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The embeddedness of craft making and its implications for participatory design: A north – south case study

by Sarah Emily Brown, University of Bath

Abstract

Making methodologies: Comparisons across the north-south divide Northern consumers' growing interest in sustainability and social justice has created an increased demand for "ethical" craft, which is proliferating craft livelihoods projects in the global south. There is much criticism of neo-colonial divisions of labour involved in typical projects, in which northern designers create designs, often based on traditional aesthetics, and local makers engage in repetitive hand production. The removal of all traces of the maker from the work, in terms of creativity, autonomy, variation and cultural authenticity, is increasingly being challenged. Design and participatory design approaches seek instead to provide the tools to enable makers to engage in the whole creative process. While this may increase ownership of products, it nonetheless applies a methodological toolkit based on northern understandings of making and creativity. Economic and hegemonic inequalities, even in the most collaborative approaches, can result in markets, rather than marginalised makers, dictating outcomes and processes. What is the impact of shifting traditional, local modes of craft thinking towards a design centric perspective? Is there a risk of undermining local understandings of cultural identity, materiality, and the meaning of both making and makers? How do northern understandings of making, guiding both development actors and consumers, compare with southern understandings? This research investigates reflections on making from two groups of female makers: embroiderers in Madagascar involved in a livelihoods intervention, and textile crafters in the UK. It explores shared and differing relationships between making and notions of identity, process, gender, geography and economics, and examines the renegotiation of these connections as individual making methodologies evolve. A visual elicitation methodology drawing on art and design pedagogy and traditions of women's social making was used in individual and paired informal interviews, which were thematically analysed. The research is a methodology pilot for a PhD examining the tensions between approaches to craft in international development and women's experiences of making in the global south.

Introduction

Participatory design is rapidly becoming a mainstream approach to craft livelihoods projects in International Development. This strategy has emerged in response to widespread criticism of project models that employ designers from the global north to create designs that local artisans then manufacture by hand (Murray, 2010). Participatory and co-design approaches use the design process to facilitate artisans' creative participation, in order to increase their incomes, often through access to new markets or product innovations. These strategies aim for more equitable collaboration between trained designer (or, increasingly, design student) and craftsperson, through shared decision-making (Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015).

Literature on Craft Livelihoods Projects (CLPs) often takes the form of reflective pieces by design practitioners: rich narratives of project activities and their justifications (Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015). In these accounts, design practitioners acknowledge a need to engage with traditional craft processes and they use tools such as observation and critique to allow craftspeople to demonstrate and / or explain their craft process. There is a clear focus on materials, tools, techniques and aesthetics of production. Yet the literature reveals very little consideration of the role of craft in artisans' lives beyond the generation of income, or in some cases, management of wellbeing (Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015).

Anthropological and other social studies of craft in the global south suggest that the role of traditional craft is not only complex but also deeply embedded within communities (Marchand, 2008; Brouwer, 1997). Craft practice is not 'just' a livelihood, it can be interwoven in the fabric of craftspeople's lives: culturally, politically, environmentally and socially, as well as economically (Brouwer, 1997; Scrase, 2003; Marchand, 2008). These studies report that craftspeople in the global south express this embeddedness in a number of different ways: the importance of traditional making to multiple intersecting identities; craft practice as a form of worship; craft as a connection with the past and the future, with the landscape, with material and tools; craft as a source of pride; and an inheritance (Brouwer, 1997; Maskiell, 1999; Marchand, 2008; Savasere, 2010). Craft practice can therefore facilitate connections and interconnections between the craftsperson and other domains of life, which may encompass their families, other actors in the supply chain and the community as a whole.

Interventions that aim to alter traditional craft methodologies will change these interconnections and the resulting impacts may extend far beyond the craft process and into these other domains of life. Yet, project literature typically fails to acknowledge this embedded nature of craft: the process is conceptually separated from these other domains of the craftsperson's life. It is brought into a workshop scenario, with the focus on shifting the traditional methodology towards new materials, colourways, products, aesthetic qualities, batch sizes, techniques, or a combination of these concerns (Tung, 2012; Hanson and Levin, 2015). There appears to be little recognition that these interconnections between traditional crafts and other aspects of life may be damaged, severed or enhanced by an abrupt shift in craft methodology.

This research examines this embeddedness of craft through the reflections of craftswomen in two contexts: one in the global north (UK), one in the global south (Madagascar). The analysis suggests there are cultural differences in understandings of craft and its interconnectedness in these two cases. Malagasy craftswomen described a craft process that is more interconnected with other domains of life than British craftswomen. Participants in both groups reflected on shifts in their methodologies; in the Madagascar case this was due to a livelihoods intervention as well as ongoing critical reflection, and in the UK case this was due to the pursuit of more diverse craft practices. These changes revealed dynamic connections between craft practice and other domains of life. Craftswomen in each context negotiated these changing connections and interconnections in different ways.

These findings have implications for participatory design projects that aim to alter traditional craft methodologies. If they do not consider the embeddedness of craft and the connections between craft practice and the lives of craftspeople and their communities, design practitioners risk bringing culture-specific

assumptions about the craft process, and the role and value of craft itself. An outside perspective (from nationally as well as internationally run projects) could overlook the context-specific role of traditional craft in connecting the individual: socially, spiritually, environmentally or economically. By isolating the craft process from the life of the craftsperson and intervening to shift the traditional practice there is a real risk that craftspeople are negatively impacted by unintended consequences and projects become unsustainable.

The discussion suggests that consideration of these interconnections could help to establish the existing role of craft prior to interventions. This could help to build projects that are more useful, appropriate and relevant for craftspeople and their communities, potentially increasing long term sustainability. Identification of these complex interconnections needs to be done by members of the craft community themselves, as they may not be visible to outsiders or gatekeepers. This could bring the voice of the maker into the discussion of projects from the very outset. Additionally, design practitioners could use reflexivity as a tool to help them to identify cultural assumptions around the role and meaning of craft that may be shaping projects to favour the designer's, rather than the craftsperson's, perspective.

Literature

This research draws on two main literatures. First, a brief introduction to participatory design perspectives on CLPs will outline the aims and criticism of these approaches. Second, anthropological and other social studies of traditional craft practice in the global south will be presented, which describe the embeddedness of craft in other domains of life, including social, environmental, spiritual, political and economic dimensions. Finally, a link will be drawn between these two literatures to suggest that these anthropological perspectives can contribute to CLPs using participatory design by highlighting the interconnectedness of craft and the value of these connections to craftspeople.

Craft livelihoods projects in international development are increasingly using participatory and co-design approaches (Tunstall, 2013). They respond to criticisms of the neo-colonial nature of project models that artificially divide local understandings of the craft process into design and manufacture stages, done by designers from the global north and producers from the global south respectively (Kasturi, 2004; Murray, 2010). Participatory and co-design approaches use a facilitated design process, in which designers and craftspeople collaborate to co-create craft objects, challenging unequal hierarchical relationships and pursuing innovative designs, in order to access new markets (Fathers, 2005; Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015). Projects aim to increase the craftsperson's agency within the process. These approaches may result in changes to one or more elements of the craft methodology, including craft process, material, product, aesthetic, market and scale of production. Alternative models partner design students from national or international academic institutions with craftspeople and apply similar principles (Rhodes, 2015).

There is increasing criticism of the use of participatory design in CLPs: two main points are raised. First, the use of the design process itself suggests a lack of recognition of local creative methodologies and an assumption that traditional craft does not involve innovation (Tunstall, 2013). Neither 'craft' nor 'design' may adequately describe the traditional processes of making understood in the global south, which may employ reflective thinking and material understandings in a far more integrated way than design approaches in the global north (Tunstall, 2013). Furthermore, the design process is built on understandings from the global north and has a history of being used for oppressive purposes by colonial administrations; it risks undermining these traditional methodologies and fundamentally changing the meaning of making (Ghose, 1989; Tunstall, 2013).

A second problem is that voices from the global south are largely absent in the literature, which predominantly consists of reflective pieces by design practitioners and theoretical critiques of CLP methods (Murray, 2010; Tunstall, 2013). Despite repeated calls from design practitioners themselves for the craftsperson's voice to be brought into the discussion, there seems little commitment within design literature to alter this (Ladd, 2012). Voices from the global south that are present are often gatekeepers and NGO staff, rather than craftspeople

themselves. Participants' responses, when they are included, are not presented with methodological information on how they were gathered, making it difficult to determine how representative they are. The absence of the craftsperson's voice is in stark contrast to narratives of equalising hierarchical inequalities (Tunstall, 2013). To address these concerns, it is imperative to bring the voices and perspectives of craftspeople themselves into the centre of the discussion in a systematic and rigorous way (Murray, 2010; Tunstall, 2013).

These criticisms can be extended to address a wider question about the role and value of craft in society, which is examined in numerous anthropological perspectives using anthropological apprenticeship and ethnographic research methods (Brouwer, 1997; Marchand, 2008; Savasere, 2010). Critically, these approaches rely on the researcher spending an extended period of time in the craft context, observing, asking questions and engaging directly with the craft process and the craftspeople in situ. These investigations not only explore the craft process itself, but also use craft to illuminate power relationships, social hierarchies, pedagogies, cultural histories and other aspects of the local culture (Brouwer, 1997; Marchand, 2008; Savasere, 2010).

Two themes from this literature are particularly pertinent to CLPs. The first is that craft practice appears to be deeply embedded within the life of the craftsperson and often the whole community (Brouwer, 1997). Brouwer describes the role of craft for Indian artisans as intertwined within a wider belief system of religious, economic, social and political activities and ideas: a sense of 'completeness', from which any one aspect is inseparable (Brouwer, 1997). He cautions against development practitioners attempting to project their own financial understandings that divide economic activities from these other domains (Brouwer, 1997). In other examples, craft is also connected to spiritual, and religious practices, the environment, individual and societal relationships, political activity and economics in interconnected ways (Maskiell, 1999; Marchand, 2008; Savasere, 2010).

The second theme that relates to CLPs is the importance of craft to constructions of cultural identity (Scrase, 2003; Savasere, 2010). This is typically related not only to individual identity in terms of pride, achievement and ability (Maskiell, 1999), but also to collective identity based on shared cultural heritage, aesthetic values and livelihoods (Maskiell, 1999; Savasere, 2010). Additionally, Scrase draws on ideas around hybrid identities to suggest that craftspeople have multiple intersecting identities in relation to their practices, as they negotiate shifts in traditional processes to suit contemporary markets (Scrase, 2003).

There is an ethical imperative for stakeholders of CLPs to consider the potential consequences of altering traditional craft methodologies. Accounts by design practitioners that focus on project activities and creative agency, artificially isolate making from the historical, environmental, social and political dimensions of the craft process[1]. Development perspectives demonstrate many examples of unintended consequences of CLPs: environmental damage, conflict over gender dynamics and shifts from diverse livelihoods to risky, insecure markets (Scrase, 2003). Engaging with the role that traditional craft plays in the local context may identify aspects of life to which it is inseparably connected. Consideration of these connections at the outset could highlight potential consequences and investigate them as part of the design of the intervention.

Consideration of these interconnections may also increase the likelihood that CLPs become more sustainable in the long term. Design practitioners' accounts often focus on the duration of the intervention and refer only anecdotally, if at all, to long-term outcomes (Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015). These time frames may be too short to see these interconnections, the ways that they are disrupted as craft methodologies shift and the ways that craftspeople may resolve these tensions. In addition, consideration of these connections could contextualise process-based participatory design literature: detailed accounts of design activities provide a blueprint for other practitioners, without meaningful evaluation of outcomes, definitions for claimed success or even cultural context.

Methodology

This research aims to investigate female makers' reflections on their creative process in two contexts: Madagascar and the UK. It will examine the following research questions:

- How do craftswomen in the global north and the global south reflect on the embeddedness of their craft practice?
- What implications do different understandings have for the implementation of participatory design approaches to craft livelihoods projects?

Two samples have been selected for a comparative case study approach. The Madagascar sample comprised ten female members of a craft livelihoods embroidery project, ranging from 17 to 60 years of age. Since 2012, the community has been involved with an embroidery livelihoods project that was developed by the community and a local and UK NGO partnership. This was in response to the community identifying that the reeds used for traditional basket and mat weaving were in decline and they were seeking an alternative livelihoods strategy that did not rely on natural resources. I have been involved with the project since the outset, teaching technical embroidery skills and later supporting business skills. No formal design process was taught and embroiderers have developed individual methodologies and styles over time. Individuals make speculatively and to commission. Sales money from the cooperative's shop goes directly to the maker of each product when it sells. The participants are all former weavers and have been practicing embroidery independently for three to five years without technical or creative support from the project.

The UK case involved a sample of six-textile craftswomen aged between 40 and 65, all of whom made recreationally and four professionally. Five participants were members of the same informal network, and all engaged in social as well as individual making, and in formal teaching or informal skill sharing. Some participants were self-taught or had learned through family or friends, while some had attended professional or recreational training courses to support various aspects of their creative practices. All engaged in at least two textiles crafts.

A visual elicitation methodology was used, whereby objects were used to facilitate discussion and reflection on complex and intangible topics (Harper, 2002). Data collection methods were adapted to suit each context, according to preferences of makers. In the UK sample, craftswomen were asked to bring three pieces of their craftwork that they felt were significant, which were used to prompt reflection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, allowing space for the participant to guide the interview. Craftswomen in Madagascar were less practiced at discussing their creative processes. A more experimental approach was therefore taken, in an attempt to individualise each conversation to suit the participant. Some interviews were conducted individually, others in pairs; some conversations were held while making was being undertaken; some makers created commissions illustrating their embroidery process, which they then discussed. In both case studies, interviews were audio recorded and analysis was done thematically, both within and across cases, based on Braun and Clarke's six-stage method for thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Reflexivity is critical in this approach and the examination of the intersectionality of the researcher was particularly important. This was done formally through a reflexive journal. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Bath.

Analysis

The analysis revealed that craftswomen reflecting on their practices discussed rich and diverse methodologies with wide ranging connections to other aspects of life. Each participant had developed an individual set of concerns within their practice, and these were embedded in different ways. Connections were complex, inter-related and overlapping, and commonalities were evident across one or both cases. Three themes emerged: identity, relational connections (which includes three sub-themes of social connections, pedagogies and

context) and economic connections. The conversations suggested that each connection could be seen by the craftswoman as highly valuable, constraining, or both simultaneously.

Identity

Every conversation revealed the central importance of craft making in constructions of identity. Individual practices were, in both cases, driven by constant reflection and the need for development, and craftswomen derived deep senses of pride and satisfaction from making successful work. However, reflections revealed that different aspects of craft making were important in identities in each case. British women focused on developing and diversifying their practices. Their methodologies were made up of multiple strands of different activities and unique skill sets were seen as an important part of their individual craft identity. The women constantly challenged themselves to learn new processes and try new materials. They clearly enjoyed the novelty and potential of combining different processes. Refinement of skills, quality and craftsmanship were mentioned less frequently than diversity. Craftswomen were happy to generate their own designs as well as work from bought patterns. They saw this as a form of collaboration; a way of connecting to others through dialogue or emulation. Craftswomen talked with great emotion about the importance of craft to their sense of self, and often attributed their personal qualities to their craft processes, for example Linda (UK) reflected, “it has made me more confident, because I am confident about my sewing”.

Malagasy craftswomen, on the contrary, discussed a single strand methodology, in which they strived for good quality and challenged themselves to generate new designs. Their craft identity was not tied to diversity of processes as much as diversity of designs, and the ability to generate new ones. Embroiderers avoided working using other people’s designs and each embroiderer’s work was clearly recognisable to all members of the co-operative. Nambinina (Madagascar) reflected, “it is important to me that it is my design, because it is created by me. I am proud of it”. This is particularly interesting as traditional weaving typically follows standardised designs, products and sizes: in their previous craft livelihood, they may not even have recognised their own products at the market. However, when working on embroidery, diversity of designs was seen as vital to economic success and, therefore, generation of high quality designs was critical in the identity of a successful embroiderer. Despite these individual practices, conversations suggested that Malagasy craftswomen felt a shared identity with other embroiderers.

Relational Connections

Craft played a critical role in the ways that craftswomen reflected on relating: to other people more generally, to specific individuals, to their environment and to their cultural histories. This was the most complex and overlapping theme.

Social connections

Social bonds and connections were built through making in both contexts. British craftswomen all engaged in social making activities as well as individual making. This was done with friends, at textiles guilds or societies, where they were members or group leaders, and with others at home. Craft played a central role in these relationships: conversations were about making and sometimes the work itself was collaborative. The connections forged through these shared making experiences were imbued in the objects themselves, and as craftswomen reflected on pieces they recollected the shared experience of making, or the experience of making as a gift for family or friends. For example, Ana (UK) reflected on an object in her home, “the friendships that were formed through making that as well, that was really nice. And it is there in my daily life, you know, so it's really good, it lifts my spirits”.

Malagasy craftswomen also made socially, with extended family, friends and neighbours, typically in small groups in areas of shade near their houses, with embroiderers and weavers often present. Not all embroiderers enjoyed this! They described socialising while making, as opposed to about making. All the Malagasy embroiderers preferred to do some parts of their process individually so that they could concentrate. Some preferred to do other aspects of the work socially while others preferred to work on their own throughout. However, this was challenging, as they reflected that weavers did not understand their need to concentrate, and it was difficult to find a place to work on their own. Tantely (Madagascar) described the issue, "I prefer to be on my own because that is when I can finish my products faster because I don't get distracted. When I am with other people I can get distracted, and sometimes I put down my work".

Pedagogies

Craftswomen in both contexts discussed connections they had built through teaching and learning, and the changing nature of these processes over time. They discussed a shift from craft skills being passed down the generations from female elders, to skills being passed on across generations from one family to another. In the UK, makers talked about this shift happening when they became adults and moved away from home. Craft became an activity they did socially, in groups, where skills were passed on, and they actively sought classes and courses to learn new techniques. Diversity of practice was central to their making identities and new connections with other individuals and collectives emerged through the pursuit of new skills.

Malagasy craftswomen discussed the shift in pedagogy that had occurred with their transition from weaving to embroidery. They discussed the history of reed weaving that goes back many generations in the region, and women talked about the skill being given by the ancestors (worshipped by the Malagasy). There is great respect for elders and traditional skills are typically passed from mother to daughter, strengthening filial relationships. As demand for embroidery has increased, traditional pedagogies have shifted, with adults learning new skills from each other, rather than girls learning from their mothers. Some embroiderers wanted their daughters to learn weaving as it is considered an essential skill for women but they had to ask practicing weavers in the family to teach this skill, as they themselves no longer undertook weaving. This connection between mother-daughter and craft practice appears to have been disrupted by the shift in craft methodology and remains unresolved.

Context

Craftswomen in both cases constantly contextualised their work by situating it in relation to other craft. British craftswomen consistently located pieces on their own continuum of making (by which they were often surrounded in the home) and in relation to craft practices of their own families. They reflected on the methodologies of their mothers and grandmothers, discussing how they had learned from these women. However, they distanced themselves from these 'traditional' methodologies, referring to changes in approach to craft and resources that had allowed them to diversify and to pursue conceptual and aesthetic rather than 'needful' making. Sue (UK) reflected, "I think maybe my grandmother would have just knitted, and done the same thing time after time after time to some extent, and probably not developed that at all… I think people are more up for innovation these days".

Malagasy craftswomen contextualised their making in relation to place, rather than family history. They stressed the importance of weaving to notions of gender, in Madagascar, the local region, the bush more generally, and the village. They spoke of the vital role that weaving played in their community, producing everyday items, and items for ceremonial occasions, for example mats to wrap the dead or for guests to sit on. Haingo (Madagascar) explained, "if you are a woman here you are supposed to be able to weave. In the bush, weaving mats is vital… an essential item that we need in everyday life". The craftswomen also reflected on the importance of the reeds being provided by the Creator.

When the Malagasy craftswomen discussed their embroidery methodologies, these were always related back to weaving. Embroidery was seen as a way of communicating the weaving culture they no longer practiced, for

example Rosella (Madagascar) explained a piece of her embroidery work, “I was trying to show the weaving culture that we have here. You don’t see this anywhere else”. The visual parallel is striking (see figures 1 and 2). The natural environment, from which the reeds were taken for weaving, was central in image making (see figure 3). Although embroidery was a new process to most of the embroiderers, it was still situated in terms of place: the village, the bush, the region and the country, as well as being constantly related back to the previous craft.

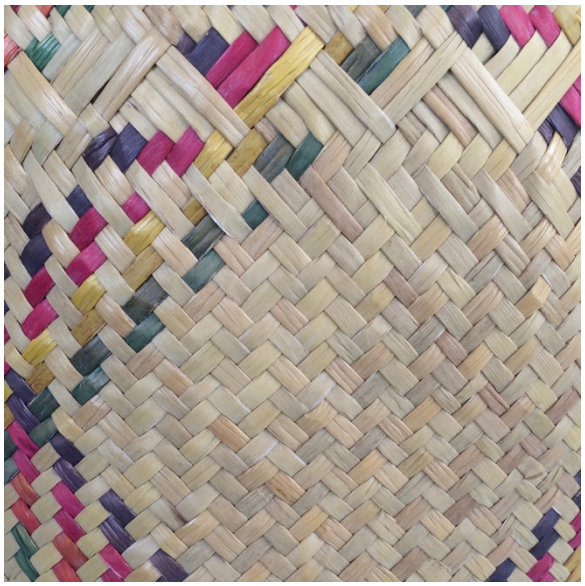

Figure 1. Detail of traditionally woven basket

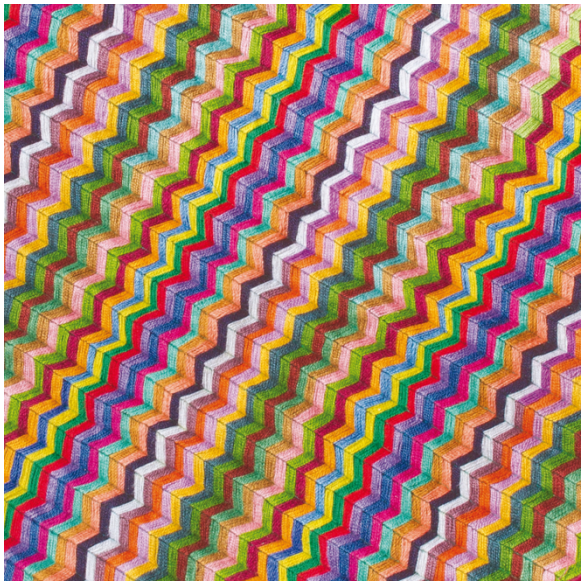

Figure 2. Detail of hand embroidered cushion cover

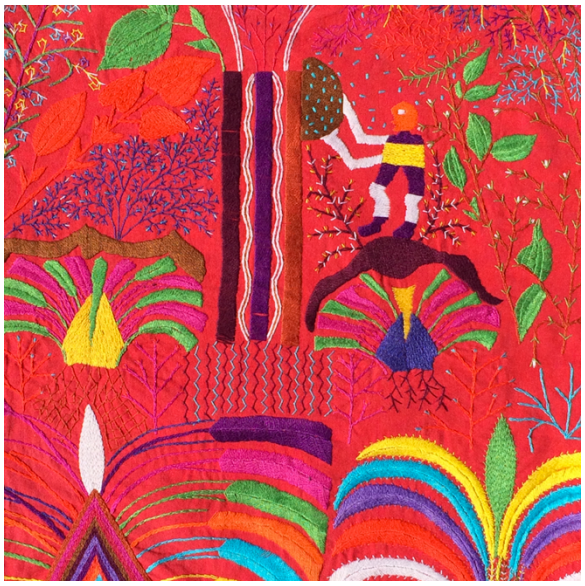

Figure 3. Detail of embroidered cushion cover depicting a man collecting wild honey in the forest

Economic Connections

Craft practice was connected to money, although craftswomen in each context dealt with these connections differently. Economic issues were central to every conversation with Malagasy embroiderers, whereas British embroiderers rarely referenced economic considerations affecting their making. In both cases, choice of materials was limited by what craftswomen could afford. However, British makers were typically able to find cheaper substitutes and therefore were still able to make works similar to their initial intentions. Malagasy craftswomen all described their making being actively constrained by the materials they had: leftovers would dictate the colours of new products and this affected motivation.

Craftswomen who produced professionally in Britain described time constraints, such as payment for a commission dictating the number of hours spent on it. However, when frustrated by such economic limitations, the British women responded though recreational making without these restrictions, often using a more detailed or time-consuming technique or process, to make items for their homes or as gifts. Every professional craftswomen had several strands to her craft methodology, each providing different value. Therefore, if the economic activities were not fulfilling, women undertook different craft activities for wellbeing, pride and satisfaction.

Malagasy embroiderers all had single strand methodologies: their financially precarious situations prevented them from making recreationally. They all undertook embroidery full-time, rather than weaving, as it was more efficient, more enjoyable and less physically demanding. Economic considerations constrained their designs at every stage. They referred to customer preference in every decision during the craft process, including choice of product, colour, stitch, image or design. While some embroiderers preferred the novelty of constantly making new designs and others preferred the familiarity of repeating a single design, they all engaged in making a wide range of designs and products because they felt they were more likely to make a sale. This was often likened to using natural resources, for example Kazy (Madagascar) explained, “the reason I want to make different products and designs is that when you sell something, it is like setting a trap. You set several, and if one doesn’t catch something, then another one might”.

In addition, in Madagascar, craft was central to an informal welfare system operating between craft makers.

During the shift from weaving to embroidery, economic connections with weaving were being transferred to embroidery. The embroiderers talked about an informal labour system that they had previously used when they were weavers, in which money could be borrowed and paid back by weaving mats using materials provided by the lender. Although rates of pay for this casual work were low, they allowed craftswomen to obtain money immediately in emergencies on trust based on their craft skills. The embroiderers described a similar relationship with embroidery 'trainees' or 'helpers', other women who have learned embroidery informally to meet demand and often work in a similar informal manner.

Discussion

This section has two aims. First, the interconnectedness of craft in each context and the main differences are discussed. This includes the values and constraints that craftswomen perceive and the ways that they renegotiate these connections as their methodologies change. The second considers how recognition of this interconnectedness can be used to develop participatory design approaches in which the voice of the maker is more central in identifying the role of craft and the potential challenges for craftspeople if it is disrupted. This could make space within projects for the renegotiation of these connections.

The most striking difference between the reflections of craftswomen from Madagascar and the UK was related to the interconnectedness of their craft processes, particularly in reference to the value and constraints that connections or interconnections bring. Malagasy craftswomen all described a wider range of connections than British women, covering economic, social, cultural, spiritual and geographical dimensions. This is consistent with anthropological investigations of other craft communities in the global south, which refer to interconnectedness or embeddedness of craft process in terms of place, identity, economic, social, relational, religious, spiritual and political domains of life (Brouwer, 1997). It may also reflect the differences between craft practice as a majority livelihood in Madagascar and a more unusual livelihood in the UK. Were the research conducted in a physical community of makers in the UK, responses may have been different.

British craftswomen reflected much more on social connections, particularly in relation to individual identity, and built multiple connections with other individuals through their practices. They were less constrained by the connections identified than Malagasy craftswomen. The British craftswomen all had long histories of working with multi-strand methodologies, which included activities they carried out for economic reasons, pleasure and wellbeing. They taught and / or learned many processes, materials and techniques, including experimental approaches and following patterns. They made individually, socially and collaboratively. Constraints due to connections that affected one strand were adeptly avoided in other strands; for example, clients' ideas and time limitations applied due to price were avoided when making recreationally. Making as a social activity that constrained concentration was compensated for by individual making undertaken in a quiet space when family were out of the house. Each strand therefore provided different constraints and values.

The constraints faced by Malagasy craftswomen were typically more acute. Due to the financial necessity of every craft encounter, craftswomen did not have the same luxury of resolving commercial frustrations by making for the home or for gifts. Constraints were not only financial, but also governed by social and relational aspects of life. Relationships within the village and deference to elders within family and community, as well as avoidance of conflict over design ownership (a problem not relevant in weaving due to standardised designs), all dictated aspects of creative decision making.

Similarly, the value brought by a range of these connections seemed greater among Malagasy than British craftswomen. Whereas British craftswomen built their identity on diversity of practice and their ability to pass on skills, Malagasy craftswomen built their identities on the role, meaning and spiritual significance of traditional craft in their community, in their region and in Madagascar as a whole. This was spiritually important and connected them not only with their own family histories, but also with their shared ancestors. The shift in craft from weaving to embroidery had led to a renegotiation of these relationships. For example, the use of

natural resources (reeds) provided by the Creator appeared to have been replaced by the figurative importance of flora, fauna and the landscape in embroidery. Women who no longer wove coffins or mats ensured that they purchased more than enough mats for their household alone to ensure that they could still contribute to community events by sharing them. Informal welfare systems developed around weaving were also transferred, in a different form, to embroidery, as most embroiderers trained family and friends to conduct informal work to meet demand.

The analysis shows that through the interconnections with other domains of life, the role of craft in each community is significantly different. In the UK, craft was predominantly an activity undertaken for enjoyment, wellbeing, social interaction, and sometimes for generating income. In Madagascar, craft was essential to the life of the whole community. Not only was it the primary source of income for women, it was also an activity that was undertaken while social interaction was taking place, connecting craftswomen to the Creator, the environment, the ancestors, the village, the region and the country. There is little evidence in the literature on participatory design to suggest that these interconnections and the role of craft are being considered. Literature typically focuses on craft and the design process. This reflects the priorities of British craftswomen, who reflected primarily on their own processes, techniques and materials. It suggests that design practitioners from the global north may be projecting their own cultural understandings of craft onto craft communities in the global south during CLPs.

A challenge for design practitioners is to consider these connections during the development of a project. This presents a number of difficulties. Projects are recognising the importance of understanding local craft processes and aesthetics, but the tools they are using may serve to isolate craft from these interconnections (Tunstall, 2013). Observations of the craft process in progress, demonstrations, and variations on the critique process in which artisans are asked to talk about what they have made, often appear to take place in a workshop scenario away from the homes of the craftspeople (Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015). Designers may have no experience of the culture in which they are working prior to the intervention. Local craftspeople may assume the connections between craft and other domains that occur in their community are universal, or may feel uncomfortable disclosing such details to outsiders and strangers. Simply by using their own cultural lens to focus on process, design practitioners may be excluding local understandings (Tunstall, 2013).

Cultural assumptions around the role of craft may be presenting challenges for craftspeople involved in CLPs. One example is the focus on open-ended experimentation to facilitate innovation, which is typical at the outset of a project (Hanson and Levin, 2015; Rhodes, 2015). While open-ended experimentation was described as an everyday craft activity by British craftspeople, Malagasy craftswomen related every creative decision to the customer and likelihood of making a sale. They actively minimised the creative risks they were taking and favoured a more incremental development, in which each product was developed based on reflections on the last. Not only does open-ended experimentation fail to build on this craft methodology, it could encourage more financial risk to be taken without the means to test ideas in the market. In addition, it is questionable as part of a sustainable strategy in contexts where participants may not be able to afford to take time out to engage in open-ended experimentation on future occasions.

A further example is a preference for co-design and co-creative activities, in which designer and craftsperson are making creative decisions together. It is difficult to imagine a reality in which this collaboration is as equal as designers suggest it might be. However, it also reflects a process more akin to that which British crafters described as collaboration - a process that Malagasy craftswomen did not have experience of. Malagasy women discussed the importance of embroidering their own designs rather than those of others, despite their craft histories of weaving mats and baskets to standardised designs. This was described as a source of pride and satisfaction, but may also be linked to them taking responsibility as individuals for renegotiating their own connections with environment, spiritual and cultural aspects of life through their embroidery practice. It also means they are fully responsible for the success of sales and the income they generate. Dividing this creative

process and building a one-off collaborative process in which the craftswoman collaborates with a designer or student from outside, is not sustainable if the outsider plays a dominant role. In a situation in which hierarchy is inevitable, it may also constrain a craftswoman into compromising when making financial decisions. These decisions could negatively affect her income, while the collaborating designer or design student faces no real consequences.

Recognition of these interconnections, and the constraints and values they provide, could improve craft livelihoods projects by early consideration of the impacts of changes in craft methodology. Projects could nurture shifts in craft methodology that not only generate increased income, but that craftspeople find useful and relevant. This could include examination of the role of traditional craft and consideration of the ways in which an altered craft process could continue to fulfil an existing role, or provide alternative connections. It could include the provision of space, time and support to encourage successful renegotiations between the altered and traditional craft connections, rather than the implementation of projects on a short time frame with no follow up support. It would inevitably involve the voice of the craftsperson as NGO staff and local gatekeepers may not fully appreciate the connections. Craftspeople themselves may need time to explore and consider them. The voice of the craftsperson would therefore need to be brought in at the conception or planning stages of the project, rather than simply at the delivery stage, which is consistently called for within the literature (Murray, 2010).

Consideration of the role of craft and its connections with other domains of life, as well as its embeddedness within a community, could be critical in improving outcomes around long-term sustainability. Despite the importance to international development outcomes, the discussion of sustainability in terms of long-term improvement for project participants is given very little consideration in the participatory design literature. In some cases there is no evidence that the design practitioner returned to the project site or found out the outcomes of projects. Reflective accounts, with no discussion of outcome, should therefore be treated with caution by others who wish to use them as blueprints. In addition, reflexivity, as opposed to reflectivity, could assist design practitioners to identify culturally specific assumptions around craft that may be isolating craft practices and methodologies from interconnected domains of life.

Conclusion

British craftswomen built individual identity and relationships through exploratory and diverse craft methodologies, building on a foundation of craft provided within the family when they were children. Malagasy women, on the contrary, considered their traditional making as a local, regional, national, and gendered identity. When their traditional methodology changed as the result of a livelihoods intervention, they renegotiated a different relationship to the traditional weaving process. Their new embroidery practice was also firmly rooted in place and identity.

Neither of these cases can be considered representative of all craftspeople in the global north or south. Both are small samples that do not demonstrate the vast diversity in craft methodologies. It is unsurprising that in contexts where craftspeople live in financial poverty the economic aspects of their practice become more acute. Yet, this research suggests that anthropological perspectives on the interconnectedness of craft in communities of craftspeople in the global south could be investigated further in relation to craft livelihoods projects. The voice of the maker, widely regarded as problematically absent from literature, could be used as a tool to recognise these interconnections and to consider the impact that a shift in traditional methodology could have on them. It may be easier for craftspeople to buy into projects and adapt to new methodologies if they have considered the challenges they may face in renegotiating these connections. Space, place and time with an emphasis on understanding, re-establishing and developing the opportunities and values that these interconnections present could increase satisfaction, community buy-in, wellbeing and long-term sustainability of craft livelihoods. Further research into craftspeople's experiences of methodological shifts and consequent changes in connections and interconnections with other domains of life is needed.

End Note

1. Rhodes considers relationships between people in relation to ‘Ubuntu’, or ‘interconnectedness’, in a participatory design approach used in South Africa, however this is explored in terms of collaboration (Rhodes, 2015). Anthropology of craft literature suggests that this interconnection happens much more broadly (Brouwer, 1997).

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