

IMPORTANCE OF HANDICRAFT KNOWLEDGE IN AGRICULTURE

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Handicraft and agriculture have always been closely related. Agriculture needed working tools from handicraft workshops, and handicraft needed materials produced in farms. Due to the technological progress in agriculture, Slovenian handicraft products from Slovenian farms also assume more modern form and different useful value. A bond with the handicraft past is represented by handicraft knowledge and skills passing from generation to generation that are a part of Slovenian intangible cultural heritage. The article deals with types of heritage handicraft knowledge, problems in transferring knowledge to the next generations of craftsmen, and possible measures for handicraft knowledge protection.

Key words: intangible cultural heritage, craftsmen, craft knowledge.

ВАЖНОСТЬ РЕМЕСЛЕННЫХ ЗНАНИЙ В СЕЛЬСКОМ ХОЗЯЙСТВЕ

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Ремесленничество и сельское хозяйство всегда были тесно связаны. Сельское хозяйство нуждается в рабочих инструментах ремесленных мастерских, а ремесленное производство – в материалах, производимых на фермах. Благодаря технологическому прогрессу в сельском хозяйстве словенская ремесленная продукция словенских фермерских хозяйств приобретает более современный вид и отличается ценностью. Связь с ремесленным прошлым представлена ремесленными знаниями и навыками, передаваемыми из поколения в поколение, которые являются частью нематериального культурного наследия Словении. В статье рассматриваются виды знаний о наследии ремесленников, проблемы передачи знаний следующим поколениям ремесленников, а также возможные меры по охране ремесленных знаний.

Ключевые слова: нематериальное культурное наследие, ремесленники, ремесленные знания.

Introduction

Handicraft knowledge transferred from generation to generation is a part of Slovenian intangible cultural heritage. It is protected by Unesco Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which has been valid in Slovenia since 3 January 2008 (MKVNKD, 2008).

In specialised literature, there is no unified term for activity of handicraft that is performed mainly by hand using traditional natural materials, mainly produced or picked domestically, which is in practice called “handicraft”. Philosophers, psychologists, representatives of cognitive sciences, evaluators of the companies’ value, and also other scientists in the field of organization and management deal with definition of knowledge. (Sitar, 2006, p. 59). The purpose of the article is to present theoretical background and research question in regard to importance of handicraft, importance of knowledge, and whether both become extinct.

Theoretical definition of handicraft and craftsmen

In the dictionary of the Slovenian standard language (SSKJ, 2014), handicraft is defined as a craft in which something is produced or repaired using a simple tool, and craftsman is a person producing or repairing something using a simple tool.

In the dictionary of English language (*Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*) (1993, p. 291), handicraft is defined as activity that requires craft and art skills at the same time (e.g. sewing). Handicraft products are defined as products produced using these skills. The basic criteria of handicraft is the fact that the product is produced mainly by hand. In case of mass and machine production, products are not considered handicraft products.

Handicraft (Wikipedia, 2016), sometimes also more precisely expressed as artisanal handicraft or handmade craft is every version of work, where useful and decorative items are produced entirely by hand or using a simple tool. Handicraft is traditionally the main sector of craft and is related to a wide range of creative and design activities for production of handmade objects made of textile, malleable and durable materials, paper, plant fibres etc. Many craftsmen use completely natural and domestic materials, while others prefer modern and non-traditional materials, for example old recycled industrial materials. Usually, the term handicraft is used for traditional techniques of creating products that are practical and aesthetic at the same time.

Handicraft (Wikipedia, 2015a) has its roots in rural craft, since the need for various products made of home-grown, picked, or produced material that were already known by ancient civilization, arisen from performing agricultural activity. Numerous handicraft crafts were performed for centuries, and some of them, which were originally carried out in a limited geographical area, are a modern invention and represent craft popularisation.

Baš (2004, p. 506) describes that up to the World War II, handicraft was defined as a synonym for a cottage industry, which was considered craft in general. The term handicraft is nowadays again used for craft activities arising from heritage. Baš (2004, p. 507) relates handicraft also with craft and agriculture: he says this is a spread form of management in the countryside, where handicraft or craft is a supplementary activity, sometimes also predominant activity. Handicraft was most often related to agriculture in blacksmithing, carpentry, wheel wright, saddlery, joinery, milling industry, plaiting, log sawing, lace-making, and in some modern craft activities. Craftsmen are named (*ibid.*) also as a type of craftsmen that used simple

tools to produce various products in domestic workshops. After the World War II, craftsman was defined as a person producing or repairing something using a simple tool. From 1990s, the term craftsmen became a positive name for producer of products of cottage industry and handicraft.

In the same work, Baš defines cottage industry and handicraft as repetitions of the handicraft heritage (2004, p. 95). According to Baš, this expression also includes various modern unique and small-sized creativity that is based on traditional knowledge. The term denotes a series of economic activities carried out by operators themselves, in a family, or in cooperation in their own residential environment, in special working places, and studios.

Bogataj (1999, p. 11) establishes that, especially after the end of the World War II, the term handicraft gained derogatory meaning for everything that is backward and is not in accordance with modern fashion guidelines. Regardless of the stated, in Slovenia the term handicraft has been re-established in a positive meaning of the word, since it is about the topics that are again current in the modern world.

On the basis of Standard Classification of Occupations (SURS, n. d.), handicraft workers include mainly the following:

- Handicraft workers in wood and other materials;
- Handicraft workers in stone;
- Handicraft workers in wood, reed, bast, basketry, straw etc.;
- Handicraft workers in paper;
- Candle makers;
- Hand cord makers;
- Handicraft workers in textiles, leather, and similar materials;
- Lace makers;
- Handicraft workers of textile and leather items;
- Hand spinners and weavers.

Among the activities of handicraft we can also include occupations in the field of artistic creation under the Standard Classifications of Occupations 90.030 (SURS, n. d.), when persons uniquely paint on porcelain, glass, ceramics, wood by hand, or they make unique items that fulfil the defined criteria for classification of these items as handicraft items.

Theoretical definition of knowledge

According to Jaklič (2006, p. 15), knowledge is a difficult to define term that is understood as conscious and unconscious ability to react. He believes the emphasis is on action, since, according to this definition, knowledge can only be shown in the course of action. He also believes that knowledge is not enough if it is not enriched with creativity, which is divided into subject and social creativity. According to Jaklič, various creations arise from both types of creativity and spiritual creativity. Cowann (2005, p. 57) also establishes that the condition for re-creation of traditional knowledge is also awakening of everything else related to knowledge, including spiritual practices. Nonaka in Takeuchi (1995, p. 21) state numerous different

philosophical theories on knowledge, among others also Plato, according to which knowledge is “justified true belief”.

Sitar (2006, p. 59) believes that it is possible to derive understanding of knowledge in narrow and broader sense from knowledge definitions. In narrower sense, this knowledge is in individual person that is stored in them. In broader sense, this knowledge is also owned by organization, since it is stored in its processes, products, and documents. Knowledge can only be owned by the company to the extent to which organization is capable of motivating individuals to give their knowledge at its disposal. Knowledge involves individual’s experience, it is in their brain, it is a consequence of all learning processes, actions, discoveries of individual of what functions and what does not function (ibid., p. 60). Sitar also believes (ibid.) that it cannot be completely divided into certain types, since it would then be too simplified.

Types of knowledge can be divided in several ways. In theory and practice, knowledge is most often divided into explicit knowledge that can be transferred by various media, and converted to implicit knowledge, and we also call it tacit, hidden knowledge (Sitar, 2006, p. 63). Explicit knowledge is the knowledge that is expressed, articulated, coded and/or written, and is, according to Sitar (ibid.), encompassed in a text, tables, diagrams, product descriptions etc. Such knowledge is formalised and has a form of documents, books, manuals, technical instructions, databases, procedure notes etc. For example each employee in organisation is accountable for their areas of work in accordance with the definitions in employment agreements or the act on the classification of assignments and duties and in compliance with these rules (Horvat, Lipičnik, 2016, p. 31). According to Nonaka (in Dermol 2010b, p. 17), explicit knowledge is therefore easily captured, expressed, and re-used.

On the other hand, implicit knowledge is the tacit, hidden, non-expressed and/or non-coded knowledge, and according to Sitar (2006, p. 64) it influences individual’s and organization’s ability to create and continuously adapts. She writes that people have more knowledge than we are able to express. When we try to express knowledge, we simplify it too much, we leave out the point, or we fail to express everything we know. It consists of our experience, intuition, individual understanding of things, and is deeply rooted in us, our actions, emotions etc. Dermol (2010a, p. 13) denotes implicit knowledge as equivalent for subjective, personal knowledge or personal intuition. In this type of knowledge, Dermol includes tacit knowledge, experiential knowledge, embodied knowledge, rooted knowledge, and socialization knowledge. Takeuchi (2006) believes that tacit knowledge has important cognitive dimension. According to Takeuchi, it consists of mental models, beliefs, and views that are so deeply rooted in a person that we take them for granted, therefore, we cannot verbalise them.

Hislop (in Dermol, 2010a, p. 20) establishes that many doubt in division of knowledge into implicit and explicit as two entirely separate forms of knowledge, since knowledge is not unambiguous, but it is a combination of explicit, implicit, developmental, and static knowledge. Also Hildreth and Kimble (in Dermol, ibid.) establish that each knowledge includes explicit and implicit topics, only the

relationship among them is different. Dermol (2010b, p. 38) states that implicitness of knowledge and its relation to practise and individuals makes it difficult to transfer knowledge, since it requires various teaching methods that also include practical lessons.

Nonak's theory on knowledge conversion that runs in a form of spiral, is also summarised by other authors (Černelič, 2006; Dimovski, and Colnar, 1999). They write that knowledge can be created and transferred through four patterns of conversion presented hereinafter.

- *Socialisation* means conversion of implicit knowledge into implicit. In this pattern, two persons directly exchange implicit knowledge. An example of socialisation is when a person observes another person working in order to learn how to perform a certain work. A good example of socialisation is also exchange of experience, learning at work, and brainstorming workshops.
- *Externalisation* is conversion of implicit knowledge into explicit. In this pattern, new knowledge is created, since implicit knowledge is documented and becomes available also to others. Externalisation process takes place through metaphors that are mainly activated by intuition and holistic imagination with the help of ability to connect and logically differentiate.
- *Internalisation* is conversion of explicit knowledge into implicit, whereas members of some group or organization except this knowledge, complement it, and redefine it. Internalisation is a final consequence of individual's and organizational checking of new knowledge. It means that this knowledge is accepted, and enables creating routines and skills.
- *Combination* is conversion of explicit knowledge into implicit. In this pattern, new explicit knowledge relates to the old one. The total knowledge is not increased, but the existing knowledge that can connect some scattered knowledge in a whole, is transformed. Examples of such learning are exchanging and combining such knowledge on the basis of documents, at meetings, seminars, and conversations. On the basis of the already obtained explicit knowledge, new explicit knowledge is formed in a way that we compare the existing knowledge with the new one by adding, sorting, combining, and categorising.

Takeuchi (2006) establishes that socialisation is a fairly limited form of knowledge creation. It is true that apprentice learns the skill of baking bread from the master, but nobody in organization (including them) has a systematic insight in master's or apprentice's knowledge. If such knowledge does not become explicit, it also cannot become a part of organizational knowledge, according to Takeuchi.

Research question, research, and discussion

In the article, we ask the following research question: *Why the top-level handicraft knowledge that is a part of Slovenian intangible cultural heritage has become extinct?*

The answers were obtained with semi-structured individual interviews that were conducted with five recognized craftsmen entered in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.

Interviewees described their own experience and considerations in regard to future destiny of their activities. From the stated we summarised the following reasons for extinction of the heritage handicraft knowledge:

- *Insufficient recognisability of handicraft heritage and undervaluing of its importance:* Among important reasons for extinction of handicraft is insufficient public awareness that top-level handicraft is a part of Slovenian intangible cultural heritage that must be a subject to equal protective measures as other areas of cultural heritage. General public does not distinguish real craftsmen from those who are not. Abolition of obligatory acquisition of the Art&Craft Certificate for all persons who want to pursue the activity of cottage industry and handicraft, caused a great deal of damage to top-level craftsmen. They feel “unrecognised” since certificates, recognitions, and entries in the Register do not provide them with any protection against unfair competition, nor do they receive any financial support at the expense of entry in the Register.

- *Creating a false notion on handicraft occupations:* in the last decades, a false notion on handicraft occupations has been created in public, according to which these occupations are supposed to be a part of the history, and not a link among past and present. Due to such thinking, craftsmen rarely find suitable persons who would like to obtain their handicraft knowledge and continue their activity.

- *Insufficient cultural-protective measures:* Based on the research, craftsmen believe they are fully responsible for protection of handicraft knowledge. Except for the entry, the state does not offer any protective measures to the craftsmen entered in the Register that would enable them transfer of knowledge to the next generations. Similarly as independent cultural workers, they would need a state’s help in paying social contributions. From the empirical research arises that only by entering craftsmen in the Register it is impossible to preserve heritage handicraft knowledge, if organised transfer of handicraft knowledge to the future generations is not enabled at the same time.

- *Inadequate and too complicated legislation in the field of handicraft activity:* On the basis of empirical knowledge, top-level handicraft knowledge becomes extinct also due to the inadequate legislation, on the basis of which craftsmen perform their activity or perform personal supplementary work. Regulations governing handicraft do not consider the need of handicraft activity for more favourable business conditions (due to their division among cultural-heritage and economic nature of activity), which also enable survival and development of the activity. Regulations governing the field of handicraft activity, have been fully equalizing business operation conditions for all economic operators, including craftsmen. This also relates to taxation of their products by a general VAT rate of 22 percent, and to the duty of tax payment from every issued invoice regardless of when the customer pays the invoice. Craftsmen cannot handle all bureaucratic obstacles and high penalties, therefore, they opt for closing their workshops and studios. Also regulations in the field of personal supplementary work that govern occasional production and sale of handicraft products in a small scale, are inadequate. Purchasing vouchers and electronic reporting to FURS is too complicated for the smallest craftsmen, therefore, they choose to stop working.

- *Unfair competition and high operational costs*: it has been increasingly difficult to survive with handicraft activity. In the empirical research we discovered that most of the craftsmen's income does not cover even the basic expenses and duties. Therefore, by performing their activity they create loss that they cover with money from other income, e.g. pension.
- *Lack of connection and coordination of actions of the responsible for preservation of handicraft*: it is very painful for craftsmen that there is no visible effort for cooperation and solving common problems among the key stakeholders responsible for representing their interests in front of state and other authorities. Although, with joint efforts, they could contribute a lot to preservation and development of handicraft.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research, craftsmen entered in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, have no proper state support in protection of their knowledge that can only be preserved and developed in a personal relationship among the master and learner. There are few handicraft schools, also a huge problem of practical training is present, and top-level handicraft masters mostly do not fulfil prescribed formal educational requirements for implementing practical lessons. The state did not legally protect domestic handicraft heritage against intrusion of domestic and mainly foreign falsified cheap industrial products in Slovenian market.. Despite all the problems there is hope for revival, preservation, and development of handicraft heritage in the 21st century. This is especially true in the pride and passion that craftsmen feel during their work. They as socially responsible entities could have a higher reputation and loyalty among customers, higher attractiveness for investors, lower negative influence on the environment and are more sought among quality personnel (Horvat, 2015). The state will also have to contribute their share by finally listen to the needs of craftsmen. Namely, Slovenia has also suffered the worst financial crisis since it represents a small, mostly export-oriented economy with one of the smallest banking systems on a global scale (Horvat, Potočnik, 2017). Protective handicraft law proposed by craftsmen could be a proper way to regulate craftsmen's status, their education, working conditions, and incentives for preservation of these kind of cultural heritage in Slovenia.

References

Božena Macarol was a long-time associate of the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, where she advised small economic operators, including craftsmen and farmers, in various fields. She was in charge of studying legislation in the field of handicraft, and gave suggestions for improvement of operation conditions of craftsmen. From 2014 to 2016 she was a part of a working group preparing a proposition of the protective Handicraft Act. Recently, she has been working with Slovenian Handicraft Centres and handicraft cooperatives in creating better

educational conditions that would enable more efficient transfer of handicraft knowledge to the future generations of craftsmen.

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