Special Issue Call for Papers

Rediscovering and Theorizing Craft in Organization Studies

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We are witnessing a revival of craft in contemporary society. While craft has been equated by some with a primitive and largely obsolete mode of organizing and working, recent research has shown how craft has surprisingly reappeared to reconfigure entire sectors, with examples ranging from beer brewing (Kroezen & Heugens, 2019) and watch-making (Raffaelli, 2019) to urban services like barbering (Ocejo, 2017) and supermarket work (Endrissat, Islam & Noppeney, 2015). Across these settings, craft appears as a fundamental approach to work and organization that can be contrasted with the conventional efficiency-maximizing approaches underpinning mass manufacturing and professional bureaucracy (Fox Miller, 2017). Whereas modern organizations are often configured around a mechanical approach to work that relies on the rationalization and automatization of human production tasks, craft, alternatively, prioritizes human engagement in making and relies on a distinct set of attitudes and skills. Sennett (2008), for example, famously defined craft as a basic human impulse to do "a job well for its own sake". Relatedly, craft rests on a distinctive concern with mastery of skill which relies on practical, material or embodied forms of knowledge that require dedication and a communal (rather than individualist) attitude (Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Holt & Yamauchi, 2019; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997; Popp & Holt 2016). As such, craft consecrates the value of human touch in making as something that cannot be replicated by a machine.

Historically, craft has appeared to gain social traction during times of industrial revolution. The English Arts and Crafts movement (Morris, 1892; Ruskin, 1849), for example, embraced craft to cherish pre- and anti-industrial forms of work in the wake of the First Industrial Revolution. It appears that the current industrial revolution is triggering a similar movement to re-enchant work and organization in the digital age (Endrissat et al., 2015; Suddaby, Ganzin & Minkus, 2017). The appeal of craft lies in its perceived potential to create meaningful jobs in contradistinction to the disenchanted work typical of industrialized or digitalized work environments (Bell, Mangia, Taylor & Toraldo, 2018; Pratt, Pradies, & Lepisto, 2013). Craft has also been proposed as a force of change that may enable the transition toward a sustainable society (Bell et al., 2018; Moore, 2005). Craft has been associated with forms of production that are deemed more environmentally-friendly (e.g. Weber, Heinze, & DeSoucey, 2007) as well as with paths to betterment at the bottom of the pyramid (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013). Relatedly, craft also provides material means for political expression as evidenced by cases of "craftivism" (Greer, 2014), such as the Stitch'nBitch movement (Minahan & Cox, 2007).

Whilst it thus appears that craft will play an increasingly important role in society across the globe, research on the subject has been historically fragmented and marginalized. As such, we think it is time to build on recent efforts toward more dedicated attention and synthesis (Bell et al., 2018), in order to advance theory around the unique processes and practices of craft approaches to work and organization.

For this special issue, we are especially keen to attract work from a variety of perspectives and levels of analysis that can help us understand better when, why and how work is approached or organized as a craft and with what consequences. Below we sketch seven themes that scholars may wish to contribute to, though contributions do not have to be limited to these themes:

1. ***The inherent tensions in craft work***: Craft appears to sit at the interstices between various powerful forces in organization and society. It relates to the fundamental tension between human and machine in making (Form, 1987), but also to tensions stemming from alternative views on what entails quality in making. In craft work, science and technology may clash with tradition on the one hand (Shils, 1981) and art on the other hand (Becker, 1978). Actors may thus experience fundamental craft-related tensions when technical aspects have to be squared with traditional or artistic aspects. How can these tensions be fruitfully exploited by individuals and organizations? How can they be buffered to avoid possible detrimental effects?

2. ***Craft and meaningful work***: Digitalization and automation are fundamentally transforming the nature of work. At the same time, individuals are increasingly looking for meaning and purpose in their work (Pratt et al., 2013). Examination of craft work may provide new insights into what makes work meaningful in the digital age with increasing affordances provided by technology and artificial intelligence. How is meaningfulness constructed or experienced through practicing work as a craft? What is the role of emotions in craft work? What is the value of "human touch" at work if machines become objectively capable of providing the same "touch"?

3. ***Craft in unexpected places.*** While craft is often understood narrowly as a primitive form of manufacturing, the concept appears to have much wider applicability. Indeed, a wide variety of "conventional" organizational actors, ranging from universities to corporations, and from community centers to public libraries, increasingly seek to nurture a craft approach to work. For example, by establishing and tooling dedicated makerspaces (e.g., hubs, fab labs, tech rooms) that help hone maker skills and imaginations (Browder, Aldrich & Bradley, 2019). Such examples of 'craftification' appear to also be intertwined with a broader societal trend toward entrepreneurialisation, and the increasing salience of entrepreneurship as an attractive self-image and source of income. Intriguingly, the concept of craft has also increasingly been extended to the digital environment, as is evident in McCullough's (1998) concept of the "practiced digital hand" or the adherence to "software craftsmanship" among programmers (McBreen, 2002). Why and how is craft used to reinvent or update organizations and occupations that have traditionally used other models of work and to what effects? How does craft appear in new kinds of work, such as digital work? How is the allure of craft used to improve the social status of "mundane" organizational actors?

4. ***Craft, identity, and materiality***: Craft takes place in personalized relationship between the self, materials, techniques, concepts as well as other makers and consumers (Holt & Yamauchi, 2019). As such, bodily connections between people, place, and materials characterise craft practices (Bell & Vachhani, 2020). This affects how identities are constructed and evaluated (cf. Beverland, 2005) and impacts the practices through which organizational actors craft their material selves (cf. Foucault, 1988). How do engagement with matter, manual skills, and bodily experiences influence identity dynamics in and around craft work? How can craft illuminate the "technologies of the

self" in modern society (Foucault, 1988)? How does culture shape and sustain the relationship between identity, skill and materiality (and vice versa)? How do "craft cultures" differ across places, countries, and industries, and how does this affect the organization, production and consumption of craft (Sasaki, Nummela & Ravasi, 2020)?

5. *Craft decline, revival and persistence:* Craft approaches to work and organization have come and gone over time. We have only just started to understand under what conditions craft may persist, decline or revive and what different forms craft may take as a result (Cattani, Dunbar, & Shapira, 2017; Kroezen & Heugens, 2019; Raffaelli, 2019). This raises interesting issues at both the organization and field level. Questions that appear worthy of study are: How do craft approaches evolve over time as organizations or organizational fields progress? How may heritage crafts persist in spite of modernizing forces? What is the role of the local community as well as wider institutions in the (re-)appearance or disappearance of crafts firms and skills? Are certain organizational forms – such as family business (Erdogan, Rondi & De Massis, 2020; Sasaki, Ravasi, & Micelotta, 2019) – more prone to craft maintenance or revival than others? How can craft skills be recovered once they are no longer practiced?

6. *Craft as a force of change.* In recent years, craft has been associated with renewed interest in local and sustainable production and consumption – and the entrepreneurial ferment that accompanied this trend. It has been discussed for its potential to provide insight into sustainable use of materials through its DIY and re-use culture, towards a less resource intensive production and consumption (Bozkurt & Cohen, 2019). Craft has also been used as a means for political expression in craft-related forms of protest that have been dubbed as "craftivism" (Greer, 2014), such as the sea of pink yarn-crafted pussyhats in recent Women's marches (Black, 2017). It has been employed to draw attention to vulnerabilities and mobilize against injustice, as well as to offer support in healing and relocation, as with small initiatives, such as knitting workshops for refugees (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013). How do craft activities and objects become agents of environmental and social change, and alternative ways of organizing waste and re-use? What are the possibilities and limits of craft as a means of protest? How do craft, entrepreneurship and activism interplay in opening up a dialogue on and awareness of environmental, societal, and political issues, and to what effects? How does craft help craft livelihoods, enable resilience, sustain places and indigenous cultures, and fuel economies, particularly in non-western contexts?

7. *The dark side of craft*: Craft is prone to the construction of positive social imaginaries (Taylor, 2004), but not naturally virtuous. Some have argued that contemporary craft movements may have been captured by the elite with little benefit for the rest of society (Bell et al., 2018; Jakob, 2013; Ocejo, 2017). For example, organizational actors frequently appear to engage in "craft-washing" to construct desirable images that are disconnected form the ordinary reality of work and production (Beverland, 2005). There is thus a need to advance critical understanding of the role of craft in contemporary society. How are different positive social imaginaries constructed and performed in craft work or craft organizations? Through what mechanisms may craft have positive or negative effects on individuals, organizations and society? How can craft alleviate hardships that people experience, such as poverty, displacement, and isolation? How 'gendered' is craft work and craft entrepreneurship, and what are the unique challenges? What is the role of craft across different social strata (e.g. upper vs.

lower class or advanced vs. emerging economies)? What are the roles of craft-based firms in both developed (craft as art and luxury) and developing countries (craft work as a means for survival)?

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