



**RICHERS**

RENEWAL, INNOVATION AND CHANGE:  
HERITAGE AND EUROPEAN SOCIETY



# THE COMMODIFICATION OF COMMUNITY-LEARNED SKILLS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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## *The Case of Craft*

*Amalia Sabiescu, Martin Woolley*

*Coventry University*

*The essence of craft*

# CRAFT AS NON-ALIENATED LABOUR

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- Quintessential human activity
- Industrial revolution and the dichotomy craft-machine/mass production: separation of design and manufacture
- Craft and culture
  - embodied attitudes, skills, knowledge, values (the maker)
  - techniques, tools, materials (the process)
  - patterns, symbols, colours (the product)





## CRAFTMANSHIP OF HOREZU CERAMICS

- Maintained style for at least 300 years
- 50 potters still active in 2010
- Inscribed in 2012 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity





### *Technique, material*

Men extract and prepare the clay, shape it on the wheel

Women decorate the objects with natural dyes and custom tools and techniques





## *Patterns and symbols*

Traditional patterns and symbols: rooster, tree of life, spiral



*Craft and technology*

# TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTING CRAFT

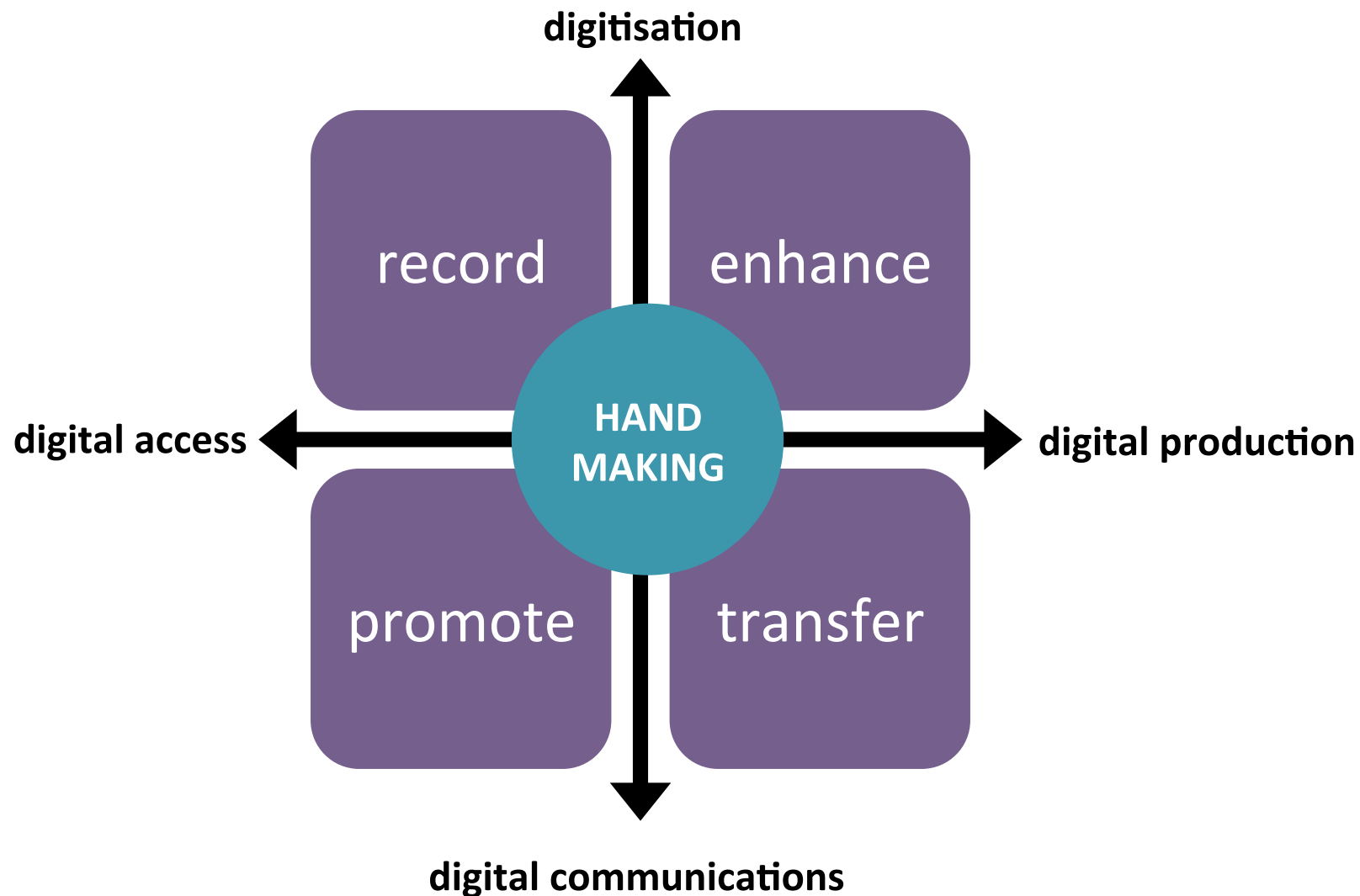
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- ENHANCE – digital technology embedded in the hand making process
- PROMOTE - digital technology to market and raise awareness of the crafts
- RECORD – digital technology used to record and disseminate craft knowledge and skills
- TRANSFER – digital technology used to transfer hand making skills and knowledge into new production contexts



# DIGITAL CRAFT HERITAGE – HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY

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*Strategies for community-led  
commodification*

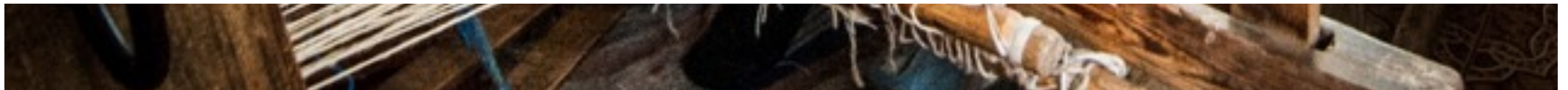




# ENHANCE MAKING PROCESS

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*Efficiency and creativity*



# BENEFITS

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- Efficiency (e.g. batch production, hand finishing)
- Creativity (CGI, additive manufacture)
- Customisation (3D printing, indirectly by enabling direct contact with customers)

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*I tried to look on the Internet and see what tools are there, what new technologies. But this is a way of communicating, it is a communication. If the machine intervenes I do not know if it would communicate the same thing. It would help me professionally, but not as a human being*

*-Romanian wood worker, 16/12/2015*



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*I want to be and stay in control, I am not interested in automating the entire process. I am interested in what I can personalise as much as I can. It is true that the medium I use is very time-consuming, but I do not consider I am losing money. Every activity is defined as well also by the time you dedicate.*

*-Romanian contemporary weaver and textile designer, 21/12/2015*



# PROMOTING CRAFTS

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*Social media and e-commerce*



# POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

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- Keep production local and diversify customers base
- e-commerce (own online shop, online marketplaces - Etsy, Folksy)
- Product showcase and communication of product attributes
- Engaging and relating with consumers
- Networking and relating with professionals, makers, and peers



# AFFORDABLE PROMOTION: SOCIAL MEDIA

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- **Selling.** New potential for craft e-commerce, diversifying their retail base.
- **Adding Value.** Reveal the hidden stories behind the craft object and its maker and raise the perceived value of craft in the marketplace.
- **Building Audiences.** Introduce craft to new audiences with other cultural and lifestyle interests through their own frames of reference.
- **Positioning.** Position a maker or craft organisation in a way that creates new professional and creative opportunities
- **Networking.** Connect organisations or individuals into hubs for sharing the information, creative collaboration opportunities and companionship essential for a sector of sole traders



# CONNECT TO MARKETS

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*Diversify customers base*





# *MakeWorks, Scotland*

## Find local manufacturers in Scotland

Use Make Works to source fabricators, material suppliers and workshop facilities.

🔍 What manufacturing process, materials or machine are you looking for?

Find →



# BLOUSE ROUMAINE SHOP

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*Online shop for traditional Romanian  
garments (2013)*

<http://www.blouseroumaine-shop.com/>





# CRAFT TOURISM AND CRAFT TOWNS

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*Place identities*





# CRAFT TOURISM AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

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- Rural regeneration and development
- Communicating place identity
- Spreading craft cultures (craft workshops, fairs, exhibitions)
- Open new markets
- Stimulate local economy - inspire new initiatives



## .....WOODLAND WORKSHOPS

*Camping and woodcrafting  
for tourists, West Dorset, UK*

<http://www.mallinson.co.uk/>



.....**FARNHAM CRAFT TOWN PROJECT**  
*Building a craft town identity*

<http://www.farnham.gov.uk/discover/crafttown>







# REINVENT

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*Bringing new crafts to communities*







## THE PEOPLE'S PRINT

*Enable communities to design  
and make their own textiles*

# CHALLENGES, OPEN QUESTIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

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- **Skills** dying out, last generations
- Transformation of **skills**, proliferation of basic and endangerment of high level skills
- New breed of **maker communities**: maker movement, virtual guilds: link, connect, transmit?
- Balancing local ways and customer expectation/response
- Sustainability of traditional ways of making or transformation?

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A new maker community is emerging,  
connecting the culture of traditional skills and  
materials with modern-day digital production,  
distribution and interaction techniques.

*-Yair, 2011*