Sustainability as a deeper perspective in design education.

Nora Melkild¹, Irene Brodshaug², Astrid Midtbo²
¹Oslo and Akershus University College of applied sciences, Norway
²Oslo and Akershus university college of applied sciences, Norway

In many ways, western culture has distanced itself from the origins of materials. This paper proposes sustainability as a deeper perspective in design education. The concept of materiality in this paper, is understood as a respect for artifacts, knowledge of natural resources and the handling of them. Most people act on the assumption that energy and resources will last forever, and the idea that this might come to an end, is hard to grasp. How can students be made more aware of a product’s origin and duration? Is it possible that an increased understanding of the planet’s limited resources could create better design solutions, as it would force both students, design teachers and designers to think through what is created as well as the assignments given in design education? Would this change of perspective also increase the knowledge of materials? In Norway, the curriculum is currently in a process of change. The Ludvigsen-committee, a government committee appointed by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, is currently working on evaluating the components of different subjects and the amount of time they are given in the school system. The general part of the current Norwegian primary and secondary school curriculum has a clear agenda regarding sustainability and holistic, environmental thinking. However, this is hardly mentioned in the subject specific part of the Art and Crafts curriculum. Here the main focus is art and design processes, while the bases for the products, natural or man-made materials, which is the fundament for all design, is barely discussed. A key question in future design education is whether to keep a broad perspective, or narrowing down the content, which might facilitate deeper learning, and hopefully create a deeper knowledge of materials and craftsmanship. This paper will suggest some input towards the Ludvigsen-committee’s proposal in June.

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*Presenting author