Lancaster, UK

Craft and Design for Sustainability: leverage for change

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ImaginationLancaster/Lancaster University
• Topic and aims
Structure of Presentation

- Topic and aims
- Understandings of craft
Structure of Presentation

- Topic and aims
- Understanding of craft
- Implications of Sustainability
• Topic and aims
• Understanding of craft
• Implication of Sustainability
• Common ground between craft and sustainability
Overview of research

Craft & Design for Sustainability research

Design for Craft Contributing to Sustainability in the YRD

Validation
- adapt findings
- test findings

Main study
- 30 interviews, 3 in-depth case studies; focus groups

Study examples
- Wedgewood, Portland Works, Cumbria Crystal in the UK

1 existing theories

2 initial concepts

3 initial frames

4 ground theory

5 test findings

6 adapt findings

deductive

inductive

Craft research

Maker movement, Creative industry

Sustainability, Systems thinking, Transition design, Social innovation

Co-design, Systemic design

• Preindustrial, marginalized, past
• culture, origin, tradition
Connection & Relations

- Hand-mind-heart
- People-material-nature
- Doing-thinking-being
- Past-present

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMAN TOUCH

For work to be creative and meaningful, for it to connect at a deeper level with people, it has to be of people – of the hand, the eye and the spontaneous, intuitive responses that are possible when working directly with materials. During the process of making, one has to ‘see’, ‘listen’, be responsive, and make decisions – not in a pre-planned, impositional way, but as the work unfolds. The maker has to allow the work to inform its emerging direction. Eisner puts it this way:

The work itself secures its own voice and helps set the direction. The maker is guided and, in fact, at times surrenders to the demands of the emerging forms. Opportunities in the process of working are encountered that were not envisioned when the work began but that speak so eloquently, about the process of emerging possibilities that connections are formed. But
Objectives and Aims

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• What is the relationship between craft and design for sustainability?

• How can design contribute to craft for a sustainable future?
Objectives and Aims

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• What is the relationship between craft and design for sustainability?
Objectives and Aims

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

• What is the relationship between craft and design for sustainability?

The relationship between craft and sustainability has not been researched in a systematic way.
Methodology

Literature Review

Theoretical analysis

Scoping study
Implications for Craft

- Practical
  - Ecological attribute
  - Localism & Vernacular

- Epistemological
  - Complex way of knowing

- Ontological
  - Continuation of tradition
  - Authentic being
Practical: An ecological way of making

- Environment
  - Local, small, connect people and culture to natural environment
  - Tradition, folk art, customs, social & moral norms, beliefs
  - Ecological, sustainable living system, self-organizing, interconnected, symbiotic

- Community
  - Tacit know-how, experimental collaborative knowledge

- Crafts people
  - Skilled, knowledgeable, holistically engaged making, knowing and being

- Knowledge
  - Renewable, natural aesthetic, likely to be environmentally friendly

- Culture
  - Practical: An ecological way of making

- Materials
Practical: craft as an ecological way of making

- Local materials
- Local knowledge
- Local practices
- Local culture
- Local diversity & identities
Epistemicological: craft as a complex way of knowing

- Does craft just represent bodily kinesthetic knowledge?

“Embodied knowledge is more than merely skilled practice and performance, and the body plays a key role in the making and recall of a wide spectrum of knowledge, including the conceptual kind”

Marchand, 2010:18
Epistemological: craft as a complex way of knowing

- Explicit, linguistic knowing
- Perceptual knowing
- Implicit, embodied knowing
- Existential knowing (emotion, beliefs)
Our worldview needs revision.

Embodied, intuitive ways of knowing are as important as rational, cognitive ways of knowing.
“I use a lot of sensual words ..., with analogical, visual words like square, triangle, stone and water, etc. to make more sense.

So, they put understandings into practice, and the practice corrects their understandings, and vice versa”

Interview with a ceramic master in Jingdezhen, 20 May 2017
Ontological: craft as an authentic way of being

• Connected relations
• Self-actualizations
• Self-transcendence: the psychological heritage, the spiritual, symbolic and beliefs
The production of so many useful things results in too many useless people

Karl Marx
She learned from her grandmother, who learned from her mother. Her daughter “will have to continue this tradition so humankind can benefit from it”

Paradiso, 2015, photo: BBC, London
We didn’t come up with the wish to build this house. It is a wish preserved from our ancestors.

Villager/builder; https://vimeo.com/34499848, 2010
“A craft product, when well designed and produced by a good craftsman, is not merely useful, but also has such elements as balance, proportion and harmony”

Aristotle
Real craftsmanship, regardless of the skill involved, reflects real caring, and real caring reflects our attitude about ourselves, about our fellowmen, and about life.

— Spencer W. Kimball —
Eco-effectiveness: waste = food
"It is impossible to solve a problem within the same framework of thinking that gave rise to it in the first place"

Orr, 2002
Cosmopolitan localism
Small-local-open-connected
Eco-communalism

Understanding of Sustainability

Household

Village or Neighborhood

City

Region

Planet

Kossoff, 2015
Revision of lifestyle and values

Design for Life
creating meaning in a distracted world

Stuart Walker
### Relationship between Craft and Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accordances</th>
<th>Tensions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eco-effectiveness</strong>&lt;br&gt;Natural material, renewable resources, closed loop ecosystem</td>
<td><strong>Cosmopolitanism</strong>&lt;br&gt;Closed, isolated from technology and economy, lack of global view</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Localism</strong>&lt;br&gt;Local resources, knowledge, human needs, community-based living, diverse cultural identities</td>
<td><strong>Productivity</strong>&lt;br&gt;Pre-industrial technique, uncompetitive, while modern production generally ignores social and environmental costs.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resilient system</strong>&lt;br&gt;Small-scale, diverse, distributed, resilient to risks and crises</td>
<td><strong>Economic viability</strong>&lt;br&gt;Low-paid, low price, value diminished, cost-income gap</td>
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<td><strong>Lifestyle</strong>&lt;br&gt;Authentic, relevant, creative, responsive, contextualized</td>
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Scoping study of craft-sustainability context in the YRD

Craft as a means for economic sustainability

Unequal and unbalanced development (income, support)

High enthusiasm of commercial activities (risk)

Lack of principles, criteria and direction (assessment)
Deeper leverage for transformative change

People-nature reconnections
Knowledge recreation
Institution restructure

(Abson et al., 2016)
Leverage point 1: craft model of production & economy

Customization
personalization, diversification, bespoke service

Network
sharing resources, online connections, makespaces

Micro-production
small workshops, cottage industries, home-based studios

‘making a living’ and ‘living a creative life’
Leverage point 1: craft model of production & economy

extraction from nature → integration into nature
“questioning existing perceptions of legitimate knowledge in science and politics opens up the potential to identify gaps in and strengths…”

Abson et al., 2016
Leverage point 2: craft model of knowledge and education

**Reductionism**
Parts
Structure
Prove it
Hierarchy
Categories
Separate
Future/past
Precise
Static
Dehumanized
Mechanistic

**Left brain**
Logical
Analytical
Objective
Rational
Fragmented

*meanings & purposes vs. causes & effects*
Leverage point 2: craft model of knowledge and education

**Reductionism**
- Parts
- Structure
- Prove it
- Hierarchy
- Categories
- Separate
- Future/past
- Precise
- Static
- Dehumanized
- Mechanistic

**Holism**
- Whole
- Creative
- Intuitive
- Synergy
- Individual
- Connected
- Complex
- Dynamic
- Self-organizing
- Now
- Harmony
- Organic

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“engagement” with the materials, the tools and the wider context where the creative process takes place”

Ingold, 2007
Leverage point 2: craft model of knowledge and education

Holistic model of teaching and learning

- research
- sharing
- teaching
Leverage point 2: craft model of knowledge and education

“The first condition of education is being able to put someone to wholesome and meaningful work.”

John Ruskin
“learning to transform oneself & society”

UNESCO, 2010
Leverage point 3: nurturing institutional change based on craft ideology

Quality
Humanization
Concentration
Responsive
Self-actualization
Fulfillment
Holonomic

Institution

Regulations, Policies, Laws,

Moral norms, Customs, Code of conducts

Worldviews, Mindset, Posture

Cultural & ethic values
Moral recognition
Social equality
Localization
Pro-society
Pro-environment

Eco-communal based institution
“Without Craftsmanship, inspiration is a mere reed shaken in the wind.”

-Johannes Brahms