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Value Direction: Moving Crafts toward Sustainability in the Yangtze River Delta, China

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Abstract: The paper presents ongoing research on craft and design for sustainability in the Yangtze River Delta (YRD), China. Based on previous research into the relationship between craft and design for sustainability, and literature on value, a typology of five values pertaining to craft is defined. This research investigates values and craft practices in the YRD through identifying the direction of craftwork development in the region and evaluating them against the defined five values. It is found that some crafts in the YRD are commercialized and strongly influenced by cosmopolitanism and consumerism, while some crafts with high intrinsic values are still in decline and need specific interventions. However, these interventions need more context-based consideration and evaluation. What might be regarded as "excessive" intervention in commercial promotion and mass-production could potentially homogenize local crafts, thereby undermining their distinctiveness and their intrinsic values. The aim of this paper is to (a) identify the direction of different craftworks categories in the YRD; and (b) evaluate them with the defined five values in order to inform future design intervention.

Keywords: craft; design for sustainability; value; direction; Yangtse River Delta; ICH

1. Introduction

Craft has long been regarded as being out of step with mass-production and contemporary society [1] (p. 295). According to several sources, the global rise of industrialization and consumer societies have hastened a decline in traditional craft practice and production across the world. This is evidenced in a series of research and reports (For example, Chudasri's thesis on craft industry in Thailand [2], and the report for the Crafts Council UK in 2012 *Craft in an Age of Change* [3], and Holroyd, A.T. et al. [4]). However, in China, the spirit of craftsmanship (gong jiang jing shen) has recently been identified as a vital ingredient for the nation's manufacturing development [2]. Also, in 2017 the Craft Revitalisation Plan was issued by the central government's State Council to reintroduce craft products into everyday life [5]. Today, craftsmen (gong jiang), ingenuity (jiang xin) and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) (fei yi) are frequently referred to by Chinese politicians, policy makers, business promoters and academics; these terms are now part of the mainstream of public discourse. As marginalized crafts and indigenous knowledge have gained political power, there is a revival of interest in craft objects and craft practices across China. This wave of craft resurgence has been further bolstered in recent years by China's promotion of entrepreneurship (chuang ye) and innovation (chuang xin) [6]). This renewed interest is also resulting in a wide variety of craft revitalization practices happening in modern China.

The Yangtse River Delta, the region of interest in the present study, has a long and rich craft history with c.a. 700 crafts recognized as ICH at the world, national and provincial levels [7]. This region is also one of China's most developed and highly concentrated industrial areas with dynamic technologies

and commercial modes. Many of the ICH crafts that were once limited to local circulation have been put on the online market through major e-commerce companies and are now sold all over the country [8]. These include, for example Taobao and Dongjia. (Taobao is the largest e-commence company in China and they have created online shopping that dominates the consumption of Chinese people. Dongjia is another online platform for crafts and craftspeople selling their works and communication, that was set up in 2015 in Hangzhou.) Given this, our concern is how to understand the current craft practices and revitalization with the various elements present in this region—long-lasting crafts, dynamic technological developments, and a growing economy—in order to work towards a sustainable future. Lenzerini argues that the prominent characteristic of ICH is self-identification and distinctiveness [9] (p. 105). This is also consistent with our findings from previous research—one of the principle characteristics of craft is the localism and its distinctiveness from other cultures [7]. Meanwhile, craft has a close relationship with sustainability in terms of accordance and tensions [7]. China has been undergoing a craft revival in the arena of creative industries [10]. Therefore, we are especially interested in how the crafts in the region can be sustained and revitalized within the highly cosmopolitan and modernized context and avoid becoming "something else". Based on this, this research asks what the current state and development directions of craft practices in the YRD are, and how to evaluate them in order to inform future design intervention.

In order to understand the craft development and craft-related contexts, and make sense of the life and work of craftspeople, this research employs ethnographic methods, in the form of semi-structured interviews and observations. Twenty-seven semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and observations for this research were conducted between May 2017 and December 2017 in four cities in the YRD: Shanghai, Hangzhou, Suzhou and Jingdezhen. These interviews were conducted with craft makers, buyers, academics, designers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and business development representatives. The craftspeople were mainly from two fields of craft—porcelain and textiles, but also included some involved in bronze and woodcrafts. In addition, two academics in the field of craft studies and one NGO leader were interviewed in a non-YRD affiliated city, Beijing, in order to gain a general view on Chinese crafts and potential directions for information collection. Apart from a critical literature study, the research in this paper is mainly based on an interpretive analysis of the empirical data from the field.

Combining findings from previous research, secondary resources and primary data from the field in the Yangtze River Delta, this research aims to identify the current directions of craftworks in the region and evaluate them in the context of sustainability, in order to inform future design intervention in crafts toward a sustainable future.

2. Defining the Values of Craft in the Context of Sustainability

The word "value" frequently occurred in the interviews and conversations in the process of field data collection, and is also discussed in the heritage literature, as a means to assess and direct the planning of heritage site protection, e.g., Marta de la Torre's work and the report of The Australian National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites on assessing value in cultural heritage [11,12]. Value will be discussed later in Section 2.2. Informed by this, we recognized that the value definition of crafts is critical to our understanding of craft practices, because it affects whether the value crafts contain can be enhanced or diminished, and whether design intervention can be steered by context-related values. However, first of all, we need to clarify what we mean by value, and second, what values craft contains? In order to answer this, we referenced previous research on craft and sustainability, and reviewed literature on value.

2.1. Craft and Sustainability: A Consistent and Contradictory Relation

This section is based on findings from our preceding research [7,10]. Hereby, we briefly summarize the findings to give a starting point to define the values pertaining to craft in line with sustainability.

Craft is considered by many scholars as one of the most elusive concepts, meaning it belongs to a "polythetic category" because it cannot be absolutely fixed in any particular definition [13]. In previous research, by extensively referencing literature on craft, the authors have attempted to address this "polythetic category" and developed a systemic view on craft in terms of ecological and localized making, complex thinking, and authentic being [7]. Regarding sustainability, Maxwell et al. argue that the mainstream technology-intensive approaches do not approach the concept of sustainability holistically [14]. David W. Orr has classified all approaches to sustainability as either technological sustainability or ecological sustainability—both are coherent responses to the global environmental and social issues but are very different from each other in their visions [15]. Contributing to the authors' understandings of sustainability are ideas of holistic sustainability that integrate technological-based ideas with ecological-based concepts. These ideas deal with the common concerns of environmental integrity, social justice, and economic viability. (For example, see John Elkington [16], and "Towards the Circular Economy" by Ellen MacArthur Foundation [17]).

In the field of design for sustainability, numerous pathways have enabled solutions and initiatives to emerge over the past two decades. These include: Green Design, Cradle to Cradle, Biomimicry, Product/Service-based Systems, upcycling, Systemic Design, permaculture, and social innovation. (For these approaches, see William McDonough and Michael Braungart [18]; Fabrizio Ceschin and Idil Gaziulusoy [19]; Bill Mallison's notions and views on Permaculture [20]; Ezio Manzini's approaches to design for social innovation [21]). The practices and discourses of design for sustainability have yielded an unprecedented mix of ideas and approaches, especially the emerging holistic understandings and visions of sustainability, such as the Quadruple Bottom Line [22,23] and Transition Design [24], which identify the need for a systemic shift in outlook and approach. These holistic approaches, which resonate with the theory of holism [25] and a systemic view of life (For more information about Capra's ideas of symbiosis and systems view see https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/courses/short-courses/mind-matter-and-life%3A-a-unified-systemic-view) [26], share the common concepts of self-organization, interconnectedness, cosmopolitan localism, and symbiosis. By reviewing these ideas and approaches, four key concepts of design for sustainability have been identified, that is, eco-effectiveness, cosmopolitan localization, self-production and contextualized lifestyle [7,27].

By bringing these two areas together—a comprehensive understanding of craft and design for sustainability—strong connections are revealed that can be summarized in terms of ecology, eco-communality, resilient systems and lifestyle revision. However, there are also some tensions, such as those triggered by cosmopolitanism, productivity and economic viability. The relationship is summarized as accordances and tensions in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between craft and sustainability, source from Zhan [27] (p. 872).

Relationship between Craft and Sustainability	
Accordances	**Tensions**
Eco-effectiveness Natural materials, renewable resources, closed loop ecosystem	Cosmopolitanism Closed, isolated from technology and economy, lack of global view, being out of step with modern aesthetics
Eco-communality Local resources, knowledge, local human needs, community-based living systems, diverse cultural identities	Efficiency & effectiveness Pre-industrial technique, uncompetitive, while modern production generally ignores social and environmental costs.
Resilient system Small-scale, diverse, distributed, resilient to risks and crises	Economic viability Low-paid, low price, value diminished, cost-income gap
Sense of being Authentic, relevant, creative, responsive, contextualized	

Among the key concepts of sustainability, we chose cosmopolitan localism to represent an imagined vision of and approach to sustainability, which emphasizes community-based local craft production systems, culture and value, with the ability to share and exchange information and knowledge through ever-improving technologies, mutual respect and global network [24] (p. 229). The concept of cosmopolitan localism was initiated by Wolfgang Sachs in 1992, and later developed by other scholars (e.g., Manzini and Irwin) [24,28] as a vision and an alternative way of transition towards sustainability. This concept aims at first generating a resilient social mechanism and productive system to cope with the ever-deteriorating climate and social crises. It is coherent with another notion of sustainability—diversity. Both concepts are informed by the sociological and scientific theories of holism and symbiosis, as Fritjof Capra frequently addressed in his book, *Systems View of Life* and in the courses at Schumacher college [26]. Sammells addresses the concepts of cosmopolitanism and localism by seeing a two-way link between them in heritage cuisine and tourism [29]. She argues that there is not an absolute division between cosmopolitan and local [29] (p. 143). Apart from the idea that cosmopolitanism is evolved from the universalization of geographical localism, she also argues localism is built and conceptualized in the context of cosmopolitanism, because "defining the 'localness'" of a cuisine requires evaluation through the lens of cosmopolitanism [29] (pp. 154–155). As Table 1 shows, craft are presumed to be not cosmopolitan but local. The local distinctiveness endows the critical value to traditional crafts while closed modes of production inhibits their development in the modern context. Therefore, this implies that the value in crafts should represent the mediation "between big and small networks, between global and local" [30] (p. 8). However, the two-way link between cosmopolitan and local also informs that the value of "localness" is not exclusive "localness" in the tradition of indigenous craftspeople. This also resonates with the argument that local tradition is not static but flexible [31] (p. 6) and is in constant development [32] (p. 237).

2.2. A Value Typology of Craft (Five Values Pertaining to Craft)

Mason states that values mean "the qualities and characteristics seen in things, in particular the positive characteristics" [33] (p. 7). Meanwhile, values are "produced out of the interaction of an artefact and its contexts; they don't emanate from the artefact itself" [33] (p. 8). He further argues that values are multiple and diverse [33] (p. 10). The notion of value is widely discussed in relation to the conservation of heritage sites, and this literature provides a useful reference. Aesthetic, historical, evidential, and communal values are the categories used by English Heritage [34]. Values such as historical, aesthetical, scientific, social, spiritual and communal values are most used in heritage conservation [33] (p. 285). Then what values do crafts have? UNESCO categorizes the value of ICH into social, economic and commercial dimensions in which the economic value is divided into the direct and the indirect [35]. The direct economic value includes for own consumption, for consumption by others, with commercial use, e.g., traditional medicines, tourists attending a festivity, and trade of crafts, while the indirect economic value includes skill and knowledge and social value as conflict prevention. Regarding China's ICH heritage conservation, Xu proposes three types of values relating to ICH: aesthetic value, social value and academic value [36]. As Mason argues, these typologies of value sometimes describe the same dimension, but in subtly different ways. He also points out that one typology cannot represent all cultural heritages and encourages the development of new typologies for particular cultural settings where required [33].

Referencing value creation in business, Bowman and Ambrosini propose three levels of recognized meanings of value: financial, utility and symbolic meanings [37]. These can be attributed to two aspects of assets, tangible and intangible [38]. Value is measured not only quantitatively (financial and tangible), but also qualitatively (utility and intangible), which includes four overlapping areas: functional utility (what the product does), economic utility (how much it costs), social effectiveness (how much contribution it makes to social equality and stability) and emotional implication (how it makes people feel and think) [37] (p. 6).

The elements of value in these typologies all reflect to a variable degree the three pillars of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL): economic, environment and society. Meanwhile, transcendental and conceptual values emerge from literature on environmental management. Transcendental value is a relevant value concept to craft and can be compared to the conceptual value, which are both studied in the framework of ecosystem services [39]. The concept of transcendental value conveys an ethical and imperceptible dimension that is not implied by the TBL, while craft, as the preceding study shows, may identify strongly with transcendental ethics in terms of faith and belief (For transcendental meaning of craft, see Zhan, X; Walker, S. [7]). Hence, this could potentially inform the definition of craft value. However, by reviewing the transcendental and conceptual values in this literature, it is found that, as Silvertown argues [40] (p. 645), the value concept in ecosystem services has its roots in economic thought which emphasizes "quantifying the 'value'"; that is, the classification of value in this framework is for effectively assessing the economic value. Lenzerini also argues that the main significance of ICH rests "not on its exterior qualities, but rather on the degree of significance it has for its creators and bearers" [9] (p. 110). Based on the above research, the authors of this research tend to identify the value dimensions of craft instead of quantifying or assessing it.

Another potential reference informing the definition of value typology for craft is the Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL) of Sustainability [22] (pp. 56–65). Compared to TBL, the QBL considers a fourth element of sustainability in addition to the three pillars of environment, society and economy, namely, spirituality which addresses the existential personal meaning that contributes to the meaning of sustainability as a whole. The personal meaning of sustainability echoes one of the characteristics of craft in terms of authentic being, self-actualization and the quality of inner life engendered by craft making [7]. The noteworthy point in the QBL is that economy per se is not regarded as having meaning for its own sake, unlike the other three elements of environment, society, and spirituality. Though it is acknowledged as a vital element in both the TBL and QBL, economy is recognized in the QBL as a means of sustaining livelihood rather than having meaning in itself. Therefore, economic viability and flourishing are considered the basic values for sustaining crafts. Meanwhile, some sustainability scholars identify culture as an independent category when analyzing sustainability practices and impacts. This cultural dimension most reflects the themes of local traditions, religions, customs, communal norms and so forth, e.g., Reubens contextualizes craftworks into four aspects of sustainability, ecological (environmental), social, cultural and economic for analyzing sustainable design [41].

According to the synthesized understanding of value in heritage conservation and the elements in sustainability and referencing the characteristics of both craft and sustainability, we classified values pertaining to craft into five categories within the two dimensions of extrinsic and intrinsic in Table 2.

Table 2. Values of Craft in Relation to Sustainability.

Five Values of Craft in Relation to Sustainability		
Extrinsic	**Environmental value**	Eco-friendly materials, production processes, renewable resources-labour
	Economic value	Own consumption, increasing income, commercial use
Intrinsic	**Social value**	Employment, conflict prevention, social equality, community building, social norms
	Local-cultural value	Local distinctiveness, self-identified culture instead of cosmopolitan culture, changing cultural tradition instead of the static
	Spiritual value	Beliefs, faith, sense of being, self-fulfilment through making

Environmental and economic values are more physical and practical and can be measured. We need to rediscover a craft's intrinsic values, which are initially based on the craft itself. The value of particular know-how and skills are key elements related to the intrinsic values of particular crafts. Second, the social ethics and cultural identity and the implications embedded in the craft are the other two major values of the intrinsic dimension. Third, craft, as a way of thinking and being, has its existential meaning to makers, people in the community and, potentially, people elsewhere. This is

an intrinsic-spiritual value of craft, a value that may even be transcendental. Unlike craft's extrinsic values, some argue, craft's intrinsic values are hard to measure, but can be defined and evaluated. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the relationship of these values pertaining to craft are represented in Figure 1.

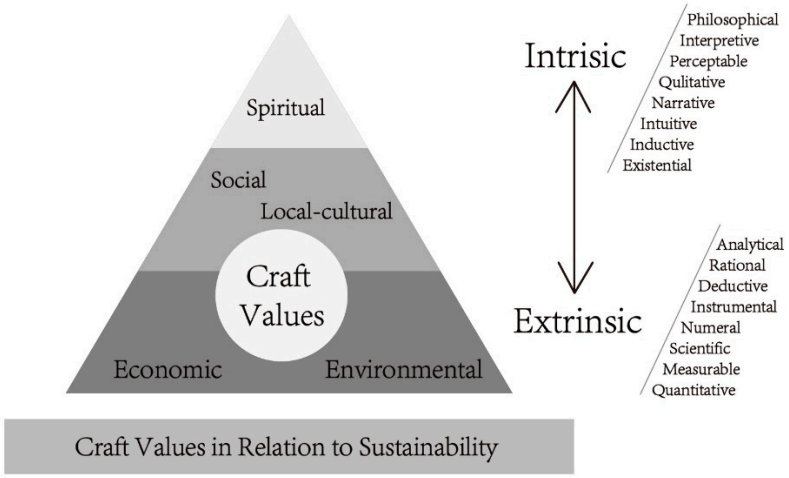

Figure 1. Values of Craft in Relation to Sustainability.

Based on the value typology defined here, the following sections will present findings from field research through understanding the current state of craft revitalization in terms of the directions of craftworks in the region.

3. Craftworks in the YRD

In order to better understand the multifaceted craft development directions in the field, and discover the particular values pertaining to them, we tried to classify the craftworks into categories. Regarding how to categorize the directions of the craftworks in the field, we referenced the existing literature on craft taxonomy. One of the taxonomies that is relevant to our purpose is a taxonomy by the theorist Daoyi Zhang regarding Chinese arts and crafts. He classifies crafts into three main themes based on the use and modelling feature: (a) decorative theme; (b) ritual and occasional theme, and (c) everyday life theme [42]. Tang's taxonomy divides crafts into two categories, functional and decorative objects [43] (pp. 4–5). Hang classified crafts into six themes and many subcategories according to the materials and skills [44], while Shi et al. classify crafts into categories according to the classification of Chinese arts, in terms of materials, skills and function [45] (pp. 99–103).

Therefore, the classification of crafts in China is fundamentally based on function, material and technique (skill), or it is based on broader fields such as "traditional craftsmanship" and "traditional fine arts", as used by the ICH sector [46]. According to a review commissioned by the UK Crafts Council on the taxonomy of craft used in the UK, the particular contribution of this review was that it offered two new factors to classify crafts, that is, craft-related industry (fashion, art and antique) and craft-related activity, in addition to function, material and technique [47]. Craft-related activity includes the core activity such as textile, woodwork, and related activities such as raw material sourcing, craft fair, etc. [47]. Chudasri also suggested another factor for classifying crafts, namely, "market value" in terms of high-end, medium-high, low-medium and low values, which is mainly from a marketization point of view [2] (p. 84).

According to data from semi-structured interviews and observations, "cultural products" were frequently mentioned to refer to some particular craftworks. We take this concept into account when considering the classification. However, we found that what informants called "cultural products"

meant different crafts from one interviewee to another. It referred to a variety of craftworks ranging from utilitarian, decorative to artistic crafts and even contemporary art works.

Since the classification is intended to understand and identify the directions of crafts in contemporary society and the particular values in these crafts, we tend to classify them from a directional perspective. By taking the taxonomies in literature, observations and the interview data collectively, the craftworks in the region are divided into four categories: traditional, cultural-functional, utilitarian and art-craft. This classification is based on the degree to which the craftspeople inherit or innovate the traditional craft and in which development direction they innovate their craftworks.

3.1. Traditional-Decorative Crafts

This form of craftworks is more decorative than utilitarian, pertaining more to traditional fine art than contemporary art, e.g., silk umbrellas are usually not used in daily life but for decoration and ceremony (see Image 2). The makers of this type of craft are more likely to stick to tradition in terms of motifs, style and process, or even copy the tradition by putting the pattern or painting onto a different type of medium or use it in another craft technique, e.g., many embroideries are found to be a copy of photos and paintings, and are sold as fine-art works to hang on the wall, as Image 1 shows. Among these works there are also some religious items, such as a Bodhi bracelet made of seeds from banyan tree.

Images 1–3 and show examples of this type of craft, which represents a significant percentage of crafts in the YRD, according to the observation of embroidery in Suzhou, imitative porcelain in Jingdezhen, and woodcarving in Dongyang county, southeast of Shanghai.

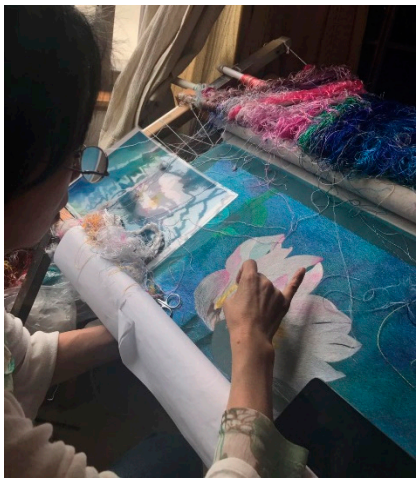

Image 1. Su-embroidery in Ren Huixian studio.

Most people who make these works are considered fei yi chuan cheng ren (inheritors of ICH) (resembling the Living National Treasures in Japan, ICH inheritors are the bearers or preservers of ICH Properties who are certified by the government sectors of ICH. See http://www.china.com.cn/culture/zhuanti/fyccr/node_7068575.htm (accessed on 1 February 2018)) Masters of Arts and Crafts). They are not all formally educated, and some of them lack awareness of the modern environment, contemporary aesthetics and market demands. However, these craftspeople are highly skilled even while they stick to the traditional methods, materials and designs. Ms. Chen, a leader of a craft NGO, when talking about the crafts from the YRD sent to the Lisbon International Handicrafts Fair 2017, commented from a commercial point of view:

Most of the products are pretty timeless. Although they are ICH crafts, they are time consuming, and the materials are expensive, like the Yunjing brocade, and the Dongyang woodcarving. But the major problem is that these crafts have been made into finished products instead of semi-finished

materials like a piece of embroidery or woodcarving. The semi-finished products are attractive and interesting for buyers because they could bring potential opportunity for future cooperation.

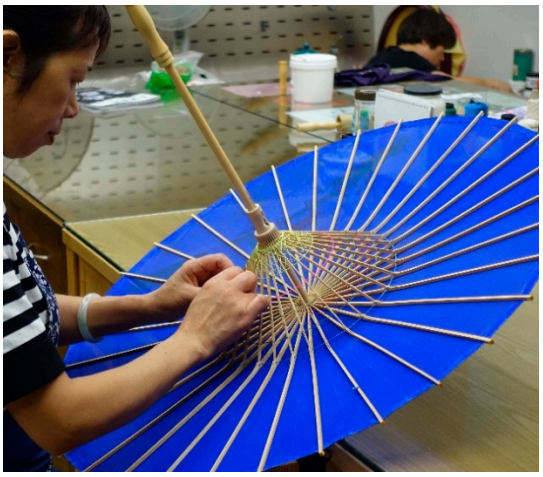

Image 2. Hangzhou silk umbrella.

Image 3. Five-colour mini porcelain cup.

Her comments about the timelessness of traditional crafts are supported to some extent by the crafts observed in the field and particularly in the case of ICH crafts. For example, when observing Suzhou embroidery in the Ren Huixian Studio (Image 1) there were five people in one room all embroidering Chinese landscapes, and flower and bird paintings by copying the pictures onto a silk base. One master embroiderer told the authors that the most valuable part of the embroidery was the innovation of stitch technique because it was very difficult to break through the traditional stitch technique to invent a new one that could enhance the visual effect. In a handmade silk rug company in Jinshan town and the Hangzhou Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hangzhou (Image 2), southwest of Shanghai, we observed similar scenes and craft practices. However, according to the craftspeople employed in weaving, they are content with their work. Most women weaving in Suzhou, although they cannot earn a good income, thought that the joy their work brings to them makes them feel self-fulfilled and their lives meaningful.

The UK [3] and Thailand [2]), face a similar issue in the dilemma in passing down the craft knowledge. Although China has initiated many ICH programmes and training courses to support ICH crafts, it is still ineffective in motivating young people to learn the craft skills, particularly the intricate and complicated. A master embroiderer complained:

> "Fewer and fewer of the young generation are willing to learn this skill. It really needs composure and perseverance. When the government set up some programmes to encourage people to take apprenticeships in traditional skills, there were a few young people coming to learn in our studio, but most of them gave up halfway or after the programme ended. Now I have just one part-time apprentice".

As most of interviewees said, another problem is that it is hard to find a market for these exquisite traditional products. According to an ICH inheritor of Shanghai Woollen Tapestry, few tapestry works were bought by individual consumers; most of the works were commissioned by government, hotels or emporiums for decoration or furnishing. However, the second generation of heritage crafts are starting to change the singular scenery of their works. Most of these people are the next generation of inheritors and graduated from Arts and Craft schools. They are more likely to return to their families to continue their parents' crafts. In Jingdezhen, this group are called "the second generation of ceramic inheritors" (ci er dai). They will be the main force driving the inheritance of the traditions and innovation in the future. Most of the craftworks designed and made by them are classified into cultural-functional crafts and utilitarian commercial products. This will be discussed below.

3.2. Cultural-Functional Crafts

Craftworks that have both a function and connotations of tradition are classified as cultural-functional crafts. They combine traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics. Traditional intricacies are simplified and optimized in terms of material, form, pattern and the production process, and sometimes the materials and processes are changed. Nevertheless, the core techniques and core processes of manual creation or control by people are significantly retained whilst not being destroyed. The essence of the diverse local cultures which represent their pasts and their peoples can still be perceptibly identified.

Innovation is not only about the crafts (products) at the product design level, but also at the level of contextualized-spatial design (museums galleries, hotels, restaurants, pubs and cafes). Compared to utilitarian craft-products, these craftworks often have less packaging and are made by hand in small-batch productions or in the bespoke mode, thus, there is less intervention by contemporary technologies and mass-production. Images 4 and 5 show examples of this craft category.

Taking the case of a blue and white tea set (Image 4) made by the ceramic artist, Mr. Gan who was interviewed in the Sanbao ceramic village, Jingdezhen, May 2017, it can be seen that the shapes of the vessels almost completely retain local forms. However, the traditional painting and engraving has greatly changed to a modern way of expression. Mr. Gan is one of the many artists who are dedicated to innovating and updating traditional blue and white porcelain. He controls the whole process of producing them. Though the intricate painting has been replaced with the abstract and the precise forms have been changed into cruder forms of folk teapots, the technique and culture of the traditional vessels still remain. These craftworks are innovative yet within the tradition in terms of their appearance, material, and the craftsmanship used during the making process. Another ceramic artist Mr. Ning also commented (Interview with artists Gang Ning who is also the president of Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute, November 2017),

> "An artist (maker) who has no knowledge and techniques of blue and white, who doesn't know how to control the whole process of glazing and kilning (in addition to painting), can hardly innovate while also retaining the essence of tradition".

Another example of these crafts is Zhubingren bronze work. The person currently in charge is Master Zhubingren, a fourth-generation proponent of the family craft. The major direction of the enterprise was to innovate the bronze works so that they would become "cultural" craftworks for ordinary people for daily use, since bronze works used to be craft used by royal families and aristocracy. In reviewing the works named be them as "cultural" products, we recognized that they are rooted in the traditions and the lifestyle of south Yangtze River Delta. Some of these craftworks reflect the

culture through their forms and techniques or in the ways they are used. The tea plate and saucers in have the design and style of traditional vessels while being forged by the Master's new technique of melting-cooling-crystalizing. These modern, and also traditional craftworks are welcomed among the rising Chinese middle-class.

Image 4. Artist Gan Gaopu's modern blue and white porcelain tea set.

Image 5. Zhubingren bronze tea service, courtesy by Zhubingren Bronze Museum, Hangzhou.

3.3. Utilitarian Craft-Products (Commercial)

This category of craft-products includes products that (1) combine traditional parts of semi-finished pieces with an industrialized production mode by employing machines and components outsourcing; (2) are significantly modified or even disruptively innovated by industrial design and use mass-production line. Examples of these type of products can be seen below (See Images 6 and 7).

From the second generation of Shanghai Woollen Tapestry Masters, Mr. Bao graduated from a design school and created a new brand called "Queens Back" to innovate the family heritage craft (Image 7). The forms and patterns were redesigned and then handwoven into semi-finished pieces. Later they were integrated into the production of bags and shoes in factories. However, according to him, the prices were not competitive in the mass-production commercial market since the costs were so high, especially for the handwoven pieces. He stated,

> Those bags are sold at prices ranging from 500–5000 yuan (1 yuan ≈ 0.11 British pounds in 2017). The revenue seems not bad, but the stores take out more than half of the profits. However, the sale volume is still very low.

Regarding the outlet for his products, Mr Bao was running two sales models, developing new products for Taobao online sale and also for the relatively high-end physical stores in shopping malls. According to him, sales were still not good.

Image 6. Tea leaves pots redesigned and branded "Story of Blue and White" in Jingdezhen.

Image 7. New product by using the ICH technique of Shanghai Woollen Needle Tapestry.

As Image 7 shows, these products are difficult to clean and keep because of the woollen material. When asked if he had considered changing the directions of current designs, product use or target consumers or markets, Mr Bao replied,

> I have studied the market quite a lot. It's a bit hard to innovate because of the characteristics of the ICH item and the material. If it is changed too much, I wonder what the heritage item can leave for us. It becomes something else.

This is the crux of the issue. The orientation and form of products for the ordinary use market needs further research to identify potential new possibilities. These possibilities should enable these craftsmen to stop employing mass-consumption, or to stay with it but explore optimized ways to reconcile this with the traditional craftsmanship that the crafts convey. This also applies to the dilemma described for the traditional-decorative crafts in the previous section. It is a reminder for designers to reflect on whether the direction of mass-produced consumer goods, as illustrated here in the utilitarian category, is appropriate or not.

Another example is the "Zhuyu" umbrella in Hangzhou (Image 8). The umbrella was inspired by the traditional silk umbrella, a featured specialty craft of Hangzhou (Image 9). The structures are semi-handmade by craftspeople at the early stage, but the project is changing the process, including

the of manual input. According to a designer involved in this project, there is a move to employ auto-machines or technologies to improve the making process and increase efficiency, so as to reduce the cost. If this is achieved, aside from the bamboo material, what can be recognized as a form of ICH that conveys the craftsmanship and local culture of silk umbrella? Although the original purpose was to revitalize ICH crafts, the umbrellas are now mass-produced. The umbrellas are sold at the price of approximately 300 yuan. However, the use of bamboo structure is unique and greatly reduces the environmental impact. Therefore, compared to other mass-produced umbrellas in the Chinese market, these are more popular despite being more expensive.

Image 8. Zhuyu umbrella inspired by silk umbrella with Bamboo structure, awarded IF prize, Red dot prize. http://www.ulibuy.com/productinfo.html?seqid=69409.

Image 9. An original traditional umbrell.

3.4. Art-Craft Works

Products with little utilitarian or functional use that are made with particular traditional craft techniques and materials are defined here as art-craft works. Most of crafts in this category are actually regarded as artworks, and serve as a means of artistic and ideological expression. The style of these works can be both contemporary or traditional depending on the themes they convey and they are normally extremely expensive and symbolic. The people who engage in these craft works are artists such as Ai Weiwei. One of his most prominent works, *One Hundred Million Seeds* was once exhibited in the Tate London. It was made of porcelain by over one thousand artisans in Jingdezhen [48]. Another example is the artwork of Zhu Legeng (Image 11). In these works, the techniques and skills per se are less important than the meaning and ideologies contained in the art piece. Some artists have designs or ideas and then employ artisans to actualize them while others are originally craftspeople

who have experience of the particular crafts and normally make the works themselves, such as Zhu Legeng. This form of craft actually goes beyond the craft and the craftsmanship themselves and is more related to contemporary arts (Images 10 and 11). However, the processes of creating involve a high degree of artisanal work. Many of these works are done by collaboration between contemporary artists and artisans.

Image 10. Ceramic Artist Zhu Legeng's works are exhibited internationally.

Image 11. Ceramic Master Sun Yanming's work.

Three ceramic artists and a number of informants in conversation with the authors said that it would not be possible to make their masterpieces if they could not find skilled artisans to collaborate with them. One ceramic artist stated:

> I tried to carry it out myself many times. I've learnt it before, but it's hard to carry out my idea . . . I came here (Jingdezhen) and was told that the artisans here can do everything. When I really started to get along with them I found they were really amazing—they can make the shapes, the patterns and the large pieces and whatever you want. I collaborate with several fixed artisans. At the beginning, it took a bit of time to get things through, you need to get them to really understand what effect you want. The communication between us is very important and I am always beside them to watch and comment. They also give me suggestions and show new patterns which I didn't know before. This often informs me a lot.

Outsourcing the production of art works is very controversial and has been criticized by art theorists, including Glenn Adamson who comments on skills and material outsourcing [49]. The issue of authorship is a debated in the craft field. However, according to our interviews with artisans, most of them do not think it is exploitative. Instead, they feel it is a reciprocal process in which they develop their skills and an aesthetic inspired by the artists. As one responded:

> Before these artists from other places came, we only produced the traditional version of dragon gallbladder-shaped vases . . . she [a contemporary artist] came and asked me to make

greenware and special effects for her. After that we applied the expression to our products. It looked really good and turned out to be very welcome at the fair. I benefited a lot.

Nevertheless, there are also some other works that are hard to place in any of the four categories described above, such as the purple clay teapots and Longquan celadon porcelain which are made by renowned and highly skilled artists. These works are utilitarian but normally regarded as art-craft works since they are often bought by people for ceremonial use or by connoisseurs as collection objects. Unlike function-cultural crafts, the functional use of these objects totally disappears from daily life, and they become objects of arts and symbols of craftsmanship. Viewed through this lens, these artefacts can be regarded as art-craft work, though made through an integrated process by a single craft-artist. In addition, the boundaries of these four categories of craftwork is blurred in many situations, for example, the Zhuyu umbrella discussed above can be classified into the categories of local-cultural crafts with it's the moderate intervention of industrial design while the handmade part of the process is retained from the traditional design.

4. Evaluating the Craftworks in the YRD

In order to investigate how crafts can move towards sustainability in the future, and determine potential areas for design intervention, we evaluated the current directions of craftwork in the region by reviewing each category against the five values of craft defined in the foregoing sections. The results are revealing and suggest some potential areas for intervention. These are discussed below and summarized in Figure 2.

- **Traditional-decorative crafts**: as analyzed above, this type of craft is economically in a state of dilemma with respect to creating monetary income for craftspeople. They are hard to sell. Culturally, they are more decorative and stick to traditional stereotypes, which degrades the vitality of the culture. Socially, due to economic non-viability and the loss of cultural vitality, these types of craft are unable to generate more jobs for young people in the current socioeconomic conditions. Consequently, this also diminishes their social value to a certain degree. However, the social norms and rituals related to some crafts or which are inherent in their making processes are still valuable, and this aspect needs to be recognized and protected. Also many traditional crafts have personal spiritual or religious meaning and thus embody high spiritual value. Some elderly women-embroiderers in Suzhou found they lost the meaning in their life after they moved to a new apartment and could not continue embroidering. Sometimes, the power generated from the craft's spiritual value can even support a person and a craft in isolation from the influence of other value factors. This is why we found some craftspeople were very happy and content although they lived in poverty. Environmentally, craft in this category are not necessarily eco-friendly even though most of them are perceived as such. In fact, some of them are high energy consumers and materially wasteful. For example, imitative porcelain requires a large amount of firewood and the rate of successfully finished works is rather low.
- **Cultural-function crafts:** economically, this group of crafts look promising to modern China's consumers because they are moderately priced and favoured by a rising Chinese middle-class who have an awareness of the loss of local culture and environmental ethics. Environmentally, compared to traditional crafts, they are relatively cost-effective. Since they have been modified by design and technological intervention, many of these crafts are more ecological, material-saving and energy-clean. Culturally, these crafts greatly retain the essence of traditions and local cultures while contemporary aesthetics and sensibilities are added-in, making the local culture more vibrant and alive to present daily life. Modern intervention and innovation do not harm or diminish the local-cultural value. Instead it increases the vitality of a once withered local culture.Socially, by providing jobs to craftspeople, income is increased and more people are motivated to participate in the craft practices. Therefore, the local-cultural value of the craft is enhanced. Spiritually, it brings enjoyment and fulfilment to the makers and consumers through the making and use of

the object. Since the processes of manual control is largely retained the makers, they can still find the same spiritual value as gained from making the traditional crafts, including self-fulfilment, self-actualization and sense of being. However, the deep religious connotations conveyed by some crafts and craft making processes are at a risk of being lost because of alterations to these.

- **Utilitarian craft-products:** these crafts are largely modified into industrial mass-production and consumption to maximize their monetary value. Economically, they are significant due to the increased efficiency and reduced costs. The manual and controlling work once done by craftspeople are in the process of being transformed by machines and new technologies. Socially, this means that more jobs cannot be generated for craftspeople and instead of community production, mass-production factories are built which do not need skilled people. Culturally, because of the disruptive and significant alteration of the original ICH crafts, the local culture is greatly diminished and homogenized by mass-consumption. Environmentally, these products are beneficial to the environment because they often use traditional green materials or improve the traditional materials and energy use. However, this environmental value should be offset by the effect of mass-consumption. Spiritually, the value of the traditional craft making practice, the self-fulfilment offered by the integrated process of working, and sense of working with ones' hands, disappear.
- **Art-craft works**: economically, these works can normally create considerable monetary income to the affiliated crafts, but they also belong to a minority. Socially, they are able to create opportunity for crafts people in terms of increasing jobs and income, but the craftspeople are not in a position of subjectivity. Craftspeople get much less income than the artists and often loses authorship of the works. Consequently, this results in exploitation and inequality where there is supposed to be an equal collaboration between artists (sometime designers) and artisans. However, there has been a lot of controversy regarding whose knowledge should be more valued and taken into account. Environmentally, since these works are often a piece of art artists do not consider the environmental costs and its disposal, and many works are discarded in or around museums (e.g., *One Hundred Million Seeds* by Ai Weiwei was shipped to London and discarded outside the museum after the exhibition). Culturally, these works often transcend their local traditions and meanings and emphasize a contemporary cultural expressions. Spiritually they are more contemporary conceptual arts beyond the physical and vernacular heritage, which is very different from the spiritual value the craft bequeaths to the maker. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, e.g., the rare objects of purple clay teapots are culturally and spiritually valuable due to their resemblance to cultural-functional crafts in these regards.

As revealed from the evaluation of these categories of crafts (Figure 2), mass-production and mass-consumption can hardly protect the intrinsic values that craft conveys, though in the short term, it could create extrinsic economic and environmental value. However, craft's intrinsic values—social, local-cultural and spiritual values, may diminish in the process of mass-production and mass-consumption due to excessive technological mediation, as shown by utilitarian craft-products. Cultural-functional crafts produced in a small-batch, customizable or bespoke mode have the potential to protect crafts' intrinsic values by activating their cultural vitality in the contemporary context, and also have the potential for increasing its economic viability.

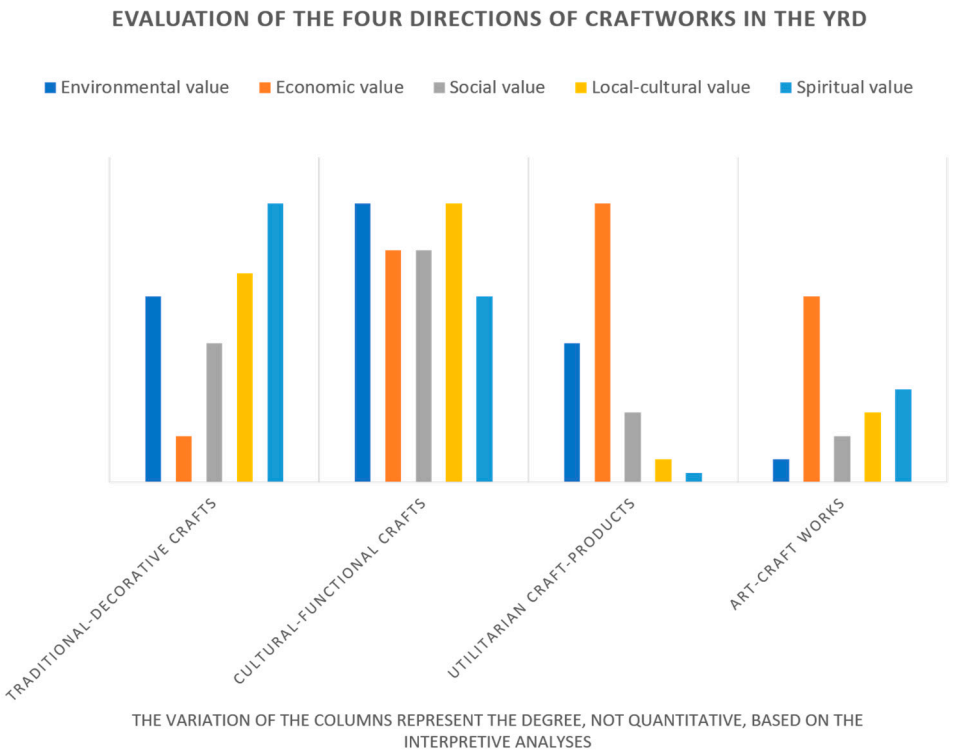

Figure 2. Evaluation of the four categories of craftworks in the YRD.

Informed by the evaluation and analyses of the four categories of craftworks in the region, it is found that traditional-decorative crafts especially need design intervention in the potential areas of:

- Commodification within the customizable and small-batch mode to increase economic value, so as to increase the social value by providing more employment, etc.
- Material and technical improvement to reduce environmental impact and increase production capability
- Community construction of craft objects to increase their social value in terms of raising the social status of craftspeople and conflict prevention.

Utilitarian craft-products need design intervention in the potential areas of:

- Protection of the local culture principally by retaining the essential handmade elements and human control, and more contextualized design
- Reducing quantity and improving quality to make allow small-batch customizable production
- Reducing technology mediation and excessive branding.

Art-craft works need design intervention in the potential areas of:

- Raising artists' awareness of environmental issues that are actually caused by their works
- Facilitating equality in the collaboration between artists and craftspeople in terms of authorship and income distribution
- Keeping local materials, techniques and traditions more relevant to the artworks.

Only after those areas above for each craft category are effectively implemented, and the economic, environmental, social and local-cultural values are increased, can the spiritual value embodied in the craft be restored and created. These potential areas will be explored in our future research.

5. Discussion: Value Creation and Speculation

Findings from this research show that crafts' economic value has been created to some extent by greatly utilizing e-commercial platforms such as Taobao, Dongjia as well as agencies of cultural creative industries. Through these agencies, once marginalized craftspeople have increased their income, helping to narrow the income gap and elevate their social status. Consequently, this has started to motivate young people to shift their careers into crafts. Especially, as the porcelain crafts shows, there is potential to generate space and opportunity for craftspeople working together to form more interactive and responsive communities. In doing so, this has the potential to create crafts' social value, though the social value of most crafts is under-exploited as shown in Figure 2. The very nature of these communities is the value that is lost in modernity through centralized and globalized social structures and are the communities that Kossoff calls for us to reconstruct in everyday life [25]. However, as many proponents of Transition Design suggest, this should not, and cannot, represent a simple return to traditional ways of life [50]. Another contribution of recent endeavours is that the diverse, vernacular, cultural value of craft has been publicised and appreciated through the revitalization of craft in the context of cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, there is a risk in the creation of economic value.

As defined in previous sections, the economic value of crafts has a two-fold meaning, that is: self-sustaining and commercial use [36]. Max-Neef holds that human needs are finite, while the ways in which humans choose to satisfy these needs are infinite [51]. Overly relying on the agents of creative industries, outside industrial designers such as the case of the *Zhuyu* umbrellas, and intermediary businesses such as Alibaba and Dongjia will distance craft consumers from craft makers. Thus, the original endeavour of these agents to promote craftsmanship and satisfy the self-sustaining needs becomes just a means of creating monetary income by commercial use. The revitalization of ICH items into utilitarian products through hype marketing in commercial and media promotion could put the crafts at risk of becoming alterative mass-produced "Made in China" goods. This could diminish craft's local-cultural and spiritual value which the state and the people originally recognized and are eager to protect and rejuvenate.

Regarding crafts' environmental value, most crafts are often regarded as eco-friendly because of the material and use of pre-industrial production processes. An academic scholar in craft theory pointed out that a craft that can last and survive to the present day demonstrates its balanced ecological interaction with the natural environment, or in his words, "the homonymous relationship between heaven, earth and people" (Interview with a professor form Arts and Crafts Institute at China Academy of Arts in May 2017). However, this assumption is challenged by a large number of interviewees, as one kiln operator in Jingdezhen noted:

> Porcelain uses so much energy (gas, electricity, especially wood) to fire the kiln, some even needs to be fired two or three times, especially artistic works and 'imitative' porcelain that need wood-fuelled kiln to fire.
>
> (Interview with a kiln operator in Jingdezhen, September 2017.)

Similarly, an academic researcher responded:

> Some crafts use more raw materials than machines because of the inaccuracy of human techniques, such as carving with precious wood and stone, even though most crafts are often made out of natural materials . . . and some natural materials are unrenewable.
>
> (Interview with Professor Zou at Tongji University, Shanghai, May 2017.)

Therefore, the environmental value of crafts varies depending on the different crafts, different materials and production processes. Some crafts such as bamboo basket weaving and vegetation dying are pro-environmental, but crafts like porcelain are energy consuming. Research in material and environmental sciences could provide substantial references. There needs to be more scientific investigation into material sourcing, energy and supply chains, and the lifecycle system of products.

Despite this, a noteworthy aspect is that if some crafts with environmental, social or local-cultural values are highly commercialized or promoted as hollow cultural symbols as in some cases in the category of utilitarian craft-products, these crafts could be developed into mass-production, mass-consumption, and mass-throwing away. In the long term, this will diminish the very environmental and local-cultural values which people recognize and want to protect in the first place.

6. Conclusions

From this research on the development direction and evaluation of craftworks in the field, it was found that some crafts in the YRD have been undergoing a significant revitalization into everyday life dominated by cosmopolitanism and consumerism, such as the categories of cultural-functional crafts and utilitarian craft-products. However, some crafts are in decline, such as the category of traditional-decorative crafts. Through the evaluation and discussion of the four directional categories of craft in the YRD, we argue that the impact of cosmopolitanism could be a significant factor that has not actually degraded and homogenized all crafts, as the category of cultural-functional crafts demonstrates. On the contrary, it could be a positive driving force to make them more relevant to the present life, and thereby keeping distinctive local crafts alive. As Nugraha concludes in his thesis, "to maintain tradition means to continuously develop it" [32] (p. 237). Therefore, traditional-local culture can only stay alive when they are fused into the present day.

However, unthoughtful revitalization and over-dependency on commodification and commercial promotion could potentially undermine intrinsic values such as social, local-cultural and spiritual values in the crafts we want to preserve. Crafts' revitalization should be an organic process which takes time if change is to continue in a healthy fashion. Therefore, the key for designers and intervenors involved in craft revitalization is to determine how the craft innovation can contribute to, rather than detract from, the intrinsic values of the craft and the implications for sustainability, with consideration for the pressing need to increasing craftspeoples' income and the state's economic growth.

The main contribution of this article is, firstly, the development of an original value typology for craft based on the synthesized analysis of the key concepts of sustainability, value, and the characteristics of craft; secondly, through empirical field data and literature on craft taxonomy, a deep understanding of the current craft development in the YRD is gained by identifying the directions of craft practices in terms of four categories of craftworks; and thirdly, the potential areas for future research in crafts are initially identified by evaluating the current craftworks with the value typology. However, due to the limited subject sample, the four categories of craftwork might not be totally suitable for all crafts in the region and elsewhere, given that crafts are extremely diverse. The value typology and evaluation require critical feedback and more contextualized analyses to particular crafts. In so doing, it could effectively direct design intervention toward a more cosmopolitan but localized future. The areas and strategies for design intervention we have identified will be explored in our further research.

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