

Unconventional Craft Identities: Acknowledging Alternative Approaches to Enterprise in Scottish Craft

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Abstract

There is strong evidence to suggest that craft practitioners find it difficult to seize their potential as micro businesses and sole traders (Nielsen et al., 2018). Despite much work at the intersection between craft and entrepreneurial practice, research shows a gap exists between the needs of craft businesses and the support provided by national organisations (Fillis, 2002; Bouette and Magee, 2014). As a result of these discrepancies, traditionally entrepreneurial craft businesses are more likely to receive organisational advice and financial support. Meanwhile, those craft businesses perceived to be making a less obvious contribution to sector development are denied. Through advocacy for limited models of craft business, many 'unconventional' (Guercini and Cova, 2018, p. 36) models have been marginalised, or left underexplored. This has significant implications for the diversity (Eikhof, 2017) and longevity (Luckman, 2018) of the sector. However, craft's tendency for activism holds potential for 'political, economic and social transformation' (Jakob, 2013, p. 131) with many calling for the sector to be utilised as a space for political debate and action (Smith, 2016). Drawing upon the findings from an exploratory study, this paper seeks to advance the debate about how the craft sector in Scotland can harness more unconventional entrepreneurial models, whilst reimagining their future use. A survey was conducted amongst 25 craft businesses from across Scotland. A questionnaire was designed to capture how craft practitioners interact with organisational support and instrumentalise collaborative exchanges to overcome challenges. The qualitative data was thematically analysed and revealed three deeply connected themes addressing practitioners' multiplicity of identity, their processes of identity development, and experience of collaborative tensions. The authors discuss alternative 'craft rich' forms of economy and models of entrepreneurship before concluding with recommendations for national support organisations to provide developmental support to build, promote, and sustain the working lives of craft businesses.

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Introduction

There is strong evidence to suggest that craft practitioners find it difficult to seize their potential as micro businesses and sole traders (Nielsen et al, 2018). Despite much work at the intersection between craft and entrepreneurial practice, research shows a gap exists between the needs of craft businesses and the support provided by craft development organisations (Fillis, 2004; Bouette and Magee, 2015). As a result of these discrepancies, 'conventionally' entrepreneurial (Pagano et al, 2018) craft businesses have been singled out as most productive in the literature (Fillis, 2004; Bouette and Magee, 2015; Jourdain, 2015), leading to the replication of conventional ideals of practice in the sector (BOP Consulting, 2010; Yair, 2012). Meanwhile, through the creation of opportunity for conventional craft business, many 'unconventional' (Guercini and Cova, 2018, p. 36) approaches have been marginalised, or left underexplored. This has significant implications for the diversity (Eikhof, 2017) and longevity (Luckman, 2018) of the sector. However, it is believed craft's tendency for activism holds potential for 'political, economic and social transformation' (Jakob, 2013, p. 131) with many calling for the sector to be utilised as a space for political debate and action (Smith, 2016). Drawing on the findings from an exploratory study, this paper seeks to better understand the way craft practitioners in Scotland interact with craft development organisations as a temporary collaboration (Grabher, 2002). A survey was conducted amongst 25 craft businesses from across Scotland. A questionnaire was designed to capture how craft practitioners interact with organisational support and instrumentalise collaborative exchanges to overcome challenges. The qualitative data was thematically analysed and revealed three deeply connected themes addressing practitioners' multiplicity of identity, their processes of identity development, and experience of collaborative tensions. Presenting these activities as a form of unconventional entrepreneurship, the author discusses alternative 'craft rich' forms of economy and approaches to entrepreneurship before concluding with recommendations for national support organisations to provide developmental support to build, promote, and sustain the working lives of craft businesses.

Craft support and development organisations

There is strong evidence to suggest that craft practitioners find it difficult to seize their potential as micro businesses and sole traders (Nielsen et al, 2018). Aiding Scottish practitioners in this journey of entrepreneurial realisation are a host of craft development organisations, such as Craft Scotland, Applied Arts Scotland, and Fife Contemporary Arts and Crafts. These organisations provide diverse forms of support, including opportunities for training, exhibition, and retail (Thelwell, 2015) that make up their programmes of developmental support. Despite much work at the intersection between craft and entrepreneurial practice, research shows a gap exists between the needs of craft businesses and the support provided by these national organisations (Fillis, 2004; Bouette and Magee, 2014). The schism between craft and dominant conceptualisations of economy are well documented (i.e., Greenhalgh, 2003; Jakob, 2013), with practitioners often positioning themselves outside traditional realms of economy and enterprise (McAuley and Fillis, 2005; Jourdain, 2015; Kovesi and Kern, 2017). The implications of this is a failure to align the value propositions of communities of craft practitioners, the dominant structures of culture, work, and commerce, and the institutional and organisational leaders tasked with helping individuals flourish within such structures. As a result of these gaps, conventionally

entrepreneurial approaches to developing craft enterprise are more likely to benefit from organisational advice and financial support, whilst the more unconventional are sidelined (Glăveanu et al, 2016). This is an issue that has gone on to be replicated in organisational and academic research, where the conventional model of the entrepreneur is singled out as most economically valuable and viable (for example, Fillis, 2004; Bouette and Magee, 2014; Jourdain, 2015). This has driven a wedge between practitioners and the public sources of support and infrastructure they rely upon (Belfiore, 2015), alienating any craft practitioners who operate outside of this canon of craft entrepreneur. However, relationships between craft practitioners and nationally recognised craft development organisations are highly prized as legitimising forces within the sector. As gatekeepers of opportunity, craft development organisations make significant judgements about a craft practitioner's creative and entrepreneurial identity. As a result, practitioners risk becoming 'objects of decision making' (Eikhof, 2017, p. 298), where identities are shaped to meet the requirements of others, instead of a practitioner's own autonomous desires. This inevitably creates a tension that needs to be navigated by practitioners, who must work to maintain control whilst also negotiating the legitimacy that may be bestowed by a craft development organisation (Morgan and Nelligan, 2015; Eikhof, 2017). Thus, there exists a gap in understanding surrounding the relationships craft practitioners broker with craft development organisations via their participation in temporary collaborative activities, and how this augments their unique entrepreneurial identities.

Craft as unconventional entrepreneurship

Craft's definition is complex, haunting the practice and obfuscating development of the sector (Jakob and Van Heur, 2014). As one of thirteen sectors included in the UK (DCMS, 2018) and Scottish Government's (Scottish Government, 2019) definitions of the creative industries it regularly benefits from the hyperbole and rhetoric that surrounds this economy. Despite this, craft is often overshadowed by more 'productive' areas of the creative industries, such as film, media, or computing (Flew, 2005; Garnham, 2005) where significant economic growth is celebrated (DCMS, 2018). Positioning craft as an entrepreneurial subculture (Fillis, 2004; Pret and Carter, 2017), there is much space for craft development organisations to broaden their understanding of what it means to be entrepreneurial in craft and recognise the sector's areas of difference. The project-based nature of work in the creative sector such as craft has implications for career advancement, that sets it apart from the usual understanding of entrepreneurial progression. Progress is framed as 'an individual's movement into positions that bring increased artistic or creative recognition, reach, freedom and/or responsibility, enable collaboration with more reputable partners or allow access to more or better quality resource' (Eikhof, 2017, p. 293). This intertwining of the professional and personal can result in an unconventional form of entrepreneurship (Guercini and Cova, 2018), an alternative approach to entrepreneurial activity that shares many elements with craft practice. Some features of conventional forms of entrepreneurship are its occurrence in a static environment, meeting the needs of the market, and the founder as the driver of entrepreneurial action (Guercini and Cova, 2018; Pagano et al, 2018; Schulte-Holthaus, 2018). In contrast, unconventional entrepreneurship takes a more constructivist approach, creating a more dynamic environment, meeting the needs of an individual or team, with entrepreneurial action shaped by a community (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of conventional and unconventional entrepreneurial processes, compiled/adapted from Guercini and Cova (2018), Pagano et al (2018) and Schulte-Holthaus (2018)

Conventional Entrepreneurship	Unconventional Entrepreneurship
Adopts realist and holistic perspective	Adopts constructivist, heuristic perspective
Occurs in/creates static environment	Occurs in/creates dynamic environment
Seeks to meet the needs of the market	Seeks to meet needs and goals of the individual or team
Opportunity driven (Opportunity discovered)	Necessity Driven (Opportunity created)
Entrepreneur is specified	Entrepreneur not specified
Profit/business orientation identified early on in process	Profit/business orientation emerges through experimentation
Action is planned	Action is dependent on situation
Linear approach	Iterative/non-linear approach
Outcomes can be predicted	Unpredictable outcomes
Fixed ends	Open ended
Monetary motivations	Monetary motivations balanced against non-monetary elements
Creates economic value	Creates cultural, social, and economic value
Founder drives entrepreneurial action	Entrepreneurial action shaped by interaction with community

Guercini and Cova (2018) identify unconventional entrepreneurship as having three key features: (1) passion, leisure, and adventure; (2) 'tribes' in entrepreneurial creation; and (3) the liquidity of society that causes heightened uncertainty. In these circumstances, Guercini and Cova position entrepreneurship as 'a shared passion and communal incentive to develop something that could become a successful business venture' (p. 385). The widespread uncertainty experienced by individuals drives them to seek stability in practices they feel passionate about, connecting them with other like-minded individuals. Thus 'commitment may be fuelled by motives superseding the rational search for profit' (p. 385). Instead, unconventional entrepreneurs seek to be identified by the passion that drives their entrepreneurial activity, and provides them with a sense of purpose. This understanding of entrepreneurship differs significantly from the top-down focus upon the financial, which is believed to have left practitioners alienated by a 'political manipulation of the entrepreneurship debate' (Patten, 2016, p. 33) seen to favour a purely economic agenda. Whilst craft development organisations provide collaborative opportunity that offer craft practitioners more than just economic returns, many more unconventional approaches have been marginalised, or left underexplored by craft development organisations. This has significant implications for the diversity (Eikhof, 2017; Patel, 2020) and longevity (Luckman, 2018) of the sector. However, craft's tendency for activism holds potential for 'political, economic and social transformation' (Jakob, 2013, p. 131) with many calling for the sector to

be utilised as a space for political debate and action (Smith, 2016). Thus, a gap emerges that questions the extent to which craft practitioners resist the conventional influence of craft development organisations that may threaten to augment their unconventional approach.

Methods

Drawing upon the findings from an exploratory study, this paper seeks to understand the way craft practitioners broker their relationships with craft development organisations, and the mechanism they put in place (if any) to resist the pull of the conventional and instead develop a unique entrepreneurial craft identity. Scotland was selected for the area of focus due to its vibrant contemporary craft sector, influenced by its rich craft heritage (McAuley and Fillis, 2005; Peach, 2007; Pret and Carter, 2018). Craft in Scotland has been noted for its particularly vibrant networks that rely on collaborative processes (Halbert, 2018; Pret and Carter, 2018; Docherty et al, 2019). However, the role of craft development organisations has rarely been discussed (Munro, 2017). The method of survey was selected to encourage response from a broad range of practitioners, with varied experience, career stage, location, and practice. This survey was made available online, and shared with Scotland's craft communities via social media and e-mail. The survey ran in two waves, both lasting four weeks each. The first, from November 25th to December 23rd 2019, the second from January 6th to February 3rd 2020. It must be noted that this represents an extraordinarily busy time for the crafts sector, in the run up to, and aftermath of, Christmas, partly explaining the low response rate.

The qualitative data collected via survey was analysed using a form of abductive thematic analysis, employing Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules' (2017) 6-step 'criteria for trustworthiness' (p. 3) and Dubois and Gadde's (2002) model of systematic combining. This model of analysis, employed in case study research, demands the researcher move between empirical evidence, available data, theory, and the overall case study to which the analysis belongs. In doing so, it is possible to abductively build out theoretical frameworks that can best explain the research context being explored. Harvey, Hawkins and Thomas (2012) underline the value of their ethnographic approach to the better understanding of interpersonal exchange and experience, in particular the value of embedding a researcher within the research contexts, something also emphasised as valuable in craft research by Pret and Cogan (2018). Whilst this research has not claimed to be ethnographic in nature, it is worth noting that the data for this paper was not collected hermetically. Instead, this paper forms part of a larger embedded case study that makes up a doctoral research project, that has so far drawn on observation, interview, and immersion in meetings, events, and social gatherings. All of these have worked to provide a buttress for what might otherwise appear to be seen as freestanding pieces of research. Whilst it can be read as such, it is necessary to emphasise this study's role as a cog in the much greater machine that is an ongoing doctoral thesis.

Findings

Analysis of the data revealed three deeply connected themes addressing practitioners' multiplicity of identity, their processes of identity development, and experience of

collaborative tensions. By unpacking the ways individual practitioners draw on and interact with available opportunities, it has been possible to identify some of the key influencers on the self-definition of craft practitioners. Whilst not generalisable, the analysis has brought to the surface three connected themes, that collectively tell the story of how craft practitioners in Scotland interact with programmes of developmental support, and how they instrumentalise collaborative exchanges to embed themselves in the sector whilst developing understanding of their own identity. These themes are: (1) the leveraging of collaboration and collaborative tension; (2) employing multiple identities; and (3) identity development and renegotiation.

Leveraging Collaboration

Although collaborative acts demand a shared goal, the reasons for collaboration are multifaceted, and appear connected to respondents' individual goals. Survey respondents listed a rich selection of rationale which have been grouped into eight themes (see Appendix A). Many indicated that financial reasons play an important role, alongside the perceived potential these opportunities offer for business expansion. These two themes can be framed as representing a conventional form of entrepreneurship dictating entrepreneurial exploitation for the accumulation of wealth. However, they are supplemented by a far more remarkable range of personal motivations that demonstrate the wealth of possibility that opens up for practitioners when engaging in collaborative working, as well as exemplifying alternative objectives and goals of creative practitioners (Eikhof, 2017). Three in particular stand out for their frequency of discussion: (1) to build networks, (2) to contribute to community and own wellbeing, and (3) to challenge or develop skills. It is also possible to see connection between these themes. For example, building up networks of support is likely to contribute considerably to community and personal wellbeing, as well as provide access to new or previously unknown opportunity.

Such networks characterise the creative industries (Thomas et al, 2013), where individuals combine resources and skills to create a force greater than the sum of its parts (Gaggioli et al, 2020). Thus, it is not surprising to see the vast experience of collaboration reported by respondents (see Appendix B). Grass roots activity in particular plays a major role in respondents' collaborative activity, with other makers (96%), craft guilds or collectives (76%) and artist-run initiatives (76%) all ranking highly as collaborative partners. These inherently social processes are crucial opportunities for identity development (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010), whilst also being essential for entrepreneurial development (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011). Whilst collaboration amongst peers enables belonging within a networked community (Pret and Carter, 2017), there are indicators that it also stems from a place of necessity. Respondents were concerned about the implications of Brexit, with consequences including a lack of 'inward investment' [respondent 557]. Concern lay in a 'lack of training opportunities' [respondent 916], with one respondent specifying that a particular 'HND glass course [is] no longer available' [respondent 126], with the knock-on effect of 'a lack of people picking [craft] up as a job or even a hobby to ensure its continuation' [respondent 441], demonstrating the liquidity that breeds unconventional approaches.

As a result of such liquidity, a major part of respondents' identity appears to be filling the opportunity gap in craft, with practitioners taking on an ambiguous leadership role as a result

of their need to be 'dynamic and contextual' (DeRue and Ashford, 2010, p. 630) in their circumstance. Terms used by respondents to describe their role in the sector suggest forms of craft activism – for example, 'advocate', 'facilitator', 'mentor', 'educator' - alluding to a responsibility held by respondents to promote craft and embed craft values in society. This passion for the sector is elaborated on by respondents discussing future goals, ranking 'creating a positive working environment and industry' [respondent 441] highly and demonstrating significant responsibility for the sector, with drive 'to ensure that the craft is upheld for another century at least' [respondent 441]. Collaborative working is implemented to help realise these goals, offering opportunity to give 'back to the making community who helped' [respondent 745] them, and 'provide community support' [respondent 126]. However, the duality required by practitioners to both build out opportunity whilst also participating in it demands they develop an array of capabilities. By building out their capabilities within one domain (e.g., adopting the role of project management, event organiser) they may go on to build complementary skills within a parallel domain (e.g., designer, exhibitor and teacher). Individuals must build and project a unique but recognisable craft identity, whilst also creating the domain within which they are able to perform these roles. Thus, in response to the uncertain and constantly evolving nature of the context they find themselves in, craft practitioners identities must also evolve.

Multiple Identities

Terms used by respondents to describe their role in the sector were varied, demonstrating multiplicity of identity that speaks to the portfolio careers so entrenched in creative working (Eikhof, 2017) and craft (Luckman and Andrew, 2018). Some respondents used terms like 'maker', 'business owner', or 'teacher', encapsulating varied roles and activities. Others were descriptive - 'maker supplier to some small shops attending craft markets' [respondent 527], or 'Multiple... Craft practitioner, small business, project manager, facilitator, researcher, advocate' [respondent 105] - denoting that a singular term would not communicate the specificity or complexity of their role in the sector. Meanwhile, other respondents communicated personal feelings regarding their position - 'tentative' [respondent 471] or 'minimal' [respondent 359] - indicating doubt or dissatisfaction in their role in the sector. These roles seemingly change depending upon context, with an equally varied selection undertaken by respondents when working collaboratively, showing how a practitioner's identity must adapt to the approaches needed for the situation (Alvesson, 2010). The difference in the specificity with which respondents were able to describe the roles they took up in collaborative working (see Appendix C), indicates that taking on such a relationship may provide greater role clarity compared to when working alone. Thus, collaborative acts become a vital part of meaning-making when establishing a unique entrepreneurial craft profile.

Two themes emerged from the survey that could offer insight into this multiplicity: (1) doubt and uncertainty, and (2) a desire to explore. Much uncertainty in creative sectors such as craft comes from the blurring of formal and informal opportunity and reliance on temporal, project based working (Haunschild and Eikhof, 2009; Merkel, 2019). But defining an identity during temporal changes of a collaborative project can provide a sense of consistency (Alvesson, 2010) that enables practitioners to navigate uncertainty. As such, entering into collaborative relationships with craft development organisations that dictate clear roles and objectives can be a valuable and steadying force for an individual. Conversely, this multiplicity may also be

a manifestation a craft practitioner's exploration and experimentation with the boundaries of their practice. Creative practitioners are often identified as individualistic and rebellious (Bain, 2005; Nielsen et al, 2018). Therefore, exploring multiple identities as a form of play (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010) that reaches outside of the expectations of the sector can be viewed as a form of rebellious transgression. Yet, a need for autonomy in a heavily co-dependent and interconnected sector may prove problematic for a practitioner unable to adapt to the opportunities available to them. When asked to identify the values and goals central to their craft business, responses shared two themes, grouped here as (1) stability (a desire to lead a 'wholesome life' [respondent 663], and 'secure my future' [respondent 144]) and (2) autonomy and agency (described using terms like 'responsibility', 'integrity', 'control', 'freedom', 'access' and 'flexibility'). As one respondent states:

"The main challenges are around finance and time management for all the tasks involved in (and skills required for) running a small business. Like many makers, I balance a "portfolio career" - working part-time to provide regular income and cover household bills, and developing my business part-time (reinvesting everything to support growth towards a self-sustaining position). This places a significant burden on time for developing the business, which (as a solo practitioner) covers designing and creating items for sale/exhibition, branding and marketing, sourcing materials, identifying and targeting appropriate sales channels. On top of this, teaching and running research projects (writing grants, manuscripts, conference presentations)."
[Respondent 105]

Notably, this respondent frames growth as being progress 'towards a self-sustaining position'. This is contrary to a conventional projection of entrepreneurship, which often assumes a mindset focussed upon the exploitation of opportunity, the expansion of business, and the accumulation of wealth (Frederick et al, 2018). Instead, this respondent seemingly favours a far more organic form of growth, that values independence and personal investment: another example of the ways in which craft practitioners may be deemed unconventional. However, this way of working for the respondent is difficult: an emotionally draining circumstance that perpetuates an agony (Petriglieri et al, 2018) redolent in contemporary creative models of work. Such difficulty may lead to the 'tentative' [respondent 471] or 'minimal' [respondent 359] sectoral roles that are reported by some respondents. Potentially driven by an inability to clearly ascertain a particular role, or even a fear of fully engaging with the confidence to fully define their roles, practitioners 'oscillate' (Petriglieri et al, 2018, p.120) between various emotional states in an attempt to manage these experiences. This oscillation sees them using their explorative nature to collect possible future selves (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010), via a low risk form of play that is mitigated by the support of craft development organisations.

Collaborative opportunity opens up space for identity exploration, where risks can be mitigated by the inclusion of collaborative partners (Caza et al, 2018). Operating under the banner of a collective entity, or an organisational leader, individuals adopt new identities in a process of approving or rejecting possible career pathways (Petriglieri et al, 2010). Offering opportunity for practitioners to imagine themselves in novel circumstance, these interactions build out the multiplicitous identities of practitioners with space to envision and share in 'new ways of working' [Respondent 712]. A duality of activity exists within the collaborative opportunities taken up by the respondents. One states they 'find collaboration and working with others to be extremely useful, sociable and an intrinsic part of my practice' [Respondent 597], whilst another alludes to two definitive streams of financial benefit, but also enjoyment,

stating: 'collaborations and co-operative events have been hugely rewarding in terms of exposure and sales, but also inspiration' [Respondent 772]. Another respondent elaborates on this inspiration, valuing the 'headspace to bounce new ideas around' [Respondent 105] that comes with a new domain, allowing a moment of space to engage with unconventional performances of themselves (Guercini and Cova, 2018). That is not to say any opportunity should be taken on blindly. Opportunity still have to be carefully weighed up. They are capable of contributing sizeable uncertainty, as well as considerable potential for the misinterpretation of identity, values and goals by others in the ecosystem. This creates alienation or doubt that serves to further compromise collaborative efforts and projects.

Identity Development

As a liminal space for imaginative ideation, craft development organisations offer moments of play to craft practitioners when they are provided space to consider themselves entering into a new domain. Craft practitioners perpetually renegotiate their identities, and adapt working practices in an almost schizophrenic way (Wong, 2017). However, successfully maintaining, (re)interpreting, and communicating these identities as they transition from playful activity to a formalised way of working work is central to the recognition of development: something that can be aided by an organisation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Although limited in availability and scope, respondents use programmes offered by support organisations to supplement their externally-motivated activities with internally-motivated ones, filling a gap in what individuals are able to achieve alone. Respondents cite 'guidance' [respondent 663], 'help' [respondents 084, 310, 527], and 'professional development' [respondents 603, 557, 310, 916, 155] as reasons for reaching out to organisational support. This demonstrates the esteem placed in the organisations, whilst also communicating a distinct sense of vulnerability. Individualistic motivations drive this way of working. Respondents use phrases such as 'to raise my profile' [respondent 144], 'for my own interest' [respondent 603], and 'promotion of my own practice' [respondent 950], framing organisational support as a space for practitioners to focus on their own identity, without having to also care for others in the sector. However, in order to move into these new domains, they must cross the threshold that exists between the imagination of play and the reality of work (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010) in order to validate these activities as legitimate. It is this validation (or invalidation) that is an essential final step in the process of securing a new identity (Ghaempanah and Khapova, 2020), and demands recognition from colleagues and peers within a domain. This constant necessity for an individual to always reassess and redefine their values and goals guides their renegotiation of their entrepreneurial boundaries, and has implications for the paths they choose and decisions they make. If the renegotiation and development of identity is reliant upon the approval of others within the sector, there is danger of over reliance on pre-existing pathways that threatens innovative models of work that challenge the status quo.

Breaking away from conventional pathways can lead to innovative venturing (Guercini and Cova, 2018). However, some respondents feel frustrated by the 'status quo' upheld by their community. One criticizes their peers' inward tendencies, hoping they may one day 'become more inclusive and think beyond themselves and their clique' [respondent 441]. This is

mirrored by another respondent, who notes that 'other makers tend to be quite isolated, only a few work openly with [the] community' [respondent 471]. The sector's reliance on archaic business models is an issue for some, such as the creation of objects for the sake of capitalist goals. When asked about challenges for their future development, one respondent replied 'whether the need for material products are needed or are they just a waste or if they are even necessary' [respondent 359]. This existential line of inquiry connects to the reoccurring issues of quality and accessibility. Accessibility relies on availability and price point (i.e., many items at a low price). Meanwhile, quality suggests a considerable investment of time, skill, and materials that must be recouped at an equally considerable cost, preventing them from being priced accessibly. The ability of respondents to balance these two central values is apparent, and disruptive to both self-determination and self-identity. By seeking the stability of economic sustainability via accessible forms of production, practitioners are asked to compromise values of environmental sustainability that call for a focus on more mindful production which is driven by need and quality rather than desire and consumption. These issues challenge a practitioner's core value systems, influencing the way makers work, and the market pathways ventured down. This issue of misplaced values is further discussed by a respondent, who declares 'I don't want to associate myself with a plan that seems to [be] leading to half-starved crafters' [respondent 745]. Demonstrating doubt in the standard routes to market and the mechanisms that are offered to, and accessed by, craft practitioners, this statement underlines the short-term focus of temporal opportunity typical in the sector. The organisational perpetuation of such pathways has implications for the stability sought by practitioners. As such, practitioners seek novel or innovative ways of working in order to disrupt the norm of the sector. In doing so they also contribute to the uncertainty they find troubling. Seemingly, practitioners are willing to adapt to uncertainty if it keeps their integrity intact.

When it came to future goals, some respondent's main focus was simply to sustain their core values (i.e., quality, integrity, skill) showing concern for maintaining integrity. Analysis of the vocabulary used by respondents included terms such as 'grow', 'develop', 'expand', 'employ' and 'internationally' occurring often (see Appendix D), demonstrating that despite the dominant narrative of craft practitioners rejecting conventional entrepreneurship (Luckman, 2018; Kovesi and Kern, 2018), there are several instances of conventional goals. Whilst academic conceptualisations of entrepreneurial pathways are often simplified to particular stages - new venture, start-up activities, growth, stabilisation, and either innovation or decline (Frederick et al, 2018) - this linear model appears irrelevant for craft. Alongside the conventional, respondents exhibited a varied selection of personal hopes of building their practice, creative development, variety, long term sustainability, and concerns for local models of economy, employment, and environmental impact - intrinsic forms of value demonstrating a more humanist perspective regarding value and growth (Fillis, 2004; Walker and Brown, 2004).

Thus, what we see is an entrepreneurial identity that is deeply entwined with personal, and contextual interpretations of growth. Respondents understand the language of growth, but its interpretation by others in the ecosystem (and beyond) may be obscured by the context in which this growth is performed. Instead, practitioners take charge of their development, connecting deeply with their communities, promoting value in practice, and expanding in ways that see them navigating the sector broadly. Rather than exploiting and exhausting an opportunity, there is desire for an opportunity to be nurtured and developed. For example, goals like founding a guild [respondent 663], setting up independent exhibitions, retail spaces,

and studios [respondents 663, 359, 660, 603], investing in local economies [respondents 471, 155, 246], and developing quality and skill in craft production both technically and aesthetically [respondents 155, 126, 712, 441]. This demonstrates necessity for the reconceptualising of what growth looks like in a craft business context. Craft demands the management of a creative power hierarchy that is reliant on building value, reputation, and ability within collectively 'approved' spheres that must be recognised by other actors in the sector. Thus, growth is not as simple as making money, employing people, and selling internationally (although they are factors). Instead, the craft venture evolves, with an individual exploring avenues via collaborative configurations, taking 'side steps' in to new domains, and integrating very specific factors such as setting up a studio, establishing an exhibition space, or making. These varied integrative identities enable an individual to become an integral cog in the shifting machine of the sector, slowly accruing greater and greater influence on the ecosystem, in turn shaping the future development of the sector.

Conclusion

Collaboration with craft development organisations plays a significant role in the formation and re-evaluation of a craft practitioner's entrepreneurial identity. By accessing and leveraging the processes of collaboration, individuals mitigate their experiences of tension, and challenge the entrepreneurial identities common in the sector. Through this process of adaptation to, and creation of, available opportunity they augment the resources found in the sector, contributing to its structure. Through metaphysical and physical exchange within a collaborative space, individuals are able to define facets of their identity with more clarity, whilst collecting new ones. These varied identities can be employed in different contexts, offering craft practitioners a robustness when managing the uncertainty redolent in the sector. They are also potentially more divergent than an individual would be able to create on their own, thanks to the introduction of novel or innovative resources, ideas, or practices contributed by partners such as craft development organisations.

Whilst the outcomes of these partnerships cannot always be known, individuals make the most of the opportunity to be explorative, recognising the value in moments of play. This demands a reflexive approach that cannot be planned for, as well as significant sense-making *after* the opportunity has concluded. However, a lack of control when participating in such opportunity does leave an individual practitioner open to further collaborative tension. To counter-act this loss of autonomy, individuals take on a role of leader in their own grass roots projects, working to give back to their community. This offers them space to create the opportunities they believe are unrecognised, and enriching economies with craft values and ethics. Constantly renegotiating and adapting their working practices through this duality, they iterate and refine entrepreneurial identities that satisfy personal goals, yet they are heavily dependent upon the opportunities created by others to explore and play with new possibilities.

A serious concern is the potential misinterpretation of identity has to contribute to community mistrust or doubt in an individual, damaging opportunities for development and collaborative relationships. Whilst collaborative tension may not be enjoyable (although not necessarily unpleasant either), it is a process that helps individuals question as well as better define and understand their own role in the ecosystem, in turn shedding light on their options

for their future self, and continue developmental momentum for the sector. The resulting re-conceptualisations of growth as a process of unconventional entrepreneurial identity development must be recognised as valid and influential by craft development organisations. Doing so can inform a new perspective for future creation of programmes of support for craft enterprise which may, for example, seek to include craft practitioners in the creation of opportunity.

Notes

Serious limitations in the data collected via survey places limitations upon the findings of this paper. Next steps seek to address the shortcomings in data collection by conducting in-depth interviews with a small number of survey respondents. Doing so provides opportunity to further explore some of the themes introduced in this paper, and elaborate upon conclusions.

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Appendices

A. Reasons for Collaboration & Number of mentions

REASONS FOR COLLABORATION 'Examples'	No. N=25	REASONS FOR COLLABORATION 'Examples'	No. N=25
FINANCIAL REASONS 'Sales' 'Financial profits' 'Secure commissions' 'Orders' 'Financial security' 'Income'	10	BUILD REPUTATION 'Raised profile' 'Build reputation' 'Recognition' 'Public awareness' 'Promote craft' 'Cultural stability' 'Visibility' 'Honour past crafts people'	9
BUSINESS EXPANSION 'Business expansion' 'Supplement collection' 'International business'	3	FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES 'Future opportunities' 'Exhibition opportunities' 'Opportunity awareness'	5
CHALLENGE/DEVELOP SKILL 'Creative development' 'Informal mentoring' 'Socialisation of practice' 'Develop processes' 'New skills' 'Experiences' 'New capability' 'Inspiration' 'Bring ideas to life' 'Produce my very best work' 'Find new ways of working'	11	COMMUNITY & OWN WELLBEING 'Companionship' 'Motivation' 'Support community' 'Mutual cooperation' 'Connection' 'Peer support' 'A satisfactory life' 'Make a contribution' 'Work with others' 'Belong to a group' 'Reassurance of my ability'	11
BUILD NETWORK 'Build networks' 'Publicity' 'Build audience' 'PR' 'Promotion' 'Exposure' 'Outreach'	13	RESOURCES 'Sharing costs' 'Sharing tools' 'Sharing learning/knowledge' 'Sharing spaces'	4

B. Respondents experience with collaborative partners and project types

Collaborative Partner + Most popular project type (% of respondent rate)	Rate N=25
Other Maker Market/Pop-up (63%); Exhibition (58%); Design/Production Retail Collection (58%)	96%
Craft Collective/Guild Exhibition (68%); Network Event (58%); Market/Pop-up (42%); Workshop/Training (42%)	76%
Artist Run Initiatives Exhibition (63%); Market/Pop-up (47%); Network Event (32%); Workshop/Training (32%)	76%
Tradeshow Exhibition (80%); Retail Collection (30%); Market/Pop-up (10%)	40%

Public Organisations Online Content (50%); Network Event (50%); Print Publication (40%); Exhibition (40%); Workshop/Training (40%)	40%
Curators Exhibition (70%); Pop-up (30%); Design/Production (30%); Workshop/Training (30%)	40%
Public Museum/Gallery Exhibition (33%); Retail Collection (33%); Market/Pop-up (17%)	48%
Private Museum/Gallery Exhibition (71%); Print Publication (57%); Retail Collection (57%); Online Content (43%)	28%
Private Businesses Market/Pop-up (63%); Retail Collection (63%); Exhibition (38%); Design/Production (38%)	64%

C. Top 15 Roles in Sector VS. Roles when Collaborating

ROLE IN SECTOR Descriptive terms used by individuals to describe their role in sector	Mentions N=25	ROLE IN COLLABORATION Descriptive terms used by individuals to describe their role when collaborating	Mentions N=25
Maker	8	Exhibitor	9
Practitioner	2	Maker	9
Designer	3	Designer	7
Educator/Teacher	3	Educator/Teacher	6
Researcher	2	Facilitator	3
Facilitator	2	Technician	3
Advocate	2	Seller	3
Artist	1	Manufacturer	2
Business Owner	1	Artist	2
Collaborator	1	Researcher	2
Heritage Craft Business	1	Collaborator	2
Craft Practitioner	1	Writer	2
Embroiderer	1	Fabricator	2
Fabricator	1	Driver	2
Minimal	1	Project Manager	2

D. Most common future goals of respondents

Goals for the future of respondents craft business	Mentions
Growth (Grow locally - 2; Grow online sales - 2; Grow nationally - 2; Grow internationally - 5)	11
Make a living/secure financial future/viable business	8
Keep producing new/innovative work	7
Address issues of environmentalism/sustainability	5
Set up own organisation/shop/studio	5
Develop techniques/skills/brand	4
Employ others	3