An Introduction to Inclusive Making

In this introduction you will find approachable explanations to some terms and theories concerning Inclusive Making. It is aimed at anybody that is interested in Making or already involved in Making. With this introduction we want to offer a more accessible approach to Making.

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Critical Making

What is Making?

The makezine describes making at a very basic level as "Making is the act of creating something", thus something humans have already been doing for thousands of years. The Making we are talking about specifically is the one practiced by the maker community, known as maker culture. Maker culture can be defined as people focusing on learning and subsequently using practical skills to create their own projects and designs, starting out as amateur ● e ● s, becoming hobbyists and might ultimately even become experts in their own right. As technology has become a part of our everyday life, a lot of Making is technology-based or -infused.
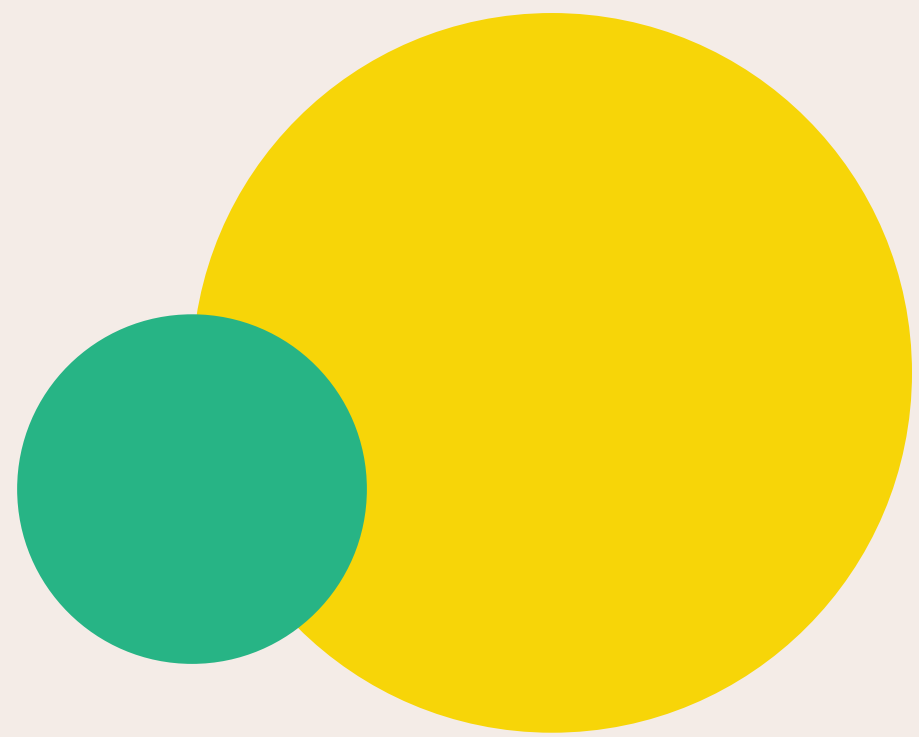
What is Critical Making? How is it different? 1/2

Responsible innovation and making in grassroots practices means that those who tinker with existing technologies and develop new solutions do this critically.

Critical Making has 6 core values

Open
Critical Making promotes open collaboration, including the sharing of skills and knowledge. It boosts creativity in the ecosystem of makers by making processes and results accessible.

Local & connected
Critical Making is happening locally, working on the ground and adapted to a particular socio-cultural context. Thereby, critical making implies an engagement with local communities as well as global networks – thinking globally and making locally.

Social & Diverse
Critical Making reflects on the social dimensions of making, the living realities of those persons involved and concerned, as well as the ethical implications of their work. Critical Making thereby addresses societal challenges and needs. That's why it is so important to strive for diversity and inclusiveness.

Reflexive
Critical Making re-thinks and re-constructs the dominant mainstream maker culture from a critical stance, reflecting on underlying power structures and their implications.

Impactful
Critical Making aspires to really make a difference. It seeks to improve life and build a sustainable future.

Joyful & meaningful
Critical Making is still about the joy of and in making, but adds meaning to it. What is made critically is made with a specific purpose of individual or social kind.

What is Critical Making?
How is it different? 2/2

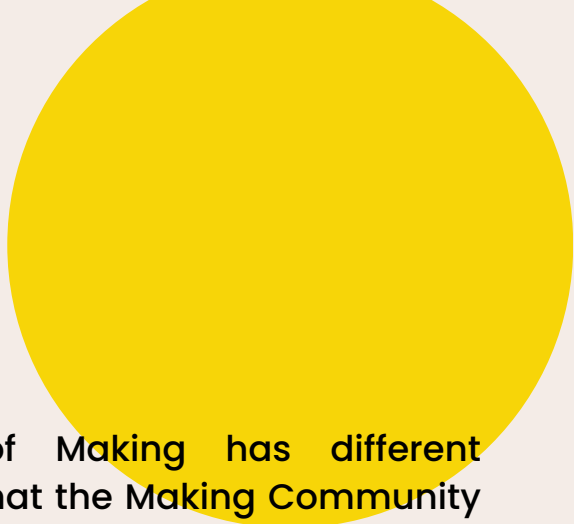If we want to adhere to these aspects of Critical Making it becomes clear that one transversal topic is the one of inclusiveness and this is the focus of this document. Let's take a closer look at how Making can be more inclusive in the context of diversity, intersectionality and allyship and how this opens possibilities for Critical Making. Why is this important and fits into the six values? Let's take a look:

What is diversity and what does it mean in the context of Making?

With the term diversity we describe the degrees of difference among people in general or among people in a specific group. Diversity dimensions in which people can differ can be, for example, gender, age, socioeconomic background, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation and many more.

When we acknowledge diversity and look at a group's diversity, it is not about finding the "most diverse person" or creating the "most diverse group", it is about acknowledging differences among us that create different life experiences, different needs and different disadvantages in a group or in society. It also helps to identify in which ways a group might not reflect our society's diversity and we can ask ourselves then why that may be so.

Diversity in the context of Making has different implications. One is the fact that the Making Community isn't as diverse as our society really is, so we can analyse why this is the case. The act of Making is also deeply intertwined with diversity by itself: If something doesn't meet our needs or we want something unique for us or others, we make it. In a sense, an ongoing lack of acknowledgement of society's diversity fuels the need and desire of Making.

If we look through the lens of Critical Making and want to be responsible, ethically correct and reflect on existing power structures, we can only do this by acknowledging diversity itself and within the community. We can take a first step by noticing who's part of the maker movement, who isn't and why this might be so – from there we can make a change.

What is diversity and what does it mean in the context of Making?

As diversity was already defined in the prior section, we want to take a closer look at intersectionality! When people talk about diversity, they also tend to bring up intersectionality. The term, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, describes how different aspects of a person can overlap – or intersect – to create a unique experience of discrimination and privilege. It's important to not only be aware of dimensions of diversity, but also to understand that people within a certain group may still face different challenges or hold different privileges.

Let's look at a Maker Space for examples: If we want to welcome more women in our Maker Space, it's not just about addressing women specifically, we also must consider that some women may also be mothers, thus taking care of a child. Hence, they may not be able to attend events late at night or they may wish to take their child with them, but the Maker Space isn't particularly child-friendly.

A woman of color might be hesitant to join the Maker Space, not because there are not enough women present, but because there are not many – or any – people of color present. Or an enthusiastic tinkerer might not ever join the weekly Female Maker Meeting – even though she really wants to! -, because it's always on a Friday evening and that's when the tinkerer observes Shabbat (which always starts Fridays at sundown).

Obviously, there might never be the perfect date for an event for everybody, but it's important to remember that all people have multi-facetted identities and we should take this into consideration when planning events or generally wanting to offer a more welcoming Maker Space. If we want to be community-centered and address social needs in Critical Making, we not only acknowledge and support diversity, but we also need to be aware of the multifaceted life experience and challenges each person has.

What is allyship and what does it mean in the context of Making?

Allyship describes the actively chosen and continuous efforts of a person or group of people to advance the interests of an underrepresented group of people in a certain space or in society at large. By being an ally, someone responds to personal or structural discrimination against another person or a group by using their own resources and privilege to fight against the discrimination of others. This can for example mean to share resources with other people or to speak up if someone is facing discrimination and support them.

Allyship also finds its place within Critical Making: If we have a surplus of resources, like time, knowledge, hardware and more, we can share these resources and support the maker community in becoming more accessible to everyone. Allyship in Critical Making can also take the shape of supporting and amplifying the voices of marginalized people and their projects within the community. Allyship can mean that we create space for new ideas, concepts and projects in Making that are otherwise often overlooked in the movement. Allyship in Critical Making is reflective and aims to be impactful and meaningful.

Why might all this matter to you?

So, why should your Making be critical? Why should you take a critical look at the design and process of making something? Making is all about empowering oneself, finding new approaches to something and making new ideas reality. If you engage with Critical Making you'll engage with Making in a way that is community-driven, impactful, ethically responsible and challenging existing power structures. You will be part of the reason for the maker movement to become more open, vibrant and curious and be a member of a community that seeks both joy and meaning through Making.
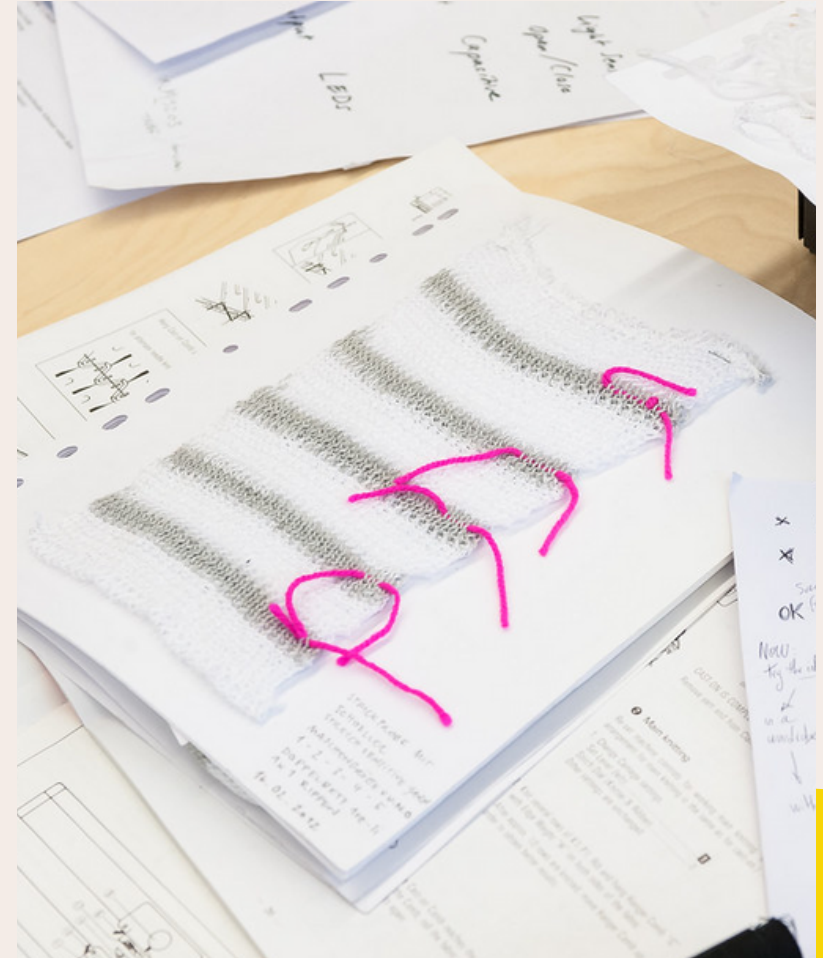
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