

Learning and growth in contemporary craft-based organisations

Supervisors:

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Project description:

The early 21st century has seen a renewed interest in craft products and working practices. New organizational templates for craft-based enterprise, such as urban micro-breweries, open access 'makerspaces' and specialist online intermediaries such as Etsy, have reduced the barriers to entry for new craft practitioners. The movement has gained additional cultural resonance through popular books such as Matthew Crawford's *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, Peter Korn's, *Why We Make Things and Why it Matters* and Susan Luckman's *Craft and the Creative Economy*. This studentship provides an opportunity to investigate the meaning of contemporary craft work and consider the extent to which it represents and enables distinct organisational identities and practices (Bell *et al.* 2018). We are keen for applicants to engage with an emerging research strand that seeks to reclaim a craft future within Modernity (Adamson 2013, Ferris 2015) and to examine how the application of craft-related values and ways of being could help to inform a transition towards more environmentally and socially-benign models of growth (Clarke *et al.* 2014).

Your research proposal should relate directly to this theme, but could focus on craft-based organisations and practitioners in a variety of countries, regions and/or sectors. Given the topic, we envisage a broadly qualitative approach being adopted in the proposed study, incorporating fieldwork. We are also interested in the wider role of learning in this organisational setting (Cunliffe and Bell, 2016) and encourage applicants to consider how researcher-practitioner collaborations might be used to explore this issue (e.g. Koomen and Blundel 2017). The successful applicant will have opportunities to engage with research groups in the faculty, such as the recently-formed Centre for Knowledge in Organisations and Professions, and with cross-university groups such as Innovation, Knowledge and Development (www.open.ac.uk/ikd). There may also be scope to work (via Prof Blundel), with colleagues in the ESRC Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity (www.cusp.ac.uk).

References/readings:

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