



## Images and Stories of Inclusion – Works from Franz-Joseph Huainigg

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Manuscript for the lecture at the

34<sup>th</sup> IBBY International Congress in Ciudad Mexico City 2014/Reading as an inclusive Experience/  
Section 2) Inclusion in children's and young adult literature

Inclusion presently is a worldwide demand on public law, education and art at last since 2005, when UNESCO published their *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*.

The main challenge with integration is that “mainstreaming” had not been accompanied by changes in the organisation of the ordinary school, its curriculum and teaching and learning strategies. This lack of organisational change has proved to be one of the major barriers to the implementation of inclusive education policies.<sup>1</sup>

All children – not depended on their sex, religion or diseases – should have access to (basic) education of good quality in child friendly learning environments. In Austria inclusion replaces integration as one of the principles in renewing the new teacher education, which is now going on.

In Austria from all young people under 20 years of age 6.2 per cent males and 4.5 per cent females are with permanent impairments. Generally

21.2 per cent of people with permanent impairments reported constant problems in their leisure time, 16.1 per cent in public traffic and 12.6 per cent in their house (or flat). 11.1 per cent of the employees with a permanent impairment reported constant problems due to their impairment in work. Constant problems in communication with other people (5.3 per cent), with the attitude of other people (4.3 per cent), in vocational training (3.1 per cent) and with education (3.0 per cent) were mentioned fewest.<sup>2</sup>

Though only 3.0 per cent mentioned constant problems with education, only 11 per cent of people with permanent impairment complete higher education vs. 22.6 per cent of people without impairment.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: Ensuring Access to Education for All. Unesco 2005, p 9

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Leitner: Menschen mit Beeinträchtigungen. Ergebnisse der Mikrozensus-Zusatzfragen im 4. Quartal 2007. In: Statistische Nachrichten 12/2008. Gesundheitswesen. p 1140



Inclusion may minimize the rates of constant problems in all aspects. Before inclusion can be successful, it is necessary to all of us to know more about live with impairments. One Austrian who spreads in different ways information on living with handicap is Franz-Joseph Huainigg<sup>3</sup>, who suffers from physical impairment.

### **Franz-Joseph Huainig**

He was born in 1966 and because of an accident during an immunization; he is dependent on a wheelchair. He has studied German Literature and Media Communication in Klagenfurt and Vienna and now he struggles for the rights of handicapped people as a politician in the National Council. He is married and lives with two children in Vienna. Since he needs a respirator, he lives with helping hands to manage his tasks.

Aufgrund meiner Erfahrungen trete ich uneingeschränkt für die Integration behinderter Menschen in allen Lebensbereichen ein. Eine besondere Rolle ist dabei der Integration in Kindergärten und Schulen beizumessen.<sup>4</sup>

Because of my experience, I stand absolutely for the integration of disabled people in all parts of life. A special role for promoting integration should play kinder garden and schools. (Transl. SF)

Therefor it is not at all surprising that Franz-Joseph Huainigg, who publishes poems, autobiographical texts since 1984, writes for children too. These stories deal with disabled people or focus on topics like adoption and emotional troubles to live with foster parents. Especially in his texts for picture books, he shows life from an atypical point of view: from a girl in a wheelchair, a blind man or a deaf child. Though some of his texts are first published almost twenty years ago, they had not lost topicality.

### **Verena Ballhaus**

In the Illustrator Verena Ballhaus the author found a congenial artist for his stories. She was born 10. March 1951 in Gemünden am Main, she grew up in Munich and studied there in the Akademie der Bildenden Künste painting, graphic arts and art as subject in school. Though she took part in the traineeship at school, she decided to work first for theatre, posters and

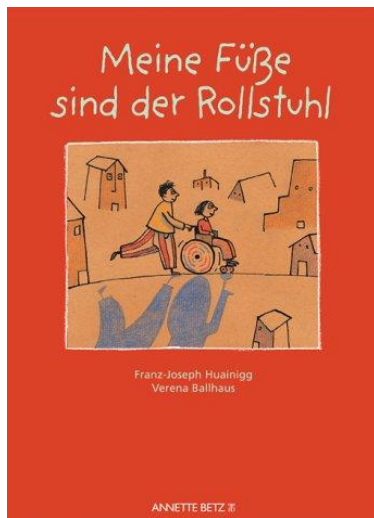
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<sup>3</sup> More details to his life and work: <http://franzhuainigg.at/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://franzhuainigg.at/politik/>, 25.06.2014



covers for LPs. Since 1986, she focuses her artist work on illustration. Her interest in etching, caricature and in picture stories takes her to reduced forms and abstraction. Now her figures appear lifelike, lines get more independent and she plots space more candid.



***My feet are the wheelchair (Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl. 1992/2003)***

Margit may finally go alone for shopping in the supermarket. The particular in this situation: she goes by wheelchair. Her experiences were told in the picture book (My feet are the wheelchair). It was republished in the European year of people with handicap 2003 with new illustrations from Verena Ballhaus.

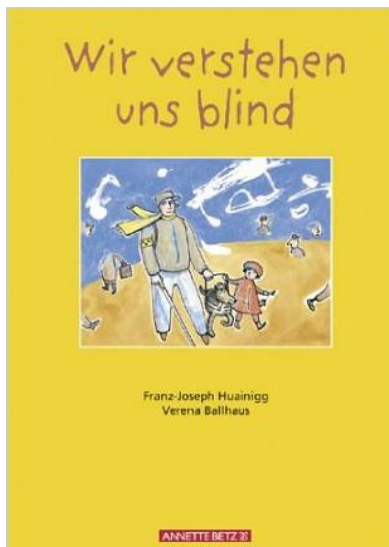
Without barriers was the motto in this year, barriers in both the daily life and in the people's heads. The author builds his book on these aspects. Anyway, Margit's first excursion also teaches her other things. She would like to be as all other children, however, is she thrown back on her very difference. On one hand, there are the daily facts of reality: If she can cross a street quickly because of a levelled sidewalk on one side, but fails in front of a high sidewalk on the other side. In addition, nobody cares. On the other hand, there are barriers in the head: Margit who suffers from congenital paralysis finds her life nothing special, which provokes irritation in others. Some ignore Margit and others show demonstratively sympathy. About the experiences of the child in the wheelchair, the author works out understandably well the conflicting emotions of being the same vs. being different.

The statement is supported by illustrations from Verena Ballhaus. She uses a carefully designed room concept with framed or cut rooms, which underline Margit's loneliness. It culminates in the dynamic ball, when Margit and her new boy friend, as well an outcast because of his weight, have fun together without thinking of the others.



Auch diesmal schauen die Leute. Besonders der Mann im Straßencafé und die Zeitungsverkäuferin. Doch das macht Margit nichts mehr aus.<sup>5</sup>

People look also this time. Particularly the men in the street café and the newsvendor. However, Margit does not care anymore. (Transl. SF)



***We get on blindly (Wir verstehen uns blind. 2005)***

As starting point in this text, Huainigg chooses the chaos in the sale of a department store. In the crowd, the little girl Katharina gets lost. Only a blind man notices the crying child longing for his parents.

„Die Leute sind wirklich blind“, lachte der Mann, „für mich und meinen Hund warst du nicht zu übersehen. Ich heiße übrigens Matthias“<sup>6</sup>

„People are really blind“, the men laughs, „for me and my dog you couldn't be overlooked. By the way my name is Matthias.“ (Transl. SF)

-La gente está realmente ciega –se rió el hombre- mitperro y yo no podíamos dejar de verte. Por cierto, me llamo Matías.<sup>7</sup>

Together they make themselves on the way to find her parents. This strategy of telling the story of a child being saved by a blind adult makes explanatory dialogs possible. Many questions which otherwise are regarded as too obtrusive can be answered: How does a blind man see the world? How does he find the way with guide- dog and stick? Does he sense colours? How does one ski blindly? How does braille work? All this questions of the little girl are answered. Therefore, Katharina can inform her parents about her new knowledge when she arrives home safely.

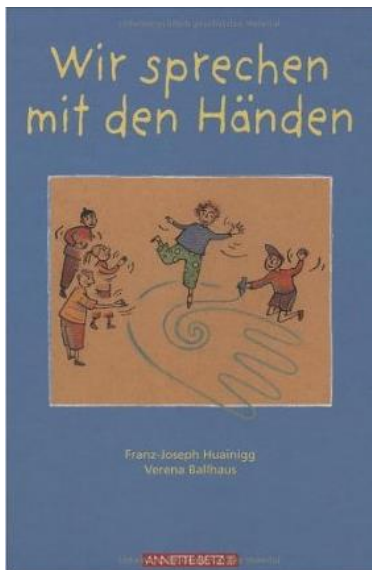
<sup>5</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Meine Füße sind der Rollstuhl. Wien, München: Annette Betz 2003, last page.

<sup>6</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Wir verstehen uns blind. Wien, München: Annette Betz 2005, second double page.

<sup>7</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Nos entendemos a ciegas. Trad. María Dolores Martín Piñeiro La Puerto del Libro 2007



By putting bold letters selectively, the world of blind people gets clearer. However, many aspects would be missed without the illustrations. With extreme points of view and droll details, the city chaos in which the girl was lost gets visible. Matthias' view of the world appears in grey colours and a different technique is used, it is monoprint. So the world of blind people doesn't get conceivable only by the explanatory dialogues but also by the illustrations.



***We speak with hands (Wir sprechen mit den Händen. 2005)***

In this short story, Huainigg makes the world of the deaf people accessible. It is the story of deaf Lisa, who is finally understood. Because the other children learn by her new playfellow Thomas, which understands sign language that deaf people aren't stupid and their gestures aren't nonsense.

„Wie, was? Man kann **mit den Händen sprechen**? Ist das eine Geheimsprache?“, stottert der Junge.<sup>8</sup>

„What how? One can speak with one's hand? Is this a secret language?“, the boy stutters. (Transl. SF)

-?Cómo, qué? ?Es que se puede hablar con las manos? ?Es un lenguaje secreto? – dice el chico tartamudeando.<sup>9</sup>

It is again a special setting which appears realistic to explain the unknown. Thomas knows the sign language, describes it well and translates Lisa's signs. The children are very interested in the idea of an individual gesture instead of the original name. This seems more attractive to them.

Rasch bekommt jedes Kind seinen Namen in Gebärdensprache: Die abstehenden Ohren von Max, die O-Beine von Martin und der lange Zopf von Julia werden zu ganz persönlichen Namensgebärden.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Wir sprechen mit den Händen. Wien, München: Annette Betz 2005, third double page

<sup>9</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Hablamos con las manos. Trad. María Dolores Martín Piñeiro. La Puerto del Libro 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Wir sprechen mit den Händen. Wien, München: Annette Betz 2005, fourth double page



Every child gets his name in sign language quickly: The ears sticking out of Max, the bandy legs of Martin and the one long plait of Julia become personal gestures. (Transl. SF)

Enseguida. Cada niño recibe su nombre en la lengua de signos: las orejas separadas de Max, las piernas arqueadas de Martin y la coleta de Julia se convierten en signos de nombres muy personales.<sup>11</sup>

Further Thomas explains how communication like telephone, doorbells and fax-machines etc. are adjusted to deaf people's needs, because he lives with deaf parents and understands both worlds. This constellation is chosen cleverly because the many questions seem just as adequate to children of this age just as the knowledge of Thomas. And, it appears natural, that Lisa wins a friend and gets accepted by the peers.

Also in this book, the illustrations of Verena Ballhaus contribute fundamentally to the understanding. She captures the movements of the hands so vividly with collages combined with coloured drawings, that the reader is curious to try the gestures her/himself. A drawn alphabet of gestures is also part of the book as well as information about speaking with deaf people. In the unique text - picture combination the two artists have managed to give a new perspective on life without noise.



***Together we are great (Gemeinsam sind wir Klasse. 2007)***

The main subject of Franz-Joseph Huainigg's political work also as a member of parliament is the struggle against barriers like in his books. He pleads for an integration of handicapped people everywhere. With the ambiguous title *Gemeinsam sind wir Klasse* – which means *together we are class* or *together we are great* – he shows the daily life of an integrative primary school. It is both joyful and rich in conflicts. Bernadette needs a wheelchair and Max lives with Down syndrome. However, all other children in the class

<sup>11</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: *Hablamos con las manos*. Trad. María Dolores Martín Piñeiro. La Puerto del Libro 2007.



have their own weaknesses and strengths too, which finally leads to a cooperative classroom.

„Ja, habt ihr Max denn nicht verstanden?“, sagt Florian. „Seht euch seine Zeichnung an: Das sind wir. Und jeder ist anders. Deshalb passen wir auch so gut zusammen.“<sup>12</sup>

„Hey, haven't you understood Max, then?, Florian says. "Watch his drawing: this is us. And everybody is different. Therefore we get along so well together." (Transl. SF)

Just like the different pupils in this attractive book, text and illustration get along very well in an unconventional way. Verena Ballhaus uses warm, strong colours and sweeping lines. She changes dynamically the point of view and brings colour areas in relation to each other. The illustrations complete the text told simply and with many dialogs.

An explanatory text to integration and Down syndrome completes the book. It shows a way of an excellent integration – more than this: it shows how inclusion can work.

Franz-Joseph Huainigg manages to cause appreciation of the other in all his books with simple stories based on everyday situations. He succeeds to convey specific experiences especially in dialogues, so that young readers can be emphatic. The intensive atmosphere of all picture books is owed to a successful correlation of text and images of Verena Ballhaus.

Man spricht nicht mehr von Integration sondern von "Inklusion". Denn wer integriert wird, muss zuvor ausgesondert worden sein. Bei der Barrierefreiheit, der Gleichstellung, der Arbeitsintegration, ... hat sich ein Paradigmenwechsel vollzogen: Weg von Almosen, Mitleid und Fürsorge, hin zu Gleichberechtigung, Selbstbestimmung und Inklusion.<sup>13</sup>

One doesn't talk about integration any more but of "Inclusion". Who becomes integrated, must have been excluded beforehand. A change of paradigm has taken place at the accessibility, the equality, the work integration, ... away from donation, sympathy and welfare to equal rights, self-determination and inclusion. (Trans. SF)

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<sup>12</sup> Franz-Joseph Huainigg/Verena Ballhaus: Gemeinsam sind wir Klasse! Wien, München: Annette Betz 2007, vorletzte Doppelseite

<sup>13</sup> <http://franzhuainigg.at/uber-mich/>, 25.06.2014



## Literature

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<http://franzhuainigg.at/>