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# Craft Imaginaries – Past, Present and Future

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## Abstract

This paper contributes to debates about craft authenticity by turning attention to the craft imaginary. We suggest that the significance of craft stems from its role in constructing an alternative social imaginary that challenges dominant, modernist imaginaries of industrial production and consumption. Our focus is on the role of imaginaries in determining how societies, communities, organizations and individuals embody temporal relations to the past that extend into the present and future. We show how the craft imaginary comprises histories, traditions, places and bodies and use this to develop a distinction between the imaginary of craft-in-the-past and future-oriented craft imaginaries. Through this, we seek to highlight the organizational possibilities of craft as a source of innovation, inclusivity and disruption.

## Keywords

authenticity, consumption, craft, culture, time

## Introduction

The resurgence of craft as a ‘process or activity’ (Adamson, 2013, p. xxiii) an ‘attitude, or... habit of action’ (Adamson, 2007, p. 4) is widespread in sectors ranging from brewing, wine-making and distilling (Beverland, 2005; Kroezen

& Heugens, 2019; Thurnell-Read, 2014), to musical instrument making (Blundel & Smith, 2018; Dudley, 2014). The popularity of craft is related to its potential in enabling imagination of alternatives to modernist organization of production and consumption based on rationalization and scientific, technological progress (Luckman,

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2015a). Craft is associated with traditional ways of making things which are positioned as ‘other’ in opposition to industry and antithetical to modernist ideas of progress (Adamson, 2007). It thereby offers a means of enchantment through its opposition to industrialization (Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017). However, Adamson (2013) argues the ‘invention’ of craft is founded upon a romantic ideal of preindustrial work. This gives rise to the possibility that craft becomes imbued with nostalgia (Holt & Yamauchi, 2019; Land & Taylor, 2014).

To realize the potential of the craft imaginary in organization studies, we need to move beyond an imaginary of craft-in-the-past that is characterized by nostalgia and romanticism. The nostalgic imaginary of craft-in-the-past can be understood as a response to the desire for authenticity in modern life. Authenticity is used to construct craft products and services as ‘artisanal’, ‘bespoke’ or ‘handcrafted’ in a way that appeals to conscious consumerism (Bell, Toraldo, Taylor, & Mangia, 2019). Following Taylor (1991b), we need to search for the moral ideal that lies behind the desire for craft authenticity in order to identify the purpose this imaginary serves. While Taylor (1991b) is critical of romantic authenticity, he suggests authenticity can be used to address the problems of modernity which arise through the prioritization of instrumentalism at the expense of interconnectedness and moral purpose. This draws attention to the role of authenticity in recognizing the relationship between humans and the world and the importance of treating the latter not as ‘a source of raw materials for our projects’ but as ‘part of a larger order that can make claims on us’ (Taylor, 1991b, pp. 89–90). Authenticity can thereby enable understanding of craft as a political orientation and a moral stance (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Kovács, Carroll, & Lehman, 2014; Sennett, 2008).

We approach these issues by reflecting on the social imaginary that surrounds craft. Imaginaries offer ‘a voyaging concept’ (Jasanoff, 2015b) for understanding how deep ‘normative

notions and images’ shape people’s expectations about how society is organized (Taylor, 1991a, p. 106). As Taylor observes, ‘we can think of the social imaginary of a people at a given time as a kind of repertory. . . including the ensemble of practices they can make sense of’ (p. 115). Hence, imaginaries ought not to be associated with individual fantasy or confused with falsity (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999; Jasanoff & Kim, 2015; Taylor, 2004) as they are ‘not opposed to the real’ (Dawney, 2011, p. 539). Future-oriented craft imaginaries provide an alternative to the nostalgic imaginary of craft-in-the-past that can enable engagement with disruptive organizational, societal and ecological changes. Future-oriented craft imaginaries are distinguishable by their creativity and openness to innovation, arising from a capacity to improvise by following ‘the ways of the world, as they unfold’ (Ingold, 2010, p. 10). As has been observed at other points throughout history, craft emerges in times of crisis – often as an alternative to the perceived failure of industrial production and consumption to deliver societal benefits that have been promised (Luckman, 2015a; Krugh, 2014). In this vein, we argue that the craft imaginary can contribute to the formation and transformation of alternative ways of organizing. This potential arises from the role of craft in enabling ‘forward movement that gives rise to things’ (Ingold, 2010, p. 10), which in turn presents opportunities for innovation, inclusivity and disruption.

We begin by introducing the concept of the craft imaginary which acknowledges the inseparability of material and social entities. Next, we consider the relationship between the craft imaginary and authenticity that is related to the temporal character of craft in constructing past–present–future relationships. We show how the craft imaginary integrates histories, traditions, places and bodies in ways which create links between the imaginary of craft-in-the-past and imaginaries of craft that are future-oriented. Not only do these elements allow imaginaries to spread across cultures, time and space, they also create possibilities for innovation, inclusivity and disruption. Specifically, the elements of

histories, traditions, places and bodies foster reflection on the current social imaginary on which modernist cultures predominantly rely, showing this to be simply one imaginary which reflects a ‘creative tradition of rationalization in large organizations, replacing other, primarily substantive, traditions’ (Dacin, Dacin, & Kent, 2019, p. 10).

## The Temporal Materialization of Craft Imaginaries

Social imaginaries are ‘much broader and deeper than intellectual schemes’ for thinking ‘about social reality in a disengaged mode’ (Taylor, 1991a, p. 106). While imaginaries rely on ‘images, stories and legends’ to construct common understandings and provide a ‘widely shared sense of legitimacy’ (Taylor, 2004, p. 23), positioning imagination ‘in the realm of ideas alone’ is problematic because this ‘runs the risk of excluding a consideration of the immediate, sensate and embodied modes through which imaginaries come to be experienced and felt’ (Dawney, 2011, p. 539) affectively. As Gatens and Lloyd (1999) argue:

Imaginative constructions of who and what we are, are ‘materialised’ through the forms of embodiment to which those constructions give rise. The imagination may create fables, fictions or collective ‘illusions’, which have ‘real’ effects, that is, which serve to structure forms of identity, social meaning and value, but which considered in themselves, are neither true nor false. (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999, p. 123, cited in Dawney, 2011, p. 42)

Dawney (2011) suggests a ‘materialisation of imagination’ (p. 538) is required in order to understand ‘how bodies, individually and collectively, act on the world in order to manage affects, bring about change and in doing so produce subjects’ (p. 535). This is because imaginaries are ‘produced by bodies through practices and technologies and constitute the way in which we experience the world. They are *material*’ (p. 535, emphasis in original). This perspective

builds on Spinoza’s notion of imagination as grounded in a bodily awareness that is constitutive of the mind (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999) and acknowledges the ontological inseparability of material and social entities (Heidegger, 1962). Social imaginaries are thereby understood as ‘constellations of imaginary understandings of the world which directly arise from embodied experience and which are shared with other bodies that have similar experiences of the world’ (Dawney, 2011, p. 42). This includes fluxes and flows of material as well as objects (Ingold, 2010) that exist in relations with people and other things. As this conceptualization implies, the material world is not passive in its responses to human intervention; instead, materiality is in continual flow and unable to be contained (Ingold, 2013).

Imagination provides a means of transforming human passivity into activity through organized collective action, informed by moral rights and normative judgements (Gatens & Lloyd, 1999). Kosselck (1985) proposes that individuals, communities and societies are constituted by how they understand their own temporality and in particular their future. Kosselck uses the concept of the ‘space of experience’ to refer to the ways in which the past is understood in the present. This is paired with the ‘horizon of expectation’ through which possible futures are anticipated and prepared for. Building on Kosselck’s thesis, Schinkel (2005) writes that in order ‘to understand how we came to be what we are, even how we came to think of ourselves as so very different from the past, we have to divide our attention equally between the static and the changing’ (Schinkel, 2005, p. 53). He argues that in times when there is a perceived disjuncture between experience and expectation, the role of imagination becomes critical. This is because imagination lies between experience and expectation: ‘it takes imagination to have expectations at all – to be able to distinguish the future from the past, and to have some sense of what this future might be and to have an attitude toward it’ (Schinkel, 2005, p. 48).

Such ideas are echoed in organization studies through recognition of the importance of

connections with the past in bestowing organizational credibility and creating a sense of continuity, including by collectively ‘remembering’ events, whether they took place or not (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Oliveira, Islam, & Toraldo, 2017). As observed by Ganzin, Islam and Suddaby (2020, p. 80), ‘individuals systematically reconstruct the past to create optimistic and actionable visions of the future’ and develop visions of desired futures. The construction of histories has also been shown to be an important means of institutional legitimation in future-oriented sensemaking (Gephart, Topal, & Zhang, 2012). ‘Future-oriented sensemaking can be undertaken in settings where the future is a prominent concern. . . is always embedded in or related to past and present temporal states’ (p. 285). However, while it is acknowledged that ‘there is a great latitude for innovative construction and projection from past entities’ (p. 296), this literature tends to overlook the importance of imagination in future-oriented sensemaking. Moreover, the emphasis is primarily on linguistic meaning-making rather than material practices. Here we address these gaps by showing how the materialization of craft imaginaries presents a challenge to dominant, modernist imaginaries in the present and can encourage forward-looking future imaginaries.

Early craft imaginaries were driven by doubts concerning the ability of industrialization to deliver promised social, moral and spiritual improvements (Naylor, 1971). This gave rise to the late nineteenth-century European and North American Arts and Crafts Movement which demanded that work should be not only creative and fulfilling but also environmentally attuned and equitable (Krugh, 2014). The craft imaginary re-emerged in Western cultures in the 1960s and 1970s in the form of a ‘counter-cultural wave’ which sought to challenge the ethics and sustainability of modern industrial organization (Luckman, 2015a). Luckman suggests the current craft imaginary is driven by ‘growing awareness of the environmental and social costs of the circulation of cheap consumer goods. . . giving rise to concerns about

large-scale industrialisation similar to those that gave rise to both the earlier waves of craft’ (Luckman, 2015a, p. 24). The craft imaginary is also suggested to have re-emerged after the 2008 global financial crisis which gave rise to a search for alternative forms of commerce to rival global logics that rely on transnational corporations and global markets driven by economies of scale (Suddaby et al., 2017). Thus, consumer demand shifted to more socially and economically sustainable means of production and consumption. As these examples highlight, the historical persistence of the craft imaginary reflects its value as a collective construction which has legitimating potential in challenging dominant social imaginaries and providing alternatives.

The temporal dimension of human experience and the ability to think in ‘time-streams’ (Tsoukas & Shepherd, 2004) is pivotal to understanding what makes the craft imaginary distinguishable from modernist imaginaries. Sociotechnical imaginaries support structures of modernity through their reliance on science and technology (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). Modernist imaginaries systematically devalue materiality and embodiment through the erasure of distinctions between material presence and absence (Hayles, 1999). In contrast, the craft imaginary draws attention to materially embedded, emplaced craft production and consumption, and to the historical and organizational arrangements that enable and sustain this. Like sociotechnical imaginaries, craft imaginaries operate by ‘latch[ing] onto tangible things that circulate and generate economic and social value’ (Jasanoff, 2015b, p. 326). This draws attention to ‘people and objects. . . [in addition to] images, representations, meanings, values and practices’ (Valaskivi, 2013, p. 486). Embedding craft imaginaries by producing material things, memories and social interactions enables them to be translated into new contexts, providing a means of cultural distinction (see Jasanoff, 2015b). In so doing, the craft imaginary signals an emphasis on materiality and the affects that arise from this

(Bell & Vachhani, 2020), providing an alternative to disembodied knowledge work carried out by virtual bodies (Hayles, 1999).

Through performance of shared understandings of social life based on values that are 'substantiated into people, objects, and practices' (Jasanoff, 2015b, p. 34), the craft imaginary also enables the formation of 'collectively held and performed visions of desirable futures' (Jasanoff, 2015a, p. 19). Defining imaginaries in such terms draws attention to 'the normativity of the imagination' (p. 19) in constructing 'futures toward which we direct our presents' (Jasanoff, 2015b, p. 322), and enhancing 'the capacities of individuals and groups to see and think things differently from what was previously seen and thought' (p. 322). But the development of such resistant imaginaries, which encourage social transformation by projecting 'hoped-for' futures (p. 329) and moving 'minds and actions at a distance' (p. 323), may be hampered by the continued potency of backward-looking imaginaries of craft which have become embedded in discourses in ways which discourage the spread of new ideas. In the next section, we show how an imaginary of craft-in-the-past responds to the desire for authenticity in modern life in a way which closes off consideration of more forward-looking craft imaginaries.

### **Craft-in-the-Past and the Desire for Authenticity**

In organization studies and consumer behaviour, craft is associated with the desire for authenticity as a response to the need for human meaning (Beverland, 2005; Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008; Fine, 2003; Hubbard, 2019; O'Neill, Houtman, & Aupers, 2014; Weber, Heinze, & Desoucey, 2008). Craft authenticity is suggested to rely on: *provenance*, indexical cues that link an entity to a physical, spatiotemporal place of origin and provide an indication of its superior quality; *transference*, in the form of connections to other people, places or times that have the potential to engender value; and *symbolism*, abstract, imagined

attributions and connections between entities, people, places and times (Lehman, O'Connor, & Kovács, 2019). This provides the basis for symbolic connections that are enabled by performance, as a primary means through which an entity is made credible or believable to audiences. The extent to which notions of authenticity are constructed is made clear through the observation that 'objects and physical sites can apparently be deemed authentic on the basis of symbolic connections even to fictional people (Grayson & Martinec, 2004) or places (Jones & Smith, 2005)' (Lehman et al., 2019, p. 19). Rather than addressing the question of whether such imaginings of the past are authentically 'real', it is suggested that consumers derive satisfaction from 'fabricated authenticity' (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), provided a coherent relationship with the past is forged. The focus is therefore on the cues used by consumers when judging authenticity claims, showing how organizations construct authenticity by drawing on an imaginary past.

Studies have demonstrated how companies leverage the symbolism associated with authentic craft products for commercial purposes (e.g. Beverland, 2005; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Craft is used to signify distinguishable qualities synonymous with creativity (Luckman, 2015a). For example, in the case of French champagne producers (Guy, 2002), authenticity is supported by symbolic connections to French *terroir* and history (Beverland, 2005; Guy, 2002). Fine's study of self-taught 'folk' artists shows how authenticity confers value on both objects and creators. This is linked to the making of objects by hand, rather than mechanically, as a way of conferring moral authority on the creator. Stories of authentic creation enable the biography of the maker to be linked to the crafted object (Fine, 2003). A further example of the importance of creating an impression of craft authenticity concerns luxury wine brands (Beverland, 2005). The success of these brands relies on crafting a 'sincere story' that publicly avows the importance of handcrafted techniques, emphasizes uniqueness of crafted objects, demonstrates



relationship to place and expresses a passion for making (p. 1003). This involves ‘downplaying. . . modern production methods in favour of images of traditional handcrafted methods and intuitive expertise’ in a way which helps to convey a sense of authenticity, even if manual methods are rarely used for reasons of cost (p. 1023).

Visible practices of making provide signals of authenticity related to an inherited past. O’Neill et al. (2014) note how different registers are used to commercialize craft products, evoking pre-industrial craftsmanship, naturalness, concrete locations and historical roots. Registers are used to convey a sense of authenticity and are central in bestowing value on artisanal products (O’Neill et al., 2014). Authenticity is used by craft producers to enable market differentiation and provide a basis for ‘internal community and external differentiation’ (Weber et al., 2008, p. 530). These authors analyse craft producers, in this case grass-fed meat and dairy producers, as a social movement that mobilizes cultural codes of authenticity and uses them to rhetorically construct an identity of sincerity, transparency and connection to self/nature/others, as a means to effect cultural change. Authenticity is thus seen as an attribution, a set of claims that are ‘collectively agreed upon and appropriate according to prevailing social codes’ (Carroll, 2015, p. 3), rather than a ‘property of entities’ (Lehman et al., 2019).

The desire for craft authenticity is expressed by wanting to know how things are crafted and by whom (Dudley, 2014). This desire is realized through imagination, as much as reality, through the ‘performance’ of making. Performances are witnessed by craft consumers (Campbell, 2005), guided by craft values which their consumption serves. Craft consumption is an activity ‘in which individuals not merely exercise control over the consumption process, but also bring skill, knowledge, judgement, love and passion to their consuming in much the same way that it has always been assumed that traditional craftsmen and craftswomen approach their work’ (Campbell, 2005, p. 27). The desire for craft

authenticity thus highlights the importance of material crafted objects in forming meaningful social relationships and enabling creative self-expression (Miller, 1987). In addition to aesthetic and emotional attachments, relationships between crafted things and people have an ethical, moral dimension. For example, Carroll and Wheaton’s (2009) study of craft practices in restaurants shows that when food is prepared in restaurants in accordance with growing seasons or based on organic sourcing practices, judgements of authenticity focus on ethical values regarding how dishes are made. Such moral authenticity occurs when consumers’ attribution of authenticity points to ethical values embedded in products.

The resurgence of craft in recent decades can also be interpreted as a return to tribalism, a source of community-based identity that enables belonging (Suddaby et al., 2017). Consumer tribalism is a form of brand-based loyalty and identity that relies on the formation of a distinct sub-culture (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007). These practices confirm the ideological nature of craft which challenges dominant market logics and industrial work practices (Verhaal, Khessina, & Dobrev, 2015). This opposition depends upon two factors. First, by merging the totality of existing production methods into a homogenous image of industrial production, against which craft is positioned. Second, opposition relies on constructing a series of differences or distinctions. Craft authenticity depends on being distinguished from industrial production through being anchored in traditional making practices that emphasize care and personalization, connections to places, histories and traditions. However, the logic of this distinction is contested. For example, the craft beer industry grew in opposition to the consolidation, corporatization and homogenization of the beer industry in the twentieth century (Frake, 2017). Consequently, when a small brewery ‘sells out’ to a corporate brewery, this can have a negative effect on audience perceptions of the organization’s symbolic value, expressed as an ‘inauthenticity discount’ (Frake, 2017).

To summarize then, craft responds to the desire for authenticity through retrospective symbolic and discursive construction. Yet what is considered authentic changes over time, as particular interpretations become prevalent (Carroll & Wheaton 2009; Kovács et al., 2014). Previous research frames consumer authenticity as an interpretative code (similar to a cognitive schema), which offers an alternative to the traditional rational choice model (Lehman, Kovács, & Carroll, 2014, p. 4). However, this approach has been criticized for overlooking ‘the copious materiality of mass manufacture and consumer culture. . . as objects of knowledge and not as material *sui generis*’ (Warde, 2014, p. 283).

While linkages between craft and authenticity provide a strong normative basis for the imagination of craft, by focusing attention on the development of craft brands and showing how they enable development of new consumer markets, authenticity constrains the development of more resistant craft imaginaries that challenge established and taken-for-granted ways of organizing and propose alternatives. In the following section we develop our conceptual framework for understanding how craft imaginaries are substantiated through histories, traditions, places and bodies, showing how this enables appreciation of the potential of craft in imagining alternative futures.

## **Histories and Traditions of Craft**

The historical past provides a basis for action, a legacy in the present and a means to respond to an uncertain future. Here we draw attention to the need to move beyond the ‘backward-clinging historical stance’ (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 16) of the imaginary of craft-in-the-past. As Soares (1997) suggests, the past and its traditions are a resource for the present. Disruption of established ways of organizing and development of new organizational forms rely upon creative reimagination of the past (Suddaby, Coraiola, Harvey, & Foster, 2019). Constructing and reconfiguring the past is made through cultural

narratives, rituals and symbols connected to collective past experiences and memories.

Development of cultural narratives relies on ‘mnemonic communities’, ‘social groups. . . that socialize us to what should be remembered and what should be forgotten’ (Misztal, 2003, p. 15). Practices of remembering involve maintaining a ‘vision of a suitable past and a believable future’ (Misztal, 2003, p. 17). Collective memories of craft can be associated with certain factories or cities that have a long association with specific practices of making (Bell, 2012). These mnemonic symbols help to preserve group memory through symbolic association with past practices in a way which ensures that they are remembered and not forgotten (Misztal, 2003). Organizational mnemonic communities (Rowlinson, Booth, Clark, Delahaye, & Procter, 2010) develop commonly shared understandings of the past through members’ shared linguistic and cultural practices, events and rituals. This can be seen in Solomon and Mathias’ (2019) study of United States craft entrepreneurs who draw on family histories of making, values, religious beliefs and regionally embedded cultural practices to build an organizational identity that distinguishes their work from others. Craft entrepreneurs ‘describe how the products they offer were originally produced and consumed within their communities as a way of life and not traditionally sold on the market’ (p. 50). By situating their stories in this context, the workers see themselves as part of a ‘growing craft movement’ in the US, which the authors suggest is a response to, and a rejection of, Fordism, McDonalidization and bureaucratic modes of organization. At the same time, workers sought to locate their identities in relation to a broader social movement which uses craft to enable social change and transformation.

Mnemonic traces are preserved through performance, such as organized tours of former or current sites of production that provide a historical storytelling resource (Bell, 2012; Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Bell et al., 2019; Beverland, 2005). This is achieved narratively, by transforming unstructured events from the past into a coherent, culturally meaningful



story (Zerubavel, 2003) that can be told to potential consumers. In post-industrial landscapes, they are often characterized by narratives of loss and decline. This points towards the nostalgia that often characterizes this type of narrative, as an ‘inherently pessimistic’ and ‘unmistakably backward-clinging historical stance’ that ‘typically includes an inevitably tragic vision of some glorious past that, unfortunately, is lost forever’ (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 16). The concept of mnemonic communities draws attention to the dynamic and continually emerging nature of craft imaginaries. Reconstructive processes of remembering are ‘framed’ by social norms and values, which in turn shape the meaning that individuals attribute to them. Mnemonic communities thereby offer an important way of imagining and creating the past. Crucially, collective memory enables appreciation of the importance of cultural narratives in constructing the past as a process of imaginative signification that can be extended into the present and the future. Building on this point, we argue that craft offers a potentially different sense of time: one that is not characterized by achievement-driven linearity and prioritizes relational elements. Instead, craft ‘prioritises relational elements. Instead craft enables experience of event-time... experience of event-time informed by ‘long-duration affective relations’ that are not experienced as having ends or beginnings and that are ‘based on affective relation between humans, materials and bodies’ (Kontturi, 2018, p. 46).

Kroezen and Heugens’ (2019) study of the Dutch craft beer industry draws attention to the role of imagined histories in constructing alternative institutional logics in the context of craft, as collective, taken-for-granted organizing principles that guide embedded action. Building on Dacin and Dacin’s (2008) ideas about the importance of institutional remnants, they suggest that remnants of a decomposed institutional logic can exist as ‘mnemonic traces’, in the form of memories, texts (e.g. corporate archives) and artefacts such as sites of production, that may be later repurposed to

cause change in organizational fields. They cite the example of a brewery building owned by a family firm established towards the end of the 17th century and sold to Heineken in 1954 in the face of global competition. ‘The facade of the brewery became a protected local heritage site. Since 2011, the building has served again as the location for a brewery after the establishment of brewery De Gouden Leeuw by an ex-employee of Heineken’ (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019, p. 11). Imagined histories legitimate past practices of making and ‘raise awareness about traditional field arrangements’ (p. 31), providing a resource for regenerative craft in the present.

Along similar lines and based on the notion of cultural inheritance (Shils, 1981), scholars note the importance of tradition and its resurgence in modern society (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998; Giddens, 1994). Transmission of traditions ‘requires repeatedly “*imaginatively* reenacting a past” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 24)’ (Lockwood & Glynn, 2017, p. 220, emphasis added). Craft traditions are ‘living social arrangements in organizations infused with value and meaning derived from interpretations of the past’ (Dacin et al., 2019, p. 1). These institutionalized practices have the potential to infuse everyday life with meaning (Lockwood & Glynn, 2017). While traditions are important at the level of the organization, they are also significant at field and societal levels as a way of legitimating practices. Traditions ‘function as flexible cultural resources’ that enable understanding of how people construct meaning and resolve problems in their everyday lives (Lockwood & Glynn, 2017, p. 207). Traditions are understood ‘as dynamic resources managed by active and vested participants’ who Dacin and colleagues term ‘custodians’ (2019, p. 3). They can be imagined or invented to suit the needs of the present, invoking historical nostalgia and a sense of provenance and authenticity (DeSoucey, 2010) and can be further reimagined for the future (Dacin & Dacin, 2019). Their symbolic value is based on consistency with values and practices that are understood to have existed in the past (Lockwood &

Glynn, 2017; Shils, 1981). Importantly for this analysis, the ‘tradition-as-resource’ perspective (Dacin et al., 2019) enables tradition to be understood as coexisting with modernity and offering possibilities to look forward. For example, in their study of the ‘punt’ chair on Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Dacin and Dacin (2019) show how tacitly embedded traditions of boat production are trans-temporally reimagined to produce a punt chair.

Trevor-Roper’s (1983) account of Scottish highland traditions and the origin of the kilt underscores the power of social environments to shape how we remember the past (Zerubavel, 1996). Imagined pasts shape current enactments of traditional practices both in terms of production and consumption. The construction of an imagined or fictional account of past practice provides the normative apparatus for craft today. Craft as organized making is a powerful carrier of tradition and, as such, can be a means of both maintaining culture as well as changing it. For example, as reported by Toraldo, Mangia and Consiglio (2019) in their study of a high-end Neapolitan silk tie maker, the design process draws heavily on tradition and a spirit firmly anchored to past values to produce small stylistic changes and create perpetual ‘singularity’ in products. The past is here refashioned to create innovation. Using newer elements or adding new to old in ways that evoke tradition give the sense of discovery while maintaining comprehensibility. ‘This results in products where authenticity is foregrounded by drawing on imaginaries of the local Neapolitan context. As this case clearly reveals, a forward-looking attitude relies on an imaginary past to create a coherent story through brand identity. Opportunities for innovation in design resides in reinterpreting the past and connecting it to the present and future. Such connections enable makers to maintain differentiation and remain competitive.

In their study of collective social innovation, Dacin and Dacin (2019) show how traditional and highly tacit punt-boat building knowledge is translated and carried into the future through the reimagination, design and crafting of a punt chair. Herein lies a paradox of craft,

for organizational success depends on retaining traditional practices of making established over time, and through this demonstrating their heritage, while at the same time adapting them to ensure their currency and relevance in the current moment (Beverland, 2005). Jones and Yarrow’s (2013) study of stonemasons engaged in heritage conservation work shows the importance of traditional craft skills, based on hand tools and techniques, in enabling the conservation of the past while at the same time acknowledging that any attempt at preservation involves reinterpretation. Possibilities for reinterpreting the past suggest a close connection between memory and imagination. This enables imaginaries to be used transformatively, as vehicles for re-envisioning what things could be like in the future (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015).

## Imagined Places and Bodies

Taylor’s (1991a) development of the social imaginary draws significantly on Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) which describes how the nation state serves as an imaginary that unites culture and geography and past and future in discourses of nationhood. Anderson’s contribution arises from his analytical focus on cognitive processes and development of a processual terminology for examining lived experiences of “‘nation-ness” – imagining, restoring, remembering, dreaming’ as a basis for explaining ‘human agency, and specifically the role of the imagination’ (Bergholz, 2018, p. 519). This provides insight into a third element of the craft imaginary which enables the achievement of continuity between past-oriented and future-oriented craft imaginaries – place. The term a ‘sense of place’ signals the embedded nature of craft as a distinctive connection not only to location but also to relational memories and imagination imbued in place (Feld & Basso, 1996). These include appreciation for an understanding of sense of place through experience as well as memories fusing both the meaning of place with its authenticity. Attachments to place continue to be significant despite technological and social

shifts that have enabled greater mobility through globalization (Lewicka, 2011). Place attachment comprises both affective and cognitive connections to place (Tuan, 1977). A fundamental consequence of the search for authenticity is that actors seek out places that hold strong memories as well as deep sentiments tied to place. While this literature emphasizes the social construction of place as ‘interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, and imagined’ (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465, cited in Lawrence & Dover, 2015, p. 373) we suggest that places of craft are also sensed, through being embedded and deeply connected in physical, material landscapes. This is signalled by use of terms such as ‘provenance’ or, in wine making, *terroir* (Smith Maguire, 2013). At the same time, places are also imagined through collective storytelling of events, mythic pasts, or even futures (Beverland, 2005) strengthening the links to place attachment and identity.

Heidegger’s (1962) concept of existential spatiality provides additional insight into the element of place within the craft imaginary, particularly affective aspects which condition encounters with practice (Bell & Vachhani, 2020). As Lamprou (2017, p. 1737) drawing on Heidegger (1962) explains, ‘existential spatiality develops as “care”; namely, the immersed involvement of human agents who dwell in everyday practice’ and encounter material objects in a way which is sensitive and receptive to their changing nature (see also Ingold, 2013). Lamprou (2017) suggests it is through immersion in, and submission to, their environment that human agents are able to relate to objects in ways that have significance to them.

Material places of craft are sometimes associated with ‘legacies of mass manufacturing [that] linger in putatively authentic places’, including in ‘particular urban or regional spaces (with built landscape features and visceral memories of industrial heritage)’ (Gibson, 2016, p. 61). Drawing on an ethnographic and archival study of cowboy boot making in El Paso, Texas, Gibson shows how ‘material inheritances’ are ‘reconfigured in

place over successive generations and used to construct place mythologies’ (Gibson, 2016, p. 62). Alternatively, craft is idyllically linked to place. For example, Harris tweed produced exclusively in the Scottish islands of the Outer Hebrides (McClellan, 2017) and pottery made in Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom (Bell & Vachhani, 2020) have achieved iconic status for both product and place. The social and economic value that can be achieved by institutionally embedding craft in place is significant. In the case of Harris tweed the ‘connection to the Hebrides is so vital that it is protected by a 1993 Act of Parliament, enforced by a regulating body known as the Harris Tweed Authority, and identifiable by the Orb-shaped certification mark that serves as its signature’ (McClellan, 2017, p. 90). By signalling the authentic situatedness of craft in place, inheritance holds significance for the correspondent value of craft.

Embedding craft in place establishes a coherent relationship between the past, present and future or, as reported by Tsoukas and Shepherd (2004), between memory, attention and expectation. Mahler (2008) introduces the notion of ‘lived time’ defined as ‘multiple temporalities characterized by sensuality and affective relations’. This orientation toward the sensual and the ‘long-term commitment in the encounter with actual others’ (p. 17) reminds us that imaginaries are also materialized through body. Sennett (2008, p. 19) illustrates the stereotypical features of the imagined ‘craftsman’ as an ‘an elderly man surrounded by his apprentices and his tools’. Situating craft in the bodies of makers is an important feature of this social imaginary. In some occasions, it is the body itself that is assumed to be authentic and that is celebrated as a counterweight to modern alienated subjects. The craftsperson’s body enables *poiesis* (Heidegger, 1977), using the hands to fashion materials in ways which bring forth and reveal the materials from which objects are made. The bringing forth that is entailed in Heidegger’s description of ‘handcraft’ is a consequence of the ‘occasioning’ through which things are ‘induced’ to appear (Holt & Popp,

2016, p. 10). Occasioning considers and heeds the form (shape), purpose (final use or cause of the object) and the skills of the maker as the 'efficient cause' (Rojcewicz, 2006). Craft practice is thereby consistent with Heidegger's (1962) assertion that humans and other material entities cannot be separated and his consequent ontological emphasis on 'being-in-the-world' as 'absorbed, nondeliberative. . . practiced mastery [which is reliant upon] skilled interaction with things and people' (Reimer & Johnson, 2017, p. 1063). Through the body of the maker, the craft imaginary acknowledges the meaningfulness and connectedness of objects or entities that depend on each other holistically.

Peterson (1997) suggests that the authenticity of country music is appreciated through the contrast with mass production. Cultural imaginaries of what country music stars should look like drove the adoption of Western cowboy outfits, donned by Southern Hillbilly artists, in order to appear legitimate as expected. This 'country look' forms an essential part of the evolution of the country music scene. The 'real' or 'authentic' performer therefore is someone able to connect with other times and to engage the audience not by illusion but through a connection with values that existed in the past. References to an authentic-self, linked to the 'locus of making', are found in Thurnell-Read's study of artisanal gin distilling where distillery tours establish the authenticity of craft products. For distillery workers such as Darren, 'the very visibility of the distillation process and the labour involved meant that "part of the brand messaging is that it's completely authentic"' (Thurnell-Read, 2019, p. 8). The performance of authenticity can also be seen in craft brewery tap-rooms, where breweries open small bars, or brewery production areas on weekends, for customers to drink beer where it is made and meet the brewers, turning often unpromising, out-of-town industrial warehouses into destination drinking places, or when brewers go to pubs to 'meet the brewer' events and tap-takeovers, explaining the process of brewing and talking to consumers. This disintermediation of the relationship between consumer and producer

promises an authentic consumption experience, anchored in an immediate relationship with the producer, rather than a fetishized form of consumption mediated only through monetary exchange. The difficulty with this is that only certain bodies may be capable of performing 'craft' in a manner that fits with the social imaginary, but also that such performance risks alienating craft producers from their own identity *as* craftspersons, as this has to be performed for a consuming public, as a commodity in an exchange that derives exchange value from the social encounter.

Materialization of the craft imaginary relies on a specific image of the craft maker's body that possesses technical skills, aesthetic qualities and a self-awareness of their abilities. For producers, it holds out the promise of an unalienated, self-directed, organically integrated form of work, rooted in embodied, technical and aesthetic mastery. Yet Ocejo (2017) suggests that embodied skills are not enough in order to perform craft. Using the example of artisanal butchery, he shows how despite being the most technically accomplished, deploying skills learned through years of work in industrial slaughterhouses and meat-packing factories, Mexican workers were less able to *perform* the role of knowledgeable skilled craftsman [sic] to affluent customers. For this, a whiter, more middle class, cultural capital is required, as persuading customers of the value of artisanal products and unfamiliar cuts of meat requires what Ocejo calls a 'service education'.

Patterns of racialized and gendered exclusion are linked to a past when craft practice was defined as archetypally masculine (Holmes, 2015; Rydzik & Ellis-Vowles, 2019) and craft skills were used by industrial workers as a source of masculine identity and a means of wage bargaining (Sayse, Ackers, & Greene, 2007). This imagined craftsperson has been in decline in Western societies including the US since the 1970s, and has been replaced by precarious service work (Ocejo, 2017). Ocejo claims the re-emergence of craft presents opportunities for more meaningful work

enabled by the performance of such hegemonic masculinities. The construction of masculinities through ‘good work’ informs Bozkurt and Cohen’s (2019) portrayal of classic car repair work. They suggest that repair work provides opportunities for working-class men in an era of growing economic precarity and technological progress where human labour is replaced by machines. They focus on the craft skills and love that characterize repair workers’ accounts and has the potential to transform mundane, manual jobs into valued work (see also Crawford, 2009). As these examples illustrate, the craft imaginary is associated with a post-industrial nostalgia for ‘a type of white masculinity that can be enacted *only* through the skilled labour involved in making and fixing things’ (Dudley, 2014, pp. 13–14). Such past-oriented imaginaries of craft position women’s bodies as other. As Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles (2019) show, women who work in microbreweries must demonstrate their physical ability in small-scale methods of production where many tasks are performed manually. Women brewers experience the brewery as a masculine space, defined by tools and machinery which are designed for male bodies and dominated by norms and practices that mean female bodies are made to feel out of place. These craftswomen are routinely called upon to prove themselves physically in order to challenge sexist prejudices. At the same time, women brewers draw attention to their gender as a source of skill, creativity and knowledge in the brewing process.

Associations of contemporary craft imaginaries with white hegemonic masculinity are inconsistent with much historical practice. For example, before the industrial revolution beer production was a domestic activity carried out largely by women in the home; it was only as a consequence of industrialization that brewing became reimagined as a masculine practice of production and consumption (Bell et al., 2019; Rydzik & Ellis-Vowles 2019). Future-oriented craft imaginaries can be used to challenge the privileging of male, white bodies in performing craft and claiming an artisanal identity. This can provoke critical questioning of the gendering and racializing of craft occupations according

to cultural values that reinforce an imaginary craftsman and exclude those who do not fit such a normative conception. Forward-looking craft imaginaries instead promote relational encounters between bodies that differ from masculine, white working-class norms on which cultural representations of craft frequently depend. The future-oriented craft imaginary reconnects craft with the home as a productive space for women and men (Luckman, 2015b). It also recognizes the craft skills entailed in female-dominated service professions like hairdressing (Holmes, 2015) that rely on repetition and experience, even if the finished product is transient and intangible in comparison to certain other kinds of craft.

An illustration of the potential of craft as a social movement that challenges dominant norms and promotes social change is provided by craftivism. Craftivism (craft + activism) is a collective, participatory practice that involves the use of traditional creative handcrafts to amplify and raise awareness of political and social issues, particularly those associated with anticapitalism, feminism and environmentalism (Buszek & Robertson, 2011). Key to this is the use of craft skills and practices stereotypically perceived as ‘benign, passive (predominantly female) domestic pastime[s]’, e.g. knitting, embroidery, quilting, crocheting, which are subverted in order to humorously disrupt, unsettle in the interests of ‘peaceful, proactive. . . political protest’.<sup>1</sup> The use of craftivism to highlight unethical organizational practices, such as sweatshop labour conditions in clothing manufacture, illustrates the potential of craft imaginaries in promoting ethical engagements through relational encounters between bodies and other matter in ways which generate affect (Bell & Vachhani, 2020) and challenge capitalist, patriarchal and environmentally exploitative norms.

## Concluding Thoughts

In this paper we have traced how relations to craft-in-the-past, through the elements of histories, traditions, places and bodies, shape the materialization of craft imaginaries in the



present by linking to the past. Craft imaginaries that are situated in the past and characterized by nostalgia encourage a ‘backward-looking consciousness. . . dominated by past experiences, meaning that it is not bent on forming expectations of a future that will be very different from the past’ (Schinkel, 2005, p. 50). Instead, future-oriented craft imaginaries invite a ‘forward-looking consciousness [that] does not ignore past experiences – it cannot shape expectations out of thin air – but it uses its experience in order to transform it. To accomplish this, it uses imagination *creatively*’ (p. 50). Hence, and as noted by Kontturi (2018), craft activities are ‘not so much motivated by nostalgia about the past than by the desire towards a better future’ (Schinkel, 2005, p. 47).

As Schinkel (2005, p. 49) further notes, ‘imagination deals with possibilities’; the inherited value of craft imaginaries resides in possibilities to ‘build from the pasts and construct meaningful translations in the present and envisioned futures’ (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015). The development of new imaginaries of craft which provide alternatives to globalized industrialization is, we suggest, a critical step in disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions about modernist, sociotechnical imaginaries and making the transition towards more socially and economically sustainable forms of production and consumption. This stems from the capacity of craft imaginaries in enabling ‘forward movement’ and giving ‘rise to things’ (Ingold, 2010, p. 10) that present opportunities, including for innovation, inclusivity and disruption.

Innovative methods and techniques could be used to revisit and develop traditional, time-consuming manual practices and processes of making in ways which remain consistent with the craft imaginary.<sup>2</sup> Movements such as ‘slow fashion’ (Fletcher, 2016) can play a role in developing future-oriented craft imaginaries that foster cultures of affect and continuation, challenging the logic of mass-consumerism based on continuous novelty and disposal of objects. These initiatives seek to extend the life of an object through repair, preserving the integrity of goods and enhancing their longevity in ways that draw attention to the beauty of

imperfection and enable a sense of care. The desire for a better future attained through craft imaginaries also creates possibilities to address threats to the future of work associated with AI, robotics and machine automation. An example involves using cutting-edge sensing cubicles to take customers’ measurements and a follow-up phase in which tailors and seamstresses work with customers in their homes to perfect the fit and finish of garments.<sup>3</sup> This could be enabled by training programmes that are located at the intersection between craft and digital making, providing skills that enable the production of objects in ways which challenge and extend conventional craft methods. Such practices challenge conventional oppositional dualisms of hand/machine making and digital technologies/craft.

As has been observed at other points throughout history, craft emerges in times of crisis, often in response to the failure of industrial production and consumption to deliver the societal benefits that have been promised (Krugh, 2014; Luckman, 2015a). Nowotny (1994) suggests that problems opening up in the modernist present have come to threaten the future:

While it was constitutive for so long. . . the collectively keepable promise of a constant, glorious improvement of the future [can no longer be maintained and further temporal acceleration does not help]. . . having to run faster in order to stay in one and the same spot exposes a different experience of progress, which in a relative stage of being ahead can demonstrate an equal state of being behind. The escape routes which are supposed to lead out of the expectation of the future. . . either point to a non-existent idyllic past or place their hopes in the next phase of technological innovation. . . [which can only limitedly be realised.] Progress itself, it may be said, has aged. (Nowotny, 1994, pp. 48–9)

Craft imaginaries that engage with future, as well as historical, possibilities are vital in mobilizing alternatives to modernist, globalized organization of production and consumption. Craft imaginaries can provide a locus for ‘future perfect thinking. . . a form of prospective sensemaking in



which resources are mobilized and collective action is motivated by an imagined future state of the world' (Suddaby et al, 2019, p. 543). They are thus consistent with Castoriadis' (1987) concept of the *instituting* social imaginary, which presents a radical alternative to the instituted imaginary of late capitalism 'that produces and sustains unjust social hierarchies by perpetuating mythologies of modernism. In this paper we have argued that establishing linkages between the remembered and the desired future enables a move beyond formulations of craft based on authentic ways of producing and consuming things which are merely contemplative of a lost society. Through this, future-oriented craft imaginaries provide a means of anticipating and responding to major organizational, societal and ecological disruptions and enabling us to begin to imagine the kind of world we want to inhabit.

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### Notes

1. See <http://craftivism.com/manifesto/> [Accessed 26.11.20]
2. For example, in the field of art restoration, Artificial Intelligent-assisted analysis has supported restorers in the craft tasks of material identification, brush-stroke technique analysis and detection of previously hidden designs and underdrawings. See <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/the-science-behind-art-restoration/> (accessed 26.11.20).

3. See <https://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/21-future-jobs-robots-are-actually-creating.html> (accessed 26.11.20).

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