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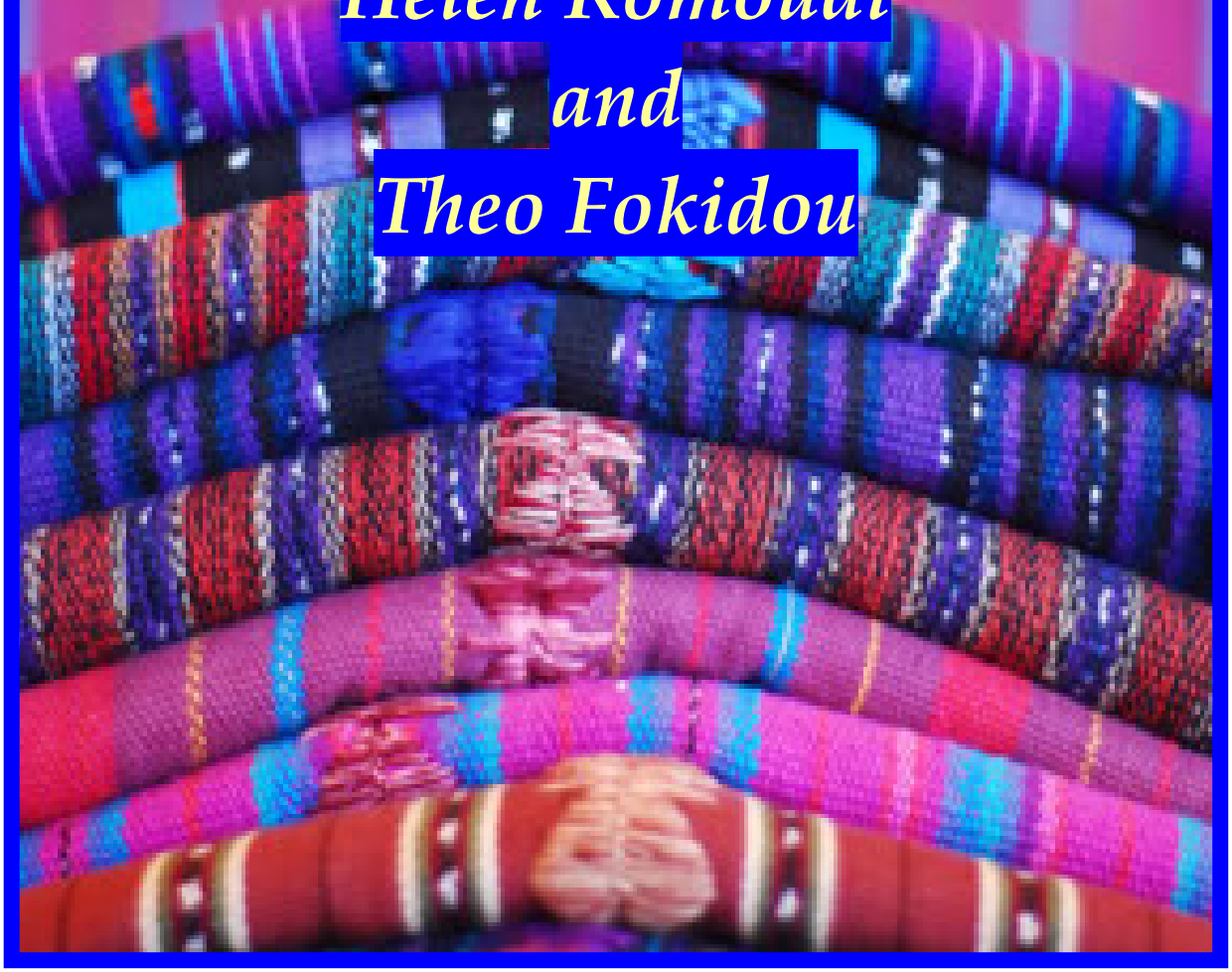

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Originally published in: Tekstilna Industrija, June-2010

Abstract:

The paper addresses a textile design project, which is part of a ten-year research work, carried out by design professors and students. The research team investigated, theoretically and practically, the possibility for textile design renovation targeting to the tourist business, and the development of new, high quality artefacts that result from the study of local cultural heritage with the adaptation of new technologies. The basic idea of the present research is derived from the fact that during the last years the conditions for entrepreneurship in Greek textile business changed a lot, influencing the designer's role and implementation. The approach, as discussed in the paper, has been the applied research direction, and was delivered as a collaborative long distance design education activity, with the use and implementation of technology that included the adoption of multimedia and the interactive learning environments of computer-mediated communications and computer-supported collaborative learning. New textile design methodologies and educational approaches for distance learning and e-learning purposes resulted, applied to selected textile producers. Examples are offered from the research work and the adapted teaching programme.

Key words: *tourist textiles, culture, textile education, new technologies.*

1. Introduction

The case study is a new approach to the diachronic aesthetic powers of textiles and textile products, which are one of the greatest cultural traditions not only of Greece, but also of the Balkan countries and the East Mediterranean littoral. The project was a real challenge for the research team and a way to exchange insights, research tools and methods that support research and design education. The contacted research was on tourist textiles/artefacts, cultural heritage, textile design, technology and textile design education issues. It was followed by students applied research on a team assigned project on textiles, textile producers and design that resulted in a final presentation with applications. Within both the preceding of the design creation, as well as during the designing process, research on all the above aspects was a substantial part of the process.

The objectives of the project were: to promote interdisciplinary intercultural research on textile production, design, marketing, education and the tourist business; to analyse textiles from an art/design point of view; to address textile-design teaching and learning/e-learning strategies; to facilitate a dialogue on the benefits and limitations of contemporary technological developments in textile design education/production.

The aims of the case study were: to create new opportunities, visions, skills, directions and media for textile students and textile producers; to develop an understanding of design research methodologies; to investigate the possibilities of innovative textiles that will result from the combined research of culture and today's accelerating technology.

The actions of the research team, in relation to the project, were: meetings to discuss and outline the main activities and the terms and conditions for introducing new tools and new strategies in textile production; a framework of tasks; cross-platform discussions and interactions on the pedagogical practices that promote effective learning and on the practices that assure the learners' satisfaction.

2. Materials & Methods

The first action of the research team was to identify the research data and parameters: research, cultural artefacts, design, cultural heritage, textiles for the tourism business, new technology and educational systems, and the methodology to be adapted. It was followed by questions/answers, addressed by the research team on the possibility that local tourist/textile business could develop quality designs and products by adapting the new technologies, without loosing the new products their cultural identity; the possibilities for textile producers to develop new skills and to adapt new designs so that the tourist business would stay/become competitive. The questions were considered in the context of the immense pressure posed upon small firms by external production changes and the expansion of high technology applications.

2. 1. Research

Research is the systematic investigation to establish facts, a search for knowledge, a human action, an attempt to find out in a systematically and scientific manner. The definition of research according to the RAE 2008 [Research Assessment Exercise in the UK] is “original investigations undertaken in order to gain knowledge or understanding” in order that “the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights' may constitute research.” This definition does not define the forum in which this “research” must occur or the media that should be employed. It is viable to consider the genesis of research blooming in practice, or to assume it occurring within academe. It can encompass new media/material in a traditional application or the use of a known component somewhere where it has not been adapted, as it is addressed in the present experiment.

Design/textile design research is distinguished from design by the production of interesting, to a community, new knowledge, by the intellectual risk, the number of unknowns in the proposed design which when successfully surmounted provide the new information that makes the effort research and assures its value, and this is what makes design research different from a design effort. Design research involves the analysis of the use and performance of the designed artefacts, a parameter included in the hereafter presented case study.

2.2. Artefacts/Cultural Artefacts

Artefact (also artifact) refers to any object or process resulting from a human activity. Aristotle divided things into those that “exist by nature” and those that are “products of art” or “artificial products” (*Physics,* Book II, 192b). Thus artefacts are contrasted to

natural objects; they are products of human actions. This feature of artefacts is reflected in the dictionary definition “artefact as an object made by human art and workmanship, an artificial product”. Consequently an artefact has necessarily a maker, a creator, or a designer. It is an object that has been intentionally made or produced for a certain purpose.

The meanings of the word “artefact” are several, but often the word is used in a more restricted sense referring to simple, hand-made objects that represent a particular culture. Artefacts are distinguished from features, which are non-portable remains of human activity. An artefact, in a narrow sense, is usually made from some pre-existing object or objects by successive intentional modifications. This activity is called work. The production of an artefact can take different forms. *A cultural artefact* is a man-made object, which gives information about the culture of its creator and users. The artefact may change over time in what it represents, how it appears and how and why it is used as the culture changes over time, like textiles and clothing. “Artifactuality” is often regarded as a defining characteristic of works of art; an artefact that has been created in order to be presented to an art-world public and in this sense is equivalent to the requirement that works of art should have a creator. The final output from a design research effort is the realization of the artefact in an environment. Proper artefact is regarded only if its maker's productive activity has some degree of success, including his productive intention.

2.3. Design

Design means, "to invent and bring into being" [Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1992]. Thus, design deals with creating something new that does not exist in nature. Design is also problem solving by changing existing situations into preferred ones. Scientific research is problem solving too, like design, but where designers focus on the solution, researchers focus on problems. Creativity and innovation are the special qualities of design that separates it from the other modes of problem solving. Design is creative, intuitive and innovative. Design is also the language that expresses feelings, used to bridge disciplines, an action giving form and structure to environment with analysis and synthesis.

Designing can be very generally defined as an activity that contributes to the understanding of a phenomenon. In the case of design research, all or part of the phenomenon, may be created as opposed to naturally occurring. The phenomenon is typically a set of behaviours of some entity (ies) that is found interesting by the researcher or by a group - the research team. The activities a research community considers appropriate to the production of understanding are its research methods or techniques.

The design of artefacts is an activity that has been carried out for centuries. This activity is also what distinguishes the professions from the sciences. "Schools of architecture, business, education, law, and medicine, are all centrally concerned with the process of design". Designing an artefact is a visual and conscious process, carried out by synthesizing visual, aesthetical and applied means, which can be expressed in physical objects, in forms and creations. It is also a subconscious process expressing the designers' inner world, marked by their identity. Social groups express their cultural values through their demands, ideologies and preferences, and their aesthetic values have been improved through the distribution of various man-made products, and via their positive or negative appreciation of them. Industries are fully aware of that, and want to influence popular aesthetic values in order to flood the market with products, which are based on their

selected standards. It is these very aesthetic standards, which are used by the producers to manipulate consumer demands not only in ordinary products but also in modern art.

The art of design stands in intimate relationship with materials, purposes, forms and styles. In many instances, depending on the form of the objects, it is also influenced by the materials in use, the manner in which the natural objects are presented, the purposes for which an object is created, as well as by the nature and the culture of the different people involved at different times, reflecting the spirit of the times, the political or religious ideas of the people, and the effects of foreign cultures. The styles so formed are the truthful expression and presentation of the character of the people of a certain area in a certain historic epoch. An artefact is actually the product of its epoch rather than of a single person, and local heritage is the catalyst that enables the expression of the same geometric designs seen in nature and which are inspired by the same fauna and flora in a different fashion, according to the culture in which it exists.

Design innovation is always closely related to critical reflection, experimentation and practical delivery. The evolution of an idea into an innovative form has always been a challenge for any designer, unknown or a famous, exercising his or her imagination and reason. The form always emerges from many factors as a result of the original concept, though it is considerably modified during the process of creation. It expresses the artist's vision and culture, as far as this is possible, within the limitations of materials and techniques.

The role of designer's emotional situation is vital in any design discipline. What inspires is an individual matter. In general, one is motivated by the desire to create something new and challenging, but often inspiration is derived from one's inner world and consists of many different inputs. It is quite often that emotion, feelings, mood, motivation, are not well understood during the design process and the design acceptance, though we have evidence that attractive and pleasing things are best buys, work better, are media of easy learning, and produce better results. Also when designers are in a relaxed situation that is, with positive emotion, they are more tolerant of designing difficulties and problems and what is recognized and accepted as a good design is usually in balance of beauty and usability.

Within designing, constraints arise in many forms. The production processes that will be used to manufacture the artefact can constrain the materials and dimensions that the designer has selected. Preferences are constraints and in many situations constraints emerge during design. Therefore, techniques for supporting the acquisition and discovery of constraints are important, thus science has developed sophisticated tools for supporting design process, such as the human-computer interaction.

Design has become integrated by technology with a kind of design regeneration. While the study of constraints has been maturing, there are many opportunities to hybridise constraint processing with other technologies from the fields of both Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Science to develop sophisticated tools for supporting design. Synergies between constraints and techniques from fields such as machine learning, information, engineering, human-computer interaction, visualization and intelligent have developed to support designing processes. Visions of the future in design research, production and education are featuring increased autonomy, more collaborative work, both face-to-face and online, more global connections, richer learning resources than traditional, and more inquiry and interdisciplinary.

2. 4. Cultural Heritage

Culture and heritage have made a great contribution to design development. The oldest forms of design consisted of geometric figures such as circles, bands, straight and curved lines, which were drawn in categorical regularity, according to a certain rhythm, and conforming to the structure of the objects they adorned. They formed a common, global, design background, becoming the basis for the spread of intellectual and technical skills, providing inspiration to create sophisticated artefacts. Local cultures have, via history, contributed to global design evolution. Over the centuries diverse local cultures have been spreading throughout Europe, Asia, Atlantic and Pacific oceans, inspiring designs and artefacts, textiles, ceramics, furniture, decorations and founding local design heritages as well as cultivating national ones.

Across the centuries intellectuals have preserved their attachment to the past, despite all the efforts of the avant-garde. Vivid examples may be found in architecture which is deeply inspired by the theories and the forms of Egypt and Hellenism, and which is datable and marked by its local identity. At the turn of the 20th century Post-modernism and Eclecticism revived the traditional classical arts, the artistic forms of the past and the old values of expression. The design history of the 70s and early 80s is an attempt to expand the given forms, with a liberal interpretation of the new materials, the techniques and the ways of thinking, and it aims at a final point of artistic, but often formless, communication. It was those decades that aroused the need to turn back to more traditional forms for design inspirations.

Is there any relation between past and modern design? Many artists, especially during early the 20th century, were defenders of the dogma that everything belonging to the past had to be discarded and only new Art and Design should be created with completely new forms of interpretation. At the end of the 20th century these ideas were disputed. Three decades ago we thought that the acceptance of heritage had come to an end. Now their values are appreciated again, as well as traditional arts, enriched with experience, new ways of thinking and techniques.

Education is a very important factor in forming culture/design consciousness and the increasing opportunities offered by multimedia and the Internet help to get closer to the values of culture, design and heritage. The memories of the past can be revived in numerous copies, as happened with Roman, Egyptian and Hellenic design during the last centuries, or their spirit is retained by the principles, qualities and philosophy of design, through a design inspiration, which is the present research way of thinking and purpose.

2.5. Tourist Textiles

Textiles cover humans' body and surroundings in thousands of variations. They hide, protect, warm, connect, separate, enchase and expose. They follow life from birth to death. Textiles are materials of enormous importance, a prime necessity with great variety and demand. The qualities and the opulent variousness/uses of textiles have made them an incomparable human creation.

The symbiosis of humans with textiles goes back to the pre-historic era, when the first human beings had recognized their ability to make soft, pliable material from vegetable and animal fibbers. They discovered how to spin, weave, comb and felt the elementary

fibbers, thus obtaining a material in which they could wrap up themselves - the textile. Thus textile was born, replacing furs and pelts.

The co-existence of tourism and textiles vanishes in history with the textiles being a great travellers' attraction, since the Egyptian and Aegean era. It is evident that travelling was quite limited, at that time, to few intellectuals with curiosity. Democritus, Herodotus, Plato, Aristoteles, Ptolemeus were some of the well-known travellers of the ancient world. It is a fact that via those travellers curiosity, fabulous and rare textiles of the ancient world moved from country to country, thus inspiring local designers and craftsmen not only for the creation for new textiles, but also of new forms of design and decoration. Textile travelled all around Mediterranean and inspired ceramics, statuettes and interiors. A well-known example are the fresco decorations of Egyptian houses with designs inspired by Minoan textiles, 1.500 years B.C. Culture was also transplanted through textiles from India and China to Egypt and Rome, and from the southern Mediterranean countries to northern European and Asian ones, inspiring local masterpieces. The Crimean textile findings are a proof of it. The Hellenistic textile fragments from the area of Noin-Ula in Mongolia and the Indian cloths, found at the Berenike Ptolemaic harbour in Red Sea are additional proofs of textiles journey in time and space.

The last two centuries travellers' attraction by local textiles has been more evident. Their interest for traditional textiles is a phenomenon with increasing sequence not only for those of the exotic countries production, but also for all tourist places. A determining parameter for the 20th century is the lightweight of most of the textiles and their by-products, making their transportation easy, especially with our modern air-transport, and thus textiles have become a modern medium of cultural data transaction among nations and people. Tradition in Greece and the Balkan countries is still alive by local women that are still producing textiles with various unique folk traditional methods and materials. Individuals and small family or cooperative firms, produce traditional textiles, mostly according to the old ways of production, orienting to domestic and foreign markets, to the local tourist market and to a lesser extent to households, especially the new ones. A great share of their sales takes place during summer time in the areas that receive a large number of tourists.

Greek tourist textile producers can basically be categorized into two groups: professional producers earning their living from sales, and those who produce hand-made artefacts, as an additional occupation. The first group is open to new developments and displays a high level of interest in seeing and learning about new techniques and design improvements. They usually have distribution networks, including outlets abroad. The second group retains a small but very important niche in the Greek market, because it is related to the retention of local and regional traditions, and the presentation of a level of quality and exclusivity, which cannot be found in manufactured items. They are small businesses of self-employed artisans. This second group has actively participated to the case study and is the field of the project.

The undertaken research proved that the major handicap of these textile producers is their anchor to repetitive reproduction of traditional designs and products with very limited innovation in designing, production and materials. Additionally, designs that have been transferred through the centuries from mother to daughter and reflect local history, religion and customs, have been degraded during the last decades, due to massive uncontrolled factory production. The cost of production was a major factor, but the rapidly increasing tourist demand for local traditional textiles was also a determinative reason for

this phenomenon. Repetition, lack of knowledge of design, lack of competence in new designs or product development, lack of artistic background, influences from abroad, both commercial and technological, became evident, and they downgraded the quality and identity of the materials produced. In addition to that, textile handicraft producers face the competition of imported products, with major competitor textiles and embroideries from eastern Asia, due to their low prices. They are machine-made products, using Greek traditional designs and having a similar texture to the original ones, causing high economic leakages and loss of employment opportunities.

The rural location of many self-employed textile artisans and their low educational level are resulting in a low level of professionalism. Their lack of know-how in new products and designs, of innovation, of aesthetics, of knowledge of the true tradition and heritage, of new technologies, and of reconciliation of the hand-made quality with the new technology are factors that are directly related to the majority of problems they are facing. In many times their low educational level leads them to easy solutions, such as either entrusting the production to low cost Asian companies, which produce cheap machine-made imitations, or to “copy” traditional prototypes in a reformatted and simplified way, thus exhibiting luck of identity. Textile production bears the history and the identity of the native country and its people, which should never be lost for the sake of modernism, internationalism and the requirements of tourists.

Tourist business in modern world is especially important. It is a major source of income for local economies. The economy of Greece is highly depending on tourist business. The interest of foreign visitors in local and traditional products, mainly textiles, is an increasing phenomenon. As a result, tourist companies have shifted their attention to local textile artisans that are producing hand-made traditional textiles. Tourism is also seen as an effective means of economic development in peripheral regions. Tourists are keen to visit areas of authentic cultural heritage and purchase goods and souvenirs that are considered 'typical' cultural products of the visiting region. The European Commission also emphasises local culture as one of the strengths of the European tourism product. Diverse local cultures are seen in particular as a means of attracting tourists to areas, which currently have low levels of tourism, because of their peripheral location, by developing a textile-related cultural tourism. The growth of textile-related tourism in the peripheral areas will provide support to textile handicraft production, local employment, and will generate funds for the preservation of both the material and the living heritage.

2.6. Textile Design Education and New Technology

The rapid changes and increased complexity of today’s world present new challenges and put new demands on the textile education system. Many believe that our changing world requires new consideration of the way, structure and culture, design education is delivered. Today's technology-rich educational environments offer opportunities for the use of the new tech, technology tools and electronically accessed information resources - electronic mail, online library catalogues, reference materials, the computer/network leviathan Internet with its hundreds of networks, databases, user groups, bulletin boards, information services, and library catalogues across the globe. These new information technology tools and resources are providing exciting and unprecedented opportunities in the new knowledge environments.

Computers are powerful and flexible tools that can enhance teaching and learning in innumerable ways. However, the value of a computer, like that of any tool, depends upon

what purposes it serves and how well it is used. Computers can be used in positive ways—such as to help make learning more engaging, to better address the needs of individuals, to provide access to a wealth of information, and to encourage learners to explore and create; or in negative ways—such as to play mindless games, access inappropriate materials, or isolate students. Online design education is being heralded as meeting the needs of modern lifestyle by managing time conflicts and offering access to those disable and from remote locations, and helping people to juggle personal commitments. Computers have updated the education of the 21st century, where students “explore” design rather than simply “learn” it.

For the present research, the case study and the long distance educational project, it was indicated as the best collaborative approach the adaptation of the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Computer-mediated communication is a simple system that allows groups to interact over time as well as over geographical location. This is a different type of interaction to that supported by videoconference systems, which allow people to be geographically dispersed, but require them to be present at the same time. E-mail, for example, is a simple form of CMC. The benefits of the use of asynchronous CMC systems for supporting group learning are flexibility, participation of quantity and quality, communication, openness/access, post-participation review/access for references. CMC systems allow learners to interact with one another over time. Learning in a CMC environment can lead to deeper processing of material because time for reflection is allowed. It provides opportunities for group-work that would not otherwise exist, but it is not a panacea; the research team was well aware of that. The flexibility over time can also be a problem for participants. It may be days, before someone replies to a question. Decision-making can be difficult on-line, again due to flexibility over time. For the presented here research work simplicity and flexibility over time were of the utmost importance and the minor problems were consequently solved.

Culture and education have been influenced and benefited by technological improvements. The increasing opportunities offered by multimedia and the Internet help learners to approach the values of design. Art and art education follow technological imperatives for the most part, but are they also influenced by it? The paper attempts cultural production using technologies that do not limit or over-influence them.

3. The Case Study

The research team was composed of the staff members of TEI Textile Design Studio and undergraduate students of the eighth semester. In the present research participated four practical trainees and ten final degree projects. The research team focused on directions where design operates as a leading discipline of the innovation processes, the entrepreneurship, the development of new high quality tourist textiles, and the adaptation of new technologies. The development of entrepreneurship, as well as of new skills and designs in the tourist textile business, in order to stay or become competitive, was considered in the context of the immense pressure posed upon small firms and artisans by external production changes and the expansion of high technology applications.

The participating students, within the scope of their final degree projects and practical training, undertook research on the textile tourist business, handicrafts, cooperatives, export centres, foreign tourists, and on the possibilities for innovative uses of the traditional textiles/designs. They finally proposed commercial exploitation for the textile tourist industry was inspired by classical and traditional designs. Their product/design

selections and the decisions for production were carried out with the support and the consulting assistance of design companies and professionals.

3.1 The Adapted Research Methodology

The research work begun by categorizing the actions and fields of the project. First, in order to support local textile producers, a questionnaire on their skills, needs, sales and targets was distributed to the textile handicrafts in the main tourist regions. The target of the questioned textile producers is principally the local tourist market and, to a lesser extent Greek households. Also a sample of 500 local and international tourists was interviewed on their purchases, and the majority of them indicated that they had bought textile products during their stay. Textiles and ceramics form an important part of the souvenir purchasing behaviour of many tourists, with jewellery coming far behind. In Greece, there is an established demand for textile and ceramic products among tourists. In many cases, textile purchases are limited to T-shirts and other textile souvenirs, but a significant number buy more traditional, and definitely hand-made, items. The full spectrum of local tourist textiles includes all kinds of hand-made traditional carpets, textiles from natural fibbers, hand-woven and embroidered women's clothes and accessories, men's accessories, children's wear, home textiles and home accessories. Mainly local or car travelling tourists prefer carpets and ceramics, due to their weight. Jewellery is favoured by high income ones. Those most interested in textile products are usually holiday tourists, Greek or foreign, differing greatly culturally and economically. This group strongly influences production by their purchases. Actually tourist sales are strongly related to the "usefulness" of the purchase.

The common characteristic of all the interviewed textile cooperatives was that they were limited to the production of large size traditional textiles of high cost. It was very important to keep textiles traditional character, but it was also important to re-orientate production towards new products/designs, which can be produced effectively with low cost. Current and potential textile-tourist producers were lacking skills in terms of design development, production organization, quality control, pricing and communication. The most important deficiencies were in the areas of design renovation and management. It was vitally important for all to obtain basic awareness of the existence of new information technology, the introduction of information technology and the use of multimedia in the design process. Quality control was a major issue, too. Design, quality control and the handling of new technology equipment were the "specialist" skills that were required for the effective operation of their business. Local people had realized that the sales of their products depend on diversification in two directions: the development of new products and designs, and the adaptation of new technologies in order to meet the needs of modern tourists. It was actually a question of product diversification and the development of a range of products that can be addressed to different target groups –exclusive tourists and everyday users.

Summarising, individuals and small family companies are the main producers of tourist hand-made textiles, following the old ways and media of production, but with low educational level and low level of professionalism, factors that are directly related to the majority of problems they are facing. Tourist textile production is particularly suited to sustainable development, since local materials and labour are employed. Designs, forms and methods of production are also closely associated with regions, with the regional design differentiations illustrated on traditional textiles and their products. Locally created textiles and products are worthy of promotion, since they serve a double purpose:

to provide tourists with authentic cultural artefacts of the region and to support the local economic basis, offering employment opportunities in disadvantaged regions. The research team offered the participating textile producers a design methodology that would meet their skill needs, regardless of their operational/educational differences and their location, in CDs, a form suitable for distance learning and e-learning, assisted by the development of a simple Computer Mediated Communication system – an email network.

4. The Design Methodology

A *method* is a set of steps, or guidelines, used to perform a task. The structure of the proposed, by the research team, textile design methodology (figure 1) was the following:

- *Awareness of Problem*: Awareness of problem comes from multiple sources - in the present case study the new developments in the textile tourist industry. The output of this phase is a proposal, formal or informal, for a new research effort. Out of the detailed analysis of the present situation of local tourist textile industries emerged the first awareness of the problem on which the research would focus: *how to construct and maintain a simple textile design system in order that meets the textile producers skill needs.*

- *Suggestion*: The suggestion phase follows immediately behind the proposal and is intimately connected with it. There were many approaches to the problem and the research group discussed them over a period of months. New insights into the problem continued to emerge from the students undertaken research and questionnaires. During the alternating cycles of discussions, reading and individual cogitation that characterized the design research efforts, the adaptation of long distance e-learning systems was identified as the best answer to the textile producers requests for design and computer education.

- *Development:* Design is implemented in this phase. The techniques for implementation will of course vary depending on the artefact to be constructed. In the present work the participating students, with the pre-determined criteria of cultural quality and tourists' acceptance, implemented design with the quality of a paradigm.

- *Evaluation*: Once constructed, the artefact is evaluated according to criteria that are always implicit and frequently made explicit in the proposal (Awareness of Problem phase). Deviations from expectations, both quantitative and qualitative are carefully noted and must be tentatively explained. That is, the evaluation phase contains an analytic sub-phase in which hypotheses are made about the artefact. In a sense evaluation takes place continuously in a design process, since a large number of "micro-evaluations" take place at every design detail decision. The consulting assistance of tourist export business, and the adapted market research and market acceptability were the main actions of the evaluation process.

Conclusion:

This phase is the finale of a specific research effort. Typically, it is the result of satisfying, that is, though there are still deviations in the behaviour of the artefact from the (multiply) revised hypothetical predictions, the results are adjudged "good enough." Not only are the results of the effort consolidated and "written up" at this phase, but the knowledge gained in the effort is frequently categorized as either "firm", facts that have been learned and can

be repeatable applied or behaviour that can be repeatable invoked, or as “loose ends”, anomalous behaviour that defies explanation and may well serve as the subject of further research. Any of the phases of the design methodology may be spontaneously revisited from any of the other phases, especially in the early stages of a project, though it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where in the process the change could occur.

The participating textile handicrafts produced experimental textiles/samples, selected from the students design creations that followed the aforementioned design methodology. They were selected with the criteria to fulfil modern demands, have the ability to evolve, adapt to the rules of market and agree with the tourists’ taste. The so produced samples were exhibited by the participating tourist cooperatives in the selected regions, to evaluate the tourists’ acceptance. The most popular samples are currently produced with the support of the Hellenic Organization of Handicrafts. The materials, and means that were employed –either hand or machinery- were the ones used locally and by local manufactures. As far as the design work is concerned, the focus was on helping producers to visualize, design and produce, in the future, evolutional, innovative possibilities of well-known and overworked designs. The aim was to help them open their minds to design methodologies, new technologies and possibilities, and not to enforce upon them the use of specific designs and applications.

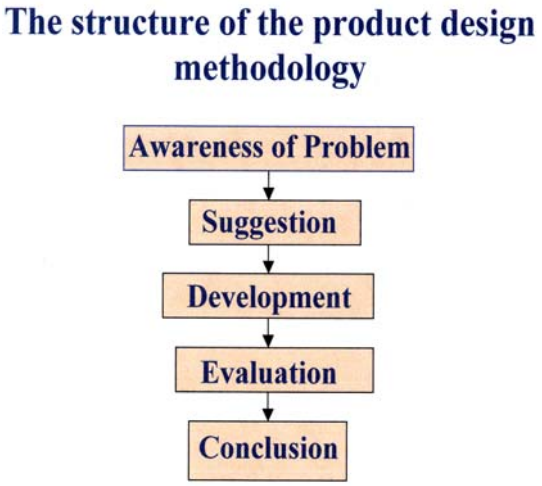

Figure 1 The steps of the adapted designing methodology

4.1. The Design Process

Design is a major factor of marketing processes, since it determines the form and the utilities of the product, the latter being one of the basic components of marketing. Traditional textile producers usually copy designs from museum exhibits. Thus the notion of designs from heritage - a quite well known area to the producers - was retained, and the design alternatives proposed were based on traditional tourist favourites, from a modern point of view. The focus was on solutions that maximize the sales, improve the quality of the products and use updated technologies, without depriving the final products of their local identities or heritage. The participating students offered simple designing paradigms, in order to help them improve their abilities. In addition, research on market requirement and market acceptability was carried out among tourists and tourist manufactures. The proposed methodology of design development (figure 2.A), in accordance to the adapted by the research team research methodology, an educational method to assist textile handicraft producers to adapted systematic design evolution methods. The long distance

educational programme as created in CDs and hard copies included simplified lessons on design (figure 2.B) and many paradigms of possible products and designs inspired by local cultural heritage for tourists' favourites (figure 2.C).

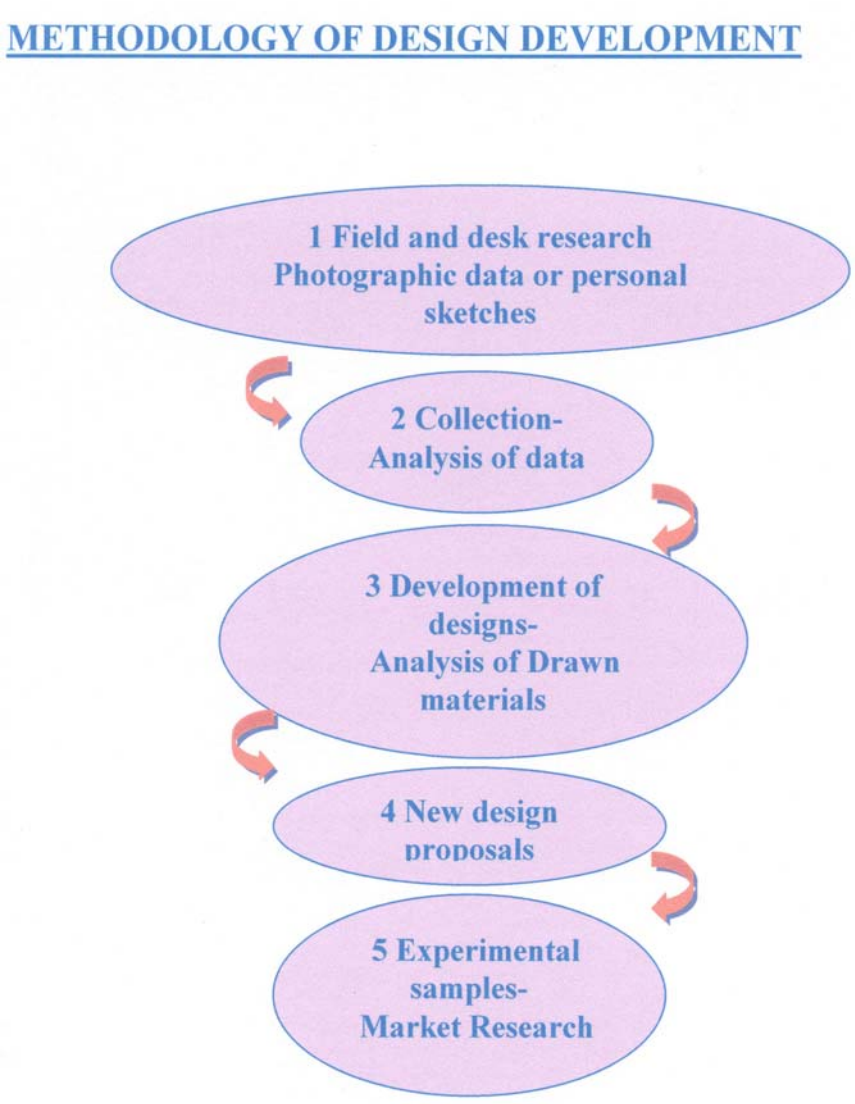

Figure 2 A

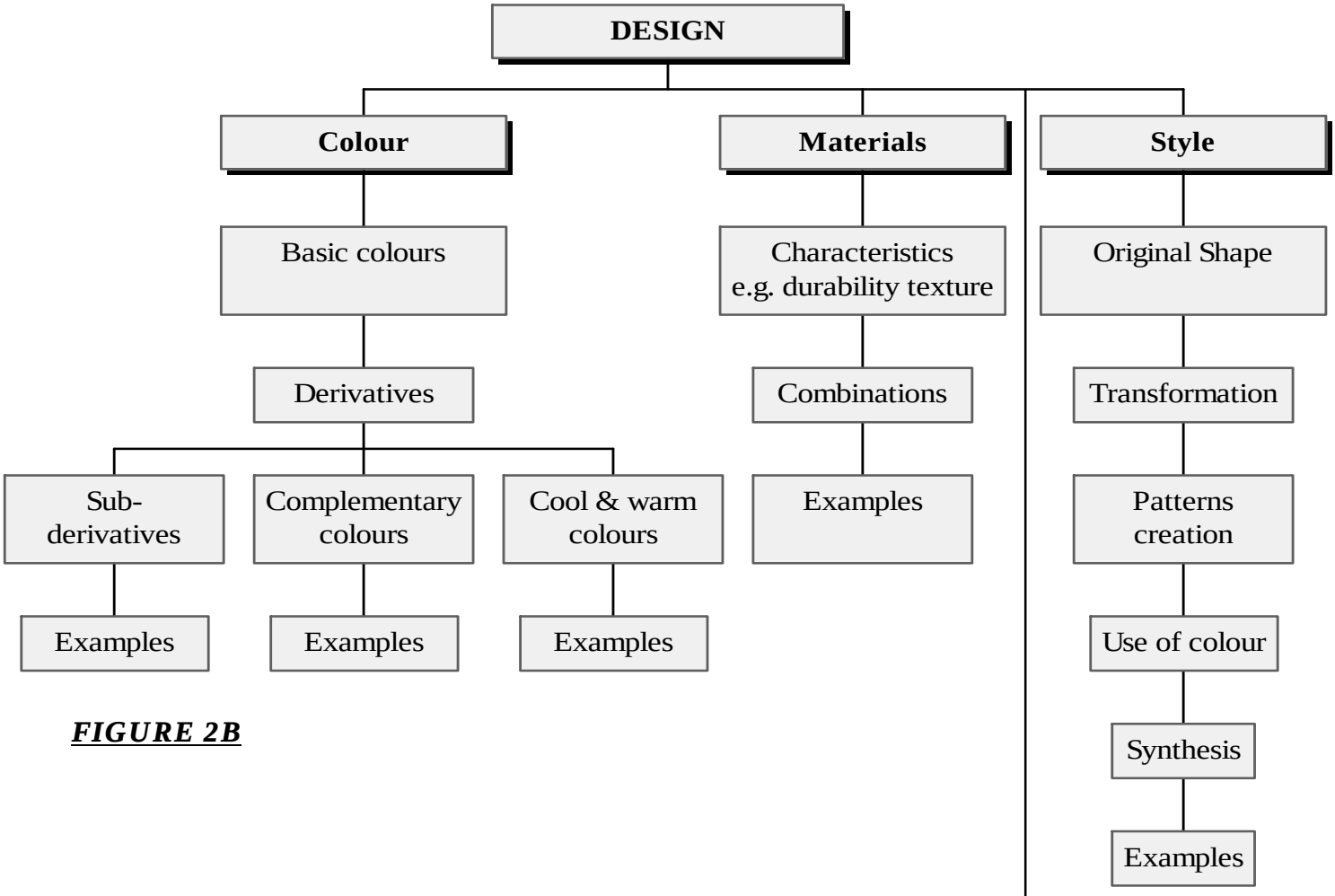

FIGURE 2B

INSPIRATION

INSPIRATION

Figure 2C From the Byzantine icon the participating students proposed a doll-souvenir and from the traditional embroidery a new modern vest for men

5. Results

The proposed design methodology assisted by distance learning delivery, introduced ways of creating culture, value, social and environmental quality, providing opportunities to producers and workshops in remote/rural areas to obtain access to training and develop the skills necessary to become competitive. The case study pointed the importance of cultural continuity, of cultural and social exchanges that derive from tourism and of local processes and materials, and also the value of the textile business to the regional growth in the concept of economic and social development. Collaboration between textile handicrafts and professional textile designers has started. Professional designers are interested in the textile tourist business and the production of handicraft textile items. This, in the long run, will stimulate provincial youngsters to become involved and take up positions in their regional businesses, and offer financial opportunities and inclusiveness to women and people in remote/rural areas. Securing jobs in the textile tourist production has also a social and cultural significance, besides its economic one, especially for women and handicrafts in rural areas.

6. Discussion

The practical results of the research are intended to render design a field of study able to participate in the processes that develop local values, resources and realities, opening new roles and opportunities, coordinating and synchronizing many parameters. The research team through the present work has valued unique traditions' continuity and local identity, hoping to delimit new textile design frontiers for the travellers of the future, and new artefacts, inspired by old cultures and traditions, using the new perspectives of our technical developments in an experimental direction of combined tradition and innovation. The benefit of a new textile design vision is not only for the present moment, but also for the future to come, not wedged within a country's borders. It is exceeding local boundaries through the application of new technologies, communication, transaction and bartering among the countries.

The project wished to generate a positive relationship between culture-artefact and design-culture. The study and application of designs from the past can be considered as more or less limited by materials, tasks and techniques, nevertheless these were not obstacles in the expansion of the present work, or in the taking off the design projects beyond conventional limits.

Globalisation is an extremely broad and complex phenomenon that undoubtedly represents a threat to cultural identity and diversity. Design is a form of culture that faces the threat of loosing its identity and diversity if it submits to the culture industry. Deep knowledge of local design history and vision could be strong supports against defeatism. Sensibility, creativity, personality and cultural heritage are still playing a very important role, boosting morale in our contemporary aesthetics, generating the power of art with or without technical process.

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