



**Making It Local:
what does this mean
in the context of
contemporary craft?**

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Acknowledgements

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The two fold aim of this exploratory study is: Firstly, to help identify and define how the notion of 'place' is interpreted and expressed across the contemporary craft sector and in the role of making. Secondly, to explore how the changing concept of 'local' is impacting on the business models and practices of UK craft makers.

The study provides a flavour of the breadth of business models and practices contemporary UK craft-makers are adopting in response to a number of identified macro-level challenges. The examples presented demonstrate that rather than becoming less significant, 'place' and the 'local' in contemporary craft-making are becoming ever more important.

Advances in internet and digital technologies, globalisation and economic trends, and broader sustainability and environmental concerns are not only driving new forms of business innovation, but are strengthening relationships with 'place' and the 'local' in a number of key and distinct ways.

This initial exploration highlights key trends towards new business models in a number of areas including:

- Digital technology, business growth and localised production
- The use of social media for marketing, engaging with customers and R&D
- Diversification into other markets
- Site-specific commissions
- The potential for craft towns
- Craft Tourism and rural regeneration
- New routes to market
- Ethical agendas, including sustainable making and consumption and local trading

Digital technologies are helping grow makers' businesses by expanding scales of production while keeping production 'local'. Newly affordable digital fabrication technologies including digital printing, cutting and finishing services are also supporting localised craft production models. These technologies are also forging new relevance for craft practices with a broader range of craft consumers. For example, makers are now able to offer customisation options and some are using these technologies for co-designing personalised craft objects.

Work and practice that references the maker's 'local' environment and the formation of personal narratives through, and of, place is increasingly seen as a response to globalised aesthetics. Although makers have arguably been slow to catch onto online selling, craft retail sites such as Etsy, Folksy and others have challenged the idea that buyers need to see and touch a craft object before purchase. Such sites have also increased the potential for small scale and often home based business models, particularly for women. Social media platforms and content-rich websites are being utilised in a number of innovative ways to develop stronger relationships between craft-makers and craft-consumers while promoting the quality and reliability of local craft objects and their provenance.

Craft skills are increasingly being valued in other sectors of the economy, and makers are using their specialist knowledge of materials to diversify into other markets. This form of innovative business practice is increasingly important for sustaining portfolio craft careers. Of particular relevance to this research, a number of makers are working on wide-ranging architectural, public-realm, urban regeneration and built environment projects for both public and private commissions, where they are required to respond creatively to notions of 'place' and local identity. Many of the most cutting edge makers are also regularly commissioned to undertake innovative, site-specific projects, often

exploring responses to a location's history and environment and 'sense of place'.

Makers are also repositioning contemporary crafts in the context of rural regeneration. Craft Tourism is a growing opportunity for local rural economic development, opening up new markets as well as acting as a stimulus for other locally-based trades. Similarly, a number of Craft Town initiatives are championing local craft-making traditions and work strongly rooted in place and that builds on local distinctiveness.

New routes to market include 'Open Studios' networks and events which have become a successful model for bringing together and increasing the market visibility of otherwise fragmented, small-scale local makers. Makers are also adopting a range of co-operative, social enterprise and 'collective' business models, designed to increase visibility and catalyse local craft enterprise. Schemes such as Craft Northern Ireland and National Trust NI's 'Spirit of Place', where the local market forms the context for the work, also provide exposure for local artists, while acting as a means of showcasing the breadth of local craft talent.

Finally, many makers are responding to wider consumer trends by supporting sustainable and ethical making as core to their practice, often using locally sourced, eco-friendly, salvaged and re-used materials wherever possible. Some makers are concerned with raising environmental awareness by encouraging sustainable consumption, and up-cycling existing items into new, high value craft objects. Many are emphasising local trading, and the use of local suppliers and supply chains. In rural areas, new links are forming between, for example, farming and fashion, as high-end designer clothing, textile and furnishing designers, milliners, and fibre artists use locally sourced fibre products which also help to build sustainable rural economies.

The examples presented in this initial exploration suggest that we are seeing a re-engagement of contemporary craft making with 'place' and the local.

Further research is needed to explore in-depth how makers are individually and collectively responding to the identified challenges, and the areas of support and development that are needed to help sustain and promote contemporary craft-makers and their businesses.

1. Background

1.1 Aims of research

The School of Performance and Cultural Industries (PCI), University of Leeds was commissioned by the Crafts Council in October 2013 to undertake an initial explorative study of the role of 'place' within the context of contemporary UK craft making.

There were two interlinked objectives: Firstly, to help identify and define how the notion of 'place' is interpreted and expressed across the contemporary craft sector and in the role of making. Secondly, to explore how the changing concept of 'local' is impacting on business models and practices of craft makers. While the focus of the study was primarily on the UK, international examples were also included as references.

The purpose of the study was to:

- Inform the Crafts Council's advocacy work on local/regional engagement and the importance of craft being embedded in the locality;
- Inform the Crafts Council's early thinking on the role of place for a 2014/15 research project looking at new business models, giving some steers about where to focus further research.

A contribution based on the study was presented at a one-day symposium entitled 'Placing Cultural Work: (New) Intersections of Location, Craft and Creativity', organised by The Open University and CRESC in November 2013.

1.2 Methodology

The investigation took the form of a desk-based review of literature and recent research conducted on behalf of the Crafts Council, including **Making Value**¹ which documented the distinctive contribution of craft-knowledge and craft-thinking to makers' work across different industry sectors and in community and education settings; **Consuming Craft**² which identified market trends and consumer perceptions of craft; and **Craft in an Age of Change**,³ a mapping and impact study of the contemporary craft sector which highlighted a number of global and local trends affecting craftspeople and their businesses.

These findings were explored and then contextualised using real-life illustrations and examples of contemporary craft-makers and their business models, focusing primarily on makers living and working within the UK and Northern Ireland, but also including international examples where appropriate. The chosen aim of the given examples is to reflect some of the diversity of contemporary business models being adopted by contemporary craft-makers and their relationship to 'place'.

1 Yair and Schwarz (2012)

2 Morris Hargreaves
McIntyre (2010).

3 BOP Consulting (2012).

1.3 Definition of Contemporary Crafts

In line with previous Crafts Council research, we have taken a broad definition of Contemporary Craft.

We have focused on professional makers, i.e. those attempting to make money or run a business from their craft practice, rather than those making craft or using their craft skills in a non-commercial capacity or as a hobby, although we note this distinction is not clear-cut. As with the recent Making Value study (Schwarz and Yair, 2010) we use the term maker to represent those working with a contemporary aesthetic in craft disciplines including but not exclusive to automata, basketry, blacksmithing, book art, ceramics, furniture, glass, jewellery, lettering, metalwork, mosaic, paper, printmaking, puppetry, stone carving, textiles and wood.

Craft practice is no longer exclusively focused on the making of objects, but also includes the use of craft skills in a range of consultancy and other knowledge-based services. Craft and education has been reviewed in recently commissioned Crafts Council research,⁴ therefore we have not included this aspect here. Of particular relevance in this research, we have included examples of makers who are applying materials understanding and craft thinking in different contexts, especially in architecture, public realm, and the built environment.

2. The theme of ‘local’ in the context of contemporary craft

2.1 Introduction

Craft economies have traditionally been highly related to place and locality. Craft-making is often viewed as culturally embedded (vernacular) material production⁵ involving close engagement of the maker with the physical world, working with its sensory, material, spatial and environmental qualities to create objects highly related to ‘place’.

Craft can also be understood as a process and as “an approach, an attitude or an action ... a way of doing things”⁶ underpinned by particular ways of thinking which are constructed in response to an array of cultural, economic, political and societal frameworks as well as physical forces which form the context for craft. These relationships might collectively offer an alternative understanding of craft as a “system of thinking”.⁷

Particular ways of thinking, knowing and making are shaped, in part, by the places in which craft-makers live: “The affective relationship – making, identity building, social capital, political intent, emotional context – all play a role in why people are drawn to: make; what they make, and the context in which they make.”⁸

Craft often represents an intensely personal or symbolic relationship with a particular locality.⁹ This ‘sense of place’ does, by its very nature, largely defy objective analysis: it is as unique to each person as it is to each locality.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is important to our understanding of the significance of contemporary craft and craft practice, and how it is evolving, to interrogate what these relationships might mean in the context of 21st century making.

Despite claims that ‘place’ no longer matters, it remains central to most forms of cultural production, including craft.¹¹ But the relationship between craft and ‘place’ is becoming more complex: there are significant shifts in both the discursive and material understandings of ‘locality’ and the ‘local’. These relate to wider themes acknowledged in the recent Crafts Council report “Craft in an Age of Change”¹² and include the advance of internet and digital technologies; economic challenges and globalisation trends; and broader environmental sustainability and social equity concerns. These shifts represent both challenges and opportunities.

While acknowledging a strong ‘localist’ strain in contemporary craft-making,¹³ at the same time, as people re-form their ideas of and around place-ness, how are contemporary craft practices, production methods and business models changing and being challenged?

5 Sennett (2008: 8–9).

6 Adamson (2007:4).

7 Follett and Valentine (2010:5).

8 Lichti-Harriman (no date: no pagination).

9 Racz, 2009; Williams et al. (1992:31).

10 Hubbard et al. (2002:16).

11 Scott (2000:3) “culture is a phenomenon that tends to have intensely local characteristics thereby helping to differentiate places from one another.”

12 BOP Consulting (2012).

13 BOP Consulting (2012: 41).

2.2 What is 'local' in the context of contemporary craft?

Craft-makers relationships with the 'local' are diverse. Some makers strongly root their practices in particular places, emphasising authenticity, and building on local (historical) craft traditions.¹⁴ Others respond to site-specific inspiration, creating one-off pieces where the (physical, social, cultural, political) environment strongly influences their work. A growing number respond to their locality by supporting sustainable making and the use of local materials and/or local production methods as core elements of their practice.

Craft as material culture, varies **within and between urban, suburban and rural environment** and at **different socio-spatial scales**: from a maker's home environment, to connections to particular craft studio traditions; distinctive craft quarters (in diverse places such as Wells and Manchester); "Craft Towns" (including Totnes, Farnham and West Kilbride); and distinctive regional practices and aesthetics promoted through, for example, largely rural Craft Guilds. Beyond that, there are particular national traditions and identities (Scottish craft being distinct from Welsh, English or Irish craft, for example).

Craft-makers today are increasingly **neither spatially nor culturally confined**: online access allows makers to follow each other's work and to be connected across geographic borders - the Internet enabling effortless visual consumption of different cultural aesthetics: **so can contemporary craft still be 'placed'? Or is cultural and geographical dis/location changing craft practice?**

Current thinking around contemporary jewellery, for example, suggests that many national jewellery identities have disseminated and cultural styles have become more permeable.¹⁵ While we can distinguish between the styles of individual makers, national jewellery identities have dissolved, so "variety increases within each country while diversity diminishes globally."¹⁶ **One might argue, technology and globalisation have conspired to increase uncertainty about what we mean by 'place' and how we relate to it.**

Alternatively, work and practice that references the maker's 'local' environment and the formation of personal narratives through, and of, place is increasingly seen as a response to such global aesthetics. Beth Legg examined the influences on the relatively new field of contemporary Scandinavian jewellery and the strong links between nature, landscape and identity which have resulted in a relatively coherent approach and aesthetic to the genre. **Therefore, are we seeing a return to 'sense of place' – re-engagement with the local and the language of material, object and origin?**

¹⁴ BOP Consulting (2012).

¹⁵ Legg (2012).

¹⁶ den Besten, quoted in Cummins, Holmes and Skinner (2011:6).

3. Trends shaping contemporary craft practice and businesses

Recent Crafts Council reports including **Making Value**¹⁷ and **Craft in an Age of Change**¹⁸ have highlighted the (rapidly) changing nature of craft activity, and a number of opportunities and challenges that contemporary craft-practitioners face in developing their practices and businesses.

3.1 Portfolio working and multiple roles

Craft activity is far more diverse and far more complex than older models of craft-practice suggest. Today's craft-makers are predominantly portfolio workers, either from choice or by necessity. An estimated 65 – 70% of makers are developing their careers in this way.¹⁹

It is key to note that portfolio working has evolved to include a far wider range of craft and craft-related activities than before (including teaching, community work, writing, curating, design and consultancy) as well as non-craft related work²⁰

For many, craft work itself typically also includes a variety of different types of work undertaken on different scales and for different purposes: "Today's practitioners make one-off conceptual pieces, design works for batch production, are designer-makers and accept commissions for site-specific work."²¹

Portfolio craft makers also carefully manage these multiple personae, "consciously presenting themselves in different ways for different audiences, markets and areas of work."²²

Also significant is that contemporary craft practice is no longer exclusively focused on the making of objects: "In addition to (or instead of) making, many makers apply their specialist knowledge, skills and working methods in other ways."²³

3.2 Diversification into other sectors

Explored in detail in Making Value,²⁴ individual makers are increasingly diversifying their practice, and collaborating with other professionals in a variety of different roles outside of established craft contexts.

Craft skills are increasingly in demand in other creative sectors, including architecture and interior design, advertising, performing arts, film and television, and heritage as well as in the wider knowledge economy, in sectors as diverse as industrial design and manufacturing, where "collaboration with craft makers is driving innovation in products and processes."²⁵

Craft Blueprint²⁶ noted that innovation is vital for maintaining craft as a professional occupation, as well as for securing competitiveness in the marketplace.

3.3 Commercialisation

Craft-makers often worry about balancing the opportunities for commercialisation of their work with their personal creative integrity, identity and distinctiveness. Often, this informs where, with whom and in what ways makers choose to work.²⁷ For many makers, "there is a strong synergy between creative direction and business strategies: new products and services are developed not only to generate income, but also in pursuit of creative fulfilment."²⁸

It is also recognised that there are increasing tensions for craft-makers whose practices are strongly rooted in particular places and/or local traditions and their need and/or desire to tap into the highly competitive global marketplace.²⁹ This theme is explored in more detail in Section 5.

¹⁷ Schwarz and Yair (2010).
¹⁸ BOP Consulting (2012).
¹⁹ Schwarz and Yair (2010:5).
²⁰ Schwarz and Yair (2010:6); BOP Consulting (2012).
²¹ Racz (2009:1).
²² Schwarz and Yair (2010:5).
²³ BOP Consulting (2012:14); Hunt et al. (2010).
²⁴ Schwarz and Yair (2010).
²⁵ Schwartz and Yair (2010:5); see also Yair (2011b).
²⁶ CCSkills & Crafts Council (2009:23).
²⁷ Schwarz and Yair (2010).
²⁸ Yair (2012b:3).
²⁹ BOP Consulting (2012:41).

4. The Market and the marketplace for contemporary crafts

As highlighted in both **Consuming Craft**³⁰ and **Craft in an Age of Change**,³¹ while the market for contemporary craft is rapidly evolving, the methods by which UK craft is sold have arguably been slow to catch up. This section briefly explores the current market and marketplace for UK contemporary craft.

4.1 Selling Craft

Contemporary craft is sold through a number of different routes. Selling directly to the public is typical of the sector, and key channels for makers include selling from their own studio, shop or home; via commissions and at specialised craft fairs, such as the Crafts Council's [Collect](#), [Great Northern Contemporary](#) and others covering specific craft disciplines including [British Ceramics Biennial](#), Sheffield's [Galvanize](#), [British Glass Biennale](#) and [Stroud International Textiles](#). Indirectly, makers sell via a range of specialist retail, commercial galleries and exhibitions.³²

The retail market for craft is primarily UK-based: over 70% of makers do not export their products. Sales of craft by craft retailers are also highly localised, mostly to customers in the surrounding area or to people living in other parts of the UK.³³ Tourism currently appears to be of minor importance for a large proportion of craft businesses.³⁴ Nonetheless, a similar proportion is looking for new markets for their products.³⁵

The proportion of craft business revenues from online sales is small in comparison to more traditional outlets, but its significance is growing. Craft retail sites such as Etsy, Folksy and others have challenged the idea that buyers need to see and touch a craft object before purchase.³⁶ Such sites have also increased the potential for small scale and often home based business models, particularly for women. The percentage of makers selling online has more than doubled since 2004, and around 30% of makers currently sell through their own website, with 13% selling through third-party websites. Only a tiny proportion (around 3%) currently use social media to sell, however.³⁷

4.2 Consuming craft

Crafts Council research indicates that **'place' and the local are of increasing importance for craft consumers, with authenticity and provenance forging new significance for craft products.**³⁸ When globalised distribution systems mean mass-produced products are available anywhere, **personalised, exclusive and original objects with a genuine local connection are increasingly being valued.**³⁹

In *Consuming Craft*,⁴⁰ the word 'craft' was also found to be most closely associated with terms suggesting 'authenticity' and 'quality', particularly 'handmade', 'workmanship' and 'genuine'. The main reasons for buying or considering buying craft were: 'Craft makes a unique gift' (58%), 'I admire the human skill involved / want to keep craft skills alive' (55%); 'Beautiful objects appeal to me' (49%); 'It means I own something that nobody else does' (41%).⁴¹

Research also suggests that the narratives behind craft objects have become increasingly appealing to buyers. Consumers are ever more interested in the stories and personal connections behind objects, the origin of an object, who made it, how it was made and what materials were used.⁴²

This resonates with the current turn towards **sustainability and ethical consumerism** to which craft values can speak. With the desire for a more socially equitable and environmentally sustainable mode of living, craft is "a modern way of thinking

³⁰ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010).

³¹ BOP Consulting (2012).

³² BOP (2012:22).

³³ BOP(2012:8).

³⁴ Under half (43%) of makers surveyed said that tourism is very or fairly important to their business (BOP, 2012: 42).

³⁵ More than half (58%) of makers surveyed want to find new markets for their products (BOP Consulting, 2012: 44).

³⁶ Yair (2012b)

³⁷ BOP Consulting (2012: 40).

³⁸ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010:7).

³⁹ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010: 49).

⁴⁰ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010).

⁴¹ Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010:5)

⁴² Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2010: 6).

otherwise".⁴³ The literature is only just starting to consider the possibilities that craft and craftsmanship represent for sustainability.⁴⁴ The growth in interest in purchasing locally produced products or products associated with a particular region has also increased interest in craft.

A related trend is the desire for consumers to learn craft skills. This can already be seen with the popularity of craft activities at festivals and the demand for craft workshops as well as 'make-your-own' kits developed by makers.⁴⁵ 'Craft tourism' - and here the term is used to refer to the trend for people visiting particular places to attend seminars, workshops and residential craft schools, where they learn a craft or skill directly from local producers - is also becoming popular (**see Section 6**), linking craft to the experience economy.

⁴³ Adamson (2009:5).

⁴⁴ See Ferraro et al. (2011).

⁴⁵ Explored in Schwarz and Yair (2010).

5. Drivers of change in the contemporary craft sector

This section considers some of the macro-level factors driving change in the contemporary craft sector. These were explored in detail in **Craft in an Age of Change**,⁴⁶ which highlighted a number of challenges, including rapid advances in the internet and digital technologies, globalisation and economic trends, and broader sustainability and environmental concerns. These areas are clearly interrelated. **Combined, they signify significant implications for contemporary craft-makers, their relationship with ‘place’ and the ‘local’ and their business models.**

5.1 Digital technologies

The emergence of affordable digital manufacturing and fabrication tools and advances in digital media, including Web 2.0 applications, are acknowledged as having the potential to radically reshape contemporary craft practice, production and consumption. This was recognised by Handmade at the Future Everything conference in Manchester, 2011: “A new maker community is emerging, connecting the culture of traditional skills and materials with modern-day digital production, distribution and interaction techniques.”⁴⁷

We are already seeing significant changes: **57% of makers are using digital technology in their practice or production**, with the majority of these doing so often or all the time, while 30% are using digital technology for designing, 19% for making and 24% for business purposes (marketing, communication and/or photography).⁴⁸

Until recently, despite the emergence of digital workshops such as Fab Labs and a small number of university-based facilities such as Metropolitan Works which enabled the sharing and developing of equipment, access to these technologies for the wider making community has remained a challenge.⁴⁹

Newly affordable digital fabrication technologies including digital printing, cutting and finishing services offer potential new business models and growth strategies for makers. These technologies are also being used to forge new relevance for craft practices with a broader range of craft consumers. For example, makers can choose to offer customisation options and co-design and co-creation can also be facilitated.

Although makers have arguably been slow to catch onto online selling,⁵⁰ they are now starting to embrace these technologies. Content-rich websites and social media platforms are being used in innovative ways that add value to craft objects, as well as tools for creative development and new business generation.⁵¹

5.2 Globalisation and economic trends

Globalisation has opened up new markets and opportunities for contemporary crafts makers, but in an increasingly crowded, internationally connected and intensely competitive marketplace, craft production faces a number of challenges including:⁵²

- How to valorise the skill content of craft
- How to distinguish craft products from mass produced goods
- High levels of competition
- How to develop (or convey) quality

⁴⁶ BOP Consulting (2012).

⁴⁷ Yair (2011b).

⁴⁸ BOP Consulting (2012:8 & 40).

⁴⁹ Yair (2012b).

⁵⁰ BOP (2012).

⁵¹ Yair (2012a: 1).

⁵² BOP Consulting (2012).

These challenges have promoted business responses in terms of innovation and market development. In **Craft in an Age of Change**⁵³ makers reacted to current economic challenges facing the sector by looking to develop new or different products, finding new markets, and looking to use different materials.

As mentioned in the previous section, the future market for UK craft is likely to become concentrated at the higher-end, where originality and aesthetic value matter and where skills and knowledge can earn a premium.⁵⁴

Economic pressures may, however, also accelerate the trend for portfolio working and diversification into new sectors, as makers look to utilise their craft skills to bring in income from a broader range of sources.⁵⁵

5.3 Sustainability

Craft practices are increasingly being allied to **contemporary sustainability and well-being agendas – and are responding to the wider consumer trends already highlighted in Section 4**. The importance of this agenda was signified in the conference, **Making Futures 3**⁵⁶ which aimed to investigate contemporary craft as a ‘change agent’ within 21st century society, particularly in relation to global environmental and sustainability issues, social equity, social innovation and socially embedded practices including social entrepreneurialism.

Crafts Council research⁵⁷ also indicates that a growing number of craft-makers and craft-businesses are supporting environmental sustainability in a variety of ways, including sustainable materials innovation and the (re)use of local, sustainably-sourced materials and production methods.⁵⁸ Makers are encouraging local and ethical trading and reduced consumption and are also increasing awareness of environmental issues through their work, and by engaging with new audiences.

Makers are also repositioning contemporary crafts in the context of rural regeneration. They are important to rural place-making, and are also engaging with other sectors of local rural economies:⁵⁹ A significant opportunity for rural economic development is through experiential craft-based tourism, which opens up craft to new markets and provides a stimulus to local trade.

⁵³ BOP Consulting (2012: 44).

⁵⁴ BOP Consulting (2012: 9).

⁵⁵ BOP Consulting (2012:47).

⁵⁶ Conference materials available online at: [Http://makingfutures.plymouthart.ac.uk/](http://makingfutures.plymouthart.ac.uk/).

⁵⁷ BOP Consulting (2012); Yair (2012c).

⁵⁸ Just under a third (31%) of makers surveyed for Craft in an Age of Change (BOP Consulting, 2012) had changed their practice in the last three years in response to environmental concerns. Of those, more than half (51.5%) were using more environmentally sensitive or sustainable materials; just under a third (32.8%) had changed their production processes to make them more environmentally sensitive or sustainable; a fifth (20.3%) were using local suppliers in a bid to reduce transport miles; just under a fifth (18.1%) were choosing suppliers or distributors/retailers with more environmentally sustainable practices; and a small proportion (4.5%) were now recycling. (BOP Consulting: 2012:43).

⁵⁹ Mahroum, et al. (2007:40).

6. New business models

Makers have responded to the wider challenges and opportunities outlined above in a number of innovative ways. This section will explore some of these in more depth and attempt to provide a clearer understanding of how the changing concept of 'local' is impacting on the business models and practices of contemporary craft makers.

6.1 Digital Technology: growing businesses while supporting local production

Digital technology is helping grow makers' businesses by expanding scales of production while keeping production 'local'. An example is Birmingham based Metalsmith [Melanie Tomlinson](#), who makes intensely detailed sculptures, three dimensional dioramas, automata and metal jewellery. She recently worked with an engineering supplier to devise a way of photo etching and finishing her jewellery components which allowed her to expand her production.

Community embedded digital craft fabrication is also supporting localised craft production. Such an initiative is the **Make Works project (see case study)** that is helping support Scottish designer-makers to produce their work in Scotland, while simultaneously connecting them into wider networks.

Case Study: MakeWorks

[Make Works](#) was initiated in 2012 by designer-makers Fi Scott and Vana Coleman, and is an independent, community embedded organisation that facilitates and promotes artisanal craft fabrication in Scotland. Make/Works focuses on local creative production as well as offering craftspeople information about facilities and processes to create new products and possibly new business models in their own practices through small scale production. In 2014 an online directory will launch to connect designer-makers to factories, material suppliers, trade skills and fabrication facilities in Scotland. It is hoped a better understanding of materials and processes will help the design process, and encourage production within Scotland, which will also be more sustainable as well as benefiting Scottish-based manufacturers.

Individual makers are also responding to new digital technology.⁶⁰ Exploring and celebrating the trend for digital craft, the Craft Council exhibition [Lab Craft](#) featured 26 designers who combine traditional craft skills and aesthetics with digital technologies such as laser cutting and rapid prototyping. Makers profiled included ceramicist [Michael Eden](#), who blends traditional ceramic craft skills with digital technology using rapid prototyping and 3D printing and non-fired ceramic coatings to achieve 'impossible' forms through additive, layer-based digital modelling, including the award winning [Wedgwoodn't Tureen](#).

Others are experimenting with developing new products and processes using traditional and digital techniques. Work by [Gary Allson](#) and [Ismeni Samanidou](#) explores how digital making methods can be used to translate magnified textile weave structures into timber. The project has developed an innovative process that may lead to one or more products: doors, tables, screens or window panels with a unique surface resembling magnified woven fabric.

Silversmith [Kathryn Hinton](#) creates sculptural designs and jewellery using traditional making methods complemented with digital techniques such as CNC machining and digital hammer technology, a new process which she developed combining craft and digital inputs to mimic the inputs of the traditional silversmith.

⁶⁰ Explored in Yair (2011a).

As well as using digital technologies for creating new types of object, makers are also using these technologies to reshape the systems of craft production and consumption. Many are using digital technologies for co-design. Product and furniture designer [Assa Ashuach](#) who runs his own studio in London, co-founded Digital Forming® and UCODO™ with the aim of democratising the personalisation of everyday products via online embedded 'open products'. Users can interact and co-design certain products to their preferences, within the boundaries set by the original designer, creating a 3D personalised product.

Digital textile designer, [Melanie Bowles](#) (**see case study**), reinterprets traditional textile techniques using digital media. The textiles she creates are co-designed and strongly embedded in the identity and memories of the consumer rather than the maker.

Case Study: Melanie Bowles

[Melanie Bowles](#) is a London based textile designer working in digital textile design. Her work makes parallels between traditional craft techniques and new technology, illustrating the transition between the old and new processes being adopted in design. Her commissions involve the consumer throughout the design and production process to create bespoke heritage textile prints that reflect the wearer's character and environment. Her work explores the relationship of the wearer to their garment and the potential digital design has for the learner to co-design and produce their own cloth. She also uses sustainable methods of production by using local print bureaux and dressmakers for production.

6.2 Engaging with customers: social media and content-rich websites

Makers are using digital content to develop stronger relationships between maker and craft-consumer while promoting quality and reliability.⁶¹ A good example of this is Supercrafted (**see case study**).

Case Study: Supercrafted

[Supercrafted](#) is a two-year research project within the Autonomic Research Group at Falmouth University and funded jointly by Falmouth University and Superfast Cornwall. The project is exploring how digital connectivity can benefit craft practice, particularly how craft micro-businesses can gain better access to global markets and forge new relationships with audiences, customers, makers and suppliers through engagement with digital technologies as well as developing digital technology applications that facilitate online digital design, manufacture or marketing interaction. Work to date has focused on using digital content to tell stories that add value to craft objects at the point of sale. One of the first projects, In The Frame, evaluates the benefits of providing short videos of makers talking about their work which are accessed through QR codes displayed with the maker's work. Further projects are exploring social media engagement and online design interaction.

The use of social media platforms for marketing, networking and R&D also appears to be increasing. For example, makers are canvassing views on pieces under development, and linking to online photo albums that show the work and making process in more detail and generating interest in their work by posting about exhibition openings and new work for sale.⁶² Glass and ceramics maker [Charlotte Clark](#) posts photos of the making process and discusses her work online, which draws new visitors to exhibitions, and also encourages them to talk to her at openings and events – something that she values in terms of building connections and support for her work.⁶³ Progressive craft exhibition

⁶¹ Yair (2012a).

⁶² Yair (2012a) explored in detail some of the key social media strategies and techniques being employed in the craft sector, and how these are helping to address challenges facing the sector.

⁶³ Yair (2012a:3-5).

curators such as [Craftspace](#) who through their serial exhibition *Made in the Middle* promote Midlands-based craft makers, are using similar storytelling techniques. Through the use of QR codes pointing to enriched content, apps and use of augmented reality they are transforming audiences from consumers to active participants in the craft exhibition experience.⁶⁴

Blogs, websites and on-line tutorials are also increasingly being used to connect makers with consumers. Again, some makers are using these technologies to facilitate the co-design of personalised craft products. The People's Print (**see case study**) combines traditional textile and digital technologies, open source, co-design, a centralised print bureaux and participatory design.

Case Study: The People's Print

[The People's Print](#) is a pioneering design enterprise that aims to enable communities all over the world to design and create their own textiles. The People's Print specialise in promoting and publishing new 'making concepts' for textiles, combining traditional and digital technologies, open source, co-design, centralised print bureaux and participatory design. The aim is to create textiles and fashion for a sustainable future by harnessing the power of social networks and communities to stimulate emotionally durable design and maker's autonomy while reducing the power and environmental destruction of fast fashion and fast culture.

6.3 Diversification

Makers are increasingly using their specialist craft skills, knowledge of materials and experience of innovation and product development to diversify into other sectors and markets. The full range of industries and contexts is explored in depth in *Making Value*.⁶⁵

One interesting diversification for makers that is of particular relevance to this research - is into architecture, public realm and the built environment. Makers' specialist knowledge and understanding of materials, as well as colour, light and space, enables them to produce unique, bespoke pieces in response to criteria set by commissioning architects and agencies.⁶⁶

A number of established, UK-based craft makers have worked on a range of public-realm improvement, urban regeneration and built environment projects for both public and private commissions. These projects are often site-specific, where the artist is required to respond creatively to notions of 'place' and local identity.

Examples include sculptor [Laura Ellen Bacon](#) who creates site specific art and has gained a strong reputation for her large works in built environments, interior settings and rolling landscapes, including Chatsworth, Sudeley Castle (for Sotheby's) and The Artists' House at Roche Court in Wiltshire; and textile weaver [Ptolemy Mann](#) who uses innovative hand-dyeing and woven techniques and has diversified into providing colour schemes and materials consultancy for hospital, school and community centre building projects.

Furniture maker and designer [Charlie Whinney](#) uses locally sourced wood to create installations for retail, office and corporate spaces. He explores the relationships between materials, people and the environment, undertaking a range of projects that blur the boundaries between fine art, architecture and design; lettering sculptor [Gary Breeze](#) who works predominantly with wood and stone, creating public and private commissions for the built environment and public realm. He has worked on a number of projects including the Scottish Parliament and Glasgow High Court and the V&A; and architectural glass artist Kate Maestri (**see case study**) has worked on a number of projects including a glass balustrade for Sage Gateshead.

⁶⁴ Yair (2012a:3-5 & 7).

⁶⁵ Schwartz and Yair (2010).

⁶⁶ Schwarz and Yair (2010:35).

[Walter Jack Studio](#) design, invent and make a wide range of projects for the public realm, working between art and architecture. Projects include 'Crushed Wall' for Heartlands, Cornwall. They regularly consult and collaborate with architects, landscape architects and with structural, mechanical and highway engineers; and the award-winning architecture firm [Studio Weave](#) also collaborates with designer-makers on a range of public realm interventions, buildings and heritage projects.

Case Study: Kate Maestri

[Kate Maestri](#) is an architectural glass artist specialising in innovative uses of contemporary stained glass. She works to commission in collaboration with architects and engineers on site-specific projects within the built environment. Her work explores the use of structural and three-dimensional stained glass, creating an environment in which sculptural glass is experienced as colour, light and form. Kate was chosen for the Sage Concert Hall project from a list of 10 invited artists, by a panel including Gateshead Council and Foster +Partners, the architects. Between 2002 and 2004 she worked with the architects to develop a 200m structural, curved, stained glass balustrade. Another recent project is the façade for a ten-storey circulation tower, double glazed and screen printed with ceramic enamel, in a mixed-use development by Jestico +Whiles in Victoria, Central London.

6.4 Site specific commissions

Makers are also now regularly commissioned to undertake site-specific work, often linked to rural regeneration and/or tourism development.⁶⁷ [Kielder art and architecture, Northumberland](#) is a well-known example. Over the past 16 years, a unique collection of contemporary visual art, sculpture and architecture has been commissioned; "in response to the scale and complexity of its unique environment and the area's varied and fascinating history." Work is made in response to both the natural and man-made elements of the landscape, and has included [Studio Weave's Freya's cabin](#).

While public art and sculpture has a long tradition, many of the most cutting edge makers are now undertaking innovative, site-specific projects. The concept of the [Marl Hole project](#), **curated by Neil Brownsword**, was to challenge the traditional ideas and methods that have been applied to clay, and demonstrate a fresh approach to the material whilst using very primitive techniques.⁶⁸ Brownsword and three international artists worked for five days in the Etruria Marl clay quarry in North Staffordshire, manipulating the landscape in order to create interventions which demonstrated their artistic response to the post-industrial landscape and the history and relationship between the creator and the material.

[Unravelled](#) work across fine art and craft practice, offering "exhibition opportunities in historic houses where artists and makers can explore how art can evoke histories, stories and a sense of place." They are currently working with the National Trust on a three-year project developing exhibitions for Preston Manor, Nymans House, The Vyne and Uppark. Artists working within craft practice have been commissioned to produce new, site-specific work in response to the history and environment of the properties. Craft-makers involved include [Louise Batchelor](#) working in glass and ceramics; sculptor [Alec Stevens](#); and metalworker [Steven Follen](#) (**see case study**), whose light piece for the 'Unravelling Nymans' exhibition has been purchased by Nymans House and Gardens and will form part of the National Trust's collection.

⁶⁷ Mahroum et al. (2007).

⁶⁸ Booth (2010).

Case Study: Steve Follen

[Steven Follen](#) is a designer-maker with specialist skills and knowledge of metalwork and drawing. His practice includes making metal vessels and artefacts and producing design solutions for site specific commissions. Projects include commissions for the entrance foyer to the Craft Study Centre, Farnham; a processional cross for St Botolphs' Church, Aldgate, to commemorate those who died in the London bombings; seating and tree-grilles for the Ropetackle development in Shoreham, West Sussex and paving designs for Dorsten Square as part of a redevelopment project in Crawley, West Sussex; and 'Shore Gate', a private commission to front a modernist style property on Shoreham Beach, West Sussex, where the brief was to link the geometry of the building with the beach.

6.5 Craft Tourism, Craft Towns and 'place identity'.

Reflecting the growing desire of consumers to develop their own creative skills and potential, 'Creative Tourism'⁶⁹ and 'Craft Tourism' are growing in popularity. Craft workshops offer high-quality, experiential learning opportunities, often in picturesque rural settings. They also meet the need for makers to profile themselves in an increasingly crowded global marketplace.⁷⁰ They provide direct experience of the creative process, allowing makers to convey quality, authenticity, and help valorise craft skills.

Craft Tourism is a particularly significant opportunity for rural economic development, opening up new markets as well as acting as a stimulus for other locally-based trades. Often combined with strong environmental sustainability credentials, such ventures support local employment and other local businesses via the use of associated visitor services, and sourcing local suppliers and distributors.⁷¹

A good illustration of this is woodworker and furniture maker **Guy Mallinson (see case study)**, who has used his furniture design background and green wood-working skills to build a growing Woodland Workshops business which also plays a key role in Dorset's evolution as a cultural tourism destination.⁷²

Case Study: Woodland Workshops

Visitors to Guy Mallinson's [Woodland Workshops](#) learn carving and green wood working skills in an idyllic woodland setting, complemented by locally produced food and luxury 'glamping'. Guy and his team of 7 local woodworking, basketry, cabinet-makers and designers offer 'on demand' courses, focusing on the experience of immersion in making, relaxation, fun and creative exploration. Guy's website actively markets the experience of a creative rural escape featuring fresh air, locally produced food and on-site luxury 'glamping', in traditional yurts, tipis and bell-tents. The workshops have opened up a new market niche and created new business opportunities for local catering suppliers, hotels and restaurants, as well as for other local creative workshops.

⁶⁹ The difference between cultural and creative tourism is that creative tourists participate in a creative activity when visiting a destination whilst cultural tourists are consumers of cultural experiences (Campbell, 2010).

⁷⁰ Richards and Marques (2012).

⁷¹ Yair (2011c).

⁷² Yair (2011c).

⁷³ Schwartz and Yair (2010).

⁷⁴ Miettinen (2009).

In many cases, successful craft tourism is facilitated by web-based marketing,⁷³ and local craft producers also need to learn these skills. They must also learn how to deal with and relate to visitors, and be involved in the whole process of service design, which is crucial in delivering high quality creative experiences.⁷⁴

There are many examples of successful residential and non-residential crafts centres around the country, providing workshops and promoting themselves to visitor markets and linking to accommodation and other tourism providers. These include [Craft in the Bay in Cardiff](#), home of the Makers Guild of Wales and [New Brewery Arts](#) in Cirencester. Residential centres in England include [Farncombe](#), near Broadway in the Cotswolds,

[Flatford Mill](#), close to the Suffolk/Essex border, [West Dean](#) in Sussex and [Missenden Abbey](#) in Buckinghamshire. Herefordshire is arguably one of the most advanced regions in England for craft-related creative tourism. [Creative Breaks](#) is an established online network supporting local makers (**see case study**).

Case Study: Creative Breaks

[Creative Breaks](#) is a not-for-profit association of artists and crafts people set up in 2000 with the assistance of Herefordshire Council, to introduce visitors and local people alike to local artists and to promote courses run by local skilled craftspeople. Its craft members now offer more than 300 courses, workshops and holidays on a wide range of craft mediums including [silversmithing](#); [spinning, felting and weaving](#); [print making](#); [pottery](#); [green-woodworking](#) and [stained glass](#). Courses are run from makers' own workshop spaces, and offer leisure experiences focused on relaxation, fun and creative exploration in a rural environment. Many course providers also offer on-site accommodation.

Notions of 'place identity', together with engagement with the history and traditions of craft making have also seen the revival of 'craft towns', such as Totnes in Devon, and Farnham in Surrey (**see case study**). The craft identity of these towns is also used to appeal to and attract visitors.

Case Study: Farnham

The [Farnham](#) 'craft town' project began with the idea of replicating Hay-on-Wye's success as a national centre for literature and books by accentuating the role of crafts at the heart of a rural market town's cultural offer.⁷⁵ Farnham has built its craft town identity using its historical association with ceramics, and particularly the [Farnham pottery](#) and its distinctive Greenware, as well as capitalising on existing partnerships and crafts programmes with [galleries](#), arts centres such as [Farnham Maltings](#) and academic research centres including the [Crafts Study Centre](#). The launch of Farnham as 'England's Craft Town' in October 2013 was communicated through a new logo on the town's web site, which has links to local craft tourism sites, and by hosting a month of free public activities that encouraged residents and visitors to experiment with making.

Craft Town Scotland in West Kilbride, as Scotland's only designated craft and design town is championing Scottish craft-making (**see case study**). The work produced here is strongly rooted in 'sense of place' and builds on the local distinctiveness as well as Scottish craft traditions.

What the Farnham and West Kilbride examples both demonstrate is the importance of recognising and building on existing place assets and identity and using these to address particular and specific local needs.

⁷⁵ Yair (2001c:1).

Case Study: Craft Town Scotland

[Craft Town Scotland](#) was established to develop a vibrant community of local makers and an ongoing programme of activity and support for makers, residents and visitors. The initiative provides subsidised rents on workshops/studios for craft makers and promotes open studios all year, giving the town a profile and a 'sense of place'. These act as 'anchor points' throughout the town's main street, and other independent retailers/services have grown up around these. Alongside are exhibitions of work from some of the UK's top craft makers, and an education and events programme, in the purpose-designed Barony Centre. A community inspired development in response to 1990s decay of the town centre, the initiative has underpinned the town's transformation and helped raise the profile of West Kilbride as a place to live, work and visit. All profits are reinvested into sustaining and developing West Kilbride's cultural hub as a central part of the community. Makers include [Marion Kane](#), silversmith; [Virgil Bauzys](#), basket maker; [Lilith Green](#), hand-dyed yarns; [Maggie M. Broadley](#), ceramicist.

An international example demonstrating the successful use of local craft heritage to promote 'sense of place' is [HandMade in America](#), which has a 20 year history of using craft in pioneering ways to promote local economic vitality. The network of 'craft towns' in North Carolina, which are connected by a guidebook of 'Craft Heritage Trails' featuring studios, shops and galleries, has created a regional place identity based, and has evolved into a national model of rural creative place-making.

Key to note is that this is a bottom-up, community-led and inspired initiative to link together craft-makers, customers and tourists and promote 'place' and economic sustainability, which has added significantly to its success. The most recent initiative is the development of [Craft Cluster](#), which also aim to link farmers and other craft materials suppliers in this ecosystem approach (**see case study**).

Case Study: Craft Cluster

HandMade's new [Craft Cluster](#) initiative **works to encourage a local, sustainable economy for each craft medium**. The aim is to bring together manufacturers of craft media (**fibre, wood, metal, glass, clay**) artists, consumers and businesses to strengthen local craft industry. **The first cluster** - The Fiber Cluster (now re-branded as [Local Cloth](#)) - encourages and supports collaboration among textile artists, designers, fibre farmers, suppliers and small businesses to sustain the local textile economy and professions by brining locally grown and made fibre products to consumers within and beyond the region. Proposed initiatives include a biennial 'farm to fashion' exhibition and support for local galleries and guilds to showcase more fibre artists' work; a Community Dye Studio and a local yarn company; 'Farm and Studio fibre tours' which will connect communities to their fibre artists and farmers; and an online 'Local Fibre Guide' to local sources, schools, makers, events and shops. A branding and labelling campaign is also planned to help open new markets for local fibre and fibre art products.

In the UK, one successful example is the [Kirkcudbright Arts and Crafts trail](#), an annual event which builds on the town's long history as an artists' town. First held in 2004, it has developed into a major event in the area, with 80 different venues hosting works by around 150 artists/makers and attracting thousands of visitors to the small (and fairly remote) Scottish harbour town.

6.6 New routes to market:

open studios, craft collectives and the 'spirit of place' scheme.

An increasing number of rural and/or market towns are also hosting 'Open Studio' events, over weekends or longer periods. **These ever more popular and widespread events have become a successful model for bringing together and increasing the market visibility of otherwise fragmented, small-scale local makers,**⁷⁶ and are attracting large numbers of visitors to these areas.

Examples include [Dorset Art Weeks](#), a biennial rural Open Studios event with a high number of craft exhibitors which draws over 8000 visitors in two weeks; [Artwave](#), Lewes District's annual Open House Festival takes place over a two week period and incorporates a number of rural village locations and a large number of independent craft-makers; [Hebden Bridge Open Studios](#), one of several weekend Open Studios events organised throughout the year, had 64 participating artists and craftspeople opening their studios and houses to the public in 2013, and attracted many younger visitors and buyers from Manchester and other nearby urban areas in West Yorkshire.

Signifying the importance of these events to makers and customers alike, [Open House Art](#) (**see case study**) is an artist-run organisation which has formed to help self-representing artists from across the UK who exhibit or sell from their home or studio, to group together to connect with the wider market-place.

Case Study: Open House Art

[Open House Art](#) is an artist-run organisation which helps self-representing artists in locations across the UK, and who exhibit or sell from their home or studio, group together to connect with the wider market-place. A UK-wide guide to independent art trails, it lists where and when local artists and makers are exhibiting in their homes and studios and links these together on one web-site. It also functions as an online networking site for artists. Members can use OHA facilities to take payment from people wanting to purchase from them in their studios, thus preventing loss of sale. OHA also allows customers to browse and buy work online from member artists, thus creating a marketplace for high quality work at affordable prices without gallery premiums or commissions to pay. This means a buyer can be confident they are getting the best possible value available and an artist can be assured that their work is priced to sell.

Makers are also adopting a range of co-operative, social enterprise and 'collective' business models, designed to catalyse local craft enterprise. Often these are promoted via web-based social media. Examples include London based [Manifold](#); [Artisans Collective](#), a Community Interest Company (CIC) based in Prestatyn, Wales (**see case study**); [Telegraph Hill](#), London; and [Cardiff Arts Collective](#) set up to promote art, craft and design by Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan based practitioners. [Made In The Valley](#) is a small collective of artists and makers working in Hebden Bridge. Following the success of their 'pop-up shop', they are now planning to take their work further by opening a co-working space in the town for local craft workers and other small businesses.

Case Study: Artisans Collective

Artisans Collective CIC are a group of local artists, crafts people and small creative businesses in North Wales, UK who came together to form a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2013 with the aim of showcasing and sharing local creative talents and encouraging the promotion of art, craft products and creative skills within the local community. Initially organising weekly “Artisans on the high street” events, which were instrumental in the successful Totally Locally campaign in the town, with the support of the town Business Forum, Prestatyn Town Council and Denbighshire County Council, they have now secured a more permanent base for their activities realising their ambition of providing affordable retail space to local art and craft practitioners as well as space for a range of craft courses and training sessions for the wider community. The town and county council are fully supportive of the idea of “craft tourism” as a regenerative benefit for the community. The not-for-profit status of the CIC also means that any surplus income is put back into the company to provide further community-based events and opportunities

Finally, the new ‘Spirit of Place’ scheme run by Craft Northern Ireland and National Trust Northern Ireland, is a good example of where the local market forms the context for the work. This partnership initiative offers Irish designer-makers the opportunity to sell their craft products at one of nine participating National Trust NI retail outlets for a six month period. Products do not have to be designed specifically for the properties but have to reflect the Northern Ireland region and/or the ‘Spirit of Place’ theme. Around 80 expressions of interest were received, and 20 makers working in ceramics, glass, textiles, cards, wood, jewellery and silversmithing were selected, with work was on sale between April and October 2013. As well as resulting in improved retail sales and exposure for artists, this scheme also acts as a means of showcasing the breadth of talent and creativity in the Irish craft industry.

6.7 Responding to the environment: Sustainable making

Many makers support sustainable making as core to their practice, often using locally sourced, eco-friendly, salvaged and re-used or ethically sourced materials wherever possible.

Eleanor Lakelin handcrafts bowls, vessels and sculptural objects using only wood from trees already felled in the British Isles due to disease, decay or occasionally development. Most of her materials come from within two miles of her workshop. She also uses traditional turning and carving techniques with lathes and chisels. Furniture-makers Gareth Neal (**see case study**), Michael Marriott, Fabien Cappello, Seongyong Lee and the other RawCraft makers have embraced a sustainable making philosophy. Often, these designer-makers combine contemporary and traditional craft skills to redefine their practice.

Case Study: Gareth Neal

Gareth Neal is perhaps best known for his digitally cut furniture forms, but critical to his identity as a maker is his investigations of sustainable practice, including his exploration of the 'bodging' tradition, often working with and responding to (sometimes found) materials within specific locales. Gareth's most recent exhibition brought together a number of existing works to explore and draw out the connections that each piece makes to process, place and people. **The Orkney Chair** is an example of collaboration between Gareth and traditional Orkney chair maker Kevin Gauld, and is the result of a process concerned with sharing and securing unique skills and techniques, celebrating traditions located to a specific place and supporting the growth and potential rebirth of a dying industry. Other projects around place include the Carbon Negative project, where Gareth attempted to demonstrate the potential for Carbon Negative furniture production in the 21st century, and Urban Picnic that looked into the lost veneer industry of the east end of London.

Scottish textile designer [Julia Cunningham](#) works mainly in scrap fabrics locally sourced from tweed and textile mills to produce a range of practical products which are sculptural and exciting to use and wear. The scrap fabrics she works in are limited in supply, which influences and challenges how she designs her products, and also keeps her products unique and innovative. [James Sharp](#) works extensively in Art Journals which are made from recycled materials and have textile covered bindings embellished with collage. He has developed a series of place specific journals for High Peak, Chorlton, Manchester, Bollington, Bakewell, Sheffield, Bermondsey, Much Wenlock, Macclesfield, Brighton and others.

[Ute Decker](#) is a leading proponent of ethical jewellery, working in Fairtrade gold, recycled silver and bio-resin. In February 2011 she became one of the first jewellers to launch a collection in the world's first Fairtrade and Fairmined gold. Actively engaged in campaigning for ethical 'good practice' from mine to jewellery-box, Ute applies the most sustainable studio practices: using Fairtrade gold, 100% recycled silver, recycled packaging and substituting traditional toxic resins with bio-resins.

6.8 Sustainable consumption and local trading

Many makers are concerned with raising environmental awareness by encouraging sustainable consumption, and/or by reusing or upcycling existing items into new, high value craft objects. Designer [Zoe Murphy](#), prints onto recycled mid twentieth century furniture and textiles using imagery inspired by her seaside hometown of Margate, Kent. Her ethos is to encourage people to 'consume more carefully and with more responsibility'; Cheshire based mixed media artist [Liz Hamman](#) creates handmade jewellery from reclaimed materials. Much of the paper used to create the jewellery comes from reclaimed or second hand books, maps among other paper materials. Her jewellery has been exhibited nationally and internationally; Manchester based [Hannah Lovett](#) makes conceptual work using reclaimed materials including flame worked salvaged glass multiples, reinterpreting these materials via contemporary techniques into innovative new forms.

Crafts Council research shows that many makers place an emphasis on local trading, and the use of local suppliers, particularly in rural areas.⁷⁷ As well as reducing environmental impact, this benefits other local businesses. High-end designer clothing, textile and furnishing designers, milliners, and fibre artists are helping to build sustainable rural economies, by linking local farming with fashion: Yuli Somme ([Bellacouche](#)) uses local wool from Devon to make wool/wood coffins whose purpose is to encourage a more sensitive and environmental funeral, thus looking at both source

⁷⁷ Yair (2011c).

Making It Local:

what does this mean in the context of contemporary craft?

and end use. Designer-maker Jane Exley ([The Woolly Rug Company](#)) uses locally sourced Herdwick sheep wools for her fine-art rug designs that respond to the local landscape of the Lake district; while Yorkshire-based [Makepiece](#) produces low-impact, high-end designer-knitwear (**see case study**)

Case Study: Makepiece

[Makepiece](#), founded in 2004 by designer Nicola Sherlock and farmer Beate Kubitz, produces low-impact, high-end designer-knitwear. The company aims to be carbon-neutral, and promotes materials sustainability and eco production methods. Natural yarns are used from their own flock of sustainably-reared sheep, which are spun and knitted within the community, using the minimum chemical processes. The company is strongly rooted to 'place' and promotes the association with farming, the Yorkshire landscape and its long heritage of wool and textiles production in its online marketing.

Handmade in America's [Buy Local](#) and [Buy Handmade](#) campaigns have encouraged sustainable rural development by educating the public about the economic and cultural importance of growing small economies by supporting local area craft artists. In the UK, there are also now a growing number of [buy local](#) campaigns, designed with similar aim of promoting local independent designers and makers and supporting local trading and economies.

7. Conclusions

This exploratory study has provided a flavour of the breadth of business models contemporary UK crafts-makers are adopting in response to a number of identified macro-level challenges affecting the craft sector.

The examples presented suggest that rather than becoming less significant, 'place' and the 'local' in contemporary craft-making are becoming ever more important.

Advances in internet and digital technologies, globalisation and economic trends, and broader sustainability and environmental concerns are not only driving new forms of business innovation, but are strengthening relationships with 'place' and the 'local' in a number of key and distinct ways.

This initial exploration highlights key trends towards new business models in a number of areas including:

- Digital technology, business growth and localised production
- The use of social media for marketing, engaging with customers and R&D
- Diversification into other markets
- Site-specific commissions
- The potential for craft towns
- Craft Tourism and rural regeneration
- New routes to market
- Ethical agendas, including sustainable making and consumption and local trading

Personalisation, authenticity, provenance and a desire for direct contact with makers; a shift towards the experience economy and the learning of craft skills; ethical consumption and support for local trading, are all influencing the market for contemporary UK craft and signifying a return to the 'local' for craft production.

The availability of new and affordable digital technologies, as well as diversification into other sectors and markets and innovative collaborations with professionals in a range of contexts, are key sectoral trends which are likely to significantly influence contemporary craft practices and relations with 'place'.

Further (qualitative and quantitative) research is needed to explore in-depth how makers are individually and collectively responding to the identified challenges in terms of their business strategies, and the areas of support and development that are needed to help sustain and promote contemporary craft-makers and their businesses going forward.

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