in 'human needs', which in turn called for 'a new look at the subject of design method.'[278] According to Bayazit, the Royal College of Art in London, with designers Bruce Archer and Misha Black leading the way, became a pioneer in developing design towards 'a problem-solving and decision-making activity', combining approaches and methodologies from a range of disciplines, such as psychology, engineering, statistics and ergonomics.[279]

The interest in, and hunger for, a more scientific approach to design had already existed in the Finnish design field among students and professionals alike, as

274 Gunilla Lundahl, 'Industri Miljö Produktplanering', *Form*, 7 (1968), 444-446 (p. 444).

275 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, 'Teollisuus ympäristö tuotesuunnittelu', pp. 1 and 3-5.

276 Lundahl, 'Industri Miljö Produktplanering', pp. 445-446.

277 Nigan Bayazit, 'Investigating Design: A Review of Forty Years of Design Research', *DesignIssues*, vol. 20, number 1 (2004), 16-29 (p. 17).

278 Ibid., p. 18.

279 Ibid., p. 22.

expressed in numerous surveys, committees and opinion pieces in various newspapers and journals. With its arguments for rationality and measurability in the design process, the presentation from members of the Design Research Unit in London, with the headline 'Systematic Methods for Designers', fed into the seminar participants' visions for the Finnish design field. The way in which the Design Research Unit drew influences from science, technology and communications theory allowed the design discipline to function according to the scientific principles of measurement, evaluation and analysis.[280] In other words, in order to gain academic credibility, the design field could not rely on the antics of artistic subjectivity and creativity, which had gained nearly mythical proportions in Finnish design culture. The discussion around design methodologies was therefore vital to the goal of opening a university-level school for design. It would give design the long-awaited academic status that would allow the development of research activities and help design gain a disciplinary status in Finnish society alongside architecture and engineering.

In an effort to test and develop the methodologies discussed in the presentations, the seminar also included two workshops, one led by Victor Papanek and the other by Buckminster Fuller. The task of the group led by Papanek was to design a playground for children with cerebral palsy, and Fuller's group worked on creating a mobile slaughterhouse for reindeer, mainly to be used by the Indigenous Sámi population in the North of Finland (see figure 1.17.).[281] The slaughterhouse was expected to help support one of the main livelihoods of the Sámi, as a new law had been introduced, demanding better hygiene for slaughtering cattle.[282] The result of the workshop was a functioning prototype, which could be taken apart and put back together easily, while being light enough for one person to move and transport it in the back of a small truck.[283] There is no evidence of what the responses from actual reindeer herders were, but journalist Matti Pensala, writing for the *Kaunis Koti* interior design magazine, enthused over the prototype and saw it solving many of the issues caused by the new law.[284] Moreover, as the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* reported, the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture became interested in funding further research and prototypes. However, it remains unclear whether the slaughterhouse ended up in production and use.[285]

The results of the seminar workshops demonstrated what a more research-based and socially responsible design could be in practice. Furthermore, the portable reindeer slaughterhouse was a sign of a growing interest in what Alison J. Clarke has called 'peripheral economies'[286], emblematic of what she describes as a global development

280 Jane Pavitt, 'Input/Output: Design Research and Systems Thinking', in *The Perfect Place to Grow: 175 Years of the Royal College of Art*, ed. by Octavia Reeve (London: Royal College of Art, 2012), pp. 129-140 (p. 133).

281 Personal archive of Yrjö Sotamaa, 'Teollisuus ympäristö tuotesuunnittelu', p. 8.

282 Matti Pensala, 'Tapahtui Suomenlinnassa', *Kaunis Koti*, 5 (1968), 15-17 and 69 (p. 69).

283 YLE Elävä Arkisto, Finnish National Broadcasting Company online archive, televised report, 'Liikuteltava poroteurastamo tuotesuunnitteluseminaarissa': http://yle.fi/elavaarkisto/artikkelit/liikuteltava_poroteurastamo_tuotesuunnitteluseminaarissa_37169.html#media=37175, [accessed 23 February 2022].

284 Pensala, 'Tapahtui Suomenlinnassa', p. 69.

285 'Kuntoutusvälineitä ja teurastamo Suomenlinnan seminaarin tuloksina', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 18 July 1968.

286 Alison J. Clarke, 'The Anthropological Object in Design: From Victor Papanek to Superstudio', *Design Anthropology, Object Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. by Alison J. Clarke (Vienna: Springer-Werlag, 2011), pp. 74-87 (p. 74).

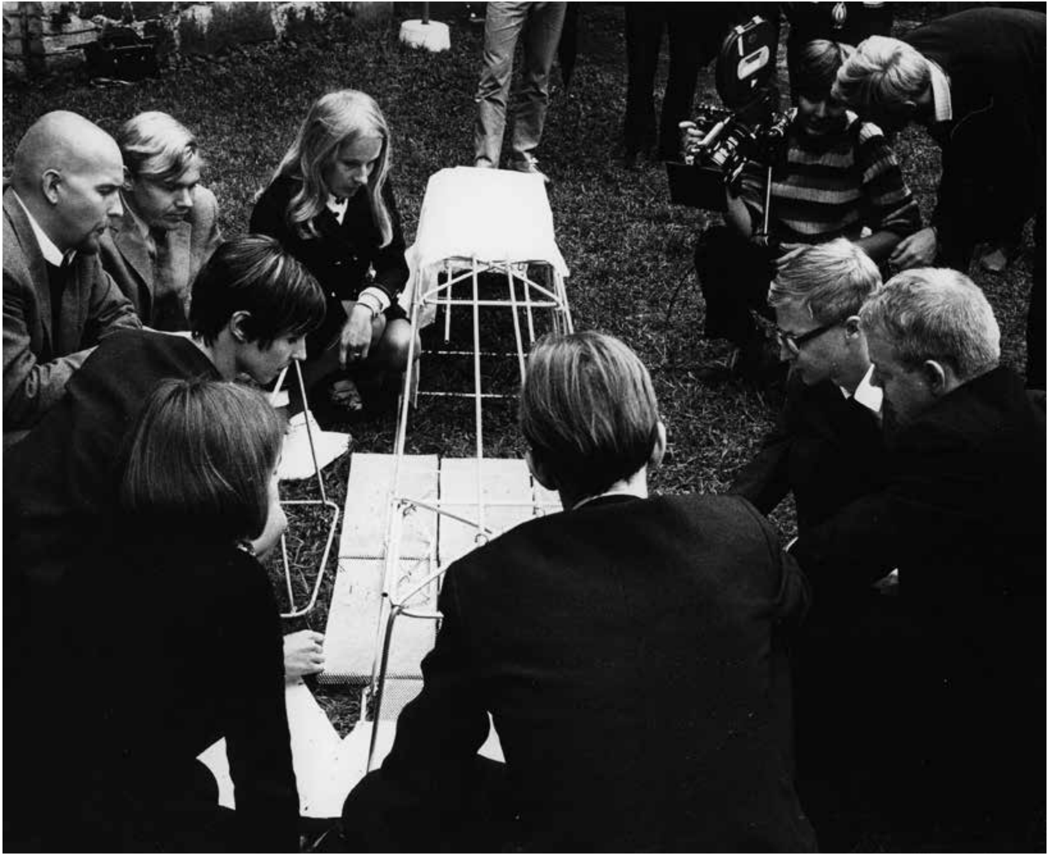

FIGURE 1.17. Seminar participants gathering around the reindeer slaughterhouse prototype. 1968. Photograph by Kristian Runeberg. Yrjö Sotamaa personal archive.

of a design culture increasingly critical of capitalist and commercial values. Instead of designing for mass consumption, designers became interested in 'the anthropological' and its aim of revealing the layers in human, social and cultural interactions.[287] However, this interest was mostly aimed towards people in vulnerable positions very different from the designers themselves. Clarke has aptly questioned whether 'the radicalism of the art and design school' ended up co-opting 'a neocolonial agenda', in the pursuit of social goals.[288] Even though the circumstances around the development and use of the portable reindeer slaughterhouse remain unclear, it might still be worth reconsidering the impact of the project, realised by students under the leadership of Buckminster Fuller whose ideology was filtered 'not through social and political contestation but through unfettered technological development'[289], as suggested by Scott. Upon closer inspection, the seem-

287 Clarke, 'The Anthropological Object in Design', p. 79.

288 Alison J. Clarke, 'Design for Development, ICSID and UNIDO: The Anthropological Turn in 1970s Design', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2015), 43-57 (p. 47).

289 Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia*, p. 202.

ingly progressive projects of the 'socially committed'[290] designers and design students were often marked by an uncritical belief in designed objects as amalgamations of technological development and progress, despite their self-proclaimed distance from the modernist ideals of the past decades. A stubborn belief in design as 'a problem-solving and decision-making activity'[291] was at the core of its development towards a scientific discipline.

Finnish newspapers, magazines and even television, published a great number of enthusiastic reports and articles about the Suomenlinna seminar. In an interview filmed and televised by YLE, the Finnish public service broadcast company, one of the people involved in the seminar, engineer Matti Kaje, expressed his contentment and stated that it had been 'a much more positive experience than what we expected' and that 'both domestic and international guests have not only exceeded our expectations but also exceeded themselves'[292]. Yrjö Sotamaa, one of the leaders of the seminar, wrote a letter to his Swedish colleague stating that thanks to the seminar 'teachers (naturally not all of them) have become eager to make changes and work together with students.'[293] In other words, the seminar brought attention to and interest in the design students' message about the need to renew the education and professional values of design. In March 1968, the Student Union at the Institute for Industrial Arts had sent an official letter of complaint to the Finnish Government, arguing that design education in the country was not at the level it should be in an industrialised society.[294] Markus Visanti, the Institute's rector, supported the students and released a statement of his own, where he confirmed that the lack of funds and opportunities was what was preventing the design field from reaching its full potential.[295] Moreover, Yrjö Sotamaa confidently stated that the activities created in collaboration with Nordic design students had already benefitted design education more than any other organisation in the field.[296] Whether this was true or not, together the students had managed to make their voices heard.

1.4.3. 'A social and global consciousness'

SDO's activities continued the same summer in another seminar, this time in Stockholm, Sweden. Here, the focus was not so much on design education, or the development of the field of design, but on design's social responsibility. In January 1968, the Student Union at the Konstfack design school in Stockholm had arranged a three-day seminar putting designers and engineers together to discuss design for people with physical disabilities.[297] Another seminar some months later gathered over 300 participants to debate the so-called developing countries and the ways in which design could participate in supporting their economies and

290 von Helvert, 'Introduction', p. 15.

291 Bayazit, 'Investigating Design', p. 22.

292 YLE Elävä Arkisto, 'Liikuteltava poroteurastamo tuotesuunnitteluseminaarissa'.

293 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, letter from Yrjö Sotamaa to Per Johansson, 18 October 1968.

294 'Teollisuuden ja suunnittelijakoulutuksen suhteet tutkittava', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 19 March 1968.

295 Ibid.

296 Ibid.

297 'Expertkonferens om formgivning för handikappade', *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 January 1968.

peoples.[298] Indeed, as historian Kjell Östberg has argued, the Swedish youth movement of the 1960s had a strong focus on the international solidarity movement rather than educational democracy.[299] This could also be seen in the debate surrounding the design field. Even though Swedish design students expressed discontent with their education, too, there was a strong focus on questioning the role and purpose of design.

These questions were at the centre of the 'Human – Environment' seminar arranged by SDO in Stockholm, in August 1968. The advertisement for the seminar published in the design student magazine *Draken* sounded similar to the programme at the Suomenlinna seminar:

> Since planning and researching for society and environment are not tasks reserved for a limited group of politicians or experts, the lecturers will form an interdisciplinary group including architects, planners, sociologists, psychologists, economists and technicians [in order to] give an example of collaboration with areas of expertise outside the school's framework [and] to provide students with orientation towards society and the necessary skills to solve the problems of today and tomorrow.[300]

According to Gunilla Lundahl, the seminar strove towards 'a social and global consciousness'[301], exploring themes such as the so-called developing countries, environmental destruction and over-consumption. Lundahl evocatively described the workshops which approached these issues in practice while forging

> a feeling of responsibility, participation and co-creation. […] The participants went through an intense development, immersing themselves in the problems, becoming conscious of their roles in society and learning how to work in a community.[302]

The workshops were realised in five groups divided into themes: education, environment, disabilities, developing countries and communication. As an example, the developing countries group, led by Indian architect Madhukar Desai, designed a low-cost dwelling for Indian families, made with clay, grass and waste materials.[303] According to the group, the designed house was not very unlike those common in India, but it could be built using more affordable materials, thus making it available for a greater number of people. The other groups worked with questions including the relationship between society and design education, reconstructing the concept of a service and communicating the dangers of pesticides.

It was the group working with questions related to disabilities who ended up producing a design that would

298 'Fyra dagar u-landsfrågor för 300 på Konstfack', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 February 1968.

299 Kjell Östberg, 'Sweden and the Long '1968': Break or Continuity?', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 33, issue 4 (2008) 339-352 (p. 342).

300 KA, *Draken*, issue 5 (1968), advertisement for the 'Human - Environment' seminar.

301 Gunilla Lundahl, 'Utbildning för demokrati', *Form*, issue 7 (1968), pp. 440-443 (p. 440).

302 Ibid.

303 'Gör oss samhällsnyttiga', *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 August 1968.

gain global visibility that continues to this day. In the 1960s, Sweden went through a transformation in terms of social and cultural attitudes towards people with disabilities, which culminated in a law that prompted the creation of a greater number of accessible spaces and housing.[304] According to design historian Elizabeth Guffey, this development was part of a wider movement in Europe and America promoting accessibility and better services for the disabled, which, in turn, had its origins in providing employment and education for disabled war veterans.[305] The group at the seminar thus worked on designing clothes, toys, handles and toilets that would meet a set of requirements put in place by invited consultants with disabilities.[306] In this work, the participating students were led by English ergonomist Bob Feeney together with a psychologist and a doctor. The most significant result of the group's work, and perhaps the workshop as a whole, was a symbol for communicating the accessibility of spaces, which later became the International Symbol of Access.

Designed by Danish graphic design student Susanne Koefed, the symbol was first included in an exhibition presenting design work by students. It received enthusiastic attention in the press, after which the Swedish Handicapped Institute wished to take it in use across the whole country. The following year, in an issue focusing on the theme of disability, *Form* introduced the symbol:

> The idea is that the symbol will be placed wherever the physically disabled will be able to move about: out in the city, in public buildings, shops and elevators, public toilets. Places where the doors are wide enough, thresholds and kerbs low enough so that someone in a wheelchair is able to pass through. We cannot tell yet whether the symbol will be used or not. In any case, the way our environment is formed today means that there are not that many places where it could be utilised.[307]

The non-profit organisation Rehabilitation International started to promote the symbol globally already a year after it first appeared in the public eye.[308] However, Koefoed's design had been changed without consulting her, most visibly by adding a small circle to signify a head, making 'the wheelchair into a person'[309], as opposed to the original design which simply depicted a side view of a wheelchair. Despite the ubiquitous nature of the symbol, over the years, it has received its share of criticism, too. In Guffey's analysis, the story of the symbol and the way in which the original design was altered without its original creator is 'a cautionary tale' depicting 'global political and bureaucratic exigencies as good design practice.'[310] In the history of the SDO, the International Symbol of Access remains a demonstration of not only the magnitude of the issues the

304 'Leva med handikapp', *Form*, 10 (1968), p. 506.

305 Elizabeth Guffey, 'The Scandinavian Roots of the International Symbol of Access', *Design and Culture*, vol. 7, issue 3, 357-376 (p. 359).

306 'Gör oss samhällsnyttiga', *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 August 1968.

307 'Leva med handikapp', p. 506.

308 Guffey, 'The Scandinavian Roots of the International Symbol of Access', p. 359

309 Ibid., p. 368.

310 Ibid., p. 372.

students were addressing and demanding more attention to, but also their closeness to everyday lives across the world.

1.4.4. **'The man with an answer to every question'**

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Victor Papanek was one of the most prominent voices regarding social responsibility in the international design field. He was a frequent guest also in Finland and other Nordic countries, and there is a persistent misunderstanding that the interest in design's social and environmental responsibility in these countries was a result of Papanek's visits. Questioning this assumption and investigating his relationship with design communities in Finland and more generally in the Nordic countries reveals not only a different story but also a more complex and nuanced understanding of how ideas travel across the global design field, and how they influence and become influenced by debates shaped by local communities and conditions. In her description of Victor Papanek's role in the Finnish design community, Clarke paints a vivid picture of a man 'with persistent and dogged determination […] obsessed with accessing the […] Nordic design scene'[311]. Papanek was virtually unknown in Finland when he secured himself an invitation to speak at the Jyväskylän kesä culture festival in central Finland, in 1966. For the next few years, Papanek became a familiar sight in design events around Scandinavia, but, judged by the press coverage, he was at the height of his popularity during the Suomenlinna and Stockholm seminars in the summer of 1968. The subject of numerous newspaper and magazine articles, he was proclaimed 'the man with an answer to every question'[312] and 'the figurehead'[313] of a design movement. Especially a lecture called 'The Moral and Social Responsibility of the Designer', delivered at the Stockholm seminar, gained an enthusiastic response. According to reports in Swedish newspapers, the lecture lasted for eight hours, and was illustrated by 350 images that showed, for example, 'pill boxes that children cannot open, contact lenses for goats, chairs and bicycles for disabled children and a surgery knife attached to a doctor's finger.'[314] Papanek's lectures, and the objects and projects that he presented, were described as 'a flood of engagement, ideas, jokes, ludicrous designs and good solutions.'[315]

There were undoubtedly many reasons behind Papanek's success across the Nordic countries (his travels included Oslo and Copenhagen, too). One of these was possibly the fact that, in his lectures, he brought the world with him as he talked about cultures and objects of faraway countries which very few, if any, of the students in the audience had visited. He was also a skilled provocateur whose rhetoric produced catchy headlines without becoming too theoretical or complicated for the wider audience to engage with. It seems like Papanek knew how to respond to the

311 Alison J. Clarke, *Victor Papanek. Designer for the Real World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2021), p 181.

312 'Samhällsengagerad designundervisning', *Dagens Nyheter*, 29 July 1968.

313 'Kreativitet efterlyses', *Dagens Nyheter*, 26 July 1968.

314 'Formgivaren har moraliskt ansvar - Designbehov finns överallt i världen', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 24 July 1968.

315 'Nya områden för design', *Dagens Nyheter*, 24 July 1968.

students' anxieties, unlike their teachers. For example, during a talk at the Suomenlinna symposium, he made a comment about the violent student revolts taking place around the world, suggesting that many of the protesting students were likely to become depressed not by witnessing endless amounts of injustice but by being made to believe that they had no power to change the world for the better.[316] Papanek argued that this was a false preconception, and stated that waving flags and building barricades was not the way to creative positive change. Instead, the students should engage in concrete actions, such as their workshop in the Suomenlinna seminar, designing a playground for disabled children.

According to Clarke, it was Finland and its 'social welfare model of design provision'[317] which acted as the greatest inspiration to many of the thoughts and ideas in Papanek's most famous book, *Design for the Real World*. Due to the prevalence of the debate regarding design's social responsibility in 1960s Finland, it is difficult to assert the patterns and directions of influence and inspiration between Papanek and Finnish design professionals and students. As Clarke suggests, 'Papanek's thesis of an ethical design culture underpinned by an economy of need, rather than an economy of desire' resonated in Finland, for example, due to the country's 'relatively recent urbanisation, socialist infrastructure, and "good design" pedigree'.[318] Moreover, Papanek's views on design education were similar to those of the Finnish students. In one of his presentations at the Suomenlinna seminar, called 'Human Needs and the Designer', he stated that 'a good designer learns not only how to draw, and I hope how to think, but he also learns how to use psychology, anthropology and sociology and mathematics and engineering and biology'[319]. Papanek's agenda for design, 'premised on a broad recognition of social inequality'[320], was speaking directly to students frustrated by the many injustices of the world they were witnessing.

However, Papanek received heavy criticism, too, in the press and in discussions after his lectures. Design journalist Gunilla Lundahl described him as an 'effective, often engaging and occasionally inflexible conviction machine'[321]. Similarly, Donald Willcox, an American journalist and a self-proclaimed expert on Finnish design, declared Papanek 'a circuit-riding gospel preacher who travels from town to town delivering the same Sunday sermon.'[322] Willcox blamed Papanek for not providing any tools to turn his ideas into reality, suggesting that 'it is not an easy experience for young ears to hear a powerful message of idealism, and then be hit over the head with this idealism once the realisation of the ideal is attempted.'[323] Perhaps rightly so, Willcox was of course referring to the reality of design students having to make a living after graduation, which, at this point, meant designing for industrial production and mass consumption.

316 Pensala, 'Tapahtui Suomenlinnassa', p. 17.

317 Alison J. Clarke, 'Victor Papanek: Agent Provocateur of Design', in *Victor Papanek: The Politics of Design*, ed. by Alison J. Clarke et. al. (Vitra Design Museum, 2018), pp. 26-47, (p. 34).

318 Clarke, 'Actions Speak Louder', p. 155.

319 University of Applied Arts Vienna, Archive and Collection, Victor J. Papanek Foundation, Transcription of the lecture 'Human Needs and the Designer', July 1st, 1968, p. 2.

320 Clarke, 'Actions Speak Louder', p. 153.

321 Lundahl, 'Utbildning för demokrati', p. 440.

322 Donald J. Willcox, *Finnish Design: Facts or Fancy* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973), p. 47.

323 Ibid.

According to a transcription of one of his lectures at the Suomenlinna seminar, after the talk was finished, a heated discussion began about the best way to make a difference, whether through activist protesting, or practical work. To repeated demands about the need to try and change the structures of society, Papanek replied: 'I don't want to talk about politics because I don't know anything about it.'[324] In another discussion, he was asked whether he was aware of his political influence. In reply, he stated: 'Well I'm a designer and not a politician. If what I do has political meaning, I'm not aware of it.'[325]

These exchanges communicated the start of a wider change in design student activism. Instead of a general opposition to social injustice and environmental destruction, the youth movement started to gain more of a political agenda. The way in which Papanek continuously stressed the importance of concrete action over political activism caused controversy, as an increasing number of students could not see how politics could be avoided when addressing structural issues such as poverty and discrimination.[326] As Gunilla Lundahl suggested, Papanek's reluctance to consider any of design's political entanglements created resistance, because of a shared desire among the students 'to see society as a result of a system'[327]. This discussion was hinting at the future development of extreme left-wing politics among students and cultural elite, which came to characterise and divide Swedish, and especially Finnish, culture for years to come, and which also was one of the reasons behind the eventual dissolution of the Scandinavian Design Students' Organisation already in 1969.

324 Papanek Foundation, transcription of the lecture 'Human Needs and the Designer', July 1st, 1968, p. 30.

325 Papanek Foundation, transcription of the lecture 'Design Education in the US', undated, p. 16.

326 'Samhällstudier behövs för designer i u-land', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 25 July 1968.

327 Lundahl, 'Utbildning för demokrati', p. 440.

1.5. POLITICIZATION OF THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

This chapter has explored how the understanding of design's role in society developed and was transformed in Finland during the course of the 1960s. In the previous decade, Finnish design had gained considerable fame and success internationally, which had pushed the design profession towards creating unique objects of exquisite beauty to win further prizes and boost the country's national identity and export figures. This development was challenged in a heated debate starting in the early 1960s, when designers and design critics argued over whether Finnish designers had lost their moral backbone in their pursuit of international success. Finland was changing at an unprecedented speed towards an industrialised and urbanised society, a process that transformed the country and its culture permanently and created new needs relating to its industries and built environment. The quality and nature of design education, which focused mostly on material techniques, aesthetics and individual artistic expression, had not prepared students for their future profession in an industrialised landscape.

At the same time, the post-war baby-boom generation was growing up to challenge the values and conventions of their parents and the surrounding culture which they found conservative and stifling. As new design students and designers emerged from this socially conscious and rebellious generation, the prospect of creating aestheticized objects for exhibitions was not enough. These factors led to a new stage in the Finnish design field, marked by an awareness of global injustice and impending environmental destruction due to over-production and over-consumption. The students began to challenge and develop their education towards a more rigorous, ambitious and scientific direction capable of taking on some of the most urgent issues in their living environments. These actions were informed by a new culture of critical debate within the field of design, which had been initiated by design professionals in the early 1960s, and which the students eagerly continued. Design students pushed this debate further and began to question not only design practice itself, but its complacency in the social, political and economic realities of an industrial and capitalist consumer culture.

Instead of passively waiting for change, students took matters into their own hands. They initiated collaborations with their peers across Nordic countries, who shared their feelings of frustration in the face of outdated forms of education and conservatism. Together the students arranged seminars in which they replaced their teachers with international guests. Talks, lectures and debates formed an important part of the seminars as exchanges of ideas and knowledge, but the results of hands-on design workshops had perhaps an even greater impact on the development of the Finnish design field. In these workshops, arranged as parts of the seminars, it became possible

for the students to experiment with new methods while creating the kind of design practice they wished to engage with.

While the first expressions of student revolt had been labelled immature and conflict-seeking, as the decade passed and the students' activities focused more on transforming design towards an academic discipline and promoting a specific combination of social critique and technological progress, their actions began to receive considerable positive attention not only in the media but also from governmental bodies who funded and visited their events. In the summer of 1970, on the cusp of a new decade, *Form* described the previous, turbulent, years:

> Towards the end of the 1960s, the unwanted side of our growing wealth is becoming visible: noise and exhaust, caused by uninhibited private motoring, is ruining our city environment, a process of restructuring is creating large industrial units and is increasing feelings of stress, illness and alienation in work environments. The world is coming closer. There is a growing solidarity towards the Third World. Protests against political oppression and economical exploitation are held openly. We are beginning to draw up a vision of a new society, built on a sense of community.[328]

This description seemed to ring true for the Finnish experience of the 1960s, too. The issues mentioned were, of course, not resolved, and the design students' mission to improve design education and design practice was far from completed. Little by little, as the wider youth movement transformed into a more polarised and party political direction, so did the revolt of the design students.

This change could also be seen in the actions of the SDO as their next seminar, held in Copenhagen in 1969, became their last. The exact course of events leading to the disintegration of the organisation remains unclear, but upon closer inspection, it is possible to trace multiple reasons behind this decision. Firstly, despite financial support from the Nordic Cultural Fund, the organisation was bankrupt, and apparently many of the invited speakers in the final seminar were paid in whisky.[329] Secondly, the Copenhagen seminar could be considered a failure: only 60 participants arrived, whereas the previous events had gathered hundreds of people.[330] Gunilla Lundahl, who had been present in most of the organisation's events, stated that while the programme and the themes were relevant and ambitious as ever, there was a change in the participation: 'everyone just wanted to talk'[331] instead of producing concrete results in the workshops. According to Lundahl, the Copenhagen seminar was, in short, 'a failure', showing that the students' collaboration had become 'vapid'.[332] Eventually, in a short statement published next to Lundahl's report, the organisation announced their dissolution.[333]

328 'Sent 60-tal', *Form*, issue 6-7 (1970), p. 312.

329 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, letters from Hanne Christophersen to Yrjö Sotamaa, 4 June 1969 and 16 June 1969.

330 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, letter from Hanne Christophersen to Yrjö Sotamaa, 16 June 1969.

331 Gunilla Lundahl, 'SDO i kris', *Form*, issue 8 (1969), p. 372.

332 Ibid.

333 Ibid.

Furthermore, in addition to difficulties with finances and the logistical challenges of international collaboration and event production, increasingly radicalised political views seem to have made collaboration between the students strenuous, if not impossible. Alongside the announcement of the organisation's dissolution, there was a list with the headline 'Alternative Goals for SDO', painting a picture of future activities were they to continue:

> We want to fight capitalism with all possible means in order to achieve a dynamic socialistic system enabling complete social justice. […] We want to put an end to a system where invented needs are satisfied at the cost of real needs. We want to research true human needs across the world. […] We want to put an end to the system exploiting our common resources on the Earth. We want to actively support national liberation movements.[334]

The wish to support socialism and abolish capitalism reflected the change in the focus of the wider student movement. Undoubtedly, the student movement's ideals were more or less based on a critique of capitalism and consumerism. However, they had not expressed any real alternative to capitalism thus far, not to mention suggested replacing it with some other already existing political ideology. Promoting socialism was, in fact, in stark contrast to SDO's official statutes, as recorded in 1967, according to which the organisation was to remain 'politically neutral'[335]. In a board meeting in March 1969, according to the minutes, Swedish student Per Johansson wished to make the following addition in the statutes:

> The organisation has a socialist objective and will strive to make the schools educate students to function in a society of total, status-free equality, of total democracy both in business and in education, and of equal opportunities to experience all forms of art and culture.[336]

Whether this was added to the statutes remains unclear, but the request reveals a change in some of the students' thinking and attitudes about the relationship between design and political engagement, a topic that would mark design education in the following decade to an unprecedented degree.

334 KA, 'SDO', *Draken*, 8 (1970), p. 19.

335 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, 'Lover for Nordiske Brukskunststurendes Union', July 1967.

336 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, 'Protokoll ført ved SDO's formannsmøte i Bergen', 7-10 March 1969.

Chapter 2.

MARXISM-LENINISM, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DESIGN EDUCATION

2.1. MARXISM-LENINISM AND THE INSTITUTE FOR INDUSTRIAL ARTS

2.1.1. 'An irreconcilable conflict'

'How do you imagine your future profession? Do you imagine your future as a successful designer, famed film director, well-known graphic designer or a free artist?' asks a 1970s leaflet aimed at those taking their entrance exams to study at the newly opened University of Industrial Arts. Instead of encouraging the student-to-be with promises of fame and fortune, the leaflet continues with a reality check, pointing out the unrealistic nature of such expectations:

> The majority of designers, film makers and art teachers who graduate from the University of Industrial Arts will work as ordinary employees within industry, in design and advertising agencies at the service of media or education – unless they end up unemployed or in jobs unrelated to their studies.[337]

In addition to keeping the potential students' feet firmly planted on the ground, the leaflet informed its reader of a 'scientific-technological revolution and societal development' which had led the education system into a crisis. The root cause of this crisis was 'the capitalist system', defined by 'the irreconcilable conflict' between the working class and the capitalist class. The Finnish state, with its system of 'state monopoly capitalism' favouring the wealthy, had allowed the quality of education to fall and unemployment numbers to soar, while passively witnessing the USA's brutal actions in Vietnam. In order to defend students, workers, democracy and science, the leaflet urged its reader to 'join the battle [...] side by side with the working class - against Capital and the Right.'[338]

Although student activism and expressions of solidarity had been a part of everyday life at the Institute for Industrial Arts for some years already, the openly party political and somewhat aggressively leftist tone in the leaflet was new. The leaflet was produced and distributed by the Student Socialists at the Institute for Industrial Arts, (*Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen opiskelevat sosialistit*, TAOS), one of many Leninist youth organisations in Finland appearing in the aftermath of the 1960s student rebellion. The overarching goal of these organisations was to spread Marxist-Leninist ideology in Finnish culture and society through political activism, study circles and agitation. During the 1970s, Marxism-Leninism came to dominate much of Finland's cultural life, including theatre, literature, art and design. According to historian Henrik Meinander, it was not a

337 Kansan Arkisto Archive (KAA), Taideaineiden Opiskelevat Sosialistit TAOS Collection, 1C_CA, 'TAOS tiedottaa: Valintakurssilainen!', undated leaflet.

338 Ibid.

surprise that the Finnish youth revolt gained dogmatic tendencies in the form of extreme leftism after the tumultuous year of 1968, with the same development taking place across Western countries.[339] What set Marxism-Leninism in Finland apart from Norwegian Maoism or British Trotskyism, for example, was the fact that the Finnish Marxist-Leninists promoted the very same ideology that their parent's generation had fought against in the Second World War. Becoming a Marxist-Leninist and thus an avid supporter of the Soviet Union could be seen as a 'symbolic patricide'[340]. It added to the euphoria of rising against the established order. Meanwhile, Finland was only able to hold onto its sovereignty to some extent in the 1960s and 1970s: Finlandization meant that the Soviet Union had at least partial control over Finnish media and politics. This was allowed by a fear of military occupation and life under the public-facing 'rhetoric of friendship'[341] practiced by the country's political leadership with president Urho Kekkonen at the forefront. Former long-term member of the Marxist-Leninist movement, Lauri Hokkanen, has argued that Finland's 'friendship' with the Soviet Union was motivated by an immense fear of 'the ghost of expansion'[342], increasingly tangible after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

Culturally, economically and politically, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Finland tested the limits of how far towards west it could reach without having to appease its eastern neighbour. In 1968, Finland joined the OECD, an intergovernmental economic organisation promoting world trade with its roots in the Marshall Plan. Furthermore, the Nordek project aiming to improve economic collaboration between the Nordic countries was expected to become another step towards cementing Finland's presence in the Western economy.[343] Instead, since Finland never ended up ratifying the treaty, Nordek became a reminder of the limitations of the country's freedom and a prime example of the number of concessions, compromises and negotiations needed when navigating Cold War geopolitics. At the same time, Finland was committing to some sizeable trade agreements with the Soviet Union, such as agreeing to order the country's first electric locomotives and a nuclear power station from Soviet manufacturers.[344]

Referring to the concessions that the Finnish leadership made in order to appease the Soviet Union, historian Ville Pernaa has called the 1970s a 'dark decade' in the history of Finland.[345] A specific darkness was at the heart of the Marxist-Leninist movement, too. Being a part of the movement meant accepting not only the Soviet leadership and its ideology without criticism, but also the inevitable arrival of a socialist revolution.[346] Lauri Hokkanen has argued that the Marxist-Leninists, himself included, undoubtedly had 'sincere, humane and altruistic intentions to improve the living conditions of workers.'[347] However, as Hokkanen duly reminds his readers, the Soviet Union was a dystopia with

339 Meinander, *Samaan aikaan*, p. 189.

340 Ibid.

341 Ibid., p. 162.

342 Lauri Hokkanen, *Kenen joukoissa seisoin. Taistolaiset ja valtioterrorin perintö* (Jyväskylä: Docendo, 2021), p. 39.

343 Ville Pernaa, *Pimeä vuosikymmen, Suomi 1968-1981* (Helsinki: Siltala, 2021), p. 50.

344 Ibid.

345 The title of Pernaa's book, *Pimeä vuosikymmen*, translates literally to 'the dark decade'.

346 Hokkanen, *Kenen joukoissa seisoin*, p. 39.

347 Ibid., p. 4.

a history of persecution, terror and mass murder. Idolising the Soviet Union meant either turning a blind eye to its horrors, which had been made known by, for example, author Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, or meeting them with acceptance. According to Hokkanen, speaking about the atrocities openly within the movement was not possible, and this was 'indicative of the suffocating effect of its hierarchical ideological structure'[348]. This darkness is present in the vast majority of the literature written about the Marxist-Leninist movement in Finland, where the main question still remains 'why'.

Here, the focus is slightly different. In addition to documenting how Marxism-Leninism became the leading political ideology among the students and staff at the University of Industrial Arts, this chapter will examine how it influenced design pedagogy and challenged the understanding of design's role in society. Instead of providing an explanation of the psychological dynamics of the movement and its members, this chapter aims to understand the ideology itself and how it was manifested in and through design and design education. As shown in Chapter 1, the Finnish design field during the 1960s was marked by intentions and debates about design's social responsibility, many of which were initiated by design students tired of idolising the country's heroic designers. During the 1970s, some of the subjects of debate were seemingly solved: the Institute for Industrial Arts became the University of Industrial Arts; design studies became more academic and research oriented; the students were given better opportunities to create their own curricula; the debate about design's social responsibility received increasing attention from professional design organisations and mainstream media.

Despite the progress, many issues raised in the 1960s about design education remained unresolved through the new decade. Although the Institute gained the sought-after university status in 1973, its struggles with low resources and lack of funding continued. Moreover, the school's spaces and rooms in the Ateneum building were small, impractical and in disrepair, as shown in photographs from the time (see figure 2.1.). The global oil crisis in 1973 created a national recession, which resulted not only in funding cuts for higher education, but also lowered employment prospects for graduating designers throughout the decade. This air of insecurity together with the lack of resources created widespread disappointment and discontent among staff and students alike, offering fertile soil for the growth of the Marxist-Leninist movement.

2.1.2. 'The power that will change the world'

Historian Jukka Relander describes Finnish society at the turn of the 1970s as 'liberal, somewhat leftist and a rather youthful place compared to what it had been before.'[349] The same could be said about the Institute for Industrial Arts after the tumultuous 1960s. However, some of the big questions around values and solidarity which had entered the shared

348 Ibid., p. 179.

349 Jukka Relander, 'From flowers to steel. Development of the Leninist Mind in Finland 1968-1972', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 33, issue 4 (2008), 464-477 (p. 466).

FIGURE 2.1. A run-down workshop in the Ateneum building. 1970s. Photograph by Pirkko Pohjakallio. Pirkko Pohjakallio and Jouko Koskinen personal archive.

consciousness of young people remained unresolved. How to feed all the hungry people of the world? How to stop war and violence? How to prevent an ecological disaster caused by overconsumption? One reason for the appeal of the Marxist-Leninist movement was undoubtedly its ability to 'explain everything'[350]; translations of literature from the Soviet Union 'held all the answers'[351] to any questions from eager students. The persuasive and authoritarian rhetoric of the movement found an undisputed culprit responsible for all issues in capitalism and a reliable saviour in socialism. In order to defeat 'imperialism and the ever-expanding inhumanity and pessimism of Western mainstream culture'[352], the movement promised its members a chance to participate in 'the development of a democratic and revolutionary consciousness'[353]. The vaguely leftist language promoting peace and solidarity, prevalent in the 1960s, had changed into a more aggressive and categorical tone, as seen on the covers of student publications and pamphlets. A typical example was the cover of a 1979 issue of TAOS magazine *Perspektiivi*, depicting three men in tailcoats and top hats sitting in a space between the Ateneum building, housing the University of Industrial Arts, and banks and factories spewing blood-red smoke (see figure 2.2.).

350 Ibid., p. 470.

351 Meinander, *Samaan aikaan*, p. 189.

352 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1D_DA, 'TAOS järjestötiedot - TAOS:n vuosikokouksen asiakirjat 17.2.1974'.

353 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.2. The cover of an issue of the Marxist-Leninist student publication *Perspektiivi*. 1979. Aalto University Archives, perspektiivispecial:027.

In 1978, when the movement was already facing its demise, a TAOS member described the relief of discovering the path of Marxism-Leninism after the 1960s revolution:

> We had to hit the wall before we could realise that students will not change the world by themselves. It is not a real threat to capitalism to intuitively fight the system. Socialism will not arrive by […] preaching the rottenness of capitalism and the wonders of socialism to each other. We understood that the working class is the power that will change the world![354]

In other words, Marxism-Leninism arrived just as the student movement was waning. Sociologist, and former member of the movement, Matti Hyvärinen describes the process of

354 KAA, TAOS Collection, 4D_DC, *Perspektiivi*, 2 (1978), Riitta Vira, 'Sinua onkin jo odotettu'.

joining as 'becoming intoxicated by radicalism and anti-authoritarianism'[355] before being swallowed up by the Finnish Communist Party and making a full turn into a blind acceptance of the authorities. Sources, such as minutes from meetings, yearly strategy plans, publications, leaflets and petitions, by the participants in the Marxist-Leninist movement at the University of Industrial Arts, show that its development was similar to Hyvärinen's description above. In the course of a few years, the students' initial excitement of being at the cusp of something new and revolutionary turned into a repetitive, routine-like objection to any outside views.

Despite the appeal of Marxism-Leninism, it is important to highlight that not every student or member of staff took part in the movement. TAOS was an active organisation, which left behind an abundance of publications and leaflets through which it was able to have a loud voice in the narrative of the 1970s. Therefore, it is easy to ignore those who did not take part in it or even protested against it, although evidence of a counter-movement exists. In 1974, an organisation called The Studying Students (*Opiskelevat opiskelijat*) appeared at the university and even secured three seats in the Advisory Board with an agenda of a greater focus on developing the studies, thus signalling a growing discontent and weariness with the movement.[356] By the end of the decade, several groups under different names, such as The General Democratic Coalition[357] and Group for Bourgeois and Non-Socialist Students[358], had appeared to challenge the Marxist-Leninists. As Pernaa argues, it is a myth that the 1970s were 'politicised through and through'[359], and that the life of an average Finn was coloured by leftist politics during the decade. In reality, the phenomenon of extreme leftism grew in conservative soil.

Understanding the appeal and reach of the Marxist-Leninist movement is important. However, it is equally necessary to go beyond its abstract rhetoric, painting its vision of a vague socialist post-revolutionary future, to try to understand what kind of concrete actions, if any, the members of the movement made in their respective professional fields. When exploring the influence of the Marxist-Leninist movement on design and its teaching, it becomes clear that drawing definitive lines between influence and consequence would be a disservice to the messiness of history. It should not be assumed that in the life of a member of the movement, every act or every decision was a direct reflection of Marxism-Leninism. Moving beyond the choices and beliefs of individuals and examining the wider atmosphere at the University of Industrial Arts through primary sources, such as statements from the leadership, political pamphlets, student publications, curricula and real-life study projects, draws a more coherent picture of the influence of Marxism-Leninism on the way in which design developed as a discipline during the 1970s. If understood as the process of turning an abstract idea into tangible reality, design offers an extraordinary lens through which examine a political ideology.

355 Matti Hyvärinen, *Viimeiset taistot* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 1994), p. 23.

356 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, yearbooks, *Taideteollisen korkeakoulun vuosikertomus 1974-1975*.

357 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, 'Vaalitiedote - Yhteistyössä taideteollisuuden puolesta', undated leaflet.

358 AYYA, TOKYO Student Union Collection, 'Valtioneuvostolle', letter dated 20 March 1978.

359 Pernaa, *Pimeä vuosikymmen*, p. 93.

2.1.3. 'Come join us in the fight'

Over the course of a few years, the somewhat disorganised 1960s student rebellion developed into a hierarchical political movement. Sociologist Matti Hyvärinen has described this as a process of general anti-authoritarianism and radicalism developing into a meticulously organised, top-down movement with the goal of spreading Marxist-Leninist ideology among higher education students in Finland.[360] Nation-wide, the main Marxist-Leninist youth organisation was the Socialist Student Union (*Sosialistinen opiskelijaliitto,* SOL), founded in 1965 and connected to the Communist Party of Finland (*Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue*, SKP). In Helsinki, a local SOL organisation called the Academic Socialist Society, (*Akateeminen sosialistiseura*, ASS), was actively recruiting members in the first years of the 1970s. The specific aims of ASS were to spread 'scientific socialism'[361] among students and academics and to harness the general anti-capitalist atmosphere to the benefit of the wider worker's movement. A leaflet from the beginning of the 1970s shows that the ASS also extended their recruitment process to the Institute of Industrial Arts, describing the atmosphere there as 'generally leftist', but 'uncoordinated and lacking an overarching revolutionary strategy'[362]. In order to develop leftist interests in a more organised form of political action, an ASS sub-division was founded at the Institute. According to the organisation's plan, this division would be in regular contact with the head organisation seeking to 'take over the political hegemony'[363] by developing the collective political consciousness at the Institute towards Marxism-Leninism through study circles, agitation work and political activism.

The interest that the ASS showed towards the Institute, despite its relatively small number of students[364] and its arguably modest, not to say nonexistent, impact on Finnish political life, can be explained through the organisation's wider ambitions. Aiming for a stronger foothold and a wider spread of Marxism-Leninism in Finnish society through future professional lives, the ASS wished to engage with students from as many different study disciplines as possible. Upon extending the Marxist-Leninist network to the Institute, the goal was to investigate the role of design education in Finnish capitalism and examine 'the meaning of industrial arts in the class struggle'[365]. Based on the findings, political action would be developed and executed in order to push Finnish society and industrial production towards socialism.

An ASS sub-division functioned at the Institute for a year until TAOS was founded in November 1972 in 'a considerably solemn'[366] ceremony attended by 59 people (around one in six students at the Institute). The underlying motivation for the creation of TAOS was to develop an organisation better suited to students of industrial arts specifically,

360 Hyvärinen, 'Viimeiset taistot', pp. 23-27.

361 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, 'ASS - Akateeminen Sosialistiseura', undated information leaflet.

362 Ibid.

363 Ibid.

364 According to the 1972-1973 yearbook, the Institute for Industrial Arts had 376 registered students that academic year.

365 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, 'ASS - Akateeminen Sosialistiseura', undated information leaflet.

366 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1D_DA, 'TAOS - Taideaineiden opiskelevat sosialistit ry:n toimintakertomus vuoden 1972 lopulta sekä vuodelta -73', annual report.

given that the majority of ASS members came from more traditional academic disciplines such as sociology, literature or history.[367] While TAOS was organised and led by students at the Institute, it was still a part of the nationwide SOL network of Marxist-Leninist student organisations. This meant that SOL provided the guidelines and most of the study materials at TAOS. The main goal of the organisation was above all 'a comprehensive ideological and political education, leading the students to join the working class and, finally, the Communist Party of Finland, a mission motivating all of the organisation's activities.'[368]

In order to recruit new members and gain visibility, one of the key activities of SOL and its member organisations was agitational work, which took many forms. Following the example of ASS at the University of Helsinki, TAOS founded 'comrade groups', where members or interested students gathered to discuss Marxism-Leninism and to plan activities. According to the guidelines of TAOS comrade groups, the main goal of the meetings was to 'bring the SOL politics into the consciousness of more students and get them organised into a democratic and revolutionary movement.'[369] The purpose was not only to increase participation, but also to create 'enduring comradeship' to support 'political work in the departments.'[370] This political work consisted of various meticulously defined tasks meant to take place in the everyday life of the school: engaging fellow students in face-to-face discussions about Marxism, collecting donations, organising protests, producing and distributing posters and leaflets and keeping the school noticeboards covered with them (see figures 2.3. and 2.4.).[371] Moreover, some members were responsible for organising study circles where participants read texts and followed a study programme created by SOL in order to 'learn the basics'[372] of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Over the course of the year 1973, there were seven different study groups with six to ten members each, even if some reports described lack of engagement and participation.[373]

One of the readings was a booklet of 91 pages called *Introduction to Socialism* (*Johdatus sosialismiin*), first published by SOL in 1972.[374] According to the booklet, which was already on its third edition in 1974, its purpose was to 'offer a comprehensible introduction to the social theory of Marxism-Leninism and to the fundamental issues in Finnish society.'[375] The text was based on an American booklet, *The ABC of Socialism*, originally written by the American socialist economist Leo Huberman and writer Sybil H. May, although it was partly revised by SOL actives to fit the Finnish context and to highlight 'Lenin's influence on Marxism'[376]. The booklet started off by arguing that the current capitalist system was based on the reality of people with capital exploiting

367 Ibid.

368 KAA, TAOS Collection, 3D_DD, 'TAOS-jäsentiedote 4/73', information leaflet dated 31 March 1973.

369 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1D_DA, 'TAOS:n Toveriryhmä = ohjesääntö', undated statutes.

370 Ibid.

371 Ibid.

372 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1C_CA, undated and untitled brochure for a Marxist-Leninist study circle.

373 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1C_CA, 'Aineistoa TAOS:n valistustyön kokemuksista 73', undated notes.

374 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *Johdatus sosialismiin*, (Helsinki: Sosialistinen opiskelijaliitto, 1974, 3rd edition).

375 Ibid, p. 1.

376 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.3. Students protesting in support of the 'one person, one vote' principle. Early 1970s. Aalto University Archives, TaiKV:9:109:01:016.

FIGURE 2.4. Notice boards outside the TOKYO Student Union office. 1970s. Photograph by Pirkko Pohjakallio. Pirkko Pohjakallio and Jouko Koskinen personal archive.

people without capital. According to the book, this culture of exploitation was deeply ingrained in capitalist societies, while only a limited amount of people benefitted from it. These people, in the Finnish context, were drawn in a figure called 'A Map of the Big Money', which named the biggest and most powerful Finnish companies alongside the families who owned them (see figure 2.5.). Furthermore, in clear and persuasive language, the book explained how the unbalanced distribution of income, imperialism and destructive wars were all symptoms of the corrupted nature of the bourgeois state. There were also painstakingly written explanations for why capitalism was 'inefficient', 'uneconomical', 'senseless', 'inhuman' and 'inequitable'. Finally, the book concluded with a prediction of the collapse of capitalism: 'The evolution cannot be stopped. The world is living in a cataclysmic age of the transition to socialism.'[377]

Soon, the rhetoric of the movement spread among students and in their publications at the University of Industrial Arts. For example, the cover of the second issue of *Tokyo-tiedot*, the Student Union publication from the year 1973, demanded support and solidarity towards Chile, which was in the midst of a military coup, celebrated the independence of Guinea-Bissau, reminded readers of the upcoming World Congress of Peace Forces in Moscow, promoted a sports event in support of Vietnam, and, finally, urged readers to sign up for a study trip to Moscow later in the autumn (see figure 2.6.).[378] The contents of the publication included a lengthy summary of the lectures of 'the first international guest lecturer' at the university, graphic designer Oleg Savatsyukin from the Soviet Union.[379] The text praised 'the powerful quality of education and culture' in the Soviet Union, and the way in which the Communist Party 'follows and directs artists in their work by paying attention to the ideological content of art and literature'[380]. Moreover, the article encouraged readers to gain more information about the progressive culture of the Soviet Union by contacting the Finnish-Soviet Society, or APN, a Soviet public information service.

This educational and propagandist dimension was crucial in the Marxist-Leninist movement: a considerable amount of their outward-facing material, created to lure more students into its organisations, described joining them as an educational path that would help the student to see the world from new perspectives and receive answers to their most pressing concerns. Choosing Marxism-Leninism was to choose the road of knowledge and science, as an 'open letter to a future comrade' from 1973 demonstrates:

> I can see that you are at a crossroads. [...] You can either continue the road following your instincts, blindly, taken over by your feelings and presumptions. Or insufficient knowledge if that sounds better. Surely your aspirations are completely honest. But most likely you will become a passive supporter of the ruling monopoly bourgeoisie, and in the worst case, an active helper in their ideological regulation machinery. Alternatively, you can choose

377 Ibid., p. 44.

378 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *Tokyo-tiedot*, 2 (1973), unpaged.

379 Ibid.

380 Ibid.

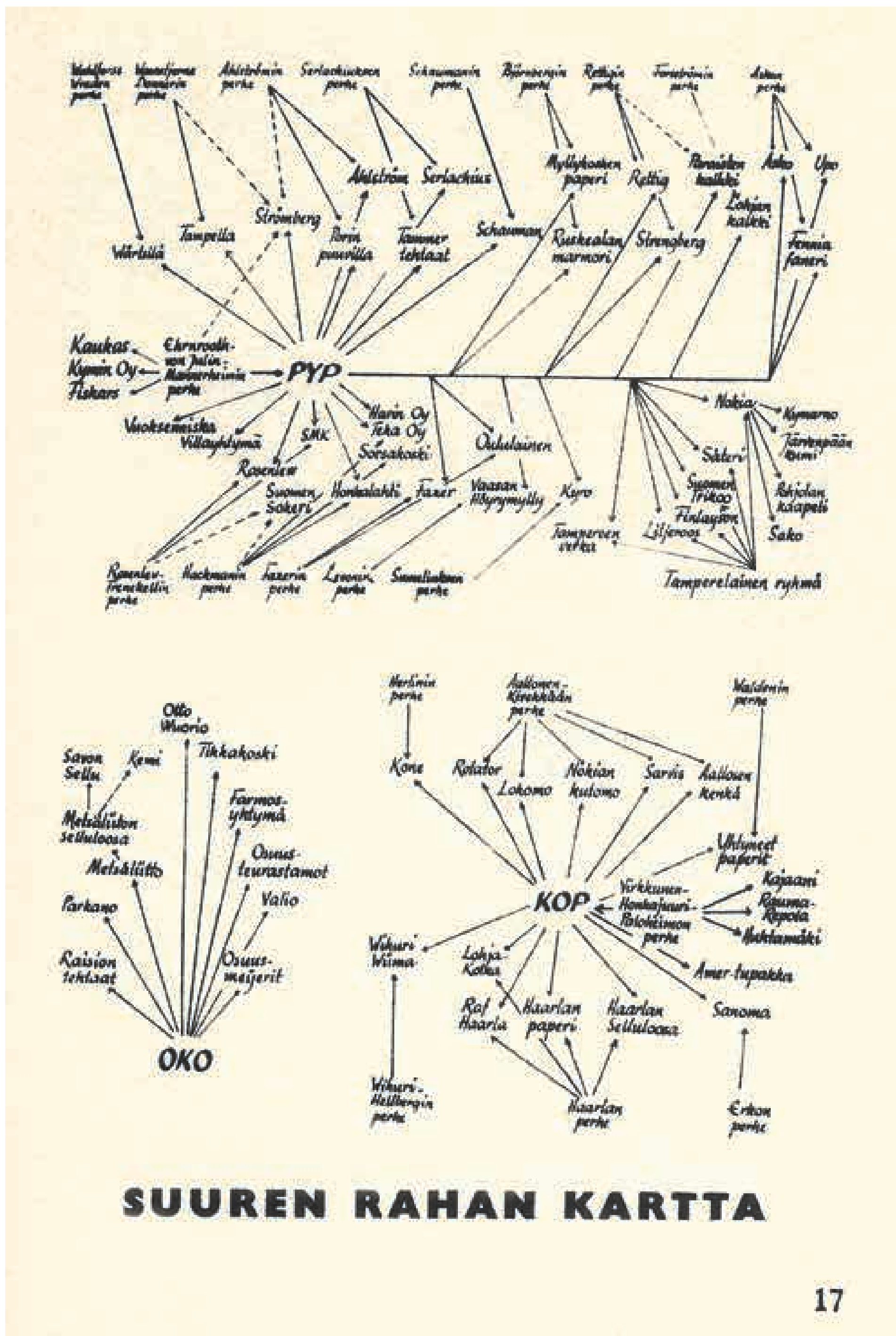

FIGURE 2.5. 'The Map of Big Money', from the book *Introduction to Socialism (Johdatus Sosialis-miin)*. 1974. Pirkko Pohjakallio and Jouko Koskinen personal archive.

FIGURE 2.6. The cover of a 1973 issue of the TOKYO student union publication *Tokyotiedot*. Pirkko Pohjakallio and Jouko Koskinen personal archive.

to step forward on the road towards democracy. […] I respect your pursuit of the truth by giving you the best advice that I can give: there is no shortcut – do your reading.[381]

Choosing to study Marxism-Leninism was therefore not only a question of educating oneself on a particular political movement or a world view, it was a choice between 'us' and 'them', between what was right and what was wrong.

381 KAA, TAOS Collection, 4D_DC, 'Avoin kirje tulevalle toverille', *Perspektiivi*, 1 (1973).

This rhetoric proved successful: after its first year of existence, TAOS had 74 members.[382] By autumn 1974, the number had increased to over 200[383], while, in that year, the total number of students in the University was 423.[384] For the students joining its ranks, even those who remained uncertain about being associated with the Communist party, TAOS promised an opportunity to make a difference:

> We, the members of TAOS, see human freedom as the ability to change the world. We have voluntarily come together as an organisation to be able to have a greater impact. In the class struggle, we have positioned ourselves alongside the working class. This struggle can only be led by the Finnish Communist Party by following the principles of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Not everyone is ready to commit in this way. But there is no freedom in hovering above the class division. For the capitalist class, freedom equals the ability to exploit workers. The working class in a capitalist country only has one true freedom: to fight and to win. […] We are committed to the battle. Come join us in the fight.[385]

It remains unclear just how far the fight was supposed to be taken. According to Ville Pernaa, who has investigated the archival records of the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service, there was indeed a shared understanding among Finnish authorities that the threat of a violent socialist revolution was, if not likely, then at least possible.[386]

382 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1D_DA, 'TAOS - Taideaineiden opiskelevat sosialistit ry:n toimintakertomus vuoden 1972 lopulta sekä vuodelta -73', undated annual report.

383 KAA, TAOS Collection, 3D_DD, 'TAOS-järjestötiedot', information leaflet dated 24 October 1974.

384 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, yearbooks, *Taideteollisen korkeakoulun vuosikertomus 1974-1975*.

385 KAA, TAOS Collection, 4D_DC, *Perspektiivi*, 1 (1973), unpaged.

386 Pernaa, *Pimeä vuosikymmen*, p. 63.

2.2. REDEFINING DESIGN EDUCATION AND ITS VALUES

2.2.1. 'For the benefit of the people'

While the Marxist-Leninist ideology was gaining popularity among the students, the Institute for Industrial Arts was facing changes in leadership and structure, which made the school move to an increasingly leftist direction. The Institute's rector, Markus Visanti, who had been pushing for the university status throughout the decade, resigned in late 1969 apparently due to the impossibly heavy workload and lack of resources.[387] The young architect Juhani Pallasmaa was appointed to replace him in an election which employed the 'one person, one vote' system, where each teacher, student and member of service staff had a vote.[388] During Pallasmaa's two-year period as rector (in 1972, he took on a professorship in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia), the Institute took steps forward in terms of including students in decision-making and adding possibilities for them to have an impact on the curriculum and teaching. In January 1972, another young architect, Jouko Koskinen, who had been teaching at the Institute for some years, started as the new rector.

During the 1960s, students, with support from some of the teachers, had been the drivers of new values. Throughout the 1970s, with Koskinen as rector and Teemu Lipasti as vice rector, the school's leadership consisted of people who supported Marxism-Leninism even if they were not active members of its organisations. In the 1973 general election for a new advisory board, some of the most prominent members of staff were TAOS candidates in a leftist election alliance. These included rector Koskinen, vice-rector Lipasti and the director of general studies, Harry Moilanen (Lipasti and Moilanen were among the teachers fired by Visanti in 1966).[389] The fact that such prominent figures openly supported the Marxist-Leninist movement demonstrates an ideological change in the leadership of the Institute, which opened up new possibilities and pathways for leftist ideology not only in the decision-making, but also in the pedagogy, curricula, communication, international and national projects and collaborations of the Institute.

In autumn 1973, after many years of preparation, the Institute finally became the University of Industrial Arts with Jouko Koskinen as its rector.[390] In his opening words for the 1973-74 curriculum, Koskinen suggested that the most important task during the first academic year was to define the goals and functions of the new university.[391] In preparation for this, in spring 1973, an open seminar welcoming all members of the school community had been arranged with

387 Huovio, *Invitation from the Future*, p. 358.

388 Ibid.

389 KAA, TAOS Collection, 4D_DC, *Perspektiivi*, 1 (1973), unpaged.

390 For further details behind this development, see Huovio, *Invitation from the Future*.

391 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, 51.00.1., *Taideteollinen korkeakoulu, opinto-opas 1973-1974*, Jouko Koskinen, 'Alkusanat', pp. 4-5.

the intention of creating these goals. As a result, the university was now to aim towards

> increasing economic equality, increasing regional equality, using industrial production efficiently for the benefit of the people, expanding democracy and creating international connections in support of these goals. As we educate product and environmental designers, visuals communicators and art teachers, our task is, then, to ensure that we can offer professional abilities that best serve these goals.[392]

As Korvenmaa notes, the university was not the planned 'smoothly functioning unit producing design professionals for concerted efforts to enhance design in order to serve industries.'[393] Indeed, when compared to the arguments for university level design education in previous decades, the language and reasoning are strikingly different. Up until this point, the need for higher education in industrial arts was, without exception, justified by the need for professional designers who would be able to increase the quality of industrially produced goods, thus enabling success in export markets and supporting the Finnish economy. Most recently, in 1969, the Ministry of Education had appointed a committee to prepare a development plan for the Institute to better fulfil the needs of industry.[394] Instead, the relatively new and young leadership had decided to more or less turn their backs on Finnish industries and chosen to promote not economic growth but democracy and equality.

2.2.2. 'Why design more stuff'

The first step towards democracy would be to follow the 'one person, one vote' principle in all decision-making, meaning that teachers, students and service staff such as janitors and cleaners would all have equal representation in voting on issues related to the University of Industrial Arts. This system had been at use at the Institute for some years and was endorsed by the majority of staff, students and leadership, but in order for the 'one person, one vote' principle to become an official and permanent way of decision-making, it needed to be approved by the Finnish Parliament. The principle had the backing of the school's leadership, student union, Board and advisory board, and initially, the Minister of Education had supported it, too.[395] The justification for this, according to designer Antti Nurmesniemi, Chair of the Board of the Institute for Industrial Arts, was that a democratic governance mirrored the development of the design profession: instead of sitting by the drawing board, design was increasingly a two-way communication with the surrounding society. Young students therefore needed to become used to cooperation and responsibility as early as possible.[396]

392 Ibid.

393 Korvenmaa, 'From Policies to Politics', p. 228.

394 Huovio, *Invitation from the Future*, p. 359.

395 Ibid., p. 357.

396 'Muotoilukorkeakouluun pettynein toivein', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 January 1973.

Despite the efforts and general support for the 'one person, one vote' principle, Parliament rejected the proposal by one vote.[397] This decision came as a shock to the students and leadership of the school, but it was far from the only issue causing widespread outrage and heated debate. Some members of parliament who were against the proposal had given speeches before the vote, expressing their concern that it might create a 'school not for studying but for building a revolution' and 'lead to an increase in physical violence in the school community.'[398] Finnish media repeated the doubts of some of the politicians, suggesting that a violent revolution was on its way at the Institute. This started the chain of speculative and sensationalist media coverage that would continue throughout the decade, adding to the divided atmosphere of the school.

For example, an article in the bi-weekly magazine of the right-leaning newspaper *Uusi Suomi*, published in January 1973, before the University had even opened its doors, criticized Koskinen for focusing on social goals rather than developing the field of design.[399] Moreover, the article ridiculed the Student Union's initiative of starting a network called 'Universities and Schools at the Service of Peace' and suggested that such movement rather predicted mutiny or war instead. According to the article, the money spent on 'this circus' provided the school's students 'a comfortable shelter for wasting their time'[400]. In addition to the growing support of leftism, one of the main issues provoking the Finnish media was the University's soured relationship to industry and commerce, previously considered inseparable elements of the design profession. Another article in *Neulaset*, the first issue of a magazine published by the recently established Finnish Culture Association (*Suomen Kulttuuriliitto*), criticised Koskinen's plans for the university. According to the writer of the article, interior architect Pekka Perjo, Koskinen's goals clearly promoted the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which could be seen in, for example, 'Peace Days, study strikes, information leaflets and notice boards at the school'[401]. Furthermore, Perjo argued that proper education within the field of design had been given up in the name of 'unspecified social goals'[402] marked by a bitterness towards capitalism, industry, entrepreneurship, imperialism and private cars.

Although many of the articles published about the University of Industrial Arts were speculative and politically, or personally, motivated, partly they were founded in reality. The atmosphere of class consciousness and anti-commercialism had grown to such heights that, upon visits to factories of esteemed design companies such as Marimekko and Asko, students would go around asking workers about their working conditions instead of learning about materials and production techniques.[403] This resulted in the students being banned from many factories and the companies refusing to hire them for summer internships.

397 Ibid.

398 Ibid.

399 Manu Paajanen, 'Taideteollinen vallankumous kansaa vastaan', *Uusi Maailma*, 10 October 1973, p. 22.

400 Ibid.

401 Pekka Perjo, 'Politisoitunutta taideteollisuutta laadun kustannuksella', *Neulaset, Suomen kulttuuriliiton lehti*, 1 (1975), 2-4, (p. 2).

402 Ibid.

403 Ilkka Huovio, *Bridging the Future. The General History of the University of Art and Design Helsinki 1973-2003* (Self-published, 2009), p. 33; Aalto University Archives, Harry Moilanen Collection, *Tokyo-tiedot*, 2 (1979), Ulla Kotimaa, 'Demokraatin näkökulma', unpaged.

Meanwhile, rector Koskinen did not hide his criticism of the rotten and corrupt state of industry and the design profession, even opening the 1972 curriculum leaflet with the following text:

> In our environment saturated with things, product designers get easily confused: why design more stuff when there is too much of it already! What do we need product designers for, are they useless? The answer is no. First of all, not everyone has enough things, abundance exists only in our most immediate surroundings. Almost all useful objects have been piled up in the Northern hemisphere where the most fervent competition for ownership takes place. [...]
>
> The majority of all production and raw material is used for the benefit of places with the greatest level of welfare, even though, logically speaking, the capacity should be directed where it is needed the most. We should learn to live with as little as possible and use the excess to keep people from dying. [...]
>
> The product designer should acquire the skills and the expertise to show us the futility in our heaps of stuff. [...] But is our society ready to provide employment for professionals such as this, is it not irresponsible to educate people to strive towards goals that might be in contradiction to the goals of industrial production and our economic system? It is irresponsible to teach professional skills meant for exploitation, which accelerates the growth of inequality and leads to a disaster.[404]

When asked about the origins of his social and political idealism later, Koskinen remembered becoming engaged with questions of social responsibility during his last year of upper secondary school.[405] An important influence in this development was Arvo Salo, editor of the magazine of the University of Helsinki Student Union and a leading figure in the increasingly radicalised youth movement. Koskinen found Salo's work and texts 'revolutionary', changing his way of thinking and seeing the world. All of a sudden, the nation's most popular newspapers *Uusi Suomi* and *Helsingin Sanomat* seemed conservative and tame. During his architecture studies at the University of Technology, Koskinen became involved in a curriculum renewal, which later developed into a full-blown revolt as the students occupied their department for a short period in the spring of 1969. In other words, Koskinen was a part of the wider generational shift in Finnish culture.

When Koskinen was chosen as the rector of the Institute for Industrial Arts in 1972, his predecessor Pallasmaa had already started taking the school towards a more socially progressive direction.[406] Before being elected as

404 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, Hd 10 Opinto-oppaat, *Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen opinto-opas 1972-1973*, Jouko Koskinen, 'Alkusanat', 4-5 (p. 5).

405 Interview with Jouko Koskinen, conducted by Kaisu Savola, 18 April 2020.

406 Huovio, *Bridging the Future*, p. 19.

rector, Koskinen had been teaching at the Institute, and he believed that his popularity as a teacher contributed to his election.[407] In the media, Koskinen was labelled as an aggressive socialist and a member of the Marxist-Leninist movement. In his own words, he was 'not a member, but definitely involved'[408]. Koskinen maintained that, in the early stages of his role as a rector, he did not represent any specific political party or group, and neither did anyone else on the Board of the University. His ideas relating to social responsibility and democracy came from direct observations of inequality in society, which, in turn, created 'a sense of justice and an eagerness to change things for the better.'[409] Either way, Koskinen's acceptance of the Marxist-Leninist movement and his personal views of design's role in society must have been a contributing factor to the overall atmosphere at the university during his time as the rector.

2.2.3. 'Towards a professional field benefitting the working class'

The University's new goals of promoting equality and democracy in society were detailed in an internal information leaflet distributed at the school in early 1973. Firstly, regional equality was to be increased by directing education, research and culture for the benefit of the so-called 'developing regions', a term which, at this time, described rural regions in Finland struggling to keep up with the rest of the country in terms of employment and welfare. Secondly, 'democratic and holistic design'[410] was to create a new balance within industrial production for the good of society as a whole, while a new ecological balance should be found between employing natural resources carefully and supporting the national economy. Thirdly, by democratising media and decision-making and raising the level of education, citizens were to become more empowered to make a difference in society. Finally, international collaboration was to be based on supporting peace work and the self-determination of nations, and workers' rights should be developed towards better legal protection, income and workplace safety.[411]

Rather than a design school programme, these wide-reaching goals read more like a leftist political pamphlet. However, as Korvenmaa suggests, it was 'highly problematic to educate designers striving towards a socialist utopia in a capitalist country with a free market economy.'[412] Despite the contradiction between the commercial nature of design and leftist politics, during the 1970s, staff and students found many ways to explore some of the key themes in left-leaning political ideologies, as numerous study projects addressed questions such as the living and working conditions of the working class, and they promoted citizen engagement, democracy and the rights of various minority

407 Interview with Jouko Koskinen, conducted by Kaisu Savola, 18 April 2020.

408 Ibid.

409 Ibid.

410 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, 40.02.1., *Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen sisäisiä tiedotuksia*, 2 (1973), 'TTKK:n tavoiteohjelmaluonnos', 10-11, (p. 10).

411 Ibid., p. 11.

412 Korvenmaa, 'From Policies to Politics', p. 232.

groups. Most of the study projects in the 1970s were made with, or for, the public sector, not with companies or industry.

As suggested earlier, a substantial part of Marxism-Leninism's appeal was its ability to provide straightforward answers to some of the most complicated issues in society. The Marxist-Leninist ideology not only showed an example of how to make society truly equal and democratic, but also how to fix the 'rotten' field of industrial arts, so concerned with optimising production and increasing consumption. As the Marxist-Leninist ideology entered Finnish design education, leftist views of science and social responsibility became intertwined with design in a fascinating way. Although it should be questioned whether all the socially focused projects were a direct consequence of Marxism-Leninism, the rhetoric and goals of TAOS were visibly present in the design curriculum throughout the decade. In their own words, TAOS strived

> towards a professional field benefitting the working class. We must develop democratic professional practices for the employees in the field of culture and design. We must begin the scientific research in our respective professional fields and to analyse the relationship of those fields to state monopoly capitalism.[413]

This ethos was to become visible in a myriad of study projects with a focus on working conditions, urban environment, citizen engagement and the public sector. These projects abandoned the traditional vision of the designer at the service of industrial production.

The idea of democratic decision-making, such as the 'one person, one vote' principle, created possibilities for students to become involved in the planning of the curriculum and developing study content. When the curriculum was renewed in 1970, students were key in its creation, encouraged and supported by the school leadership. Through the renewal, new subjects such as cultural history, urbanism and industrialism, physics, chemistry, social anthropology, media studies, psychology, sociology, ergonomics, political history and economic geography were included in the study programme.[414] Furthermore, the method of studying moved towards 'problem-oriented work'[415], which meant that students took on different roles in projects combining design and research, often arranged in collaboration between departments. This, in turn, would enable 'an open education structure which creates possibilities for continuous development of both study methods and contents [...] in close collaboration with society, working life and international activities.'[416]

This new flexibility also allowed the introduction of something that the students had been protesting for in the previous decade: different professional fields were not isolated during the studies, and, upon entering the professional

413 KAA, TAOS Collection, 3D_DD, *TAOS-jäsentiedote*, 31 March 1973.

414 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, Hd 8 Lyytikäinen, 'Muistio OK', memo dated 12 May 1970.

415 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, Hd 8 Lyytikäinen, 'Taideteollisen oppilaitoksen opintouudistus', Lasse Lyytikäinen, memo dated 11 December 1972.

416 Ibid.

field, the students would be able to function in more versatile environments and tasks. What set this study renewal apart from those in previous decades was that instead of talking about the designer's role in industry and commerce, it was considered vital to increase the autonomy of students in terms of decision-making, interests and values because it allowed 'a freedom from the prerequisites set by industrial production.'[417] Instead of training the students for successful careers in companies and businesses, the goal was now to produce independent and socially conscious professionals.

417 Ibid.

2.3. DESIGNING FOR THE WORKERS

2.3.1. 'The Arrival of the Technocrats'

As in the previous decade, the students continued to actively publish their thoughts and opinions on design and its future. In 1970, the Student Union at the Institute for Industrial Arts distributed a publication made by a group of students from the department of technical design. The original purpose of this publication, called *The Arrival of the Technocrats* (*Teknokraatit tulevat*), was to 'put down some opinions floating in the air'[418] at the Institute. The result was a modest pile of black-and-white photocopies stapled together even though, content-wise, the publication was dense (see figure 2.7.). It was not a manifesto, but 'a starting point for a discussion about product design and the politics of education.'[419] The wider goal was to create a study programme to help 'make a difference in contemporary industrial production' and to explain the difference between industrial arts and 'technical design', making a case for a greater understanding of the social and political dimensions of design and industrial production. Published in 1970, the tone in *The Arrival of the Technocrats* was not as radically political as many other publications surfacing later in the decade, but, thematically, the increasing interest in leftist ideologies was very visible. Neither Marx or Lenin were present, but the terminology and ideology in the publication were openly leftist.

Importantly, the Technocrats chose to call their field 'technical design' (*tekninen design*), instead of industrial design. According to their description, technical design was

> creative action, where the goal is to define the expectations for industrially manufactured products. These include aesthetic properties, but, more importantly, structural, functional and economic connections which create a functional unit for both the user and the manufacturer.[420]

Due to their view of the secondary importance of aesthetic qualities in designed products, the Technocrats felt the need to distinguish themselves from 'industrial artists', clarifying the difference while revealing their interest in the social and political dimensions of design and society:

> The starting point for design should supposedly be the human being, her original nature, structure and abilities, and the social reality together with economic and social structures. [...] An industrial artist [...] might be able to solve aesthetic and relatively simple functional qualities. However, when designing products related to, forexample, working environment, industrially produced

418 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *Tokyo-tiedot*, 6 (1970), 'Teknokraatit tulevat', p. 6.

419 Ibid.

420 Ibid.

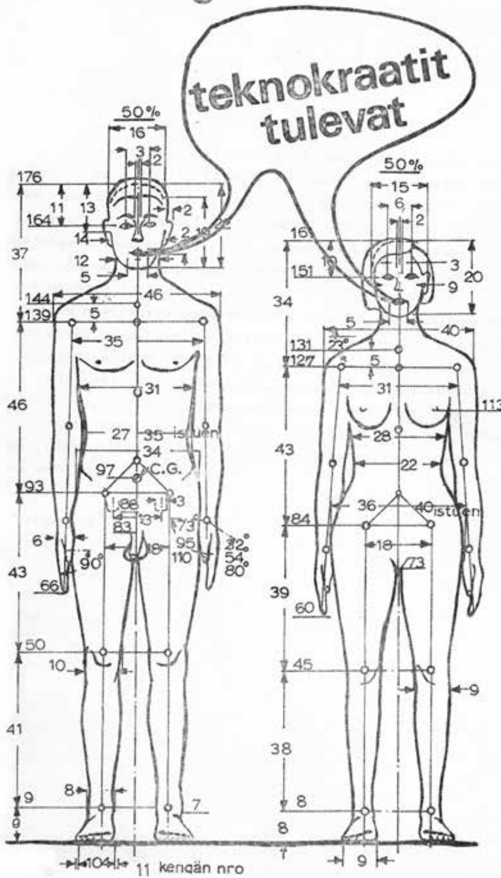

FIGURE 2.7. The cover of 'The Arrival of the Technocrats', a special issue of *Tokyotiedot*. 1970. Pirkko Pohjakallio and Jouko Koskinen personal archive.

apartments, traffic, or transport, the emphasis is on ergonomic, social, legal and production questions. A designer can solve these only by collaborating with experts and interest groups from different fields such as ideological, professional and political organizations, different focus groups and ultimately the prevailing system of production. In order to collaborate with these groups, the designer has to be aware of the political and economic structures of society and channels of influence, and the basic concepts of these scientific fields.[421]

While calling for a greater consciousness of political, social and economic structures and issues, the Technocrats did not wish to promote 'a production ideology focused on the designer'[422]. Instead, they remained doubtful of the true

421 Ibid., pp. 2-3.

422 Ibid., p. 4.

extent of a designer's possibilities to create positive change in the prevailing economic system. Design under a capitalist market economy would always concentrate on making profit, neglecting 'the human structure' of products, while the important decisions would be made by 'the holders of the capital themselves or through hired experts', who of course were guided by the law of markets.[423] As the designer was not really able to change the entire system, she had to infiltrate it and use her power to 'direct the production capacity created by modern technology towards common national and international needs.'[424] If the designer wished to engage with economic and social issues elsewhere, the Technocrats suggested that she should engage in political action through taking part in 'the ideological battle' and joining a trade union.[425]

2.3.2. 'The worker has had to adjust to the non-adjustable'

What, then, were 'the common needs', and what did participation in 'the ideological battle' mean in practice for a designer working in industrial production? Since designers could not change the fact that companies and businesses played by the rules of capitalism, they needed to turn their focus towards those who suffered most under the free market economy: the working class, specifically in their working conditions. Since designing new products for consumption would be conforming to the capitalist idea of design, new solutions were necessary. An acceptable focus, therefore, could be found in working conditions. This was a very concrete way of committing to the leftist battle by improving the conditions in which workers spent a considerate amount of their lives. The Technocrats hoped that this approach would spread among their fellow students in different departments at the Institute for Industrial Arts:

> Are the ceramic design students generally aware of the dangers in mixing and forming the clay and working with glazes and kilns? Has anyone at the department of visual communication designed visual information for factories and machinery, such as signs, warning, measurements, etc? At the textile design department, is there general interest towards developing textiles for work clothes?[426]

Before anything could be designed or improved, however, there needed to be a true understanding of woring conditions, and this could only be achieved by seeing them in the real world. Lamenting the fact that although the students at the Institute had good chances of getting summer internships in the industry, the high pace of working did not 'allow for a thorough investigation of the working conditions, not to mention discussions with workers.'[427] In order to make a difference, it was crucial to gain knowledge of 'all the factors that have an impact on working conditions, such as legislation,

423 Ibid., p. 4 and p. 17.

424 Ibid. p. 3.

425 Ibid.

426 Ibid., p. 14.

427 Ibid., p. 13.

occupational safety, labour market organisations, research institutes, healthcare, collective agreements, the worker's movement, etc.'[428]

This knowledge was gathered on a course arranged in 1971-72, specifically with the goal of making the students aware of working conditions in Finland. It sought this by visiting various factories and learning through observation, note-taking and photography. The students also interviewed some of the workers, asking questions about air quality, noise, temperature, moisture, ergonomic issues related to work positions, tools, workload and social spaces, such as dining halls, dressing rooms and showers. The results of the research conducted by the participants, many of whom were also behind *The Arrival of the Technocrats*, were put together into an illustrated report intended for circulation at the Institute as a tool to educate fellow students and staff at the Institute. This assignment became a yearly requirement in the 'General Principles of Design and Communication' course and was mandatory for all students throughout the 1970s. The assignment reports often consisted of a visual presentation of the working conditions together with short texts describing what the students had encountered on their site visit, including, for example, one to the *Kanniston Leipomo* bakery in Helsinki (see figure 2.8.).

The tone in the report was coloured by empathy and a genuine worry for the workers and the conditions in which they conducted their work. One of the visits took place in a bottling factory, where the most pressing concern was that the machines defined the pace and method of working: 'Quick work in a forced pace leads to mental exhaustion. The worker has to continuously sharpen her senses to an extreme.'[429] Another group visited a meat processing plant, where the workers were at high risk of physical injury. Lifting heavy loads lead to serious back injuries, and the meat was cut on a conveyor belt where accidents with knives happened all the time, meaning that 'many of the workers' hands were constantly wounded.'[430] At a laundry, the students learnt that employers neglected their employee's occupational diseases such as inflammation and degeneration of joints, chronic respiratory infections, different kinds of rashes and rheumatism. Accidents, such as slipping, tripping, pulling muscles and getting burns were a part of everyday life for the employees. The writers of the report seemed genuinely shocked by what they had seen and were overcome with astonishment that these issues had been left unaddressed in design education and the profession:

> If there is an agreement that product designers, environmental designers, architects, engineers and other designers work in order to create better living conditions for people, [...] then how can we accept the fact that the working environment for the majority of the population has been left undesigned entirely. We have designed, built and produced – but what is the position of the human, the worker, in all of this? She has, all too often, become ill, lost her health, lost her life! The worker has had to adjust to the non-adjustable.[431]

428 Ibid.

429 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, 'Raportti erilaisista työympäristöistä', report dated to 1971-1972.

430 Ibid.

431 Ibid.

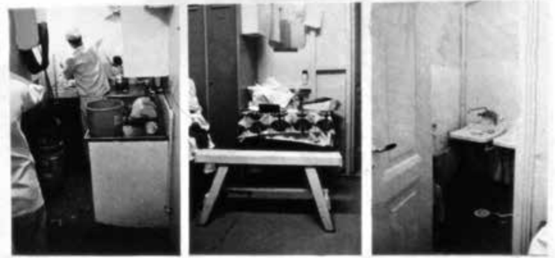

FIGURE 2.8. A student assignment reporting on the working conditions of *Kanniston leipomo* bakery. 1970s. Maker unknown. Aalto University Archives, TaiK_SVYP_010_021-036.

2.3.3. **'A quick fix to wider structural issues'**

The report also detailed how the interest in workplace safety had been born in the Industrial Design study programme: in 1969, two students had become aware of defects in personal protective equipment, or a complete absence of them in construction work, perhaps through personal experience. Moreover, 1969 had seen the introduction of a new law demanding that all construction workers wear safety helmets while on a construction site, which in turn meant that 200 000 workers needed new helmets.[432] Statistics reported that, in 1968 alone, over 30 000 accidents in took place in construction work across Finland, 4000 of which were head injuries.[433] This observation of a major safety risk and a discontent with existing helmets produced a ground-breaking project where students Jyrki Järvinen, Pekka Korpijaakko, Martti Launis and Jorma Vennola designed and produced a prototype of a protective helmet

432 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, 'Työkypärän suunnittelu', Jyrki Järvinen, Pekka Korpijaakko, Martti Launis, Jorma Vennola, project report dated to 15 September - 17 December 1969.

433 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.9. The interior of a protective helmet designed by students Jyrki Järvinen and Martti Launis. 1969. Aalto University Archives, TaiK_TMO_124A_297.

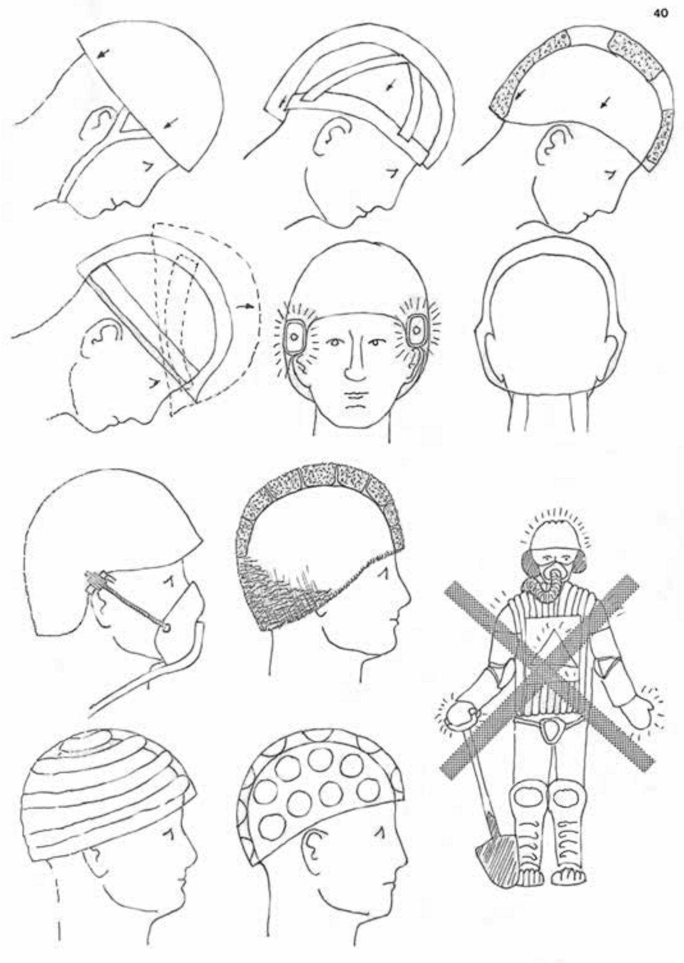

FIGURE 2.10. Sketches for protective helmets designed by students Jyrki Järvinen and Martti Launis. 1969. Aalto University Archives, TaiK 55.1_5_Kurssitöitä65_76.

(see figures 2.9. and 2.10.). For this project, the students went outside the programme's curriculum and studied ergonomics, workplace safety and legislation, among other subjects. With no previous experience in accessing the perspective of the product's final user, the students nevertheless understood its importance and prepared a questionnaire to distribute among workers. The results showed that there was major work to be done to improve comfort and functionality in existing helmets. To ensure a good result, the students collaborated with experts from the fields of ergonomics and medicine. The resulting project report was 70 pages long and it described the research and design processes in great detail, expressing the students' hopes that their project would be a start for wider, more resourceful research regarding machinery and protocols for workplace safety.[434]

Similar in tone to *The Arrival of the Technocrats*, which was published the following year, the project report reminded the reader of a designed object's limited capacity of making a difference: according to the students, a helmet was merely 'a quick fix to wider structural issues.'[435] However, the project was seen as a great success as its approach and methods were exactly what the students had been calling for throughout the 1960s: scientific, multidisciplinary and rooted in a real-life issue impacting people's lives. It created such great interest in the students that it was followed by a seminar on workplace safety where students were given the task of researching the current nation-wide safety requirements. Moreover, a group of students participated in a workplace safety training programme arranged by the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK), while further connections were created with organisations working with workplace safety and occupational health.[436]

This special interest in working conditions, workplace safety and ergonomics continued throughout the 1970s taking different forms. In autumn 1970, a new project was created to explore design's role in the making of heavy industry machinery, specifically a casting machine for concrete elements. In this project, commissioned by the Finnish Institute for Occupational Health, the design students' role was specifically 'not to focus on the technical functions of the machine, but research the working conditions of the people working with the machine and aim towards making those conditions better.'[437] The basis for this project was a survey regarding the working conditions of an element factory conducted by the Institute for Occupational Health. In addition to employing the survey report in the design process, the students worked with the users and manufacturers of the machinery.[438] Based on their research, the students at the department designed a scale model of the machine's functions so that the emphasis of the design process was on the human-machine interaction and the discomfort, such as noise and vibration, this caused to the worker.[439]

434 Ibid.

435 Ibid.

436 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, 'Raportti erilaisista työympäristöistä', report dated to 1971-1972.

437 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, 'TTO-projekteja 1971-73', unpaged and undated leaflet.

438 Ibid.

439 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, 'Raportti erilaisista työympäristöistä'.

2.3.4. 'A rational approach to the design task'

In the years between the end of the Second World War and the international oil crisis in 1973, the growth of the Finnish economy was unprecedented, and the increasing wealth was directed towards the building of a welfare state.[440] This included a number of policies that improved working conditions and workplace safety by, for example, shortening working hours and supporting research on ergonomics and work equipment. In addition to the leftist atmosphere at the University of Industrial Arts promoting the rights of the working class, these developments undoubtedly increased the students' interests in working conditions. Another influence arrived from international design schools such as the Royal College of Art in London, or the German *Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm* (HfG Ulm). Design historian and former student of Industrial Design at the Institute for Industrial Arts, Susann Vihma, has argued that the HfG Ulm has, in fact, 'significantly influenced the formation of industrial design in Finland.'[441] This could be seen in a number of ways, including the way in which social and political issues became an essential part of the industrial design education, but also in the aesthetics and themes of student projects.

HfG Ulm was established in 1953 to honour the memory of the founder Inge Scholl's siblings, both of whom were killed by Nazis in 1943 while part of a student resistance movement during the Second World War. According to historian Paul Betts, this meant that 'even technical design work would be firmly grounded in social awareness and informed political practice.'[442] The ideological reason for including social and political questions in design pedagogy lay in the school's original goal of 'designating industrial technology as the necessary locus of cultural reconstruction' while also reuniting industrial culture with 'the humanist tradition of social responsibility and moral education.'[443] Moreover, Betts has argued that the leading ideologist behind HfG Ulm was Hannes Meyer, architect, Bauhaus rector, and communist, placing the school in a distinctly leftist context.[444]

A deeper knowledge of HfG Ulm entered the Finnish design field in the 1960s when Börje Rajalin, designer and Head Teacher of Industrial Design at the Institute for Industrial Arts, hired a student from HfG Ulm to work in his office, which in turn prompted him to visit the school for the first time in 1966.[445] Around the same time, designer Heikki Metsä-Ketelä studied at HfG Ulm for a year, financed by the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts. In the Society's yearbook, in a summary of his experience at the school, Metsä-Ketelä suggested that the way in which 'the reality of our rational and technological world' was understood at HfG Ulm was 'unparalleled'[446]. Metsä-Ketelä was impressed by the way in

440 Matti Hannikainen, 'Rakennemuutos ja hyvinvointivaltio 1900-2000', in Pertti Haapala (ed.), *Suomen rakennehistoria. Näkökulmia muutokseen ja jatkuvuuteen* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2018), pp. 205-224 (p. 214).

441 Susann Vihma, 'The Legacy of HfG Ulm. A Finnish Perspective on Industrial Design and Design Education in the 1960s and 1970s', *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, 15 (2005), 64-75 (p. 65).

442 Paul Betts, 'Science, Semiotics and Society: The Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung in Retrospect', *DesignIssues*, vol. 14, no. 2, Summer 1998, pp. 67-82, p. 69.

443 Ibid., pp. 70-71.

444 Ibid., p. 76.

445 Vihma, 'The Legacy of HfG Ulm', p. 68.

446 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 1.2.1.31., *Suomen taideteollisuusyhdistyksen vuosikirja 1968*, Heikki Metsä-Ketelä, 'Ulmin muotoilukorkeakoulu', pp. 41-45 (p. 43).

which designers were expected to be aware of the social consequences of their work, and that teaching social and cultural responsibility was an essential part of studies at HfG Ulm. He enthused over the possibilities of focusing on the design of different machinery and instruments, whereas 'designing luxury objects' was not seen as relevant. Instead, scientific research and systematic testing were considered obligatory phases in the design process. Metsä-Ketelä shared the view of Tomás Maldonado, HfG Ulm's rector, who regarded the role of the designer as 'a coordinator', who should 'coordinate, in close collaboration with a large number of specialists, the most varied requirements of product fabrication and usage'.[447]

In 1968, after his year at HfG Ulm, Metsä-Ketelä was appointed to teach industrial design at the Institute for Industrial Arts. According to Vihma, Metsä-Ketelä renewed the teaching in many ways: he gave assignments where design solutions were expected to be grounded with the help of 'rational argumentation'[448], and he included the students' wishes regarding courses about ergonomics and design theory in the study programme. Despite the ambitious goals, Vihma notes that the results of the renewed study programme were not always very successful because of low material, technical and perhaps pedagogical resources. The main influences arriving from HfG Ulm were, according to Vihma, 'a rational approach to the design task, use of scientific data as bases for designs, [...] emphasis on new technology, new materials, ergonomics and systematic methods'[449]. Exploring student assignments at the University of Industrial Arts shows that these elements were present in the studies in a number of ways throughout the 1970s. However, HfG Ulm collaborated with commercial actors, most famously with consumer products company Braun, a practice which was not common at the University of Industrial Arts at this time. There was very little, if any, product design in the traditional sense thanks to the prevailing leftist aversion to consumerism and profit-making. Instead, the university searched for study project partners elsewhere.

447 Ibid.

448 Vihma, 'The Legacy of HfG Ulm', p. 69.

449 Ibid., p. 71.

2.4. IN SEARCH OF ANTI-COMMERCIAL AND ANTI-CAPITALIST DESIGN PRACTICES

2.4.1. 'Who reaps the benefits of design?'

Not every student or member of staff took part in the Marxist-Leninist movement, nor was an interest in working conditions an automatic sign of wanting to join the Finnish Communist Party. Either way, it is easy to find connections between the themes and the rhetoric found in student publications such as *The Arrival of the Technocrats*, course descriptions, rector Koskinen's texts and speeches and the openly political pamphlets of TAOS. An undated leaflet details the Marxist-Leninist organisation's views on design:

> Who reaps the benefit of design? We graduate as environmental and product designers into a capitalist society. According to its laws we have to design products that sell as much as possible, that are fashionable but not especially durable, cheaply made but expensive in the store. Advertising accelerates consumption and creates useless products such as automatic lemon squeezers or shoes with eight-inch heels. The only reason for manufacturing these products is the pursuit of profit. People of limited means need practical, affordable and durable products which do not go out of season immediately, and safe and comfortable environments for living and working in. Creating these is also the goal of designers, and here lies the contradiction between the designer and capital. WHAT CAN WE DO?[450]

The main goal of the Marxist-Leninist movement was to recruit students to support the working class in the fight against capitalism and direct Finland towards socialism. Improving working conditions was a direct way for a designer to engage with 'the class struggle' and show which side one was taking. In the meantime, the more general leftist values prevalent at the University of Industrial Arts meant that solidarity was extended beyond workers, towards other marginalised groups and minorities who were seen as forgotten and neglected by 'the system', including the design field. This interest could also be seen as fulfilling one of the goals of the new University created together by staff and students: increasing democracy and equality in Finnish society.

Starting in the late 1960s, there was a wave of establishing social movements and non-profit organisations of varying forms and scales aiming to promote equality, improve the position of minorities and bring visibility to issues neglected by

450 KAA, TAOS Collection, 4D_DC, 'TAOS/TYMPS vaaliohjelma', undated election programme.

decision-makers and authorities in Finland. The appearance of social movements has been connected to urbanisation, which brought an unprecedented number of workers to Finnish cities and changed the social structures of the country which also involved leaving many people without a reliable community or safety net around them.[451] For example, the November Movement (*Marraskuun liike*), was established to help and protect people living on the streets of Helsinki, after one specifically cold autumn in 1967, when a shockingly high number of homeless men froze to death, passed out after drinking cheap alcohol not meant for human consumption which had recently arrived on the market. A group of young doctors and lawyers established the November Movement and managed to convince the city of Helsinki to donate an empty storage building to offer temporary accommodation and rehabilitation for the homeless.[452] Another organisation was the Finnish Roma Association, which focused on improving the rights of the Roma people, a cultural and linguistic minority facing wide-spread discrimination. One by one, different organisations were formed to address some of the burning questions in society at the time, such as environmental destruction, the rights of sexual minorities and the dangers of nuclear power, to name a few.[453] Through these organisations, these causes received increasing amounts of attention among the Finnish people, conveyed through mass media and events, and widening the scope of citizen engagement and social activism.

The emergence of social movements, alongside the rhetoric of solidarity and responsibility from the Marxist-Leninist movement and more general leftist thinking, influenced the contents and goals of studies at the University of Industrial Arts. Study projects from the 1970s show how, on the one hand, students interpreted the prevailing atmosphere of anti-commercialism and solidarity, and what aspects of society and culture they wished to address with their design practice. On the other hand, the projects also demonstrated what kinds of questions the teachers wanted to address in their pedagogy, and in what direction they hoped to steer the design profession whilst creating contacts outside the university.

2.4.2. **'Courageously seek out human realities'**

In assignments throughout the 1970s, special attention was given to groups who, at the time, were considered to be in a vulnerable or underprivileged position. Meanwhile, there exists no recorded knowledge of the social backgrounds of the student body at the University of Industrial Arts. Even though higher education was free in Finland, making a living was an issue for those students who could not rely on financial support from their families. A central theme in student activism in the 1960s and 1970s was improving students' living conditions, and different laws about study loans and support were put into place in the course of 1970s. Thus, one can only speculate about the reaction of the students

451 Meinander, *Samaan aikaan*, p. 237.

452 Ibid.

453 Matti Salminen, *Toisinajattelijoiden Suomi. Tarinoita yhden totuuden maasta* (Helsinki: Into, 2016), p. 139.

to some of the assignments during their studies. For example, in a yearly task during the course called the General Principles of Design and Communication (*Suunnittelun ja viestinnän yleiset perusteet*, SVYP), which was an updated version of Kaj Franck's compulsory introductory course in the 1960s, students were to visit different areas in Helsinki and interview residents about their lives, routines and living environments. In the 1977-1978 course handbook, this task was framed as exploring what kinds of elements, both material and psychological, humans needed in order to thrive, but also what kinds of societal conditions were involved in regulating these conditions.[454] In small groups, the students were sent to mostly working-class neighbourhoods, where they went around in search of interviewees who often ended up being pensioners or families. Instructions for interviewing included a reminder that people 'need to be given a chance to talk about the things they find important.'[455] Superficial replies were to be deepened by asking more specific questions, while a 'certain level of caution should be followed with political questions as to not spur unnecessary suspicions.'[456] The students were also expected to document the homes they visited by taking photographs, drawing or painting.

The resulting reports make for intriguing reading. They offer a chance to travel in time to the Finland of the 1970s, but they also appear as touching documents of everyday lives that are often left unrecorded. For example, an interview with a family of four reveals that they have lived for three years in austere conditions, in what was originally built as temporary housing after the Second World War, with no modern conveniences, such as running water, toilet, or heating (see figure 2.11.).[457] The family's father, Harri, was an electrician, who had to quit his previous employment because poisonous chemicals had destroyed his lungs. According to him, the family could afford food only because the rent was so low. The report also listed which newspapers they subscribed to, which books they borrowed from the library and which TV programmes they watched together. The family had never been on a holiday, because Harri had not held a position long enough to accumulate a holiday period. However, despite the austere conditions, the family did not wish to move to any of the recently built suburbs, which Harri called 'slums'[458].

In another report, students interviewed Vieno, a 62-year-old widower and pensioner, who lived in a brand-new block of flats in the Pitäjänmäki suburb.[459] According to the report, Vieno enjoyed reading poetry and watching television, but she had never been to the library in her life, nor the cinema. Once a day, Vieno went for a small walk in the area and did her groceries if needed. In her own words, she never ventured outside in the evenings, since the streets were so restless and, anyway, there was no place to go to. Despite these shortcomings, Vieno was pleased with her

454 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, 'Suunnittelun ja viestinnän yleiset perusteet 1977-1978', undated course programme.

455 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 4, 'Asukkailta haastattelemalla saatavat tiedot', undated project instructions.

456 Ibid.

457 AUA, SVYP Collection, SVYP 4, 'Harri Tukiainen, sähköasentaja', unsigned and undated project report.

458 Ibid.

459 AUA, SVYP Collection, SVYP 5, 'Vieno Orsio, 62-vuotias leskirouva', unsigned and undated project report.

Liikkumiseen käutetään linja-auto-
ja.
Ruokatarvikkeet ostetaan sekä lä-
hiliikkeistä että keskikaupungilta,
Aleksanterinkadun liikkeissä
(esim. Kukkura) käydään, jos sat-
tuu olemaan "hommia" sielläpäim.
Palkka riittää ruokaan, sillä vuok
ra on halpa, vain 100mk/kuukausi.
Perheeseen tilatut lehdet ovat
Helsingin Sanomat, Elektroniikan
Uutiset, Sähköurakoitsija sekä
Made in China.
Käpylän ja vallilan kirjastoja
käytetään usein. Kirja, jota Harri
parhaillaan lukee on Thukydideksen
Peloponnesolaissota.
Iltaisin katsellaan paljon tele-
visiota. varsinkin perhe pitää

FIGURE 2.11. A student assignment reporting on the living conditions of Harri and his family in Kumpula, Helsinki. 1970s. Maker unknown. Aalto University Archives, SVYP Collection

Ihmiset joutuvat asumaan to-
della surkeissa oloissa tä-
nä asuntopulan aikana.
Kymintien kaupungin vuokra-
parakit ovat ränsistyneitä
vailla vähimpiä mukavuuksia.
Vesijohtoa ja viemäreitä ei
ole. Vesi on kannettava alu-
eella olevasta vesipostista.
Taloissa on puulämmitys ja
käymälät ovat ulkona. Pesu-
tuvassa vesi on myös läm-
mitettävä.

Parakkitaloissa asuu myös
useita vanhuksia ja lapsia.

Parakkialueella asuva rouva
Rauha Vieno █████, 2 pojan
yksinhuoltaja kertoili:

"Kuuleha sie. Mie oon menet-
täny terveytenikii tässä
asunnossa. Munuaistauti vai-
vaa ja syväntautikii. Mie
oon työkyvytön. Miulla on
semmonen paperi. Poijatki
on kouluiässä, mutta ei siitä
koulunkäymnistäkkää taho tul-
la mittää, ku aina ovat sai-
raana. Nuorempi poika pis-
siiki vielä.
Veet tippuu katosta, ovet ei
pysy kiinni. On nii vetosta,
ja kylmää, että yölläki pit-
tää nousta lämmittämmää.
Laittakaa työ joku reklaami
lehtee, että laittavat pa-
rempia asuntoja. Tämä o ihan
kamalaa".

Rauha Vieno █████ ja pojat
Kyösti Allan ja Herzi.

FIGURE 2.12. A student assignment reporting on the living conditions of Rauha and her two boys in Kumpula, Helsinki. 1970s. Maker unknown. Aalto University Archives, SVYP Collection.

living arrangements, although she found the costs of living too high. Elsewhere, Rauha, single mother to two boys, had 'lost her health'[460] in her apartment, which was so cold, damp and draughty that the children missed school all the time due to illness (see figure 2.12.).

While appreciative of the fact that these lived experiences have been recorded and preserved, the reader of the students' reports might also feel conflicted about facing such intimate details about the lives of strangers. How was the purpose of these interviews explained to their subjects? What, actually, was the purpose? The assignment did not include any concrete actions for improving the living conditions the students witnessed, nor was there any communication with policy-makers to draw their attention to the issues. The task of gathering information on people's lives, especially of those living in austere, even precarious conditions, could be seen as voyeurism or exploitation despite good intentions. Harry Moilanen, the head teacher of the introductory course and a self-proclaimed socialist, had expressed his concern for the underprivileged members of Finnish society on multiple occasions.[461] According to Moilanen, despite conscious developments towards a welfare state, some members of society, such as the elderly or the disabled, had been neglected. This indifference could also be seen in the field of Finnish design, and the only way in which this 'cynicism and self-complacency'[462] could be abolished was to turn attention to the everyday lives of people and make an attempt at understanding the different ways in which people were struggling.

2.4.3. 'Towards social and cultural responsibility'

In more solution-oriented projects, instead of industry or established companies, students at the University of Industrial Arts began to collaborate both with non-profit organisations and the public sector including schools and hospitals. This approach expanded beyond design studies to other programmes at the university, including art pedagogy, photography and graphic design. A project for designing clothing for children with cerebral palsy, for instance, was based on research conducted at the Lastenlinna children's hospital in Helsinki. The goal of the project was to develop new shapes and materials for comfortable clothing that would be easy to put on and remove both in hospital and home use. The project was conducted by third year textile design students, who received input and support from different professionals at the Lastenlinna hospital: doctors, nurses, a psychologist, physiotherapists, craft teachers and workers at the sewing workshop and laundry department.[463] There was also collaboration with prisons: one project included designing and producing a touring exhibition about the prison environment and prisoners' lives in order to remove prejudice and discrimination towards them. Another collaboration took the form of

460 AUA, SVYP Collection, SVYP 4, unnamed, undated and unsigned project report.

461 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, 'Taideteollisuuden kritiikkiä', lecture manuscript dated 7 April 1984.

462 Ibid.

463 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *TTO-projekteja 1971-73*, unpaged and undated leaflet.

organised art groups for prisoners, where the hope was to offer them possibilities for hobbies and creativity. The art group programme was planned and conducted by art pedagogy students, and it consisted of experimenting with different materials, analysing images, watching films and studying photography.[464] In a graphic design project, visual communication students did the layout and illustrations of an information leaflet about social services aimed at the elderly, commissioned by the Finnish Red Cross.

Different actors in the healthcare sector were recurrent collaborators in students' projects throughout the 1970s. For example, in 1970, students Jorma Pitkonen and Heikki Kiiski finished their diploma work focussing on emergency medical services. At the time, there was no regulated emergency transport system in place in Finland, but a public discussion about creating one was ongoing. Neither were there any nation-wide emergency telephone number, any standards or laws for how emergency transport should be equipped, or any training for the drivers.[465] According to Pitkonen and Kiiski's project report, in existing transport arrangements, the interiors of the cars and positioning of the equipment were not functional, meaning that resuscitation was extremely difficult, if not impossible. As one of the steps towards a health care system at the level of a welfare state, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health had given a recommendation of a nationwide system of emergency transport. In this recommendation, the transport car was in a crucial role. This gave Pitkonen and Kiiski the inspiration for their project, which was to be among the first of many study projects related to health care and hospital equipment at the Institute for Industrial Arts.

The project report, which also served as the diploma work of Pitkonen and Kiiski, showed that their methods were based on rigorous research. A long list of references at the end of the report included many international sources for scientific research on first aid and transportation of trauma and emergency patients. Pitkonen and Kiiski had also read extensively on how countries such as Sweden and Germany had arranged their emergency transport. In addition to reading on the subject, they consulted experts in Töölö hospital in Helsinki and the Finnish Red Cross. Based on the research, Kiiski and Pitkonen created what they called 'a catastrophe car' to be used in emergency transport across the country (see figures 2.13. and 2.14.). The most important feature of the vehicle was its equipment, with which it was possible to give effective and life-saving first aid already at the scene of the accident and inside the car. The requirements that this feature placed on the car were extensive: the car should have effective suspension to ensure stability for the patient and the carers. There should be proper ventilation, thermal insulation, good lighting and surfaces and spaces that would be easily cleaned and antistatic. Moreover, the surfaces and lights visible to other drivers had to be attention-grabbing and informative of the car's function.[466]

Pitkonen and Kiiski's project remains an intriguing example of the more systematic and research-based

464 Ibid.

465 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, Heikki Kiiski and Jorma Pitkonen, *Katastrofiauto*, 1970, project report.

466 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.13. Scale model of 'Catastrophe Car', designed and photographed by students Jorma Pitkonen and Heikki Kiiski. 1970. Designarkisto Archives, 11414 ED-design Oy Collection.

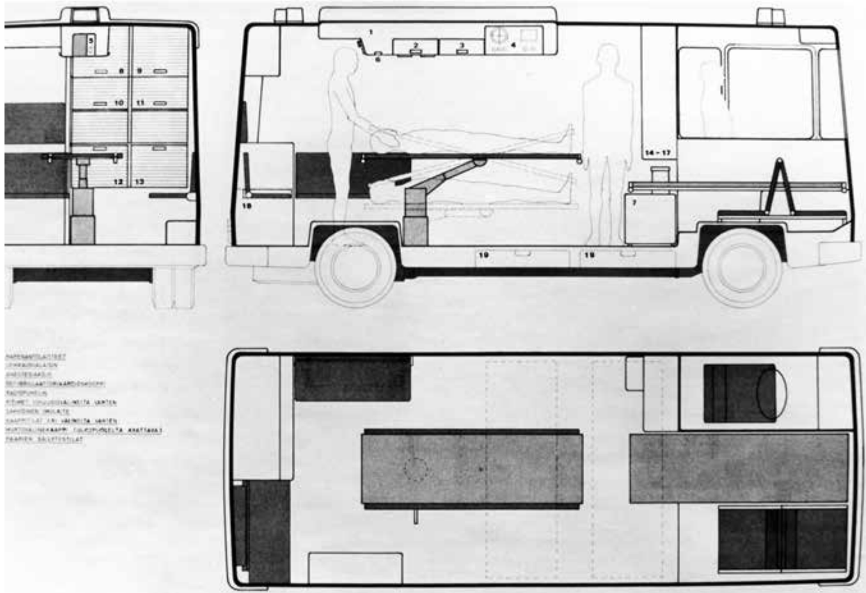

FIGURE 2.14. Technical drawings of of 'Catastrophe Car', designed by students Jorma Pitkonen and Heikki Kiiski. 1970. Designarkisto Archives, 11414 ED-design Oy Collection.

approach to design which gained a foothold at the Institute for Industrial Arts starting in the early 1970s. It was emblematic of the kind of design work that the students in the 1960s had been demanding of their education: a design process based on research and collaboration with other disciplines, resulting in not only an aesthetic object but a system which addressed a significant issue in society affecting the everyday lives of citizens. Moreover, the project caught the interest of the healthcare professionals involved, which led to many more collaborations with hospitals and the healthcare sector throughout the decade. For example, in 1971, interior design students toured the hospitals in southern Finland, invited by the Finnish Hospital League (*Sairaalaliitto*) to join a project about researching the connection between the wellbeing of patients and their physical environment in a hospital. In the project, the students redesigned patient rooms in various ways, employing different colours, materials and light. Based on the changes in their environment, the participating patients observed potential changes in their recovery, which were then recorded for the research.[467]

As the decade progressed, numerous projects focused on improving living conditions and healthcare for the disabled. For example, in 1973, student Tapani Hyvönen received a grant for the purpose of researching playgrounds for disabled children.[468] Hyvönen visited eight different institutions, with the goal of producing a guidebook for designers interested in questions of rehabilitation for the physically disabled. The final project report consisted of practical information on different disabilities and their rehabilitation processes aimed at designers. Another project by students Anneli Ahola and Jukka Juutilainen was inspired by a survey published by The Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities, which showed that the technical aids currently on the market were awkward and inadequate in order to truly benefit the people who needed them.[469] The Association did not have its own design department, so individual workers and clients often developed their own solutions. With this in mind, Ahola and Juutilainen set out to develop an 'extended arm', which would help in reaching and moving objects. Very much like Hyvönen's work, the project report included descriptions of different disabilities and their causes. Ahola and Juutilainen wished to 'address as many physical conditions as possible'[470], therefore it was decided that the 'extended arm' should be adjustable. Different technologies were researched and considered, including hydraulics, pneumatics, electro-magnetic solutions and mechanical options requiring the user as a source of power. The outcome of the project consisted of two prototypes, one of which functioned on muscle power and another with an electric motor. They were sent out to be tested at hospitals, physiotherapists' practices and the Association itself. The project report included some snippets of feedback Ahola and Juutilainen received regarding the functionality of the prototypes: it turned out that

467 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *TTO-projekteja 1971-73*.

468 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, Tapani Hyvönen, *Kehitysvammaisten leikkialueiden välineistöstä*, 1973, project report.

469 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 55.1-5, Anneli Ahola and Jukka Juutilainen, *Vammaisen apuväline*, 1976, project report.

470 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.15. Student presenting a report on the living conditions in the Temppeliaukio area in Töölö, Helsinki. 1970s. Photographer unknown. Aalto University Archives, SVYP_3831_001.HM_17.

the testers had had multiple issues with the usability of the objects. The respondents had developed similar equipment of their own, catered to their own needs, and therefore were able to come back with suggestions on how to improve the prototypes. However, in the final report, Ahola and Juutilainen did not comment on the feedback, or reveal their plans about the future of the project.

Another frequent focus in student projects was the urban environment. In a number of assignments, students worked directly with citizens in order to help them make improvements in the built environment, most often in the courtyards of old buildings in central Helsinki. In a project taking place in the Katajanokka area, students researched the demographic structure and property ownership, while also conducting surveys among the citizens and exploring official planning made by the municipality.[471] They interviewed landlords and janitors and consulted policy makers and city planners. Based on the citizen survey and the overall research process, the students redesigned a number of individual courtyards into active spaces with playgrounds and urban gardens instead of 'parking lot jungles made of concrete'[472] (see figure 2.15.). Meanwhile, some projects related to the urban environment focused on public transport, such as a 1971 project commissioned by the Helsinki City Transport (*Helsingin kaupungin liikennelaitos*) where the task was to design a bus specifically suitable for urban conditions (see figure 2.16.).[473] In 1978, student Ulla-Kirsti Junttila finished her diploma work, in which she researched street furniture and public spaces in Helsinki with the goal of

471 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *TTO-projekteja 1971-73*.

472 Ibid.

473 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.16. The scale model of a bus designed by students for the Helsinki City Transport. 1971. Designers unknown. Aalto University Archives, TaiK_TMO_124B_369.

demonstrating that 'with good and comprehensive design, our physical environment can be made more appealing and functional'.[474] In the project, Junttila surveyed different actors involved in the design and production of street furniture, reviewed existing elements in the urban environment, and presented conclusions and ideas for improvements.

The study projects in the field of design conducted at the University of Industrial Arts throughout the 1970s reflected the way in which leftist political values, such as anti-commercialism and addressing the issues of the working classes and minority groups, marked the school's atmosphere. The methods and processes used in the projects reflected a changing understanding of the design profession, and thus the direction in which design education was moving. The 1969 curriculum of the industrial design programme included a description of the goals of the studies:

> Individualism in a student of industrial design might be a deficit, because the work is mostly team work. [...] Industrial design includes all the forms of human activity affected by industrial production. Therefore, the education of an industrial designer must be an education in social and cultural responsibility, too. [...] Technical skills and knowledge are an essential part of the curriculum, but studies in both natural and social sciences are equally important, because based on them, it is possible to develop a sense of social responsibility and an understanding of the nature of an industrial society.[475]

474 Designarkisto Archives (DA), 11706 Ulla-Kirsti Junttila Collection, 18, Ulla-Kirsti Junttila, *Muotoilu julkisessa ympäristössä*, 1978, p. 1.

475 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, Hd Opinto-ohjelmat 1966-1969, *Metallitaiteen osaston opetusohjelma: teollisen tuotemuotoilun opintosuunta*, study programme dated 11 August 1969.

Two years later, the rather vague idea of 'social responsibility' had been refined as the 1971 curriculum for industrial design studies discussed 'social design' (*yhteiskunnallinen muotoilu*) as a new and preferred focus of the studies. The field of 'social design' was described as 'the wide sector of public consumption as opposed to private consumption.'[476] As the ensuing study projects demonstrated, this meant making an even bigger leap away from commercial design work and Finnish industry, a development which could be seen in the 1974 final exhibition of student work. The exhibition included, for example, a project where students and staff had designed an architectural guidebook with which the Skolt Sámi minority could build their own houses.[477] Another display presented a silk-screen workshop developed together with people in the village of Eno in Northern Karelia, where the idea was to empower farmers to employ their craft skills to make a better living and sustain their traditional way of life. These projects, with their focus on working with people seen to be in a vulnerable position in Finnish society, marked an even greater departure from designing for industry.

476 AUA, Institute for Industrial Arts Collection, Hd 10 Opinto-oppaat, *Taideteollinen oppilaitos: opinto-opas 2/1971*, undated study programme leaflet.

477 Leena Maunula, 'Muotoilukorkeakoulun työ ulottuu moniaalle', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 25 May 1974.

2.5. HARRY MOILANEN AND SOCIAL(IST) DESIGN

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, designer, teacher and journalist Harry Moilanen (1931-1991) was one of the most vocal and influential figures in the debate about design and social responsibility in Finland. Moilanen was a trained interior architect who started his design career in the late 1950s by designing glassware and working in a number of different Finnish design offices. In the early 1960s, Moilanen continued his studies in the United States, where he also returned later in the decade as an invited teacher at the architecture department of the Washington University in St. Louis.[478] Back in Finland, he taught at the Institute for Industrial Arts, assisting Kaj Franck in his introductory course. Towards the end of the 1960s, Moilanen found a passion in writing extensively about the problematic nature of the design profession, inspired by international figures such as Marshall McLuhan, Victor Papanek and Buckminster Fuller. In his often lengthy and rather theoretical texts, Moilanen argued vigorously against consumerism, commercialism and the harm that design and industrial production caused to both humans and the environment. A self-proclaimed socialist, Moilanen was a prolific, but contradictory, theorist exploring the morality, and immorality, of the design profession, taking turns in both promoting and renouncing the possibilities of a designer to commit to social and political values.

In an interview in 1970, Moilanen urged designers to be 'political actors first, and designers second, […] because to design is to engage in a socially dubious activity'[479]. This 'Papanekian' statement captured Moilanen's contradictory relationship with design, oscillating between a need to reform the profession on the one hand, and to disown it on the other. What distinguished Moilanen from Papanek, however, was his unapologetic political agenda: the further the interview went, the clearer Moilanen's socialist commitments became. For instance, he challenged the role that design had taken in support of capitalist economy:

> Due to the prevailing economic system with its goal of maximising profit, production is owned by particular social classes, and there is a pursuit towards creating unnecessary needs. […] Therefore, a designer who is also a socialist must take a stand against the entire economic system.'[480]

Further on in the interview, Moilanen demanded that the designer should be responsible for the production process in its entirety in order to secure social and environmental accountability, including sourcing of raw materials, developing production technology and even planning the afterlife of the finished product. If this proved impossible, and

478 Eeva Siltavuori, 'Arkipäivämme muodonantajat', *Kodin kuvalehti*, 4 (1970), 40-42 and 80 (p. 42).

479 Ibid., p. 80.

480 Ibid.

FIGURE 2.17. 'Freedom', a drawing by Harry Moilanen. Undated. Aalto University Archives, Harry Moilanen Collection.

the designer's tasks were continuously 'dubious', she should strive towards 'doing something else', for example 'disseminating information about environmental issues'[481]. In other words, if the designer was not able, for some reason, to guarantee socially and environmentally responsible products and production, she should resign and use her skills for educating and informing others about the negative consequences of capitalism and industrial production.

A number of drawings among Moilanen's personal papers communicate his ideology through symbols and texts. One image shows a young man in front of a map of Finland, dressed in a worker's shirt, studying a book intensely while a blue dove behind him is heading east over a red flag (see figure 2.17.). A red accordion produces red notes, a paint brush is painting an arm holding another red flag, and a pencil is writing the word 'FREEDOM' on a piece of paper. The young man, his book and his accordion are surrounded by tools, trucks, a boat, homes and

481 Ibid.

factories with their workers; a structured, functioning socialist society. Another drawing reveals Moilanen's fascination with economy, industrial production and raw materials. It takes the form of a collection of maps, diagrams and figures that depict goods produced by Finnish industries (see figure 2.18.). The drawing seems to be a model for some kind of further research and diagram-making, exploring, as it appears to do, the source of raw materials and the production processes of, for example, tools, household electronics, clothes, shoes, textiles and tableware. Here, it seems as if Moilanen has attempted to explore Finland's place in the growing global supply chain – a topic completely absent from the design debate at the time.

Moilanen's views were arguably radical, and his somewhat militant rhetoric together with the lasting stigma of being a socialist in 1970s Finland, have made his career a curious footnote in Finnish design history. Indeed, in 1972, Moilanen blamed the previous generation of designers for 'participating eagerly in the creation of a "jet-set" lifestyle', while their famous products were, in his opinion, 'completely devoid of any social goals.'[482] Moilanen went as far as calling his colleagues' work 'design-fascism, where a considerable part of industrial production is wasted on some supposed needs, on the manufacture of luxury products for the rich, at the cost of the needs of people.'[483] Despite these controversial views, or perhaps because of them, in 1973, as the Institute for Industrial Arts gained university status, rector Koskinen appointed Moilanen Head of Department for General Studies, making him responsible for developing and teaching the school-wide course, General Principles of Design and Communication. The course was mandatory for every student at the university, making Moilanen involved in educating hundreds, if not thousands of professionals in the fields of art and design. He inherited the course from Kaj Franck, who had also, albeit in a non-political way, explored the themes of social and environmental responsibility in his teaching.

Moilanen's approach was different: he considered his duty to educate and inform his students about what he saw as the most urgent inequalities and injustices in Finnish society. In the study plan for the introductory course in 1965, with Franck in the lead, the goal had been to 'strive towards creating a comprehensive understanding of the notion of industrial arts'[484], while exploring the roles that graphic design, photography and art education played in the formation of the physical environment. The planned tasks had involved assignments exploring composition, artistic expression and group work. The purpose for the 'General Principles' course in 1977–1978, developed by Moilanen, aimed to 'find the meaning of the connections between design education, society and industrial production', the goal being to give students the ability to 'critically analyse issues within the different areas of society.'[485] An undated drawing by Moilanen gives an idea of his teaching philosophy: 'education is not a place […] education

482 Personal archive of Jouko Koskinen and Pirkko Pohjakallio, *Tokyo-tiedot*, 1 (1972), Harry Moilanen, 'Designerit vastaavat kansainvälisen monopolikapitalismin haasteeseen', unpaged.

483 Ibid.

484 DM, Kaj Franck Collection, 'Yleisen sommittelun opetusohjelma 1966', p. 1.

485 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, TaiK 51.00.1, *Opinto-opas, Taideteollinen korkeakoulu 1977-1978*, p. 44.

FIGURE 2.18. A drawing by Harry Moilanen depicting economic conditions and industrial production in Finland. Undated. Aalto University Archives, Harry Moilanen Collection.

FIGURE 2.19. 'Education Thru Action', a diagram by Harry Moilanen. Undated. Aalto University Archives, Harry Moilanen Collection.

is people in motion'[486], suggesting a collectivist, perhaps even activist, mode of pedagogy where students were seen as active, and activated, members of society, instead of passive receivers of information and knowledge (see figure 2.19.).

The assignments in Moilanen's course paint an intriguing picture of design education developed following socialist principles within a capitalist economy. The first assignment of the course in the academic year of 1977–78, for instance, was to explore how individual world views had an impact on the different ways in which information is gathered, formed and communicated.[487] The students were asked to analyse and visually present some of the different elements and people who had affected their intellectual development, such as the place where they had grown up, nature, home, family, friends, schooling, media and mass communication. The second part of the course focused on the theme of work, with the goal of investigating 'the nature of work, the position of workers in industrial production and the impact work has on human living circumstances'[488], together with questions of occupational health, workplace safety, social conditions in industrial production and the relationship between 'the human and the machine'. The students were assigned to visit different factories and, through observation and interviews, create an understanding of the working conditions within them. Each group was expected to interview one of the factory workers with ready-made questions about their work experience, working conditions, salary and livelihood, possibilities for social contacts during working hours and, finally, whether they belonged to a trade union or not. The results of both the observation at the factory and the worker interview were to be made into a visual report presented to the other students at the end of the course. It was possibly these factory visits that gave the students at the University of Industrial Arts such a reputation that companies and factories ended up refusing any collaboration, as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The last part of the course explored how different societal conditions impacted different living environments. Here, the task was to visit different areas in Helsinki, document people's homes and, through interviews, create an understanding of what their everyday lives consisted of. Another theme was connected to information, communication and mass media, and their influence on citizens and their worldviews. The final task in the course was to conduct a 'product analysis', with the aim of exploring 'different problems and phenomena' connected to design and industrial production.[489] Although Moilanen's course descriptions lacked the explosive rhetoric found in his essays, the themes and assignments spoke their own language. In subtle, and not-so-subtle, ways, the students were asked to explore the different ways in which capitalist society, together with design at the service of industrial production, was letting people and nature down, whether through poor working conditions, dismal living environments, consumerist brain-washing, or environmental pollution.

486 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, 'Education Through Action', undated drawing.

487 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, 'Suunnittelun ja viestinnän yleiset perusteet', undated course programme.

488 Ibid.

489 Ibid.

In line with left-wing ideologies, the focus was on societal structures and how they affected the creation of inequalities.

In addition to these topics, Moilanen had a specific concern for the people living and working in rural Finland. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, developments towards a welfare state gained speed with the goal of providing equal opportunities in life to all citizens. As the country was in the process of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, rural areas struggled to keep up with the economic growth and increasing welfare of urban regions. A widely shared concern for the countryside led to the establishment of a committee in 1963 with the task of defining the so-called developing regions and finding measures to improve their conditions.[490] According to political historian Sami Moisio, wide income transfer programmes were developed not only in support of rural population, but also in support of Finland's economic growth and its social and political unity.[491] In Moisio's words, this allowed a view of the nation as an undivided region under development, with the Finnish state making substantial investments in providing material infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals in rural regions. Moreover, a new law was created, giving municipalities responsibility for organising and providing citizens with the services expected in a welfare state. Not everyone was satisfied with these developments, however. While rural regions increasingly became seen as developing regions, state power became present in citizens' lives in an unprecedented way as welfare services advanced.[492] Even though the growing services created more comfortable living conditions, through the supply of electricity, running water, proper roads, healthcare and education, some people saw them as 'welfare colonialism'[493], dictating the proper way of living and destroying traditions.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Harry Moilanen fought passionately against what he also called 'domestic colonialism'[494]. He was increasingly worried about 'the violent withering away of local cultures caused by social changes unevenly distributed with capitalist technology'[495]. This concern prompted him to become a reporter for YLE, the Finnish Public Broadcasting Company, and to travel around Finland interviewing working class people for his radio show called *Everyday Lives of Workers* (*Työläisten arkea*). The goal of the programme was to highlight the way in which people living in rural regions had 'their own thoughts and ideas about their lives and problems. Their voices are just not heard.'[496] In addition to his work as a journalist, this view became the driving force in Moilanen's work as teacher. In order to fight 'domestic colonialism', Moilanen arranged countless of workshops around rural Finland together with a changing group of colleagues and students. The purpose of these workshops was to support local cultures by recording and revitalising traditional craft techniques. Moilanen aimed to help develop local craft practices into cottage industries

490 Sami Moisio, *Valtio, alue, politiikka. Suomen tilasuhteiden sääntely toisesta maailmansodasta nykypäivään* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2012), p. 157.

491 Ibid.

492 Ibid., p. 153.

493 Ibid., p. 14.

494 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.84., 'Is planning organized destruction?', undated seminar programme.

495 Ibid.

496 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, *Teknisten ja Erikoisammattien Liiton jäsenlehti*, 5 (1985), Satu Härkönen, 'Nöyryyden tilalle terve ammattiylpeys', p. 1.

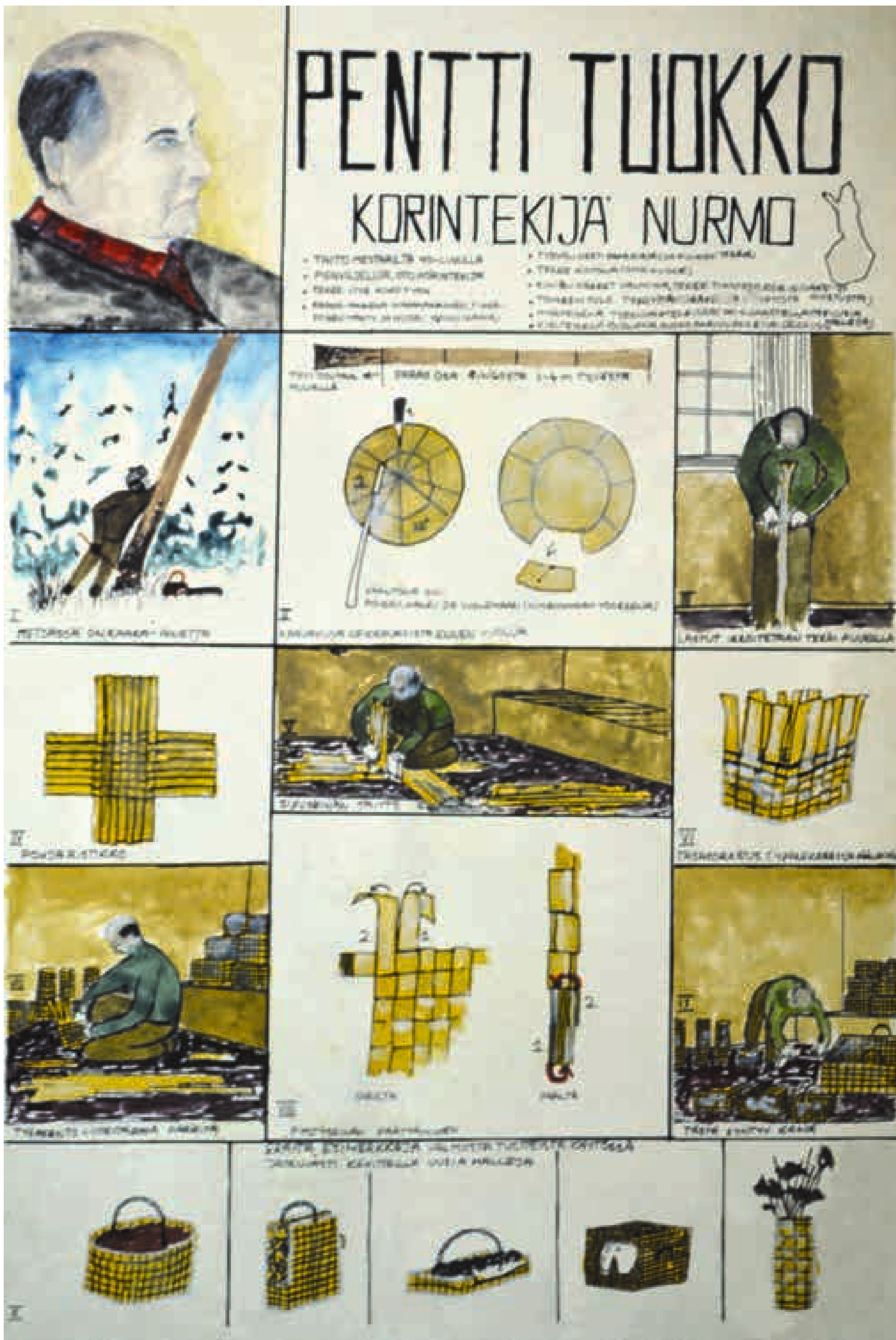

FIGURE 2.20. A student assignment documenting the work of basket weaver Pentti Tuokko. 1970s. Maker unknown. Aalto University Archives, TaiK_SVYP_011A_066.

FIGURE 2.21. Products of a workshop focusing on traditional leather making techniques. 1970s. Photograph by Harry Moilanen. TaiK_HMoi_003B_018.

allowing the rural population, such as farmers, to increase their income and continue their traditional way of life in their home regions.[497]

Developing and realising these workshops became a recurrent part of the General Principles course at the University of Industrial Arts. Together with his students, Moilanen travelled around the country and, in collaboration with municipalities, local schools and local people, arranged workshops exploring different craft techniques and materials such as blacksmithing, weaving, boat building, birch bark weaving and burl sculpting, to name a few. Some of the workshops focused on recording craft skills in danger of disappearing. For example, a wonderfully preserved student work details the life and work of birch bark basket weaver Pentti Tuokko from Nurmo in western Finland (see figure 2.20.). Other workshops aimed at helping locals develop craft products, as seen in a photograph from 1973 showing leather goods made with traditional techniques (see figure 2.21.).

The lengthiest project of this kind took place in Eno, North Karelia, and lasted throughout the 1970s. According

497 For a more detailed exploration of the 'craft revival' in Nordic countries in the 1960s and 1970s, see Malin Graesse and Kaisu Savola, 'Nordic Revival: Crafting Rural Development in Finnish and Norwegian Design Discourse' in *Nordic Design Cultures in Transformation, 1960-1980*, ed. by Kjetil Fallan, Christina Zetterlund and Anders V. Munch (New York and London, Routledge, 2022), pp. 72-82.

FIGURE 2.22. Two women in Eno presenting their hand-made textiles. 1970s. Photograph by Harry Moilanen. Aalto University Archives, TaiK_HM_ENO_001_1_027.

to a project report written by Moilanen, Eno was chosen because its population had lived more or less in a 'natural economy' up until the Second World War. This meant that many of the traditional craft skills were still used daily, as self-made objects and tools remained a vital part of everyday lives.[498] However, the craft skills or objects were not used as commodities but made to satisfy personal needs. The goal was to help turn this around and design products that could be sold to tourists, for example. However, the first steps in the Eno project were to record craft techniques, use of materials and traditional patterns. Moilanen and a group of students interviewed local craftspeople and photographed both the making processes and the finished objects. Some photographs from the first trips to Eno have been preserved, showing locals proudly presenting objects they had made such as baskets and textiles (see figures 2.22. and 2.23.). The intention was to archive the interviews

FIGURE 2.23. A man in Eno presenting his hand-woven basket. 1970s. Photograph by Harry Moilanen. Aalto University Archives, TaiK_HM_ENO_001_1_006.

498 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, 'Kansankäsityön elvyttäminen Enon kunnassa', undated project report.

and photographs in a museum collection, where they could be accessed by anyone interested in traditional Finnish craft, thus making sure the knowledge and skills would not disappear as the use of handmade objects diminished along with industrialisation.

Whether this material ever found its way into an archive or a museum collection remains unclear. Either way, the Eno project continued, and in 1976 Moilanen prepared a survey to be completed by the Eno population in order to map the breadth of skills within the population, but also to understand whether people were interested in making craft products their new income source.[499] According to Moilanen and the project report, the survey gathered over 300 participants. Half of them announced their interest in developing their craft skills and practice towards a livelihood or an extra income. To respond to this interest, Moilanen began to develop a plan for the creation of a cottage industry network, which included the idea for a craft centre with workspaces in which craft courses could be held, raw materials and tools delivered and the final products sold. This scheme was based on the success of a similar arrangement in the Turku archipelago in western Finland, where 70 craftspeople had joined forces and created a small centre for their activities. Again, whether these ambitious plans became a reality in Eno remains unclear. In either case, by 1982, initiatives of this kind were established in a number of villages and towns across Finland, including Suomussalmi, Juntusranta-Ruhtinaansalmi, Ylä-Kainuu, Selkoskylä-Pyhäkylä and Alavuokki.[500]

In addition to photographs and newspaper clippings, the only evidence that remains of these 'regional development' projects are reports and articles written by Moilanen himself. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the real-life impact of these initiatives, especially from the viewpoint of the citizens living in rural regions and perhaps participating in them in hopes of a better income. There is no reason to doubt Moilanen's good intentions, but it is worth asking whether his project of preserving traditions in fact imposed some artificial idea of rural life, and therefore was not so far from the ideology behind the phenomenon of 'domestic colonialism' he so ardently criticised. It seems that Moilanen recognised this risk of a power imbalance and even addressed it upon embarking on the projects. For example, in 1979, in the opening speech of a soapstone sculpture workshop in Nunnanlahti, eastern Finland, Moilanen stated that

> the purpose of the presence of the University of Industrial Arts at the workshop is not to bring expertise, design, nor to give advice about the best ways to work. The product development should take its starting point in the cultural tradition and professional skills already existing in the region.[501]

Moilanen's fascination with pre-industrial ways of living was most likely part of a genuine wish to empower people without access to power or any influence on decisions concerning

499 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, *Taideteollisuus 1982*, Harry Moilanen, 'Kädet luovaan ja tuottavaan työhön', 20-22 (p. 21).

500 Ibid.

501 'Kivi-illan tulos, Vuolukivikurssi Nunnanlahteen', *Pielisen Sanomat*, 15 November 1979.

their lives. However, Moilanen also represents a wider phenomenon of designers being interested in 'the traditional', 'the indigenous' and 'the vernacular', which Clarke has described as 'a collective searching for an antidote to an advanced state of alienation'[502]. Design historian Catharine Rossi has explored this phenomenon in the Radical Design movement in Italy in the 1970s, where, for example, design collective Gruppo 9999 devised initiatives exploring 'the pastoral' as an antidote to 'technological modernity'.[503] Indeed, according to Moilanen, the reason for arranging these initiatives in Finland was for the staff and students at the University of Industrial Arts to learn about different ways of living while giving attention to the needs of people across the country, not just in the industrialised and urbanised regions.[504] Since the university functioned on taxpayers' money, as many people as possible should, he felt, be able to benefit from the work conducted there. In the Nunnanlahti case, for example, Moilanen suggested that the university's task was mostly to support the initiative financially: the soapstone course was funded by the university with 12 000 Finnish marks, while the Juuka municipality provided the remaining 5 500 marks.[505]

And yet, is that what design and design education is for, transfer of funds? What was the purpose of this kind of work for Moilanen himself, and how did he see it benefitting the local communities in a long-term perspective? With the locally led workshops, Moilanen wished to 'break the monopoly'[506] of companies such as Marimekko and Arabia, and to empower people to start their own craft workshops and cottage industries. Despite the good intentions, perhaps the 'regional development' projects were most useful to Moilanen, his colleagues and students all struggling with the commercial and capitalist aspect of design work. In a 1982 interview, Moilanen suggested that the reason he kept going with the 'regional development' projects was because the designers involved, himself included, found the work 'professionally challenging, socially meaningful and spiritually enriching.'[507] This statement suggests that working with rural populations, tradition and craft, offered disillusioned designers a chance to experience something 'authentic' and 'pure', far from Moilanen's view of 'design-fascism' and 'jet-set lifestyles'. In 1973, Moilanen wrote:

> Until now, there has not been any concrete indication of what a democratic design practice challenging the monopolies could be. However, it is entirely clear what it under any circumstances cannot be: supporting a manufacturing policy based on the oppression of the workers […], whether inside or outside the factory walls.[508]

502 Clarke, 'Design for Development', p. 47.

503 Catharine Rossi, 'Crafting a Design Counterculture: The Pastoral and the Primitive in Italian Radical Design 1972-1976', in *Made in Italy. Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*, ed. by Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 145-160, p. 149.

504 'Tavoite: muotoilun fakki-idiootit?', *Soihdunkantaja*, 1 (1980), 12-14 (p. 14).

505 'Kivi-illan tulos: Vuolukivikurssi Nunnanlahteen', *Pielisen Sanomat*, 15 November 1979.

506 Leena Maunula, 'Muotoilukorkeakoulun työ ulottuu moniaalle', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 25 May 1974.

507 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, *Taideteollisuus 1982*, Harry Moilanen, 'Kädet luovaan ja tuottavaan työhön', 20-22 (p. 21.)

508 AUA, Harry Moilanen Collection, Harry Moilanen 2, *Tokyo-tiedot*, 2 (1973), Harry Moilanen, 'Taideteollisesta koulutuksesta ja valtiomonopolistisesta kapitalismista Suomessa', pp. 1-27.

Artist and designer Oiva Toikka, who worked briefly with Moilanen at the Nuutajärvi factory, remembered him as 'an interesting' and 'extremely talented designer', who 'took his theories too far.'[509] According to Toikka, Moilanen became so strict in his political views and anti-commercialism that it became impossible for him to work as a designer or create objects that would sell, as he 'simply could not sacrifice anything on the altar of selling.'[510]

Toikka's statement enforces the image of Moilanen as a man of principle. Despite the contradictory and fragmentary body of work that he left behind, Moilanen remains a fascinating example of a designer who persistently stood by his political beliefs and recreated his professional identity in their image, and not the other way around. In 1977, when the golden years of the international success of Finnish design were becoming a thing of the past, the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper published a series of texts by different design professionals analysing the reasons behind 'the design crisis'. In Moilanen's analysis, there was no 'design crisis', there was only 'a crisis of market economy', which took its form in

> the environmental crisis, crisis of regional policy-making, crisis of small-scale manufacture […], inflation, foreign debt, unemployment and emigration.[511]

Unfortunately, these were not issues to be solved by one designer, no matter how passionately and tirelessly he worked. Moilanen did, however, have his values to live by, expressed in an undated drawing (see figure 2.24.):

> curious attitude towards life
> respect for work
> love of nature
> hunger for knowledge.

509 Kaisa Koivisto, *Kolme tarinaa lasista* (Riihimäki: Suomen lasimuseo, 2001), p. 119.

510 Ibid.

511 Harry Moilanen, 'Taideteollisuuden kriisi on osa markkinatalouden kriisiä', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 22 April 1977.

FIGURE 2.24. 'Hunger for Knowledge', a drawing by Harry Moilanen. Undated. Aalto University Archives, Harry Moilanen Collection.

2.6. THE END OF A MOVEMENT

2.6.1. 'No new members'

The prevalence of leftist values among the staff and students at the University of Industrial Arts initially allowed for a greater study democracy, enabling the students to choose and create their own curricula and to develop projects to suit their own interests and ambitions. Moreover, they highlighted the social dimension of design rather than the commercial, which had the effect of creating a range of ground-breaking projects. However, as the 1970s progressed, the atmosphere at the University grew more and more strained as the Marxist-Leninist movement, spearheaded by TAOS, took on an even more aggressive tone. Interest in steering the curriculum towards a social agenda was left behind while the goal of recruiting members to support Marxism-Leninism gained more traction. Even though the extreme leftist movement had had its opponents throughout the decade, resistance grew as the years passed. In addition to the pressure coming from outside, the internal conditions of the movement were not necessarily as productive and cooperative as some wished. Already in 1973, when TAOS was still a young organisation, in a yearly report describing experiences of the agitational work, several issues around the dissemination of the ideology came up:

> The SOL study programme is too long and impenetrable. Things such as philosophy are handled in a very broad and complicated manner. […] The difficult topics flash by quickly. […] The study instructions are sometimes completely incomprehensible, non-concrete and too difficult. The study materials have not been pedagogically right either. They should be more appealing. […] The study circle homework has often been too much and so difficult that finishing it according to all the rules has been completely overwhelming.[512]

In 1975, many of these issues persisted, while the atmosphere among participants was turning sour. In an evaluation of the TAOS subsection at the Department of Product and Environmental Design, this development is described in detail:

> The departmental meetings are mostly about going through the political situation and organisational issues of the department. […] The meetings are three to five hours long and heavy. They are not planned sufficiently and there is no time for the central issues while less important topics take too much of the time. The meetings are perhaps too much about going through the motions without any concrete decision-making. […] There is only a small amount of discussion, which

512 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1C_CA, 'Aineistoa TAOS:n valistustyön kokemuksista 73', undated memo.

remains passive. […] It is difficult to get together due to everybody being busy. No new members. […] The atmosphere should be made more inspiring and relaxed.[513]

In other words, the hierarchical nature of the movement and the study programme designed by the SOL leaders were getting in the way of students' motivation to follow it. The novelty of the movement was wearing off, and only those who were truly committed to the Marxist-Leninist ideology were left. This also meant that the rhetoric of the movement became more paranoid and alarmist:

> There is a scary amount of passivity in our organisation while our movement has to take on battles more challenging than ever. Excitement, persuasion and setting obligations do not seem to be enough. […] The bourgeoisie is attacking on ideological fronts, too. This has become visible in the increasing amount of petite bourgeoisie values in the student movement. Some aspects, characteristics and reflections of these values can also be seen among our very own members.[514]

Meanwhile, the Finnish media was using the University's struggles to create scandalous headlines and provocative articles. Throughout the decade, magazines published accounts of teachers who had resigned, not only due to the low resources affecting their teaching but also due to the politicisation of the studies. Even though the tone of many of these articles was exceedingly dramatic and clearly meant to cause furore, the interviewees did appear with their own names describing their own experiences. One of the first to come out and criticise the University openly was the head teacher of textile design, Eliisa Salmi-Saslaw, who 'escaped' the University in 1974 and, in an interview with the magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti*, described its 'catastrophic' conditions and some of the teaching as 'brainwashing'[515]. According to Salmi-Saslaw, the 'revolutionary work' started in 1968, after which politics had been brought in little by little, by teachers pressuring the students. She was worried not only for the students, but also the school's relationship to industry, which according to her was contradictory. On the one hand, everyone wanted to collaborate with industry, but, on the other, everyone wanted to 'abolish the prevailing economic system'[516]. Elsewhere, the University's politicised atmosphere and lack of competent teachers were blamed for the stagnation of the Finnish design field[517], while genuine worry for the University's financial resources was translated into headlines such as 'The University of Industrial Arts is fighting for its existence'[518].

Indeed, the university seemed to hang on by a thread throughout the decade. In 1974, staff members

513 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1D_DA, 'TAOS/TYMPS, toiminta-arvio, syksy 1975', undated report.

514 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1C_CA, undated and untitled letter from Mika Launis to TAOS members.

515 Maarit Tyrkkö, 'Ei näkemiin, vaan hyvästi Taideteollinen korkeakoulu', *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 18 October 1974, p. 57.

516 Ibid.

517 'Taideteollinen on päämäärätön laitos', *Uusi Suomi*, 12 January 1978.

518 'Taideteollinen korkeakoulu kamppailee olemassaolostaan', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 16 January 1975.

organised a survey comparing their resources to those of other universities in Finland. The survey showed, for example, that while the University of Technology had 11,5 students per teacher, the University of Industrial Arts had 20,7.[519] Similarly, funding for teaching equipment and furniture per student at the University of Technology were 1200 Finnish marks against the 530 marks of the University of Industrial Arts.[520] In January 1975, several newspapers made headlines of teachers who were resigning due to the impossible workload created by administrative duties.[521] Throughout the decade, several petitions to the government were made not only by the leadership of the university but also by students and prominent members of the Finnish design field, but to no avail. Moreover, the school was still housed in dilapidated spaces within the Ateneum building, despite the hard work put into lobbying for better conditions. Already in the early 1970s, the national government and the City of Helsinki had promised a new building in Pasila, Helsinki, but the project was repeatedly postponed or cancelled. In 1977, one the nation's most admired designers, Tapio Wirkkala, lamented the situation and declared that 'the view of design education in the minds of decision-makers is based on unfounded rumours spread by word of mouth, greatly harming the University of Industrial Arts.'[522]

2.6.2. **'Do we still have ideals?'**

Troubling developments, in a decade that was already filled with disappointments, crises and scandals, escalated in 1978 when the Finnish Government chose to replace rector Koskinen with interior architect and designer Yrjö Kukkapuro. This was done against the recommendation of the university itself, where, in a general election, Koskinen had received 116 votes against Kukkapuro's six votes.[523] When the Board of the University voted, the result was a tie until vice rector Lipasti's vote tipped the scale in favour of Koskinen. Students and design professionals, such as Wirkkala, suggested that the decision was political, referring to Koskinen's alleged affiliations with the Marxist-Leninist movement, and therefore should not be accepted.[524] Yrjö Sotamaa, by then a senior teacher at the university who had voted for Kukkapuro, argued that the decision had not been 'party-political, but design-political'[525], possibly referring to his view about the new rector being able to repair and rebuild relationships to businesses and industry, a development that the Finnish Government would have been eager to see in the design field after a decade of recession. Indeed, when looking back on his time as rector, Kukkapuro described his main goal as reinstating 'the trust of institutions, businesses and the government in the ability of the university to fulfil its given mission.'[526]

519 AUA, University of Industrial Arts Collection, Hd 8 Lyytikäinen, 'Eräitä tietoja Taideteollisen korkeakoulun resursseista', report by Lasse Lyytikäinen, dated 11 October 1974.

520 Ibid.

521 'Paine Kasvaa TTK:ssa', *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 16 January 1975; 'Tre lärare lämnar Konstindustriella', *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 16 January 1975; 'Taideteollinen korkeakoulu kuilun partaalla', *Kansan Uutiset*, 16 January 1975; 'Taideteollinen korkeakoulu kamppailee olemassaolostaan', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 16 January 1975.

522 Leena Maunula, 'Taidekorkeakoulut vastustavat pakkosiirtoa', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 26 April 1977.

523 Leena Maunula, 'Taideteollisen rehtori vaihtui', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 1 April 1978.

524 Ibid.

525 Ibid.

526 Yrjö Kukkapuro, 'Taideteollisen ehdokasasettelu', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 1 June 1980.

For TAOS, replacing Koskinen with Kukkapuro was a blatant attempt at

> starting a purge and implementing reactionary changes at the University of Industrial Arts, with the goal of making it truly a university for the government and industry, rather than a university for the working people, students, workers and teachers in the industrial arts.[527]

Party-political or design-political, there was no space for Marxism-Leninism anymore. In an opinion piece for *Helsingin Sanomat*, published after Kukkapuro had given up his position as rector, he was pleased with the fact that the new candidates did not have 'political disadvantages'[528]. Whether the shift in leadership in 1978 had happened in a democratic manner or not, rector Kukkapuro signalled an end to the shaky and unresolved union between leftist ideology and design education. Despite the failure of the Marxist-Leninist movement at the University of Industrial Arts, leftist values continued to influence the wider design culture in Finland in a permanent way, as the following chapter will show.

It remains unclear how and when the final dissolution of TAOS took place. Either way, the 1978 TAOS strategy plan, which was possibly the organisation's last, reads like a eulogy:

> We did not want to be in a school like this, but in a democratic and more progressive one. Do we know if the art student still has any ideals about herself, her profession or her education? Do we still have ideals? [...] We must remember that other political forces take advantage of ignorance, and that ignorance is built on bourgeois individuality and fake appearances. What is most important to us is everyday communication that is alive and well. What is most important to us is true and accurate information, because communists have the real and scientific option. [...] We could have anything, if only we were courageous and vigorous enough to grab a hold of the future.[529]

527 KAA, TAOS Collection, 4D_DC, *Perspektiivi*, 1 (1978), 'Jouko Koskisen nimittämisen puolesta', 2-6 (p. 3).

528 Yrjö Kukkapuro, 'Taideteollisen ehdokasasettelu', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 1 June 1980.

529 KAA, TAOS Collection, 1D_DA, 'TAOS - toimintasuunnitelma, kevät 1978'.

Chapter 3. REIMAGINING THE DESIGN PROFESSION

3.1. FACING A CAPITALIST REALITY

Ornamo, the professional organisation of Finnish designers, declared 1975 'The Year of the Child'. In a statement announcing the theme, Ornamo encouraged everyone to look at the designed environment through a child's perspective, which, in their opinion, had been neglected for too long. This neglect had resulted in social, physical and psychological issues in the youngest and most vulnerable members of society.[530] Ornamo suggested that, instead of blaming children for their struggles, adults should turn their attention towards, not only 'the structures and values of society', but also the 'physical, emotional and social environment' surrounding them.[531] While acknowledging that designing new products would not fix the issues at hand, the statement emphasised the role that objects and the material environment played in creating social conditions. The statement then moved on to criticise the current design field: designers worked without considering environmental issues or end users. Instead, Ornamo called for 'democratic collaboration', which would help to create better living conditions, increase social opportunities and enhance safety.

According to the statement, the lack of 'democratic collaboration' could be fixed only by recognising how the design profession was connected to the outdated and oppressive structures of industrial production and economic ownership. In order to put an end to inequality and give citizens more power in creating their living environment, alternative economies and alternative means of production had to be implemented. In other words, Ornamo encouraged its members to take political engagement seriously, arguing that their input could be 'meaningful only if [designers] advocate for a political change within the design field and in society'[532]. The designer's line of work, then, was no less than to 'guarantee a functioning environment for all members of society.'[533] This called for a recognition of the needs that different marginalised groups, such as children, disabled and elderly, might have for the built environment they were living in. However, Ornamo never specified further what was meant by 'political change', nor a 'functioning environment' for that matter, nor did it give any specific directions on how to make them a reality.

As detailed in Chapter 1, Ornamo and several individual designers had embraced the discussion of designer's social responsibility in Finland already in the beginning of the 1960s. These early debates had been focused on the designer's role specifically within the system of industrial production in a capitalist country such as Finland. Ornamo's 1975 statement about children's rights, however, questioned economic, societal and cultural structures in a strikingly similar way to the left-leaning students at the University of Industrial Arts. Indeed, the statement arrived a few years after the establishment of the

530 'Lapsen asema ympäristössä/yhteiskunnassa', *Ornamo*, 1 (1975), p. 33.

531 Ibid.

532 Ibid.

533 Ibid.

Marxist-Leninist movement at the university. Supported and fostered by institutions and organisations such as Ornamo, ideas and thoughts about design's social responsibility inspired by the political leftism previously present in the institutional culture, were changing from abstract debates into new ideas of professional design practices. Certainly, the focus on industrially produced tableware, glass and furniture for homes and public spaces still prevailed, but an increasing number of designers forged new professional pathways and practices that followed their personal, or political, ideals and ideologies.

Meanwhile, any employed designer, with or without ideals or ideologies, had to face the realities of commerce and industry, or at least the wider capitalist economy contingent on economic growth. This resulted in a clash of values and interests, as described by Harry Moilanen in 1971:

> It has not been easy to combine political activity with professional activity. […] Political conclusions do not belong in professional life, whether you are otherwise politically active, even as member of a leftist party. The situation can be described as 'schizophrenic'. On the one hand, you try to change society, but on the other, you keep reinforcing it.[534]

Moilanen's thoughts can be interpreted as calling out hypocritical leftist designers who abandoned their values upon entering work. They can also be seen as an expression of frustration with the reality of 'designers striving towards a socialist utopia in a capitalist market economy'[535], as Pekka Korvenmaa has formulated the contradiction between leftist ideals and professional design practice.

Throughout the 1970s, this reality, with its clashes and contradictions, produced fascinating design projects situated in the professional realm but with elements of social, political and environmental activism. This chapter presents a number of these projects, many of which appear in the historiography of Finnish design for the first time. In some cases, the existing documentation related to the projects included here is sparse, and their real-life impact, complete with failures and successes, remains unexplored. Despite the fragmentary sources, the number of professional design projects with pronounced political, social, or environmental values reveals that Finnish designers managed to find or develop work that responded to their interests and values, whether political or personal, or both. As detailed in the following pages, this work consisted of, for example, participating in research projects, working for municipalities, or taking part in development aid in foreign countries. Moreover, some designers found ways of working congruent with their values within the private sector, designing health care and hospital equipment for companies, or developing ergonomic machinery and tools for workers in industry or farming.

In the only extensive text exploring the relationship between political ideologies and the design profession in 1970s Finland, Pekka Korvenmaa has argued that, in the

534 Harry Moilanen, 'Onko suunnittelu organisoitua tuhoamista?', *Ornamo*, 1-2 (1971), unpaged.

535 Korvenmaa, 'From Policies to Politics', p. 232.

midst of the political upheaval during the decade, Finnish designers sought ways to distance themselves from the turmoil and to find 'non-political alternatives for practising design'.[536] Departing from this analysis, this chapter argues that, for some designers, these practices were indeed conscious political choices. For others, if not directly political, they were socially and politically informed, inspired by the debates taking place in the design field. The global student movement of the 1960s opened many eyes and minds to injustice and inequality around the world. By putting the blame for the creation and perpetuation of these issues on the capitalist system and its often-cruel race towards economic growth, the Marxist-Leninist movement of the 1970s offered socialism as a path towards freedom from suffering and injustice. This chapter argues that, for a designer working during the 1970s, it was impossible to escape the discussion about design's social responsibility within the capitalist system, whether one was actively working towards a socialist revolution or was merely interested in the development of one's professional field. There emerged a widespread understanding that it was impossible to fight injustice with the tools and methods of the design profession as it was. In other words, design's task was not only to change the world, but to change itself.

It is important to note that the purpose of this chapter is not to evaluate how Finnish designers succeeded in their efforts to create a more socially responsible design practice. In order to do this, a substantially different kind of research, with a wider set of sources and methods, would be needed. Assessing the quality of design projects requires understanding the impact their results have on people's everyday lives. To answer such questions in this context might involve enquiring into whether the working conditions of hairdressers became more ergonomic, or whether the lives of single mothers in Pumwani, Kenya, were improved thanks to the actions of Finnish designers. Instead, the goal here is to explore the change in designers' intentions and ideals as they had been inspired by politically leftist ideologies, and to focus on how they, in turn, informed professional design practices.

In some instances, however, small indications of failures and successes remain present. For example, when engaging with development projects, some designers became very critical of the system and their own roles within it. Elsewhere, sources provide a glimpse of how design affected everyday life and its situations. To give one example, when I was exploring designer Pekka Wikström's folders at the Design Archives in Mikkeli, eastern Finland, a tiny newspaper clipping from 1973, reporting on the opening of a new emergency department at the Surgical Hospital in Helsinki, emerged among other, more substantial documents Wikström had saved. It included an image of two doctors standing next to some new medical equipment.[537] The device, designed by Wikström, was for measuring a patient's artery and blood pressure quickly, and monitoring their heart rate. In the clipping's short interview, the doctors present the device as one of the novelties at the emergency department, and praise its contribution to 'effortless mobility'.

536 Ibid.

537 'Kirurgin päivystysasema käyttöön maanantaina', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 28 March 1973.

3.2. PROMOTING SOCIAL AND ANTI-COMMERCIAL VALUES

3.2.1. 'Everything was more difficult than first imagined'

A 1972 issue of the Ornamo magazine included an article called 'The Profession of an Industrial Designer'. It was written by three students of industrial design at the Institute of Industrial Arts: Anja Järvinen, Heidi Linnainmaa and Susann Vihma, and it depicted the high stress levels and anxiety that design students were experiencing as they embarked upon their professional lives. According to the article, the reason behind the students' concerns was 'the uncertainty over future work and professional possibilities'[538]. Järvinen, Linnainmaa and Vihma argued that the discussion about employment possibilities and professional life took place 'at an abstract level, marked by guesses and [...] rumours', while the chances of finding work were 'entirely contingent on individual activity and courage.'[539] The type and level of employment that the students could apply for remained a mystery not just during the studies, but even after graduation. Moreover, their education had not provided them with any understanding of what employers would expect of them.

The article reflected not only the state of design education, but also the general state of confusion that the Finnish design field was in throughout the 1970s. On the one hand, there were many attempts and initiatives to redefine a field apparently unable to move on from its past successes through investing in surveys and fostering connections between Finnish industry, policy makers and design organisations. Such efforts went alongside high expectations of the newly opened University of Industrial Arts and its impact on export and economy. On the other hand, there was no shared understanding of what design was, or what it could be used for. The companies interested in employing designers used design mostly for choosing colours and defining shapes for commercial products. In other words, businesses did not share, or were not aware of, the vision of design as an all-encompassing tool advocated by many design professionals, educators and students, as described in the previous chapters.

Meanwhile, a growing number of designers wanted to focus on design's societal impact rather than its commercial value, as suggested by designer and design journalist Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori in 1980, in a text looking back on the previous decade:

> Many young designers wished they could break into new areas and see their work concerning wider issues. Instead of private business, they would rather have been at the service of society. But everything was more difficult than imagined initially.[540]

538 Anja Järvinen, Heidi Linnainmaa, Susann Vihma, 'Teollisen muotoilijan ammattikuva', *Ornamo*, 1 (1972), p. 9.

539 Ibid.

540 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 2.2.3.140., Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori, 'Kirje meren takaiselle ystävälle', article draft dated 12 May 1980, p. 3.

In a 1976 press release about the possibilities of industrial design, Ornamo described the idea of design 'at the service of society' in detail:

> Designers began to search for projects where their professional skills might solve real, societal needs. The environment as a whole was now seen as an object for design: designers saw themselves as part of solving issues within the areas of work environment, ergonomics, urban planning and traffic, development aid, equipment for social institutions and objects related to the needs of children, the sick and the elderly. With increasing clarity, designers started to see themselves as experts equal to other professionals in the process of designing products and environments.[541]

In other words, designers were motivated and confident to renew their profession and become a part of society in a new way. Nevertheless, the challenges proved difficult, as stated by Kulvik-Siltavuori and described by the three young students in Ornamo magazine. Furthermore, public interest in design began to wane. Design and designers no longer received as much media attention as they had earlier, and there were fewer exhibitions and competitions. Towards the end of the decade, the vivid debates of the 1960s more or less died down while designers 'worked quietly on their long projects'[542]. Looking beyond the surface and exploring design work during the 1970s reveals an expanding, if confused, field.

3.2.2. 'Consumerist hysteria or death by hunger'

During the 1970s, the professional and promotional design organisations in Finland began not only to reflect the changing landscape of design, but also to contribute to it. This can be seen in a number of occasions, events and projects that show how the values of anti-commercialism and social responsibility entered organisations such as Ornamo and the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts. While these organisations continued their traditional roles as promotors and supporters of design and designers, a great amount of this work adapted a strong social agenda with exhibitions, seminars and other promotional and professional activities leading to a new focus on design's societal impact.

The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts, with its director Olof Gummerus, had been the leading force behind the international success of Finnish design throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Society's yearbooks show that, during these decades, most of the activities were focused on keeping up the success through arranging and participating in national and international touring exhibitions. Time after time, these exhibitions showcased similar kinds of objects to admiring viewers: hand-blown glass, unique ceramic pieces

541 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.80a, 'Teollisesta muotoilusta', press release dated 17 December 1976.

542 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 2.2.3.140., Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori, 'Kirje meren takaiselle ystävälle', article draft dated 12 May 1980, p. 3.

and industrially produced furniture. This approach drew heavy criticism from the younger generation of designers, which did not go unnoticed at the Society. In 1971, two young designers compiled the yearly summary of the Society's activities and used their chance to send some pointed criticism to the leadership. They expressed concern about the state of the natural environment and design's role in its destruction, and about the uneven distribution of wealth which gave people two options in their lives: 'consumerist hysteria or death by hunger'[543].

The writers of the report had grown frustrated over the fact that, in Finland, discussion about these issues was not urgent enough, leaving people and businesses blind to consequences of their actions, while many people were using the small scale of production and the small number of people living in the country as an excuse to not care. 'We are able to export glass art without having to worry about the two tonnes of water that it takes to manufacture one single object'[544], the report stated. The only solution was to take stock of these issues publicly: if the Society wished to improve, it would have to renew its message and its ways of communicating it. Finally, according to the writers, the Society should work towards understanding and disseminating knowledge of the role that design played in the capitalist system. They could do this by exploring 'the relationship between humans and the environment, objects, machines, structures of production and production ideologies.'[545]

3.2.3. 'Waking up to a critical attitude'

The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts had touched upon some issues relating to the built environment, industrial production and consumerism as early as 1968, when it launched a national touring exhibition called 'Object and Environment' (*Esine ja ympäristö*), which was planned and created by interior architect Esa Vapaavuori and art critic Jaakko Lintinen with graphic design by Jukka Pellinen. This exhibition had an entirely different goal compared to the earlier touring exhibitions arranged by the Society. Instead of presenting an elite selection of design objects with the intention of promoting good taste, the purpose here was to investigate the built environment and present it to the visitors in a way that would make them see their everyday surroundings in a deeper, and more critical, way. This would, in turn, spark a nation-wide discussion regarding the built environment and its quality.[546]

The exhibition leaflet focused on the messy, urban landscape, which had only recently arrived in Finland. The reader's attention was drawn to the vastness of designed objects in the urban environment: signs, traffic lights, telephone booths, parking meters, mail boxes. Other elements that demanded attention included the poor living conditions and congestion caused by 'the explosive growth of

543 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 169, 'Raportti kotimaan toiminnasta', report dated 10 August 1971, unpaged.

544 Ibid.

545 Ibid.

546 'Ympäristönäyttely lähtee kiertueelle ympäri Suomea'. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 7 June 1968.

traffic'[547]. According to the leaflet, these were among the most important issues to be solved by design and designers. Attention should be given to all aspects of the everyday surroundings from cutlery to how public transport is organized, since they had 'such a significant impact on our physical and emotional performance'[548]. All in all, there was a deep, underlying concern for human well-being:

> These days, our environment is so complex that we can't even form a clear picture of it. […] Humans are left without their earlier understanding of [the environment] as a safe whole. This causes insecurity and adaptation difficulties.[549]

After stating these concerns, the exhibition placed some demands on design: firstly, industrial production should focus on creating few and only functional products instead of increasing the amount of goods and 'creating unnecessary needs'[550]. Secondly, and partly in contradiction to the first demand, a wide variety of products should be available so that consumers would have a freedom of choice to fulfil their individual needs and wishes. However, design should not only be seen as something that creates products to be consumed. The real significance of design was its ability to solve the issues of an increasingly technologized environment, such as the cityscape filled with cars or a modern office with its machinery, illustrated in the exhibition in a changing slideshow (see figures 3.1. and 3.2.).

In addition to the slideshow, the exhibition presented a display consisting of objects and image panels. The purpose of the panels was to inform the viewer about how the context of objects defined their shape, or vice versa. For example, one panel explored chairs and seats, and juxtaposed a milking stool with a throne in order to ask whether a seat was 'purely a tool […] or a symbol of power'[551]. The panel also included an astronaut's seat as an example of a thoroughly researched and engineered design object, representing the more scientific and methodological direction design had taken. This kind of novel content was an attempt to create contextual and critical knowledge about the relationship between man-made objects and the different ways in which people lived their lives. As the head of the Society, and the commissioner of the exhibition, H. O. Gummerus put it in his opening speech, the exhibition's aim was to 'give information on the relationships between, and the foundations of, the objects that stand closest to people. The goal is to explore the background and principles of design.'[552]

In other words, the Society for Industrial Arts had embarked on a new field: consumer education. In an environment increasingly filled with industrially produced objects, consumers should be able to make informed choices, and that was possible only after 'gaining a critical attitude based

547 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 148, 'Esine ja ympäristö', exhibition leaflet printed in June 1968, unpaged.

548 Ibid.

549 Ibid.

550 Ibid.

551 'Uutta ympäristöoppia', *Keskisuomalainen*, 3 July 1968.

552 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 148, H. O. Gummerus, transcription of the 'Object and Environment' exhibition opening speech, dated 6 June 1968, unpaged.

FIGURE 3.1. A slide in the 'Object and Environment' exhibition slideshow depicting the modern office environment. 1968. Aalto University Archives, Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection.

FIGURE 3.2. A slide in the 'Object and Environment' exhibition slideshow depicting traffic conditions. 1968. Aalto University Archives, Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection.

on a knowledge of facts'[553]. A critical attitude was important, because the choices people made in their everyday lives had an impact on the environment, and on an even larger scale, on the survival of the planet, as explained by the exhibition working group:

> Whether we thrive or not seems to depend on how we adjust to our own times. But the issues are not only about us. Waking up to a critical attitude towards our own environment is a kind of a road towards waking up to a global responsibility.[554]

Previously, the national touring exhibitions organised by the Society had been gathering people together to admire the accomplishments of successful Finnish designers, creating a feeling of national pride evoking the victories of star athletes.[555] These exhibitions brought glamour into Finnish everyday life and created a shared understanding of good taste. It could also be argued that the purpose of the Object and Environment exhibition was no longer to promote Finnish exceptionality and national pride, but to place Finland among the other industrialised, urbanised and technologized nations, while teaching citizens about their responsibilities in the new era of industrial production and consumerism.

3.2.4. 'Critical Finnish design'

During the 1970s, in line with the change in its domestic promotion work, the international exhibitions of the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts gained a new focus, too. The 1972 exhibition called 'Finnish Milieu' (*Finsk miljø*), taking place at the Museum of Industrial Arts in Copenhagen, Denmark, was a result of a competition won by a group of young designers, Riitta Kukkasniemi, Arto Kukkasniemi, Maisi Perjo, Pekka Perjo and Yrjö Wegelius. As their competition entry, they had chosen to curate, produce and design a showcase presenting the latest developments in Finnish interior design. Their proposed list of exhibits was an intriguing example of a socially and environmentally preoccupied design field. The group wished to draw attention to

> professional areas where the designer is not yet working, but would like to, such as ergonomics, protective equipment, machinery improving work safety, respirators, waste disposal technology, decomposable materials (fertilisers), composting, temporary sheltering, prisons, sanatoriums and hospitals, multi-use spaces, transportation equipment, aids for the disabled, help for minorities, research and consulting, and so on.[556]

The main goal was to make the field into something 'associated with a more social and pluralistic design rather than

553 Ibid.

554 'Uutta ympäristöoppia', *Keskisuomalainen*, 3 July 1968.

555 Kalha, 'The Miracle of Milan', p. 68.

556 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 182, Arto Kukkasniemi, Pekka Perjo, Yrjö Wegelius, Riitta Kukkasniemi, Maisi Perjo, 'Kööpenhaminan näyttely', undated project plan.

the elite design that has been receiving most attention in the past years.'[557] Moreover, the exhibition aimed to inform the international audience about 'critical Finnish design'[558] moving towards new professional fields. The move from 'elite' design to 'social' and 'critical' design contained a message for the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts, calling for a renewal of their values and ideas about what design was. In spite of, or perhaps even because of this, the Society chose to fund the plan.

The finished exhibition did not end up as socially progressive as the initial plan, perhaps precisely because there simply was no professional design work done in the areas which the group wished to include, such as prisons, composting, or support for minorities. However, the chosen objects and projects did manage to push the boundaries of understanding, not only in relation to what design was, but also what kind of design was worth exhibiting and admiring. The exhibition demonstrated a wish to communicate the designer's widened line of work to a broader audience. Instead of the highly aestheticized and carefully presented hand-made objects that had filled previous exhibitions of Finnish design, 'Finnish Milieu' presented, in large image panels, a playground for disabled children, hospital interiors, an ergonomic cabin for a truck, welding equipment, interiors of kindergartens and libraries, the Helsinki metro and a tram, to name a few examples.[559] Furthermore, physical objects present in the exhibition included a washing machine, scissors for the left-handed, a haemoglobinometer and hearing protectors, among others.[560]

The exhibition texts expressed a wish to 'widen the notion of traditional interior and product design.'[561] In addition to the broadened view of design, the exhibition promoted an expanded notion of 'the milieu'. Unlike earlier promotional exhibitions of Finnish design, there was no longer a focus on the domestic environment, waiting to be made more beautiful or functional. Instead, it showed how making public spaces, work environments and healthcare surroundings safe and practical had become an integral part of the designer's work. The exhibition texts also placed more demands on the future of the design profession. They stated that, despite the recent positive changes in the design profession, the international field of interior and product design was still 'relying too much on emotions' while being 'irrational and lacking a comprehensive social vision.'[562] This critique, demanding a more methodological, scientific and socially responsible view on design, was no longer novel. However, the fact that it was included as a part of an international exhibition promoting Finnish design, arranged and financed by the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts, showed that the thinking on scientific methods and social responsibility were no longer in the margins, or advocated for by progressive students only. Instead, they had moved to the mainstream and become an integral part of the Finnish design field.

557 Ibid.

558 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 182, 'Näyttely: Suomalainen sisustus tänään ja huomenna', undated project proposal.

559 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 182, 'Finsk Miljø -valokuvapaneelit', copies of photograph panels in the 'Finnish Milieu' exhibition.

560 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 182, 'Finsk Miljø -esineluttelo', object list of the 'Finnish Milieu' exhibition.

561 AUA, Ornamo Collection, F.128, 'Finsk Miljø -näyttely', copies of the 'Finnish Milieu' exhibition texts.

562 AUA, Ornamo Collection, F.128, Arto Kukkasniemi, Pekka Perjo, Yrjö Wegelius, introduction to 'Finnish Milieu' exhibition.

3.2.5. 'The Triennale is dead'

A year later, the Nordic pavilion at the 1973 Milan Triennial, produced by the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts, took an even more distanced approach to conventional design exhibitions than 'Finnish Milieu' in Copenhagen had done. Since the 1950s, the Triennial had provided a place for Finnish designers to showcase their finest products, often in tastefully sparse settings. During the 1960s, however, international exhibitions had begun to draw extensive criticism from a new generation of designers rejecting commercial interests, both in Finland and across the world, and the whole existence of the Triennial was questioned. According to historian Paola Nicolin, there had been great expectations for the 1968 Triennial and its curator, architect Giancarlo de Carlo, with hopes of changing the event 'from being what was essentially a commercial display of luxury goods to a thematic show that engaged with contemporary cultural debate'[563], a task which had been taken seriously by creating research projects tackling population growth, urban environment, social behaviour and communication. The audience was never able to review the results of this work, because a large group of Milanese students occupied the Triennial building on the opening day, arguing that modern society had allowed commercial values to invade the fields of art and architecture.[564] The occupation was a great shock and disappointment to the Finnish design field, who had undoubtedly been looking forward to yet another year of prizes and praise despite criticism from Finnish design students. Olof Gummerus, the director of the Finnish Society of Arts and Crafts, gave a statement declaring that 'the Triennale is dead'[565].

Despite the grim predictions, in 1973, the Triennial was back on its feet. This time, the theme was 'Architecture-City' (*Architettura-città*) focusing on architectural typology and the way in which it dictated 'people's movements and interactions by its own material presence.'[566] According to architectural historian Federica Vannucchi, the 1973 Triennial continued the example set by the previous Triennials in framing architecture and design 'as a means of political opposition.'[567] Among the curated content and other national pavilions, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark had joined forces on a shared exhibition, produced in collaboration with the national design organisations of each country. The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts was responsible for planning and realising the exhibition, with Finnish architect Tapio Periäinen leading the working group. Interestingly enough, the first detail the working group agreed upon when planning the exhibition was that it would become 'ideological and objectless'[568]. The goal was to create an exhibition that was 'not only critical, revealing and thought-provoking, but also positive and solution-oriented.'[569] This was a clear departure from commercial and promotional exhibitions,

563 Paola Nicolin, 'Protest by Design: Giancarlo de Carlo and the 14th Milan Triennale', in *Cold War Modern*, pp. 228-233 (p. 230).

564 Ibid., p. 233.

565 '"Triennale on kuollut"', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5 June 1968.

566 Federica Vannucchi, *A Disciplinary Mechanism: The Milan Triennale, 1964-1973*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 2019, p. 6.

567 Vannucchi, p. 6.

568 Tapio Periäinen, 'Lapsen ympäristö - Pohjoismaiden osasto Milanon Triennalessa', *Ornamo*, 5 (1973) pp. 4-5.

569 Ibid.

with which the Nordic countries had all gained considerable success at the Triennial since the 1930s, and thus it marked a significant change in how design and its potential were understood and communicated.

The theme chosen by the Nordic working group for their joint exhibition was 'Children and Environment'. This choice reflected a shared interest in social values within the countries' design fields. It was also a statement against the tradition, by both the Triennial and the Nordic countries, of presenting a top selection of industrially produced objects. To the younger generation of designers, these exhibitions had come to symbolise commercialism and elitism, and, accordingly, the plans for the Nordic pavilion challenged the traditional idea of design exhibitions as promotional events. Instead of presenting carefully selected objects in the hopes of commercial success, the 1973 pavilion used design as a way to interrogate and highlight a societal issue, namely the lack of care put into children's growing and playing environments.

Although Finnish architect Tapio Periäinen was responsible for designing the exhibition, the wider working group included experts from the respective countries, such as architecture student and playground consultant Frode Svane and psychologist Edda Westh Christensen, both from Norway.[570] The exhibition consisted of four elements: first, a series of sculptures by Finnish artist Rauni Liukko, which depicted 'a playground crammed in a narrow enclosure, on a concrete courtyard, in the midst of grim apartment houses'[571]. The sculptures were to evoke the environment where the majority of the world's children were now growing up in: a grey, urban milieu devoid of warmth and beauty (see figure 3.3.). As a contrast, a slideshow presented a collection of bright photographs where children from across the Nordic countries were building their own colourful playgrounds and toys in natural and urban environments, creating an image of the freedom of a child's imagination. Moreover, the exhibition space contained dozens of large balloons filled with air and printed with texts such as 'dear grown-up, please play with me'[572]. The balloons were intended as toys for the visitors to play with, encouraging interaction between people and simulating the freedom of a child's play. According to Periäinen, the balloons were a protest against the traditional design exhibitions with their strict rules that did not allow visitors to touch any of the objects on display.[573] Indeed, as notes from the host of the Nordic pavilion reveal, visitors of all ages took up the invitation to play, sometimes so enthusiastically that the balloons burst, creating an extra strain on the budget as they needed to be replaced time and time again.[574]

Finally, the exhibition text was a manifesto-like declaration of children's rights regarding the environment where they were made to live and play:

Every child has the right not to be born if nature is not clean;
if the child's development is stopped;

570 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 1.2.1.31., *Taideteollisuus-yhdistyksen vuosikirja 1973*, 'Milanon XVI Triennale', pp. 42-43.

571 Tapio Periäinen, 'Lapsen ympäristö - Pohjoismaiden osasto Milanon Triennalessa', *Ornamo*, 5 (1973) pp. 4-5.

572 Ibid.

573 Ibid.

574 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 1.2.1.31., *Taideteollisuus-yhdistyksen vuosikirja 1973*, 'Milanon XVI Triennale', pp. 42-43.

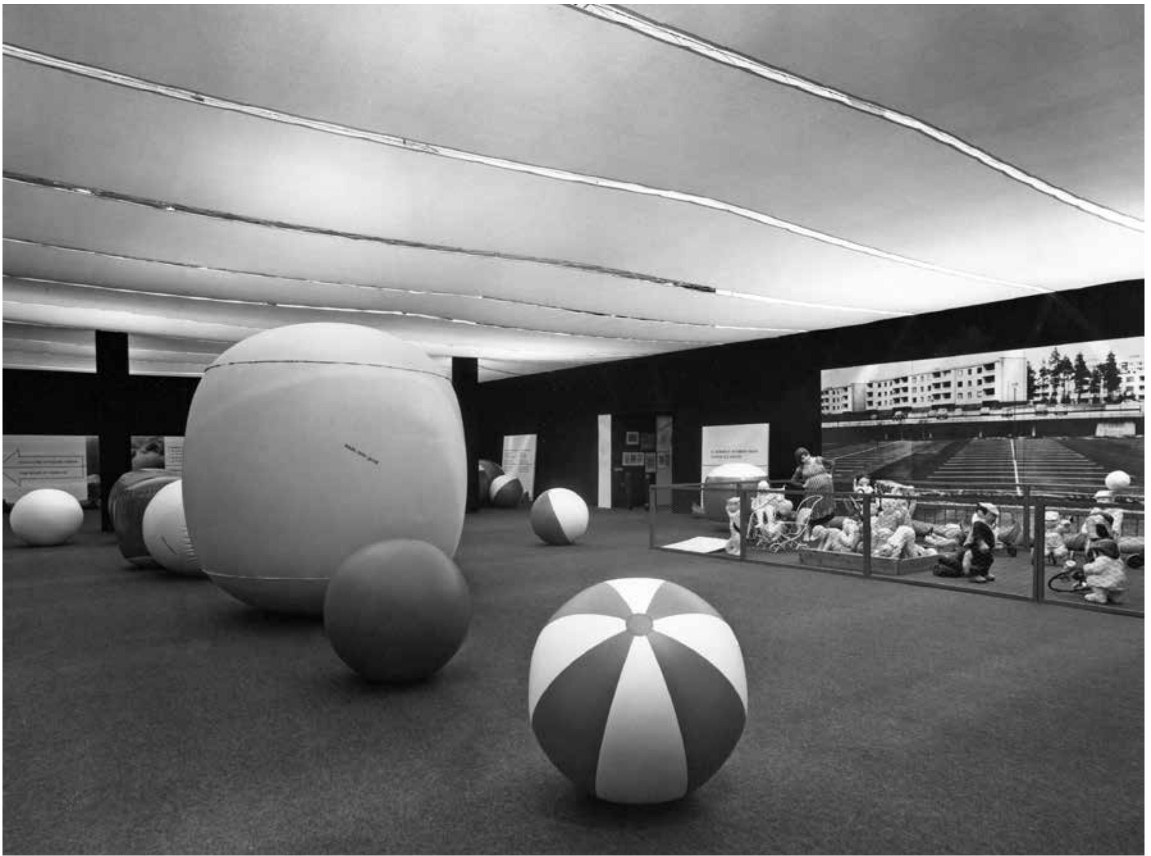

FIGURE 3.3. 'Children and Environment', the Nordic Pavilion in the 1973 Milan Triennial designed by Tapio Periäinen. Photographer unknown. Design Museum, Image Collection.

> if society does not accept the child;
> if the physical environment becomes an obstacle or a danger to the child.[575]

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the international design field had been experimenting with the format of the design exhibition as groups of young architects and designers across the world created projects and displays critical of not only the state of design, but the state of society. Perhaps the most famous of these was the exhibition 'Italy: The New Domestic Landscape' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1972, which,

575 AUA, The Finnish Society for Industrial Arts Collection, 1.2.1.31., *Taideteollisuusyhdistyksen vuosikirja 1973*, Elisabeth Stenius, 'Triennale 1973', pp. 19-23 (p. 19).

according to historian Ingrid Halland, has been considered 'pioneering and controversial'[576] in its aesthetics and politics, both by its contemporaries and in retrospect. In comparison, the Nordic pavilion at the 1973 Milan Triennial reflected a rather pragmatic attitude towards social critique through design without a radically political message. Its manifesto had a straightforward social agenda to protect the most vulnerable members of society, while the slideshow presenting children building their playing environments sustained the image of the Nordic countries as democratic and progressive. In other words, the radicalism of the exhibition was two-fold: in the Finnish and Nordic context, it was progressive in the sense that there was a refusal to promote commercial values in the form of objects. In the international context, the exhibition's straightforward message of advocating for children's rights was devoid of conceptual and abstract thinking, perhaps making it rather radical in the matter-of-factness of its message.

In addition to introducing a new way of exhibiting Nordic and Finnish design, the 'Children and the Environment' exhibition also marked the Triennial losing its position in Finland as the most important venue for showcasing design internationally. Reviews in Ornamo magazine, for example, branded the event as 'irrelevant, old-fashioned and passive'[577]. The frustration and its urgency prevalent in the Finnish design field were perhaps most vividly expressed by writer Arja Luukela Imperiali:

> While the Triennale designers are sealed inside their own hermetic specialities, this planet is contaminated with noise, dirt, industrial waste, ending up in lack of natural resources and urban chaos.[578]

It turned out that the Nordic pavilion in 1973 was Finland's last participation in the Milan Triennial in the 20th century.

576 Ingrid Halland, 'The Unstable Object: Glifo, Blow and Sacco at MoMA, 1972', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 33, issue 4 (2000), 329-345 (p. 330).

577 Tapio Periäinen, 'Triennalen ongelma 1973', *Ornamo*, 5 (1973), p. 22.

578 Arja Luukela Imperiali, 'XV Triennale', *Ornamo*, 5 (1973), 22-24 (p. 24).

3.3. IN SEARCH OF NEW PROFESSIONAL VALUES

3.3.1. 'Is planning organised destruction?'

As the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts continued to develop and promote a new understanding of design through national and international exhibitions, the activities of Ornamo reflected the internal debates and growing pains of the field. Although Ornamo had been active in the discussion about design and social responsibility already in the 1960s, the following decade saw the organisation developing and supporting different professional activities focused on design's role in solving social issues rather than serving commercial interests. Ornamo began organising and funding activities, such as seminars, competitions, exhibitions, research projects, development aid projects and study trips, which often centred around ergonomics, workplace safety, environmental concerns and social questions.

For example, in 1970, Ornamo arranged an international seminar called 'Is planning organised destruction?'. The seminar was funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education, on the condition that the focus would be connected to the theme of 'Environmental Protection', designated by UNESCO for the year 1970.[579] The title and the goals of the seminar can be seen as a part of the wave of self-criticism within the global design field in which a new generation of designers questioned the profession's commitment to industrial production and economic growth. According to design historian Alice Twemlow, this confrontation was especially visible in the 1970 International Design Conference at Aspen, which offered a stage for a dispute between two understandings of design prevalent among two different generations: design as 'a problem-solving activity in the service of industry, albeit with roots in the fine arts'[580], was up against the young participants with 'their adherence to an alternative lifestyle and set of values.'[581] The newcomers blamed the established design field for lacking political and social engagement and for choosing to endorse an old-fashioned idea of design as a promoter of good taste through mass production and consumption, and thus being directly complicit in environmental destruction.[582]

Similar confrontations took place in the Finnish design field, too. As detailed in chapter 2, designer and teacher Harry Moilanen had been attracting attention in Finland with his critical writing on design, industrial production and consumption and their effect on society and the natural environment. As a result, Moilanen was invited to plan and organise a whole seminar to critically highlight the interdependent relationship between capitalism and design.

579 Harry Moilanen, 'Onko suunnittelu organisoitua tuhoamista?', *Ornamo*, 1-2 (1971), unpaged.

580 Alice Twemlow, 'I can't talk to you if you say that: An ideological collision at the International Design Conference at Aspen, 1970', *Design and Culture*, vol. 1, issue 1 (2009), 23-50 (p. 24).

581 Ibid., p. 25.

582 Ibid., p. 25 and p. 37.

Although the title of the seminar, 'Is planning organised destruction?' echoed the critical rhetoric of Victor Papanek, Moilanen's approach was politically more explosive. Whereas Papanek distanced himself from direct political commitments, Moilanen's goal for the seminar was to 'awaken a critical attitude towards the economic, political and cultural content of design.'[583] In Moilanen's view, as long as design functioned within the capitalist system of industrial production, economic growth and consumerism, it would be guilty not only of the destruction of social and cultural values in society, but also of the natural environment.

The poster for the seminar was an interesting thematic addition to the seminar programme: three interlinking hands evoked the spirit of solidarity beyond national boundaries or the colour of one's skin (see figure 3.4.). Three cartoon-like vignettes depicted situations related to design, nature and the future. The first of these was an image of a natural paradise where naked human beings lived in harmony with elephants, seals, squirrels, monkeys and other animals. Flowers and corn were growing, music was playing from a radio while everyone, including the animals, were smiling. The second image showed a young man, perhaps a designer, architect, or engineer, standing at his desk, smiling while thinking about some great idea in his head. On his wall, there was an image of a man in a suit and tie whose face was replaced with a dollar sign. On the floor, nature was imprisoned in the form of a sad and lonely bird in a cage and the window opened to a view of a city under construction with a factory polluting the sky. Finally, against a similar background of a dark, urban view, a group of children led by a woman were looking at a 'historical monument' – a tree. A man running in the foreground of the picture shouted: 'the end is near!'

There is no remaining knowledge about the participants or concrete outcomes of the seminar, but the programme and goals suggest intensive conversations on the relationship between capitalism, consumerism and their impact on nature. It seems that Moilanen had little belief in design's ability to make a difference; most of the invited experts in the seminar came from fields such as sociology, biology and ecology, although this can also be interpreted as promoting a multi-disciplinary approach to design. Moreover, discussions directly related to design were notably absent in the programme as the content focused mostly on rural communities, pollution, recycling and the democratisation of decision-making.[584] Commenting on the prevalent trend of designers working towards supporting the working class by designing ergonomic work environments and focusing on workplace safety, Moilanen did not find these activities to be in support of his socialist cause, since they still 'subjected workers to profit-making' which only added to 'the pressures of a capitalist society'[585]. Instead, the seminar suggested two alternative, anti-capitalist goals that would contribute to the protection of social and cultural values and the natural environment.

583 Harry Moilanen, 'Onko suunnittelu organisoitua tuhoamista?', *Ornamo*, 1-2 (1971), unpaged.

584 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.85., 'Seminar on Industrial Design', undated draft for seminar programme.

585 Harry Moilanen, 'Onko suunnittelu organisoitua tuhoamista?', *Ornamo*, 1-2 (1971), unpaged.

FIGURE 3.3. 'With whom do you feel your solidarity', conference poster. 1970. Designer unknown (possibly Teemu Lipasti). Aalto University Archives, Ornamo Collection.

The first of these was related to what Moilanen saw as one of the most urgent issues in industrialised countries, namely 'capitalist planning', which caused 'the suffocation of local cultures, especially agrarian cultures'[586]. According to Moilanen, this development in Finnish conditions could be seen as 'domestic colonialism'[587], which referred to the intense concentration of power and life into urban areas. As a solution, Moilanen urged seminar participants to resist centralisation by reaching out to rural communities and supporting their economic and cultural autonomy. The second outcome of the 1970 seminar was plans for a national committee, which would collect, record and disseminate information about the exploitation and destruction of Finnish natural environments. Protecting the environment, according to Moilanen, was also a question of fighting capitalism: 'it is not possible to change the laws of nature, therefore we must change the laws of economy'[588]. In other words, no real progress in social and environmental justice could be made before capitalism had been abolished.

586 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.4.85, undated seminar programme.

587 Ibid.

588 Ibid.

3.3.2. 'Luxury designers for the upper classes'

In her account of how a code of conduct for designers became established in 1970s Great Britain, design historian Leah Armstrong has argued that moments of collective self-reflection are essential in professionalising any nascent field.[589] Indeed, the active debates among Finnish design professionals in the 1960s and 1970s were a sign of a greater need to establish a shared and communicable definition of design's purpose and values, but also to reflect a more rigorous and professional field. In 1972, SITRA, the Finnish Innovation Fund, published a survey about the role of industrial design in Finnish society. While the introduction of the survey stated that 'Finnish design has received a great amount of appreciation and international reputation'[590], it was also acknowledged that this success had been widely based on craft and industrial arts, which had, in turn, led to neglecting any systematic development of the field of industrial design. Since the role of industrial design in forming the built environment was increasingly important, Ornamo had commissioned a research project investigating the current position and future possibilities of industrial design in Finnish society and industry. The research, funded and published by SITRA, was conducted in the course of six months in 1971 and 1972. It was led by industrial designer and teacher Heikki Metsä-Ketelä, while social scientist Arno Sirviö worked as the researcher.

As part of the research behind the survey, a questionnaire was sent to recently graduated designers in order to map their thoughts and experiences regarding the transition from studies to professional life. Even though the questionnaire was conducted anonymously, the participants were asked to name their employers, which meant that, in the small circles of Finnish design, individual replies could easily be traced to specific companies and their designers. In other words, the questionnaire did not offer real anonymity, which in turn most likely affected the results. Nevertheless, when going through the filled-out forms which have been preserved in the Ornamo archive, some patterns emerge regarding questions about the education, work and values of Finnish designers in the early 1970s. A number of replies openly criticised the capitalist consumer culture and the way it not only limited the designers' independence but also compromised the integrity of companies and their products:

> I cannot accept the existing consumerist ideology as the basis for the planning of products of this company. […] How can a designer know the real needs of the consumer? The deciding factor in the production process is not the benefit of the consumer, nor the goodwill of the designer, but maximising the profit. A designer sells their workforce to the capital, which, in turn, uses it according to its own intentions.[591]

589 Leah Armstrong, 'Steering a Course Between Professionalism and Commercialism: The Society of Industrial Artists and the Code of Conduct for the Professional Design 1945-1970', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 29, no. 2 (161-179), p. 174.

590 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.78., 'Tutkimus teollisen muotoilun asemasta, tehtävästä ja vastuusta suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa nyt ja lähitulevaisuudessa', published by SITRA, 1972, p. 1.

591 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.78., 'Kysely taideteollisen oppilaitoksen v. 1969 valmistuneille', questionnaire dated November 1971.

Others were worried about the consequences of companies' careless attitude towards the environment, which was also reflected in the design process:

> The absence of a holistic worldview together with the company trying to escape its responsibilities are clearly causing irreparable ecological and social damage.[592]

Finally, designers themselves received their share of criticism, too:

> The designer must know the global interests of societies in order to work in a sensible way, or at least be conscious of who they are trampling on and when. […] With their uncritical and egoistical attitudes, they cannot do anything else than be luxury designers for the upper classes.[593]

These replies were quite far removed from the optimism of the 1960s, when design students were convinced that by developing the field into a more scientific and research-based activity, it might be able to 'save the world'. Based on the results of the questionnaire, belief in design's possibilities to solve some of the most pressing concerns in society had changed to disillusionment and weary cynicism.

Many of the thoughts expressed in the questionnaire were also present in the finished research report. According to the report, in addition to traditional goals of improving the functionality and aesthetics of products and ensuring a smooth manufacturing process, design's purpose was now to prevent environmental pollution, support the balance found in the natural environment and provide citizen education. Moreover, design should take a stand in the competition between economic systems, a thought attributed to Martin Kelm, designer and Head of the Office for Industrial Design (*Amt für Industrielle Formgestaltung*, AIF), a governmental design organisation in the German Democratic Republic (the GDR).[594] Kelm and his doctoral dissertation *Product Design in Socialism* (*Produktgestaltung im Sozialismus*) were referenced in the SITRA report multiple times, demonstrating an interest in the intersection of design and socialism.

Finally, the conclusion of the report suggested that design's purpose was not only to 'humanise technology', but to direct technology towards a better accommodation of human nature and its needs. In practice, this meant that the technical-economic starting point for design provided by industry and commerce should be complemented with sociological, ergonomi, and ecological knowledge. The report argued that planned obsolescence, or the deliberate aging of design products, was the core issue at the heart of design practice preventing the development towards an ethically and morally solid profession. However, the report did not detail how or to what extent this phenomenon was present in Finnish industries to begin with. Either way, it suggested that by engaging with

592 Ibid.

593 Ibid.

594 For more information about the AIF and Martin Kelm, see Pfützner, *Designing for Socialist Need*.

planned obsolescence, designers were complicit in the exponential growth of consumerism, environmental pollution and waste, although, admittedly, it was impossible to quantitatively measure the exact size of design's contribution to these issues. Despite the complexity and sheer scale of these issues, the report argued that a solution had to be found in order to free the design profession from the heavy load of environmental and social crimes. Meanwhile, companies and businesses would hardly be able to provide any answers due to their lack of interest in investing money in social causes such as education and healthcare. Instead, designers could partner with the public sector, which, in turn, should re-evaluate its interest in employing designers and start seeing design as 'a socio-political tool'[595]. Indeed, pursuing a sustainable collaboration between designers and the public sector was something that marked many of the most progressive design projects throughout the 1970s.

595 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.78., 'Tutkimus teollisen muotoilun asemasta, tehtävästä ja vastuusta suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa nyt ja lähitulevaisuudessa', published by SITRA, 1972, pp. 36-37.

3.4. SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DESIGN IN PRACTICE?

3.4.1. 'Real solutions to real issues'

These exhibitions, surveys and seminars, produced by Ornamo and the Finnish Society for Industrial Arts, demonstrate some of the ways in which social and political themes entered the professional and promotional institutions of Finnish design. In other words, socially and politically charged ideas about design did not remain confined within the University of Industrial Arts, but were embraced in the wider design field, too. This was not reflected only in the choice of objects in exhibitions, or workshop themes in seminars, but also in the development of professional design practice and its activities that took place amidst the real lives of real people.

The introduction of design research was one of the most long-lasting effects of the development that started in the 1960s. Even though it would eventually take many years for research and its methods to become truly established in the professional lives of Finnish designers, the first steps towards research projects were taken and the first attempts at their practical applications were made during these decades, fuelled by the discussion of design's social relevance and responsibility. As detailed in the first chapter, one of the main goals of the rebellious design students in the 1960s had been to make design become a scientifically and academically approved field able to take on societal issues. When the University of Industrial Arts opened its doors in 1973, it was an important step in this direction, although, at least partly due to its difficult relationship to the Finnish government and industry, the university did not manage to secure proper funding or infrastructure for academic research. Despite this, throughout the 1970s, numerous design research projects were conducted inside and outside the university. Funding for projects outside the university came mostly from private foundations, such as the Finnish Cultural Foundation, and from organisations such as Ornamo.

Even though national support for research and development within Finnish industries had become more established through measures such as founding SITRA, the Finnish Innovation Fund, in the late 1960s, corporate funding for design research was rare, if non-existent, in 1970s Finland. One reason for this might have been the fact that the idea of design being a scientific practice had not yet reached, or convinced, industry representatives. Another reason was, perhaps, ideological. As the 1971 SITRA report on the role of industrial design shows, accepting industrial and commercial values as part of their profession was difficult for many designers at this time. As a consequence, and thanks to the need to be paid for one's work, designers developed all kinds of funding arrangements, which will be explored further in the following sections, to realise their alternative ideas of design as a

non-commercial professional activity at the service of society. Looking back on his career, industrial designer Jussi Ahola, an active figure in the development of design research in Finland, suggested that during the 1970s the most important task for designers was to make sure that the 'protest movement' of the 1960s would turn into a professional activity able to offer 'real solutions to real issues.'[596] According to Ahola, this could be done by creating a lasting relationship between a design practice based on artistic expression and a research practice producing scientific knowledge. Interestingly enough, statements such as this were exceedingly devoid of any commercial goals.

3.4.2. 'The Romping Room Project'

All of these elements were present in an early example of a design research project. Its aim was to design and build a playroom that would work as a rehabilitation space for children with severe learning disabilities. The 'Romping Room Project' took place between 1970 and 1974. The instigator of the project remains unclear, but the interdisciplinary working group consisted of recently graduated interior designer Yrjö Sotamaa, psychologists Aino Sassi and Eeva Virkkunen, therapist Airi Puro and artist Zoltan Popovitš, while the project was funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (FAIDD), and the research institute of the Rinnekoti Foundation, with whom the project was carried out with.

According to the project report, the purpose was to design a space for play to help the participating children to develop their motor, communication and social skills.[597] This goal proved too ambitious, and the research group had to accept that a space alone would not be of any use to the children, as they needed assistance in all their activities, however minor. Instead, the aim of the research was changed to designing an environment and tools that would help assistants and rehabilitators support children in their development. The designed room included toys and spatial elements, such as foam pillows of different shapes and sizes, upholstered with brightly coloured fabrics (see figure 3.5.). The hardness of the foam pillows varied, and they were cut with different surface structures, in response to the knowledge that moving on a varied surface provided a challenge for the children and allowed them to develop balance, motor skills and self-confidence. In addition to the structures, the room included additional elements, such as small and light pillows designed to be easy to throw around, the purpose of which was to foster social interaction between the children. Some pillows could be used as horses and cars, while others were designed to be held and provide a sense of comfort. There were also slides, swings and exercise equipment.

The main research methodology, according to the final report, was to observe the children involved in the study while they were trying out the toys and exercise tools designed and produced for the project. The results were

596 Kaj Kalin, 'Jussi Ahola: Ammattina teollinen muotoilu', *Muoto*, 2 (1986), pp. 48-55.

597 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.81, 'Temmellyssaliprojekti', Aino Sassi and Yrjö Sotamaa, project report dated 25 May 1975.

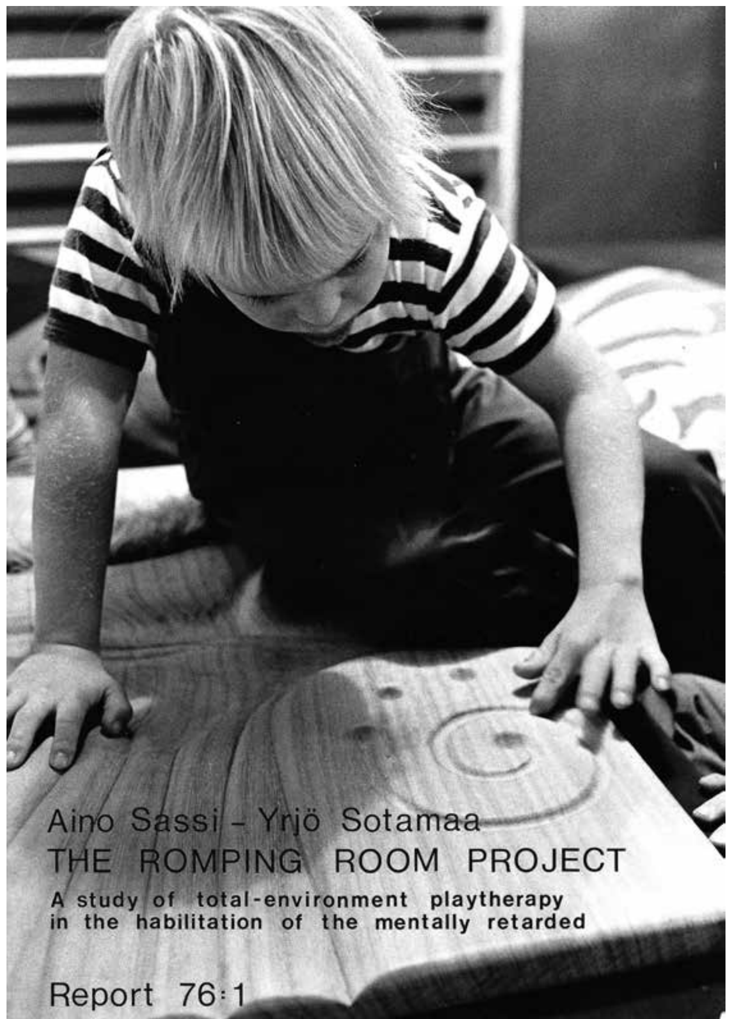

FIGURE 3.5. 'The Romping Room Project', cover of research report by Aino Sassi and Yrjö Sotamaa. 1975. Yrjö Sotamaa personal archive.

then recorded in standardised forms created for the purposes of the research. Based on the results, a specific 'Romping Room Programme' was created, where exercises were classified according to their purpose, for example the development of fine motor skills. In the conclusion of the project, the research group argued that the performance and contact abilities of the children improved during the research, which in turn showed possibilities for the rehabilitation of children with severe learning disabilities. According to the research report, the 'Romping Room Programme' improved the children's social interaction to the extent that it became increasingly possible for them to participate in organised activities.[598]

The real-life effects and the further development of the 'Romping Room' project remain unclear. Nevertheless, the project presents a fascinating early example of design research in

598 Ibid.

Finland. Its characteristics reflect the prevalent values of the early 1970s: the project had a clear, social goal, and it was conducted in collaboration with the public sector without funding from companies or businesses. Its funding model, which consisted of working grants from a private foundation and two non-profit organisations, was perhaps the first of its kind in the country in the field of design. The roots of the project can easily be traced to the 'Industry, Environment, Product Planning' seminar at Suomenlinna in 1968, where Victor Papanek advised a group of design students in the creation of a playing environment for children with cerebral palsy. The idea, which a couple of years earlier could only be realised as a workshop in a seminar, was now a real-life project with funding and collaborators.

3.4.3. 'In socialist countries, industrial design is a state matter'

When Finnish design students and designers became interested in design research methodology during the 1960s, the main influences came from the Royal College of Art, in London, and HfG Ulm in West Germany and through events such as the Suomenlinna seminar in 1968, explored in Chapter 1, or publications and exchange studies. In the 1970s, however, the interest shown towards design research in socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic was discernible not only at the University of Industrial Arts, but also in the professional design field across Finland. In 1978, in a special design-themed issue of a Finnish technology research journal, Jussi Ahola argued for a rigorous and organised development of design research. Referencing Soviet designer and ergonomics specialist V.M. Munipov, Ahola admired the way in which socialist countries prioritised developing design into an academic subject producing its own scientific knowledge independent of other research fields.[599] Ahola was not the only one expressing interest towards design in socialist countries. Throughout the 1970s, Ornamo magazine occasionally published translated summaries of articles from *Form + Zweck*, a design magazine from the German Democratic Republic.[600]

An article from 1976, written by Susann Vihma, explained the role of design in the GDR. The article focused specifically on the AIF, the governmental design organisation promoting and overseeing the design field in the country. According to Vihma, what made design culture in the GDR remarkable was that 'the goal of the German Democratic Republic is to direct all of its powers towards developing citizens' well-being and improving their material and cultural living conditions.'[601] There was a shared understanding according to which designed products had an impact on people, whether positive or negative. This impact was considered from the consumer viewpoint, but also from the viewpoint of the worker who manufactured the object. This perspective generated a wish to 'improve

599 Jussi Ahola, 'Teollinen muotoilu murroksessa', *Tutkimus ja tekniikka*, 1 (1978), pp. 12-19.

600 For example: Susann Vihma, 'Form+Zweck 1/73', *Ornamo*, 3-4 (1973), p. 15; Susann Vihma, 'Form+Zweck 1/1974', *Ornamo*, 2 (1974), p. 22.

601 Susann Vihma, untitled article, *Ornamo*, 1 (1976), p. 4.

the design standards of machinery, therefore promoting the nature of socialist work by creating good working conditions which take both spaces and objects into consideration.'[602] Finally, and pointedly, 'in socialist countries, industrial design is a state matter.'[603] This admiration, while echoing Soviet propaganda, also reflected the deep wish to push research activities forward within the Finnish design field and specifically at the University of Industrial Design, which, at the time, was struggling with funding and resources.

While it remains unclear just how widespread and deep the interest in design in socialist countries was among individual designers, design from the GDR and Soviet Union had an influence on the development of design research in Finland in the 1970s. In 1975, Ornamo and AIF entered an official collaboration, signed by the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs, as a part of their international collaboration programme for science and technology. The contract promised funding for a group of Finnish and East German design professionals to visit each other's countries, and organise an international design research symposium.[604] The collaboration committee found a shared interest in environments specifically for children, which also became the topic of the symposium, called 'Plaything -76'.[605] According to Yrjö Sotamaa, who was among the organisers of the symposium, the event was a successful culmination of the recent topics of discussion in the Finnish design field: defining a problem-centred approach to the design process, finding social and professional purpose, creating international collaboration and aiming for a multidisciplinary approach.[606] Although it can be impossible to distinguish what kind of concrete results, if any, events and seminars such as these might accomplish directly, the 'Plaything -76' seminar alone introduced dozens of East German and Finnish professionals to each other, possibly creating a continuous exchange of ideas, influences and practices.

3.4.4. 'Redesigning the work environment'

Despite the limited funding and lack of research infrastructure, the University of Industrial Arts conducted a number of rudimentary research projects in the 1970s, that made it possible for designers to be employed outside industry and commerce. The projects mostly focused on ergonomics and working conditions, which, in addition to following the university's leftist atmosphere, were a good fit with the students' interests from the 1960s and the general fascination with design in socialist countries. In the 1960s, the most research-oriented and rigorous study projects had been done in the field of workplace safety, such as the security helmet project by Jyrki Järvinen, Pekka Korpijaakko, Martti Launis and Jorma Vennola explored in the second chapter. It appears logical, then, that the first attempts at proper design research projects at the university embraced these themes too, since the students

602 Ibid.

603 Ibid.

604 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 100, 'Ornamo jäsentiedote', letter to Ornamo members dated 8 September 1976, p. 1.

605 Antti Siltavuori, 'Ornamon ja AIF:n välinen yhteistyö', *Ornamo*, 1 (1976), p. 4.

606 Yrjö Sotamaa, 'Voimavarojen keskittäminen kannattaa', *Ornamo*, 1 (1976), pp. 6-7.

and teachers had secured contacts and interest among collaborators such as the Finnish Institute for Occupational Health. A research project related to ergonomics in collaboration with a newly established governmental body for occupational safety (*Työsuojeluhallitus*) took place in 1975 at the University of Industrial Arts, when a group of students, led by designer Jussi Ahola, investigated the ergonomic conditions of cashiers in supermarkets and grocery stores.[607]

The purpose of the project was to create a general understanding of the working conditions in order to prepare national guidelines for how the work of cashiers should be arranged, in terms of both physical and psychological wellbeing. Since the research was the first of its kind in Finland, the working group had consulted previous research regarding the work of cashiers conducted in Sweden and Denmark. The methods of the study included observation, photographing, filming, interviews and a questionnaire, some of which were included in the final report (see figure 3.6.).[608] Together these revealed serious shortcomings in the basic ergonomic conditions of the cashier, but also the monotonous nature of the work and the stress caused by robberies and minor mistakes, the economic losses of which the cashier

FIGURE 3.6. Photographs of the working conditions of cashiers in Ahola, Kiiski et. al., *Selvitys valintamyymälän kassan työympäristöstä* (Tampere: Työsuojeluhallitus, 1975). Pirkko Pohjakallio and Jouko Koskinen personal archive.

607 Anneli Ahola, Liisa Kiiski, Hannu Kähönen, Outi Paloheimo and Jussi Ahola, *Selvitys valintamyymälän kassan työympäristöstä*, (Tampere: Työsuojeluhallitus, 1975).

608 Ibid., p. 5.

was expected to compensate for out of her own pocket.[609] Moreover, the report was rather transparent in expressing whose side it was on: one of the main observations of the study was that the majority of employers had chosen to prioritise economy and efficiency at the cost of the wellbeing of their workers, meaning that 'the views of the employers are often in contradiction with the starting points of labour protection.'[610] The final report summarising and presenting the results of the study was published in a series of publications exploring workplace safety and ergonomics.

At the University of Industrial Arts, one of the first research projects to receive funding from the Academy of Finland, a prestigious governmental funding agency for academic research, explored the work of hairdressers. The goal of the project was to find methods for improving the working conditions to match the national workplace safety requirements and produce knowledge that could be used in the training of hairdressers. This particular line of work had been chosen because it included 'physiologically straining factors that could be reduced or removed with redesigning the work environment.'[611] Designer Juhani Salovaara wrote an article for a technology research journal, where he presented the project in great detail. According to his description of the process, conducting a literature review was the first step in the research. However, there was no pre-existing literature considering the working conditions of hairdressers. Therefore, a point of comparison was found in dentists' work, which had been researched more.

The research methodology consisted of expert interviews and field work in the form of observation. The researchers also ran a survey asking about the daily reality of hairdressers with questions regarding different types of tasks, chemicals that they were subjected to and the selection of work tools and furniture available. Finally, interviews with hairdressers were conducted. The results produced by these methods were then documented in forms, interview notes, photographs, floor plans and dimensional drawings where the hairdressers' movements were marked. Furthermore, a physiological observation explored factors contributing to the musculoskeletal stress of the hairdressers. This observation was led by a physiotherapist, who also created an elementary map of human physiology to be used as a starting point in the design process. The findings revealed that the most strenuous moments for the body took place when there was the need to look at the customer's hair closely. The solution to this was to redesign the customer's chair to include adjustable positions, such as height. Redesigning the chair, in turn, would significantly reduce the amount of strain on the hairdresser's body, making her work less physically damaging and so improving her wellbeing.[612]

Questions related to work environments were addressed in numerous projects outside the research context, too. Interestingly, multiple projects included in a 1980 Ornamo leaflet promoting Finnish industrial design focused on projects directly connected to workplace safety and ergonomics. These included, for example, GLOW-FURNACE, a

609 Ibid., p. 51.

610 Ibid., p. 8.

611 Juhani Salovaara, 'Työympäristösuunnittelun tutkimus', *Tutkimus ja tekniikka*, 4 (1980), 22-25 (p. 24).

612 Ibid., p. 25.

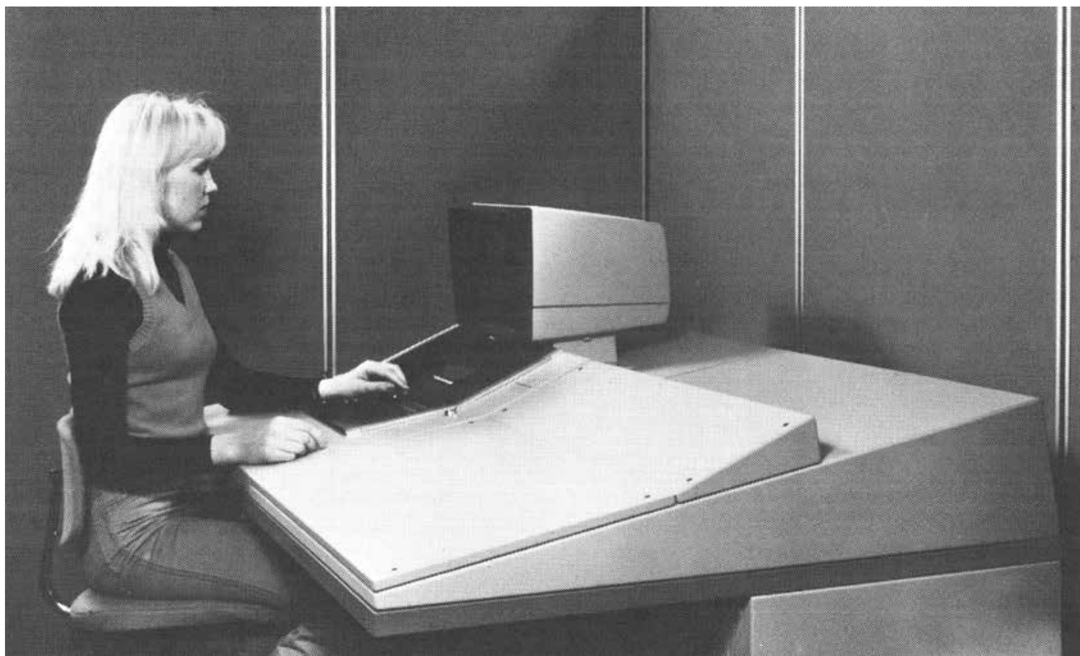

FIGURE 3.7. A control desk for pulp bleaching machinery, designed by Destem. Image from the publication *Industrial Design 1980*. Aalto University Archives, Ornamo Collection.

furnace for melting down different metals, designed by a design office called Destem for the Kone-Pohja company.[613] The text describing GLOW-FURNACE specifically highlighted the fact that the goal of the design work was to increase the comfort and safety of the worker using the machine: different positions and movements became easier, and the risk of accidents, thermal radiation or spilling of molten metal were significantly reduced. Another project included in the leaflet, also by Destem, was a control desk for the bleaching of pulp, designed to function as an ergonomically sophisticated work station for the controller and the programmer of the machinery (see figure 3.7.).[614] Some years earlier, a 1974 issue of the Ornamo magazine was dedicated to the theme of workplaces: the cover included pictures of a woman sitting uncomfortably on a high stool, legs dangling in the air, and a steep spiral staircase evoking a fear of heights (see figure 3.8.). In the issue, designers Anja and Jyrki Järvinen stated that 'working conditions are an urgent social issue. They are intrinsically connected to "touchy" political questions, too. […] It is clear that these questions cannot be brushed aside without taking a stand.'[615] This comment suggested that by developing workplaces in a more ergonomic and safe direction, designers were directly adopting a political position on the side of the working class.

613 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.84. *Teollinen Muotoilu 1980*, leaflet published by Ornamo, p. 12.

614 Ibid., p. 13.

615 Anja ja Jyrki Järvinen, 'Työympäristön suunnittelusta', *Ornamo*, 2 (1974), 10-11 (p. 11).

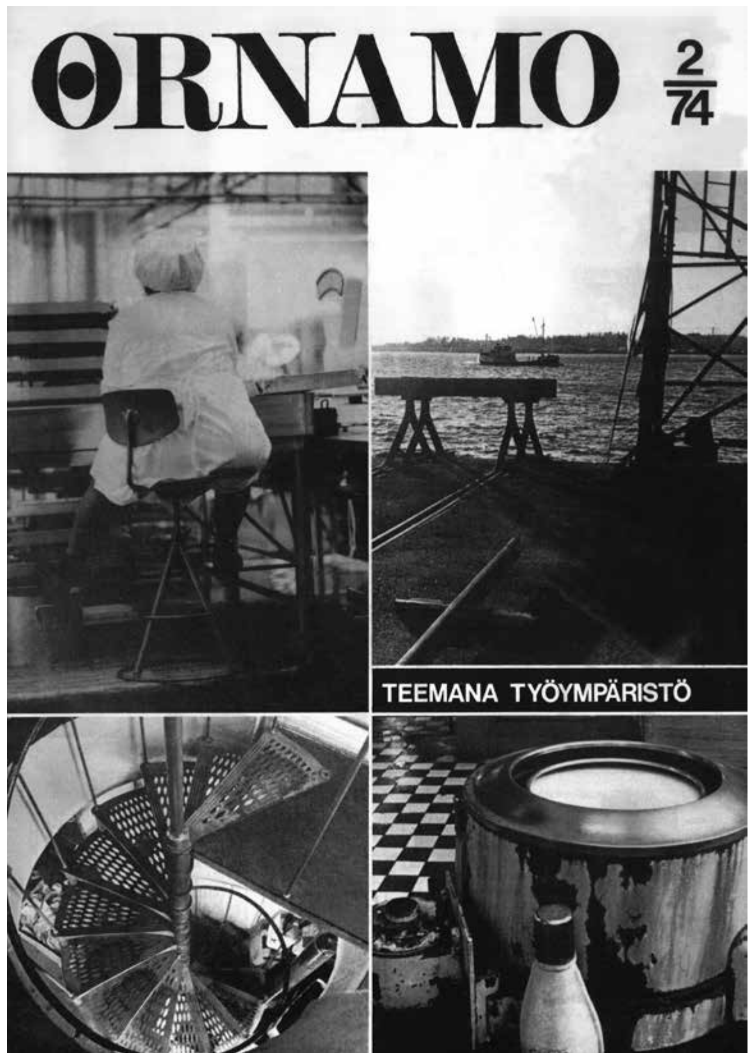

FIGURE 3.8. The cover of the *Ornamo* magazine's special issue on work environments. 1974. Aalto University Archives, Ornamo Collection.

3.4.5. 'The issues of our time raise discussion'

Despite there only being rudimentary arrangements in place to fund research within the field of design, designers remained eager to carry out research projects, some of which were consequently initiated without the promise of financial support. For example, 'PRESS-MILK', a plan for a more environmentally friendly way of packaging and distributing milk, was a sizeable, research-oriented design project created independently by a group of industrial designers. In a seminar presentation in 1979, designer Juhani Salovaara provided a vivid description of the conditions that led to the creation of the project:

> It is spring 1974. There are discussions everywhere evaluating the impact and the consequences of the oil crisis. The Club of Rome publishes its report, while the media does not know whether to be for or against it. [Professor in political economy and environmental activist] Kyösti Pulliainen declares: "The politics of growth are about to collapse." Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori, an environmentally conscious designer, is preparing an exhibition about throwaway culture, where she will display photographs of the piles of waste an average family produces. The price of a milk bottle is about to go up. The issues of our time raise discussion, and we debate them among colleagues.[616]

Around the same time, a design centre in West Berlin announced a competition with the theme 'Product and Environment'. According to Salovaara, a group of designer colleagues formed a working group, and, in the course of a week, they had developed their competition entry: a new, environmentally friendly and waste-free system for the packaging and distribution of milk. Within the Finnish design field, its systems-based approach was novel. Instead of merely designing a new packaging, the working group created a whole distribution system suitable for the Finnish production and consumption of milk.

The design process included a substantial amount of research, which allowed the designers to understand how the dairy industry operated and how much waste it produced. Two diagrams made by the working group depicted the differences between the container made from carton and the new 'PRESS-MILK' solution, which, according to the research and calculation, left a significantly smaller environmental footprint (see figure 3.9.). The 'PRESS-MILK' system was based on a steel container, which would travel between dairies and distribution points. The container allowed the distribution of milk straight to a glass, but the designers' suggestion was to place the containers in grocery stores where milk could be dispensed into the consumer's own, reusable bottles. The main point of concern was how the milk would keep its sterility and not be contaminated with bacteria. The working group developed a technology for this, which they later patented.

'PRESS-MILK' did not win the German competition, but it was chosen as one of entries to be included in a publication presenting the competition results. In Finland, the project received a lot of attention relatively. In 1976, 'PRESS-MILK' and the working group behind it received the Finnish State Prize for Industrial Arts, which was followed by a working grant from the Finnish Cultural Foundation for further development. According to Salovaara, although the milk industry was initially interested in the concept, they withdrew their support after learning that 'the calculations in the concept promised savings for the national economy but decreasing sales for the packaging manufacturers.'[617] Without support from leading companies, it proved impossible to ensure the financial and technological success of the system. The final destiny of

616 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 89, 'Ekologinen pakkaus', Juhani Salovaara, seminar presentation dated 28-29 November 1979, unpaged.

617 Ibid.

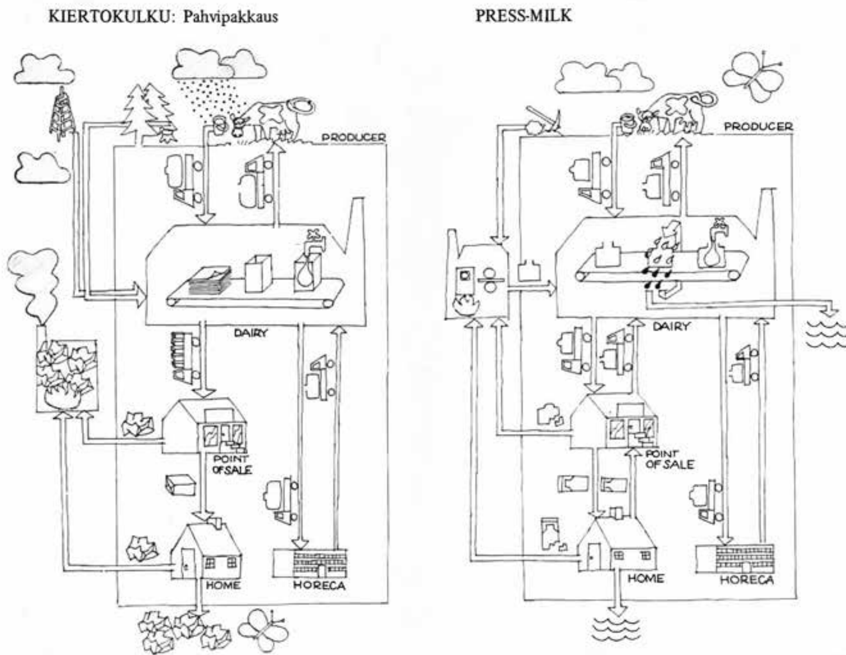

FIGURE 3.9. 'PRESS-MILK' distributing system, designed by Juhani Salovaara, Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori et. al. 1974. Aalto University Archives, Ornamo Collection.

'PRESS-MILK' remains unclear, but, as Salovaara argued in his presentation, the need for ecological solutions within production and consumption kept on growing during the 1970s as disposable materials became more and more common. The only question Salovaara had, then, was whether a designer eager to find more ecological solutions could have any real impact when working with industries and companies.[618]

Salovaara's inquiry was emblematic of the prevailing debates taking place in the Finnish design field: many designers were evaluating their true possibilities to make a difference through their work within the capitalist economic system. Creating and participating in academic or independent research projects offered autonomy from the commercial and profit-making imperatives of working with companies and industries. Moreover, developing research methodology and engaging with other scientific fields gave designers the confidence and expertise they needed in order to develop their discipline in the direction of academic rigour and credibility they had been calling for since the 1960s. As the 'PRESS-MILK' project indicated, the questions of how, and through which channels, to apply the gained knowledge in the world around them, remained an open exploration. Interestingly, many of the designers who were, early on, successfully engaging with research methodologies in their professional lives continued to do so

618 Ibid.

outside the commercial and industrial spheres. Martti Launis, for example, who had worked extensively with ergonomics and workplace security already during his studies at the Institute of Industrial Arts in the 1960s and 1970s, created a lifelong career at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Similarly, Ulla-Kirsti Junttila, who studied at the University of Industrial Arts in the 1970s, went on to become a pioneer in designing street furniture and urban environments for the City of Helsinki.

3.4.6. ‘Kefut Bl 1200’

In 1980, a technology research journal published a special issue focusing on the relationship between design and industry. The issue contained articles in which designers presented their research projects, mostly within ergonomics and workplace safety, but also within industrial product development. An article with the headline ‘The Employment of a Designer from the Industry Perspective’ explained what a designer should know before starting work in industry:

> There is a basic philosophy behind each product. It is based on the mission statement made by the leadership of the company and put into practice by production and marketing, which in turn consists of product development and sales. In order to reach the market […] the product must be placed in a segment of its own, and the manufacturing process must be rational. If a young designer interferes with Papanekian ideas about ‘the Real World’, industry will be confused. […] From a leadership perspective, the choice of materials, a smooth stream of production and a spirited sales department are at least equally important as the design of the product. If designers find these facts depressing, perhaps they should consider a more artistic career path.[619]

As evidenced by this article, there was little, if any, understanding for designers interested in the social and environmental consequences of their work. However, the growing field of hospital and healthcare technology was an industry able to provide work for designers who did not want to engage directly with commercial goals. Here, the employers were often businesses, but the purpose of hospital equipment allowed the designers to keep a certain distance to sales figures and profitability.

Designers became increasingly involved with the development of hospital technology during the 1970s, while, as a part of creating welfare services, Finland was establishing a proper hospital and healthcare centre network across the country.[620] In 1970, industrial designer Pekka Wikström applied for funding from the Finnish Cultural Foundation for the purpose of traveling around Nordic countries researching the design, manufacture and use of hospital and healthcare

619 Hannu Niskanen, ’Muotoilijan käyttö teollisuuden näkökulmasta’, *Tutkimus ja tekniikka*, 4 (1980), 12-14 (p. 12).

620 Marjatta Häti-Korkeila, ’Sairaanhoidon välineet ja muotoilu’, *Muoto*, 1 (1984), 32-35.

equipment, such as patient monitoring and laboratory devices. The purpose was to start developing this equipment, after the study trip, in Finland with a group of manufacturers, doctors and representatives from the recently established Biotechnology Research Centre (*Biotekniikan tutkimuslaitos*) and the Ergonomics Group from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (*Työterveyslaitoksen Ergonomiaryhmä*).[621]

Wikström had started his career in the early 1960s at the Finnish home appliance manufacturer Slev, a company that held a key position in the modernisation of the country. In a 1991 interview summarising his career, Wikström remembered how he had travelled across Finland together with electricity suppliers to interview farmers to understand their needs better.[622] The resulting products included, for instance, a small electric hot plate, which, according to Wikström, became the first electric stove for many Finns. In 1970, the same year as Wikström submitted the funding application to the Finnish Cultural Foundation, he started working as a member in the product development team of Kone medical device factory. His tasks included designing the structures of the devices, being involved in the development of industrial technology, finding suitable materials, but also being responsible for ergonomic and aesthetic functionality. Other tasks covered all elements of visual identities from instruction manuals to brochures and packaging.[623]

The prominence of the medical device industry as an employer of Finnish designers was visible in a 1976 promotional publication meant to boost the interest towards industrial design in Finland. Medical devices and hospital technology formed a significant part of the design projects presented in the publication. These included, for example, patient monitoring equipment and a chemical analyser manufactured by Ollituote (later Kone Instruments), which was mentioned as a business who had included a designer in their product development process already for years. It seemed important to also highlight that, at Ollituote, the designer was 'involved from the very start of the process, and not called in only when the colours were decided'.[624] The publication specified further that the designer's tasks included, firstly to visualise research results in the form of sketches and models, and, upon the final product development stage, to create the basic construction and the modular dimensions of the equipment and finally to design the visual ergonomics in devices with screens and displays.[625]

Moreover, the publication argued that design methods were well suited to solving issues connected to patient wellbeing. By reducing physical and psychological strain and simplifying the use of complex technical devices, 'a properly designed product relieves the work load of medical staff in many ways.'[626] For example, when creating the 'Kefut BI 1200' diagnostic instrument for measuring lung function, manufactured by Valmet, the goal of Jussi Ahola's work was not only to take into consideration patients'

621 DA, 11446 Pekka Wiström Collection, 1-4, 'Perustelut apurahan saamiseksi', grant application dated 27 November 1970.

622 Marjatta Valli, 'Teollisen muotoilun uranuurtajia: Pekka Wikström', *Design Forum*, 1 (1991), 20-21 (p. 20).

623 Ibid., p. 21.

624 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.84. *Teollinen Muotoilu 1976*, leaflet published by Ornamo, p. 13.

625 Ibid.

626 Ibid.

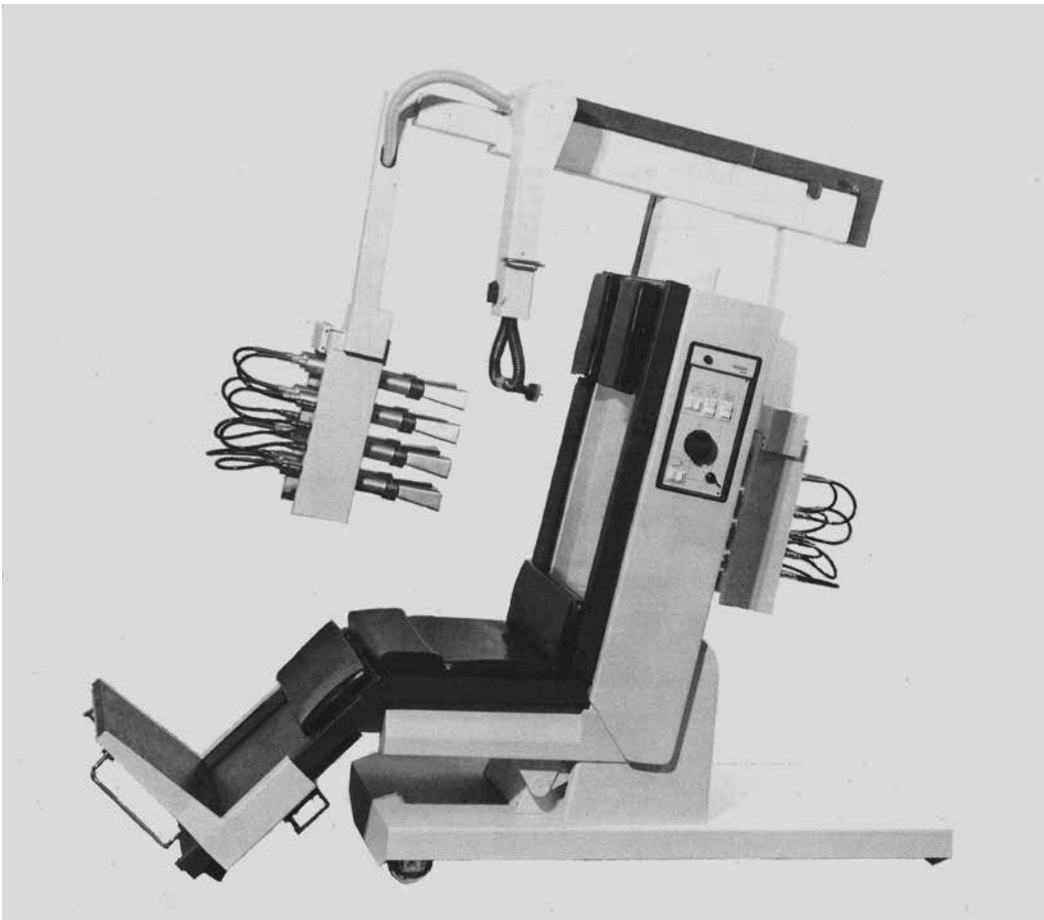

FIGURE 3.10. 'KEFUT BI 1200' a diagnostic instrument for measuring lung function, designed by Jussi Ahola and manufactured by Valmet. Image from the publication *Teollinen muotoilu 1976*. Aalto University Archives, Ornamo Collection.

different sizes, but also to consider their feelings of comfort and safety. By creating medical instruments which reduced fear and tension under examination, the purpose of Ahola's designs was to make the handling of patients easier for nurses. In other words, the technical construction of the instrument was made so that the medical examination process would be as comfortable as possible for the patients, and as physically and psychologically light as possible for the nurses.[627] According to Ahola himself, he took into consideration the visual information in the instrument, and chose colours associated with cleanliness while avoiding any 'scary' details.[628] As a whole, the visual language of 'Kefut BI 1200' was designed to evoke impressions of familiar technical devices already present in people's lives (see figure 3.10.).

627 Ibid.

628 Kaj Kalin, 'Jussi Ahola: Ammattina teollinen muotoilu', *Muoto*, 2 (1986), pp. 48-55.

Healthcare equipment has not been prominently included in the canon of Finnish design, and a deeper knowledge of the role of design in the development of the medical instrument industry is lacking, although, in 1986, design journalist Kaj Kalin described 'Kefut Bl 1200' as 'a classic product from a specific moment in the development of our industrial design.'[629] However, since its emergence in the early 1970s, medical equipment manufacture has remained a prominent employer for Finnish industrial designers. Finland's first joint conference for healthcare businesses, designers and medical instrument manufacturers was organised in 1984. The purpose was to create an understanding of the areas in which design could be useful in the field of medical equipment. The conference participants identified an issue in the speed with which the fields of medicine and technology developed. This meant that medical staff had severe difficulties keeping up with progress, while complicated equipment also created fear and discomfort among patients. Design was seen to be in a key position not only in solving these practical issues and improving the quality and functionality of healthcare equipment, but also, through research practice, being involved in the creation of new innovations.[630]

3.4.7. 'Craft is a way of life'

Alongside the technological development, industrialisation and urbanisation marking both Finnish society and the design field, debates about the need for and meaning of craft skills and traditions lived on in various media. Throughout the 1960s, many of those who wished to develop the design profession further, specifically with the focus on its ability to solve social issues, rejected craft almost entirely. For some, craft represented an exaggerated focus on aesthetic expression alienated from society and people, while research-based design practice had, in contrast, potential in fighting the injustices of the world. However, as the focus of the debates within the design field shifted increasingly towards anti-capitalism, anti-commercialism and anti-consumerism during the 1970s, craft appeared as a viable alternative to industrial production and its unwanted social and environmental consequences. This could be seen as a direct continuation of the 'constant juxtaposition' between craft and industry, present since the early days of industrialisation, which had seen the emergence not only of industrial production, but of craft as its 'other', as argued by historian Glenn Adamson.[631] The design field also became conscious of the fact that, due to industrialisation and urbanisation, craft traditions were starting to disappear. Thus, making and supporting craft became a political choice in the battle against the global consumer culture while the debates surrounding craft focused on themes such as alternative economies, livelihood and cultural preservation, as discussed in Chapter 2 through Harry Moilanen's interest in rural craft traditions in Finland.

629 Ibid.

630 Marjatta Häti-Korkeila, 'Sairaanhoidon välineet ja muotoilu', *Muoto*, 1 (1984), pp. 32-35.

631 Glenn Adamson, *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. xiii.

In 1976, Ornamo declared 'The Year of Craft' in the hopes of drawing more attention and inspiring more appreciation of Finnish craftspeople, their livelihood and the preservation of their profession. In a press release, Ornamo argued that 'commercial and global mass culture' had homogenised the material environment and pushed Finnish craftspeople into 'defensive positions'[632]. Being a craftsperson was becoming increasingly difficult: studio rents were high, tools were expensive and there were no proper pension or social security arrangements. Therefore, it was more important than ever to support craft and its makers, as craft products represented high quality and humanness. Craft was an essential part of Finnish culture, and therefore worth fighting for. There was also an element of consumer education around the discussion on the importance of craft, as Ornamo argued that the general public was 'frighteningly alienated from craft products[633]'. It was not only making craft, then, that was seen as a resistance to the powers of mass production, but also buying craft and supporting craftspeople.

A leaflet called *Craft as Employment* (*Käsityö työnä*) published in the late 1970s by Ornamo, further explained the reasons why the Finnish people should favour craft and why being a craftsperson was commendable:

> A craft product can be made individually and according to the wishes of the customer. A craftsperson knows all the steps in the making process – even some of their tools might be self-made. The basic raw materials for production at least used to be found in the environment nearby, in earth's products. There is close to no excess or pollution. The rhythm of the work is flexible, biological – compared to the mechanical strain experienced by an industrial worker.[634]

Elsewhere, the leaflet explained the impact that a more prominent craft culture would have on people and culture:

> Surely a better, more beautiful and comfortable living environment. People who are more balanced and have developed a sensibility for a more versatile and expanded understanding of this world, its phenomena and people themselves.[635]

The leaflet's message was that, in order to secure the position of craft and these positive impacts, more effort needed to be made. Throughout the 1970s, then, Ornamo argued for the recognition of craft as 'a part of the culture'[636], with the same support mechanisms as visual art had with established arrangements for questions regarding exhibitions, working grants and studio spaces. Furthermore, Ornamo wished for more communication around craft, such as permanent and touring exhibitions, newspaper articles, reviews and debates. Most importantly, there was a need for more craft organisations and places to sell craft products. As a

632 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.80a, 'Lehdistötiedote taidekäsityöteemavuodesta', press release, 5 August 1976.

633 Ibid.

634 DA, 11430 Ergoplan Oy Collection, 53-55, *Käsityö - työnä*, taitona, taiteena, undated leaflet, p. 2.

635 Ibid., p. 8.

636 Ibid.

part of Finland's cultural heritage, craft had the right to 'not merely be preserved – but to live and become revitalised'[637].

During the decade, a wave of textile artists, ceramicists and other craftspeople started their own workshops and studios in the Helsinki region. Many of these initiatives were planned as co-operatives. According to Päikki Priha, a textile artist and professor who has researched the history of crafts in Finland, one reason for this surge of independent studios was the political and cultural atmosphere of the time: solutions that supported ideological and artistic freedom were considered more tempting than a design career in industry, controlled, as it was, by trends and technology.[638] Priha suggests that working collectively allowed spaces and responsibilities to be shared, which in turn made the precarious work of a craftsperson easier, not only economically but also physically and emotionally.

For example, the cooperative Helsingin käsityöläiset was founded in 1974. Its purpose was to allow craftspeople to support one another, gain visibility for Finnish craft and make craft products easily available for people by opening a store in Helsinki city centre (see figure 3.11.). According to

FIGURE 3.11. The 'Artisaani' craft store on Fabianinkatu, Helsinki. 1970s. Photographer unknown. Aalto University Archives, TaiKV:9:46:01:014.

founding member Markku Kosonen, the store, called Artisaani, embodied both socialist and hippie values. The cooperative model was inspired by political leftism, while the uniqueness of the products and the individuality of the craftspeople

637 Ibid.

638 Päikki Priha, 'Artisaani-ilmiö', in *Artisaani-ilmiö. Suomalaisen taidekäsityön vuosikymmenet*, ed. by Päikki Priha (Helsinki: Aalto-yliopiston taideteollinen korkeakoulu, 2011), pp. 10-39 (p. 14).

reflected 'the unconventional spirit of hippies'[639]. The commercial part of running a store and engaging with sales work was not ideal for the members of the cooperative, but, as Kosonen remembers, selling products was more or less the only way to make a living as a craftsperson.[640]

The efforts paid off: throughout the 1970s, craft was discussed extensively in both local and national newspapers in the form of opinion pieces, exhibition reviews and journalistic reports about the state of craft and its makers in Finland. Established designers, such as Kaj Franck, travelled around the country, arranging workshops and lectures exploring the importance of craft. Despite the widely shared understanding on craft's value, there were critical voices, too. In 1970, designer Olli Tamminen published an essay in which he expressed his worries regarding the way in which industrialisation would eradicate craft. Tamminen did not see craft having an intrinsic value: he argued that craftspeople had social responsibility, which they were not taking seriously. Instead of focusing on wider issues, they were too self-centred in their worries about the 'little difficulties'[641] of their profession and guilty of object worship. Instead, by widening their thinking, craftspeople could find the balance between functional, ergonomic and artistic elements in their work and abandon the harmful idea that 'a product is more interesting than a human being.'[642]

According to craft researcher Anna Kouhia, craft in Finland has mostly been seen as a livelihood and thus been connected to the idea of 'moral norms regarding good citizenship.'[643] Until the growing affluence of the post-Second World War years, craft skills and products were a necessity and an important source of income for a large number of Finnish people. The influence behind the debate about design and social responsibility, produced by the issues of a rapidly industrialising and urbanising society, could be seen in the way craft was discussed too: designer and design writer Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori, who was the Finnish representative in the World Crafts Council, a UNESCO organisation with the goal of supporting craft globally, was critical of how craft and its importance were understood and communicated in Finland and other Western countries. Kulvik-Siltavuori argued that the emergence of 'art crafts', created by William Morris in 19th century England and spread around the world through professionally educated designers, had compromised the quality and beauty of hand-made objects.[644] In Kulvik-Siltavuori's definition, the real craftsperson was the local shoemaker, potter, or weaver, whose skills and products had been essential since the beginning of humanity. A maker of 'art crafts', then, was someone who had amassed a certain level of supposed sophistication and taste through studying at an art school. Western 'art craft' products, then, were unnecessary items and signs of 'cultural isolation, an economic luxury [...], opium for the higher classes'[645] devoid of any real meaning.

639 Ibid., p. 21.

640 Ibid.

641 AUA, The Finnish Society of Industrial Arts Collection, 1.2.1.31., *Suomen taideteollisuusyhdistyksen vuosikirja 1970*, Olli Tamminen, 'Mikä on käsityön asema tulevaisuuden yhteiskunnassa?', pp. 36-38 (p. 36).

642 Ibid.

643 Anna Kouhia, 'From essential skill to productive capital. Perspectives on policies and practices of craft education in Finland', in *Craft is political*, ed. by D Wood (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 212-224 (p. 212).

644 Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori, 'Onko käsityöllä tulevaisuutta?', *Ornamo*, 1-2 (1971), unpaged.

645 Ibid.

Craft in Latin America, however, in Kulvik-Siltavuori's view, had remained 'original and traditional for centuries, without any outside influences'[646], while in India, 'craft is a way of life […], you don't put it in a frame on the wall as a symbol of your living standards.'[647] This fascination, rather similar to Harry Moilanen's interest in Finland's rural populations discussed in Chapter 2, was part of a wider phenomenon of curiosity towards the vernacular in the Western design field throughout the 1970s and beyond. According to Clarke, this was a way to find alternatives to the values and realities of modern life marked by consumption and individualism, while attempting to escape the trap of the design profession in the service of capitalism.[648] In idealising non-Western and indigenous cultures, designers often neglected their complexity 'in favour of a romanticized vision of "the other" as non-complex, untainted and inherently authentic.'[649] This was visible, for example, in illustrations to various articles in the Ornamo magazine exploring global craft cultures. Depicting craftspeople in their work, the images were often close-ups of anonymous hands building something or giving shape to a material, or of faces frozen in intense concentration (see figure 3.12.). Without exception, the craftspeople in these images were left without names, nationalities, or agency, becoming empty vessels devoid of opinions, expertise, dreams, needs and ideas, ready to be filled with the projections of their Western colleagues.

FIGURE 3.12. Illustrations for an article about craft in *Ornamo* magazine, issue 1-2, 1971. Aalto University Archives, Ornamo Collection.

3.4.8. **'Go home, we don't need your help'**

Questions of romanticization, authenticity and agency also marked designers' work in development projects, which different NGOs and the Finnish government started to fund in the late 1960s. Signing up to lead a screen-printing workshop in Nairobi, Kenya[650] or to teach pottery to nuns in rural

646 Ibid.

647 Ibid.

648 Clarke, 'The Anthropological Object in Design', p. 41.

649 Ibid.

650 Immi Tiivola, 'Maridadin silkkipaino', *Ornamo*, 3-4 (1973), 11-13 (p. 12).

Tanzania[651], for example, became viable options for young designers in search for work that corresponded to their values and professional skills. In its early stages, design for development was understood as contributing to industrial development, without special humanitarian or social goals. After the Second World War, the Cold War ideology divided nations into three categories: First, Second and Third World countries.[652] The First World consisted of Western capitalist and industrialised nations, the Second of Communist economies and the Third of newly independent countries previously under colonial rule. The Cold War battle between capitalism and communism resulted in countries on both sides of the so-called Iron Curtain creating strategies to implement their preferred economic and cultural systems to nations torn apart by colonialism. Thus, the agenda of humanitarian organisations such as the United Nations, or the development programmes of industrialised countries, was not only to give aid to the hungry, poor and sick, but also to incorporate them into the global capitalist economy that was under construction.

In the 1940s, Finland was on the receiving end of emergency aid, with UNICEF, among others, sending food and blankets into the country recovering from the war. The fact that it was particpating in development projects little over a decade later can be seen as a conscious statement reflecting the political, economic and cultural status Finland was striving for.[653] Gaining UN membership and taking part in its development programme was not only a clear message about which side of the Iron Curtain Finland was on, but also a chance to boost the country's own exports, by providing technical equipment and expertise across the world.[654] As the magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti* suggested as early as 1959, participation in development projects was a good chance to practice both industrial and cultural export, while also making the 'small but civilised country known to the world.'[655]

Although Finnish designers had already taken part in development projects in the late 1950s, this line of work became increasingly popular in the 1970s. In 1973, Ornamo published a special issue of its magazine with a focus on the history and current situation of design for development from both a Finnish and international perspective. By this point, several projects had been carried out, a number of others were planned and development projects were becoming a permanent part of the country's foreign policy. A decade earlier, in 1961, a committee had been established to devise a plan regarding Finland's participation in development programmes, which resulted in establishing the Finnish International Development Agency in 1965 as a part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[656] The main principle of Finland's development programme was to 'support developing countries by promoting social well-being, even distribution of income and economic growth in these countries.'[657] Within the design field, Ornamo began posting job advertisements for Afro-Art,

651 Scholastica Mushi, 'Käsityötaidot kunniaan', *Ornamo*, 3-4 (1973), p. 10.

652 Victor Margolin, 'Design for Development: towards a history', *Design Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2007), 111-115 (p. 111-112).

653 Rauli Virtanen, *Kaivoja köyhille? Suomalaisen kehitysyhteistyön vuosikymmenet*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 2013), p. 16.

654 Ibid.

655 'Puun ristiretki', *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 5 (1959), 18-19, (p. 19).

656 'Suomen kehitysyhteistyöstä', *Ornamo*, 3-4 (1973), p. 4.

657 Ibid.

a Swedish foundation, which supported employment through craft and cottage industries in the Global South, sending Nordic designers as volunteers to 'guide local manufacturers in product development taking into consideration traditions and raw materials.'[658] In a 1971 Ornamo newsletter advertisement, for example, Afro-Art was looking to hire a leather tanner in Botswana, a designer specialised in wood products, a ceramicist and a textile designer, all in Kenya.[659]

In addition to individual designers traveling to the Global South as volunteers, Ornamo had its own development projects, too. In a 1975 draft outlining the principles for its activities, Ornamo suggested that

> development aid, when targeted right, within the fields of product design and craft, works towards creating a better life for locals, making equality real and preserving cultural heritage. Ornamo should support development aid projects, which foster international friendship, increasing collaboration and peace on Earth.[660]

For one their first development projects, Ornamo collaborated with Mikko Merikallio, a self-taught glass artist, to carry out his idea of establishing a glass blowing workshop in the town of Lelmokwo, Kenya. This idea had developed in the beginning of the 1970s, when Merikallio had spent time in Lelmokwo upon traveling across Africa.[661] Back in Finland, together with Ornamo, Merikallio applied for project funding from the Finnish government's development fund. According to the plan, a glass blowing studio 'combining traditional methods with new recycling techniques'[662] would be built in the rural town of Lelmokwo, with a long list of goals, which included creating employment, kickstarting a Kenyan glass industry, teaching skills to local young people, providing them a future within glass manufacture, funding the Lelmokwo High School with the profits gained from the glass products and, finally, inspiring other similar development projects in Africa.[663]

The workshop, called Harambee Glassblowers, opened its doors in 1976 (see figures 3.13. and 3.14.). The original goal behind the project was to set up the workshop and fund it throughout the first years of activity, after which it would function independently. Accordingly, in the spring of 1979, the workshop was officially handed over to the State of Kenya, in an official ceremony with Kenya's president Daniel Arap Moi in attendance. The workshop had operated as a part of the Lelmokwo Secondary School, where students could become trainees and gain practical experience on glass-blowing skills, but also learn about the principles of cooperative and small-scale businesses.[664] According to a report written by Merikallio, the production of the workshop

658 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.3.75, 'Ornamo-uutiset 8/71', letter to Ornamo members, 14 June 1971.

659 Ibid.

660 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 92, 'Ornamon tehtävät kehitysyhteistyön ja kansainvälisyyskasvatuksen edistämiseksi', memo dated 6 March 1975.

661 Immi Halsti, 'Ornamo Lelmokwossa - Kansalaisjärjestöjen kehitysyhteistyöprojekti', *Muoto*, 1 (1980), p. 13.

662 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 98, 'Finnish glass-blowing know-how as an export', Anja Toivola, undated article draft.

663 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 92, 'Memorandum regarding the transfer of the Harambee Glass Blowers', Mikko Merikallio, memo dated 12 February 1982.

664 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 98, 'Finnish glass-blowing know-how as an export', Anja Toivola, undated article draft.

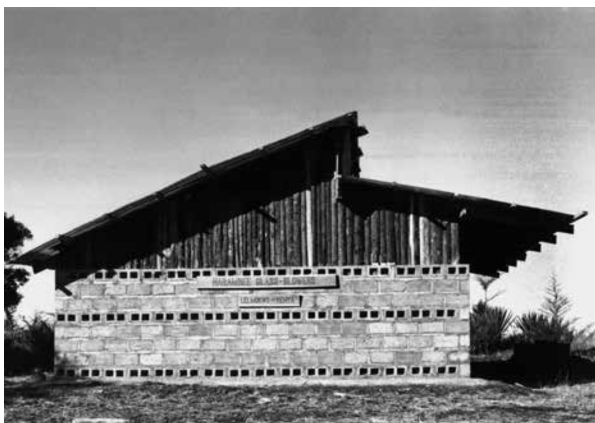

FIGURE 3.13. The Harambee Glass Blowers workshop building in Lelmokwo, Kenya. 1970s. Photograph by Mikko Merikallio. Aalto University Archive, Ornamo Collection.

FIGURE 3.14. Workers at the Harambee Glass Blowers workshop. 1970s. Photograph by Mikko Merikallio. Aalto University Archive, Ornamo Collection.

was based on recycled materials: waste oil was used as the primary fuel, and waste glass from a local soft drink bottling plant functioned as the raw material for the glass in the furnace.[665] The products were designed by the glass blowers themselves, or student trainees, while the workshop staff comprised generally of four to five people on a full and part-time basis.

In summarising the Harambee Glassblowers project for a funding report, Ornamo argued that one of its main

665 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 92, 'Memorandum regarding the transfer of the Harambee Glass Blowers', Mikko Merikallio, memo dated 12 February 1982.

goals was to manipulate 'general opinion' towards supporting the United Nations Development Strategy.[666] The report suggested that the glassblowing workshop was in line with this strategy, specifically in the area of co-operative small-scale industries, which allowed locally controlled investment and profit, as well as localised production which eliminated the need for imported goods. Writing in the Ornamo magazine, Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori argued that this way of approaching development aid was far away from the 'Papanekian' model of 'individual products, which, upon closer inspection, did not have any connection to […] the country in question'[667]. Kulvik-Siltavuori suggested that Papanek, and his thoughts regarding what design could do for countries in the Global South, had been received with enthusiasm and uncritical admiration, without properly analysing the background of the ideology itself. As a result of this, most of Papanek's ideas or products never made their way into production or use.[668]

Rather than finding solutions in the form of designed products, the goal of the Harambee workshop was to improve local livelihoods through craft practice, and the employment and income it would bring. However, in 1981, after only five years of existence, Harambee Glassblowers was closed. According to Merikallio, there were several reasons for the closure. Firstly, the previous manager of the workshop had stolen some of the income, resulting in a 'heavy blow to the fledgling organization, not to mention the loss of his otherwise good services'[669]. Secondly, the funding from Finnish Government turned out to be less than applied for, creating a serious financial strain. The workshop's car, essential for the daily tasks, was damaged in a roadside accident, and the price of fuel went up, putting a final strain on the budget.[670] In other words, the plan of creating a self-sustained workshop ended up a failure.

According to design researcher Mahmoud Keshavarz, most humanitarian design projects originate in a 'sense of urgency'[671] of wanting to alleviate the suffering of fellow human beings, but end up neglecting the historical and political circumstances that have led to the suffering in the first place. Some of the Finnish designers taking part in development projects expressed extensive criticism not only towards the projects themselves but towards their own roles in the system of the so-called 'development aid', too. For example, textile artist Immi Tiivola (now Halsti) described her experience as the artistic director of a screen-printing workshop in Nairobi in rather critical terms. After returning to Finland, she was left highly sceptical of the real possibilities of development projects and their agents, which, she argued,

> often end up satisfying their own passions and, most of the time, do not give the receivers of the aid the opportunity to choose, decide, act independently, nor carry the consequences of their own actions.[672]

666 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 92, undated Harambee Glass Blowers project report.

667 Barbro Kulvik-Siltavuori, '70-luvun design', *Ornamo*, 2 (1974), p. 16.

668 Ibid.

669 AUA, Ornamo Collection, 92, 'Memorandum regarding the transfer of the Harambee Glass Blowers', Mikko Merikallio, memo dated 12 February 1982.

670 Ibid.

671 Keshavarz, 'Violent Compassions', p. 20.

672 Tiivola, 'Maridadin silkkipaino', p. 13.

Similarly, Yrjö Sotamaa received funding from the Finnish state to study at the Design Department of Nairobi University in 1972. After returning, Sotamaa stated that the time he spent in Kenya made him 'extremely critical of all the talks, discussions and writings' conducted by 'white people'[673] presiding over Africa's future. According to Sotamaa, most of the participants in these discussions had never even visited the African continent, while the seminars arranged around the topic of design for development never included any representatives of the countries being discussed. Sotamaa argued that the motivation behind designers' participation in these seminars was about boosting their own careers rather than truly working towards resolving the issues at hand. Finally, Sotamaa expressed his vehement refusal to support the ideology of rapid industrialisation promoted by most development projects. Sotamaa, in his own words, explained that the goal of advancing rapid industrialisation led to local people becoming treated as if they were disposable goods, stripping them of their dignity 'while their feelings of fear and frustration mean nothing as long as the national income keeps on growing'[674].

Fifteen years earlier, there had been no space for such criticism of design for development. In 1959, UNESCO invited one of Finland's most successful designers, Ilmari Tapiovaara, to travel to Paraguay to help 'modernise' the country's furniture industry (see figure 3.15.). In his final report of the project, reflecting on his belief in the importance of putting customs and traditions aside, Tapiovaara had declared that 'weaknesses must be eliminated, even if the process hurts'[675], suggesting that his own vision of a successful furniture industry was more important than the local traditions. Moreover, back in Finland in a magazine interview, he had described feeling 'like a missionary who has tried to awaken a faraway population sleeping a centuries long undisturbed sleep'[676]. Only a couple of decades later did Tapiovaara reveal that, in reality, upon his arrival in Paraguay, the local industry representatives had told him: 'go home, we don't need you, we don't need your help'[677]. Despite this, he had stayed to fulfil his task because he had, in his own words, 'a strong need to work for a universal need.'[678]

In the humanitarian context, Victor Margolin has seen great potential in design's 'commitment to science and technology'[679] and thus its ability to make a positive impact on 'development' in the Global South. However, design historians have provided more critical accounts of design, technology and humanitarian aid, too. For example, Tania Messell has described a development project at the Interdesign '78 workshop in Mexico and its participants' attempts at solving 'social inequality through low-tech, affordable and ecologically sound technologies.'[680] According to Messell, the workshop's goal of alleviating poverty by developing equipment operating on sun and wind energy turned out to be entirely 'irreconcilable with local economic, technological

673 'Kokemuksia Keniasta', *Ornamo*, 3-4 (1973), 13-14 (p 13).

674 Ibid.

675 AUA, Ornamo Collection, B.B.2.68, *Final Report. Paraguay*, project report dated 1 April 1959, p. 3.

676 'Puun ristiretki', p. 19.

677 Immi Halsti, '"We don't need your help" - Ilmari Tapiovaara ja Paraguay', *Muoto*, 1 (1980), 7-8 (p. 7).

678 Ibid., p. 8.

679 Margolin, 'Design for Development' pp. 111-112.

680 Tania Messell, 'Contested Development. ICSID's design aid and environmental policy in the 1970s', in *The Culture of Nature in the History of Design*, ed. by Kjetil Fallan (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 131-146, (p. 132).

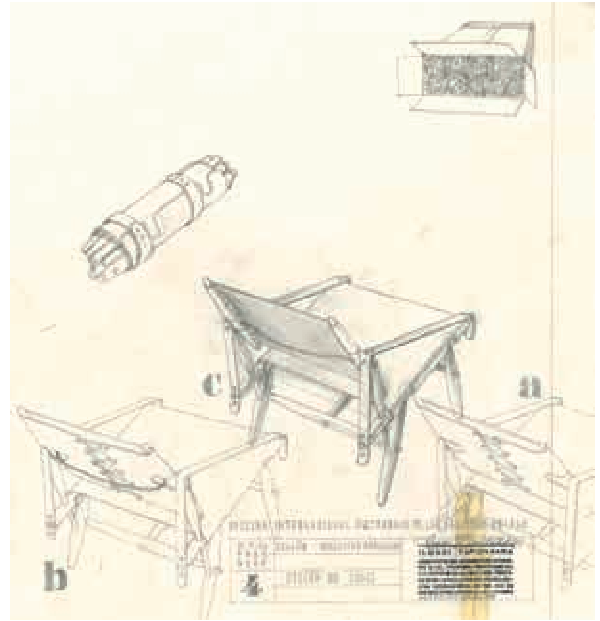

FIGURE 3.15. Technical drawing of Ilmari Tapiovaara's designs drawn during his stay in Paraguay. 1959. Design Museum, Image Collection.

and cultural realities'[681],which raised questions about the interventionist practice of humanitarian design. Elsewhere, Keshavarz has argued that humanitarian projects are merely a way for the design community to appear 'essentially good, positive and sympathetic' while, in reality, the 'inherent historical violence embedded in designing'[682] goes unnoticed. Tapiovaara's task of 'modernising' the Paraguayan furniture industry by erasing local traditions and knowledge can be seen as a prime example of this violence, cloaked in an arrogant belief that design is able to work 'for a universal need.'[683]

Following these arguments, and the criticism voiced by designers such as Tiivola and Sotamaa, the participation of Finnish designers in development projects can be seen in a new light. While working with design for development might have been the inevitable end point of the young designers' ideals of promoting social equality and solidarity, they found themselves enmeshed in a complex web of political agendas, economic goals and, most of all, in the everyday lives of real people with their real joys and struggles. Instead of a blind belief in design's ability to 'do good', a greater understanding of these elements is needed in order to recognise design's complicity in altering and destroying cultures, communities and ways of life. Perhaps this is what Kaj Franck meant with his 'disrespectful thoughts about design', presented in the introduction of this dissertation: design in its traditional role within industrial production is not equipped to promote either an understanding or an appreciation of the complexities of human life. The widespread notion of design as a problem-solving activity quickly loses its meaning when the problem needing to be solved is design itself.

681 Messell, 'Contested Development', p. 132.

682 Keshavarz, 'Violent Compassions', p. 27.

683 Ibid., p. 8.

3.5. A NEW DECADE 'FREE FROM -ISMS'

In summary, the design profession in Finland developed in many ways throughout the 1970s, as this chapter has shown. The heated debates about design's social and environmental responsibility and political role, emerging first among design students, now moved to the professional and promotional field where it created new kinds of professional practices and novel ways of promoting and exhibiting design. One of the most significant developments was the emergence of design research, first as rudimentary projects conducted in small groups focusing on social questions such as the rehabilitation of disabled children, and gradually developing towards more rigorous and ambitious activities. Another way in which designers could work according to their social values was to become employed in projects developing hospital and medical equipment. Here, the designer's role was not only to take responsibility for the aesthetic quality of the equipment, but also to ensure their usability by rigorous testing together with doctors, nurses and patients alike. Designers also became increasingly active in participating in different development projects funded by the Finnish government or international non-profit organisations. The projects mostly consisted of sending designers to countries located in the Global South, where they were expected to teach design and craft skills to local people in order to support the development of small-scale industries. All these developments, and many more, were also reflected in the way in which professional and promotional organisations saw design. For example, instead of a traditional pavilion presenting objects of high quality, the Nordic exhibition at the 1973 Milan Triennial was a conceptual statement taking a stand for children's rights in an urbanising world. Elsewhere, the topics of professional seminars focused on design and its negative impact on the natural environment, while professional publications explored political issues such as workers' rights and over-consumption.

Towards the end of the decade, in 1978, the first Finnish industrial design textbook was published, marking a new step in the professionalisation of the field. A consciousness of design's social and environmental responsibility was a consistent theme in the book. Its author, Jussi Ahola, argued that the design field was responsible for products that were 'useless, even destructive to humans and their environment'[684]. According to Ahola, any possible benefits of industrial design were mostly aimed towards those who needed them the least. According to Ahola, the design profession had still not been able sufficiently to address the needs of the working class, for example, thanks to its excessive focus on luxury objects. On several occasions, Ahola argued that a proper understanding of the task at hand was more important than aesthetic questions in the design process, and that industry representatives and the wider audience still considered industrial design as something that contributed to the marketability of products

684 Jussi Ahola, *Teollinen muotoilu* (Espoo: Otakustantamo, 1983), p. 46.

685 Ibid., p. 9.

through aesthetic choices first, and the quality of objects second.[685] Designers had not, however, been willing to accept the narrow role of artist or form-giver, and, as a consequence, had independently started to take action in order to expand their professional field towards being able to work with 'wide societal issues'[686] with a multi-disciplinary and analytical approach. Ahola suggested that this approach had led to designers making efforts in stopping environmental pollution, addressing the needs of the disabled, and creating better work environments and tools.

As the first published design textbook in Finland, Ahola's book can be interpreted as a sign of the development of both design education and design profession in the country. The profession had grown to a point where its education was no longer passed on word-of-mouth. Instead, there now existed a written source for the methodologies, practices and challenges alongside many other characteristics of the field. Moreover, the strong presence of a discussion about the social and environmental responsibility of the design profession demonstrated that it was no longer taken as a given that designers were to serve industry and commerce no matter the cost. They were now allowed, perhaps even encouraged, to consider the social, political and environmental consequences of their profession, with or without support from their employer. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the professionalisation of Finnish design had developed hand-in-hand with an interest towards social and environmental responsibility.

The 1980s saw a new ideology taking hold of the Finnish design field: individualism. According to Korvenmaa, design professionals and design education turned towards production, marketing and consumerism while the previous decade's social and environmental mission 'turned into product development and industrial arts as an individual performance.'[687] In 1986, Yrjö Sotamaa, who in his time had been a former design student arranging events such as the seminar in Suomenlinna in 1968, became rector of the University of Industrial Arts. In a magazine interview, he hinted towards a process of healing in the relationship between the design field and industry, while reminding the readers of the fact that design had the ever-important ability to boost economic growth.[688] Sotamaa was also relieved about the direction into which Finnish design was heading:

> Finnish design has, at times, suffered from excessively narrow isms, myths surrounding great masters and a puritanical philosophy of form. In recent years, I have been delighted to see wider perspectives and a healthy break away from conventions.[689]

These words showed that the Finnish design field was leaving the tumultuous decades behind. Instead of 'narrow isms', there would now be space to experiment and break free from any restrictions, demands, or responsibilities coming from outside.

686 Ibid., p. 22.

687 Pekka Korvenmaa, *Taide ja teollisuus. Johdatus suomalaisen muotoilun historiaan* (Helsinki: Taideteollinen korkeakoulu, 2010), p. 271.

688 Yrjö Sotamaa, 'Hyödyllisen taiteen puolesta', *Muoto 2* (1986), pp. 86-88.

689 Ibid, p. 87.

Even though the loudest ideologies and most radical aspirations of the 1960s and 1970s waned as the 1980s progressed, notions of social and environmental responsibility became a permanent, if silent, element within the Finnish design field with new approaches and ideas emerging and taking centre stage. The persistence of the practices developed in the 1970s could be seen, for example, in a glossy magazine that TKO, an interest group for industrial designers, published to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 1996. Alongside successful products and projects, the magazine included interviews with designers and essays about the importance of industrial design. For instance, one double-page spread that presented a selection of objects from the early to mid-1990s, included a safety mask, an ergonomic workstation, medical equipment and a children's playing environment (see figure 3.16.). As this dissertation has shown, from the 1968 Suomenlinna seminar with its workshop about designing a playground for disabled children, and study projects at the Institute for Industrial Arts concerning protective equipment, to Jussi Ahola's 'Kefut Bl 1200', similar objects to those included in the TKO publication had become an essential part of the Finnish design field as a result of designers waking up to their social responsibility. Most importantly, the objects demonstrated that designers had eventually understood the potential of their profession as a significant force in society. Safer and more ergonomic working places, more inclusive environments and more user-friendly medical equipment, for example, had, and still have, immense power in shaping everyday lives.

FIGURE 3.16. A spread presenting Finnish design from the early 1990s. Image from the publication *TKO 30 vuotta*. 1996. Aalto University Archive, Ornamo Collection.

CONCLUSION

Summary

The goal of this dissertation has been to fill a gap in the historiography of Finnish design by examining the development of design education and the design profession during the 1960s and 1970s. These two decades saw a significant change in both, as a new generation of design students and designers embraced social responsibility, environmental values and political activism. In the face of a rapidly industrialising and urbanising society, design students and professionals began to pursue a multi-disciplinary and academic field to replace what they considered an elitist and old-fashioned focus on aesthetics and craft skills. Over the years, what had started out as a youthful protest against the values of previous generations developed into a maturation of an entire field. This process created new kinds of design curricula and professional practices motivated by social, political and environmental values.

The first chapter demonstrated how, during the 1960s, new ideas of the role of design in society emerged and developed in the Finnish design field. Initially, new demands about the designer's social responsibility were debated in newspapers and events, based on the frustration experienced by young designers in the face of a design industry focused on producing objects designed not to make everyday lives better, but to win prizes in international competitions. Finland was becoming an industrialised and urbanised country at a fast pace, a development that not only changed Finnish society and culture permanently, but also created new demands and opportunities for design professionals, moving from largely craft-based products to industrial manufacture of household appliances and heavy machinery. This industrialised landscape was in need of an adapted design education, too, as the prevailing focus on material techniques and individual artistic expression was not able to provide design students with the skills they needed in their future profession.

What started as a protest against the previous generations and the conservative nature of post-war Finnish culture, soon developed into a serious effort to renew design education. A number of students took matters into their own hands and, together with peers from other Nordic countries who found themselves in a similar situation, staged events, seminars and protests demanding a change towards more socially and environmentally responsible design practice, fuelled by a discontent in their outdated and old-fashioned education and a consciousness of global injustice and environmental destruction. The students, influenced by curricula at the Royal College of Art in London and the Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung, became interested in developing their field in a more scientific and rigorous direction, able to address urgent societal issues. By the end of the 1960s, largely due to the efforts of the design students, design education in Finland was becoming more academic and research-oriented, while the debate about design's social responsibility received increasing attention in both mainstream media and in the various activities of professional design organisations.

The focus of the second chapter was in investigating how the student movement, initially marked by a sense of solidarity and progressive values, became heavily politicised among design students, as a nation-wide Marxist-Leninist youth organisation connected to the Finnish Communist Party harnessed the students' strong desire towards changing prevailing social and cultural conditions. Around the same time, the Institute for Industrial Arts, which became a university-level institution in 1973, appointed new leadership supportive of the leftist agenda. This, together with a widespread interest in questions of international solidarity, anti-consumerism and social equality, created an atmosphere open for political activism. The convincing rhetoric and the effective recruitment system of the Marxist-Leninist movement were alluring for many students in search of a greater purpose in their lives, and membership numbers increased quickly in the beginning of the 1970s to include half of the university's students by 1973. The global political situation marked by the Cold War and the oil crisis created an air of insecurity, further worsened by a national recession, cuts to higher education and dwindling employment prospects. This, in turn, generated widespread discontent among the students at the university, offering suitable conditions for the growth of the Marxist-Leninist movement.

In addition to documenting the way in which the Marxist-Leninist movement worked, a central theme in the second chapter was to examine its influence on design education. Although not all students or members of staff were involved in the movement or considered themselves communists, the pronounced goals of the university were now to support social equality and environmental values. The influence of leftist values meant that the curriculum no longer focused on preparing students for a future career in industry or commercial work, but rather in the service of the public sector, such as, for example, Helsinki City Transport, the Finnish Hospital League, or the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Another significant theme of the studies was the endeavour to become familiar with how working-class people lived and worked, as a recurring study assignment throughout the 1970s was to visit different factories and homes in the Helsinki area, and to interview the workers and residents about their living and working conditions and present the findings in illustrated reports.

At first, the prevalence of leftist values among the staff and students at the University of Industrial Arts allowed for a greater study democracy, enabling the students to choose and create their own curricula and to develop projects to suit their own interests and ambitions. As the decade progressed, the atmosphere at the university grew more and more strained and the Marxist-Leninist movement adapted an even more aggressive tone, which made everyday life at the university difficult. The interest in developing the field of design towards greater social responsibility was left behind as the goal of recruiting members became the most significant task. However, a number of students found the aggressiveness of the political debates tiring and distracting, and new student organisations demanding more peaceful study conditions emerged. Towards the end of the decade, Marxism-Leninism

waned as the number of engaged students kept sinking and as members of staff supportive of the movement were replaced with new, more politically neutral faces.

The goal of the third and final chapter was to examine whether the social, environmental and political values so prominent in the relatively sheltered environment of the University of Industrial Arts fostering experimentation and rebellion, found their way into tangible, real-life professional design practices and activities beyond abstract debates. The chapter argued that social, environmental and political values did indeed enter the professional design field in many ways. Promotional activities such as exhibitions and events gained a new focus, following the lead of students who, starting in the mid-1960s, had protested for a greater understanding of and interest in the role of design in urbanisation, industrialisation and consumerism. Domestic exhibitions arranged by the Society for Industrial Arts, for example, took the form of consumer education, while Finland's participation in the 1973 Milan Triennial alongside other Nordic countries became a critical commentary on the harsh urban conditions in which children across the world were growing up. These new exhibition themes signalled a significant shift in values, increasingly addressing design's role in major societal questions instead of promoting highly aestheticized objects. Moreover, professional design publications and events produced by Ornamo began to focus on anti-consumerism, social equality and environmental values, much in the same vein as the left-leaning students at the University of Industrial Arts.

Finally, the social, political and environmental values were also seen in new types of professional practices following the examples set by design education. For some designers, the commercial values within industry had become difficult to support, making it necessary to create an array of viable alternatives. One option, which also developed the field towards an academic direction, was to initiate research projects and apply for funding from the university, different foundations, or governmental institutes. Another possibility was to join non-profit organisations and participate in development projects in the Global South, designing products for small-scale industries or educating local designers. Within the private sector, designers began to participate in the creation of medical aids and hospital equipment, or focused on developing workplace safety and ergonomics in, for example, industrial production and farming. For some designers, avoiding commercial work or traditional product design was a conscious, politically informed choice. For others, inspired by the prominent debates taking place in the design field, using time and resources to develop different types of work opportunities was motivated by social values. In either case, in order to sustain the new professional landscape, there needed to be a shared understanding of the possibilities of design among not only designers, but also companies, funding bodies and other collaborators. This, in turn, required a joint effort from the design field as a whole as they attempted to reframe the values, practices and purpose of an entire profession. The chapter showed that, during the 1970s, despite one's political convictions, as a design professional it was

virtually impossible to escape the discussion about design's social responsibility within the capitalist system. Although the debates waned towards the end of the decade as new trends and values entered the field, the professional practices generated by social, political and environmental ideologies became a permanent, albeit quiet, part of the Finnish design field.

Approaches, methods and contributions

In tracing the change within the Finnish design field over two decades, my intention was to move between different levels and layers of history writing. The first and main focus was on the design community in the country's capital city, Helsinki, more specifically the students and staff at the Institute for Industrial Arts (later the University of Industrial Arts), together with professional and promotional organisations. Through primary sources, my goal was to give a voice to different actors in the design field and their thoughts and ideas about design and its role in society: students, teachers and professional designers, while drawing an image of the central figures shaping the field. On another level, events and elements in Finnish society, such as the generational shift, rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, the complex relationship to Soviet Union and the development into a welfare state, provided contextual background for understanding the developments in the design field. Thirdly, in order to demonstrate that Finland was far from an isolated island during these decades, some points of comparison with a global design field, also in the process of change, were included. A specific focus was on geo-political questions, widening the previous understanding of post-Second World War Finnish design, which has been thus far connected to Western and capitalist economies and ideologies. In the second and third chapters, I argued that Finnish designers, in fact, had a well-documented interest towards design for socialist causes in socialist countries, mainly the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. Although my decision about the limited focus of this dissertation was made consciously, it is clear that widening the geographical scope, or bringing an element of comparison into the framework of this research, would allow more complex and more widely significant conclusions. However, there is particular value in diving deep into a specific time and place in order to portray histories previously left untold.

My approach of looking at the Finnish design field as a community consisting of people, organisations, institutions and infrastructures was a conscious effort to avoid individual narratives, with a couple of exceptions. In the first chapter, I explored designer and teacher Kaj Franck's work and the possible motivations behind his lasting, although constantly transforming, interest in creating a socially and environmentally responsible design practice. The starting point for my analysis was a number of primary sources in the form of interviews and personal notes, but also secondary information about details in his personal life. Based on these, I argued that Franck's time spent at the front in the Second World War and his alleged homosexuality at

a time when it was punishable by law, gave him a sensitivity towards questions of social justice and a need to contribute to society. In other words, I argued that Franck's design philosophy, which he passed on to hundreds of design students during the 1960s, was largely shaped by his personal life experience. In the second chapter, I explored the teaching activities of designer, journalist and self-proclaimed socialist Harry Moilanen by analysing a number of his drawings, published articles, interviews, photographs and student assignments. I argued that Moilanen's approach to design was strongly shaped by his political convictions, according to which the exploitative and destructive patterns of capitalism were putting both humans and the natural environment in danger. By including analyses of Franck's and Moilanen's design ideologies, my purpose was to give a more nuanced idea of what social, environmental and political values in design might mean. Indeed, as described above, the design profession is shaped by great global and national events, powers and influences, but also by the efforts, personal motivations and political convictions of individuals living their everyday lives.

Due to the lack of secondary literature around the chosen topic, my research relied mostly on empirical sources located in various archives. The number of sources and the forms that they took were vast, and many of them appear here for the first time in the historiography of Finnish design. Despite this, one of the biggest challenges in my research was the fragmentary and sometimes anecdotal nature of the primary material, especially in terms of objects and documentation related to a great number of professional design projects I used in this dissertation in support of my argument about the prevalence of social and environmental values among designers. Similarly, tangible sources related to design education, such as student projects, were scarce. As demonstrated throughout this dissertation, I located an abundance of published and unpublished texts detailing the theories and ideologies of both students and professionals, and descriptions or mentions of design projects turning these ideas into reality. Unfortunately, I was able to locate a significantly smaller number of objects, drawings, photographs and project reports that would have allowed me to ground my final arguments on more 'solid' material. There are some possible explanations for this absence: firstly, the tangible results of design work conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, in areas explored in this dissertation, have not been considered valuable or interesting enough to be included in archives and museum collections, or protocols have not been in place to acquire, say, the 'Kefut BI 1200' diagnostic instrument for measuring lungs. Secondly, should this kind of documentation still be found in personal or private archives, it is likely collecting dust in basements and attics. In either case, despite the fragmentary sources, I hope that this dissertation has not only succeeded in conveying the presence of social, environmental and political values in the Finnish design field, but also managed to point in directions where it might be possible to find more information.

Alternative histories and better futures

The main goal of this dissertation was to fill a significant gap in the history of Finnish design by giving a detailed account of not only a specific set of values and practices developing within the field, but also of the initial steps in becoming the wide-ranging, research-based, academic profession it is today. The research challenged pre-existing notions of what kind of design is considered interesting and valuable, and what kinds of designers and activities connected to design are worthy of attention. It also widened the understanding of what is considered Finnish design, moving beyond a narrow selection of industrially produced or hand-crafted, highly aestheticized objects to anonymous student work, rural craft traditions, temporary installations, medical instruments, seminar posters, industrial machinery, development projects and ergonomics, and so on. Furthermore, in the Finnish context, it contributed to a growing research interest in exploring the Marxist-Leninist movement in the 1970s, giving insight into its ideology, theory and projected practical applications. In an international context, the dissertation has provided a geographically and culturally specific account of the change that swept over the global design field during the 1960s and 1970s, demonstrating that, while this change shared many commonalities across the world, local conditions and influences should not be overlooked.

In addition to being the widest individual account so far written about the social, environmental and political values in the Finnish design field, this dissertation invites more research to be conducted in a variety of areas. Firstly, the question of what exactly happened to the values so prominent throughout the 1960s and 1970s remains somewhat unanswered. Although my final argument was that the values did not disappear completely upon entering the 1980s, but continued living on in the professional practices of designers alongside other values such as individualism, a more detailed account of the long-term consequences of these tumultuous decades is needed. Another path left unexplored here is the development of design as an academic field of research. The first steps towards what we now call 'design research' were taken during the period investigated in this dissertation, spurring the question whether the prominent debates about design's social and environmental responsibility left their mark on not only the subjects of research activities in the field of design, but also in the methodologies and approaches. Moreover, exploring how the further development of academic research in the field of design affected the understanding of design's role in society, would generate a better understanding of the contemporary design field in Finland. Finally, one of the more exciting and controversial questions provoked by this dissertation and that demands further research is that of the relationship between Finnish and Soviet designers. In the third chapter, I presented sources depicting a well-documented interest towards design in socialist countries and a nascent collaboration with, for example, the governmental design organisation in the German Democratic Republic. As mentioned earlier, Finnish design has traditionally been connected

to Western markets and capitalist ideologies with the effect of making its connections to socialism a taboo. Exploring this relationship deeper to analyse the extent and consequences of the existing collaborations and contacts might open up an entirely new view on Finnish design culture.

In an often-used argument, researching social and environmental values in the history of design is valuable because of the possibility of it giving us guidance or ideas regarding how, in the contemporary moment, to start building a more equal and sustainable future. One of the initial motivations for writing this dissertation was, indeed, to inspire designers to look at their profession with more critical eyes and to offer them something new to become inspired or motivated by. As detailed in the introduction, this approach was directly informed by my personal quest to make sense of the (design) world I had entered. Perhaps, by researching something related to questions of social equality and environmental sustainability, some of those values would rub off on me, too, and I would become a better and more useful person to society with my knowledge on how to make it into a better place. During the research process for this dissertation, I have come to think differently, and my understanding of the role and importance of research into the history of design has changed, not to mention the role of historians. I no longer think that historical knowledge is valuable only if it is able to teach us a lesson or make us into better designers, or better people. Nor do historians necessarily know what to do in order to create a better future for humanity or the planet. Who is allowed to decide, what is 'better', anyway?

Having said this, if there is some kind of impact that I could wish for this dissertation to have, it would be to show readers how history-writing is always contingent on the time and space in which it takes place, no matter how ardently some historians might suggest otherwise. Historical scholarship, including this dissertation, always serves a purpose, conscious or not, in the minds of those producing, funding, promoting and publishing it. Meanwhile, the power of history-writing lies in its intrinsic ability to make enquiries into the lives, communities and cultures we have created, and to challenge and critique established notions that shape them. In the most recent decades, it seems as if it has been found necessary to uphold a design practice that supports the growth of the Finnish economy and the country's identity as part of Western capitalist culture. The intertwined relationship between design, commerce and industrial production has been so tightly established that there has not been space to challenge it. This, in turn, has allowed the design profession to become complicit in some of the most complex and frightening issues of our time, such as environmental destruction due to over-consumption and over-production. At this moment, it is imperative to see design as a profession not exclusively tied to practices leading to the eradication of humanity. In researching and writing this dissertation, questioning the meaning of design in wider society alongside the design students and professionals in the 1960s and 1970s has led to one important conclusion: it is far from impossible to create a design profession free from the goal of supporting capitalist economy built on limitless growth – it has been done already. The question of how to maintain this freedom remains.

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Interviews

Interview with Jouko Koskinen, conducted by Kaisu Savola, 18 April 2020

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‘Disrespectful thoughts about design’ explores a generation of design students and professionals in Finland in the 1960s and 1970s as they became aware of the two contradictory faces of design: one that is complicit in overproduction, overconsumption and social inequality, and the other capable of examining, addressing and perhaps even solving these issues. This awareness prompted an ambition to develop design education and design practices shaped by environmental concerns, feelings of social responsibility and politically leftist motivations.

Based on extensive archival research, this text fills a gap in the history of Finnish design, while providing a geographically, politically and culturally specific account of the wave of social and environmental responsibility that swept over the global design field during the 1960s and 1970s. It argues that, at present time, there is an equally urgent need to see design as a profession able to reconsider and realign its goals and values.

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