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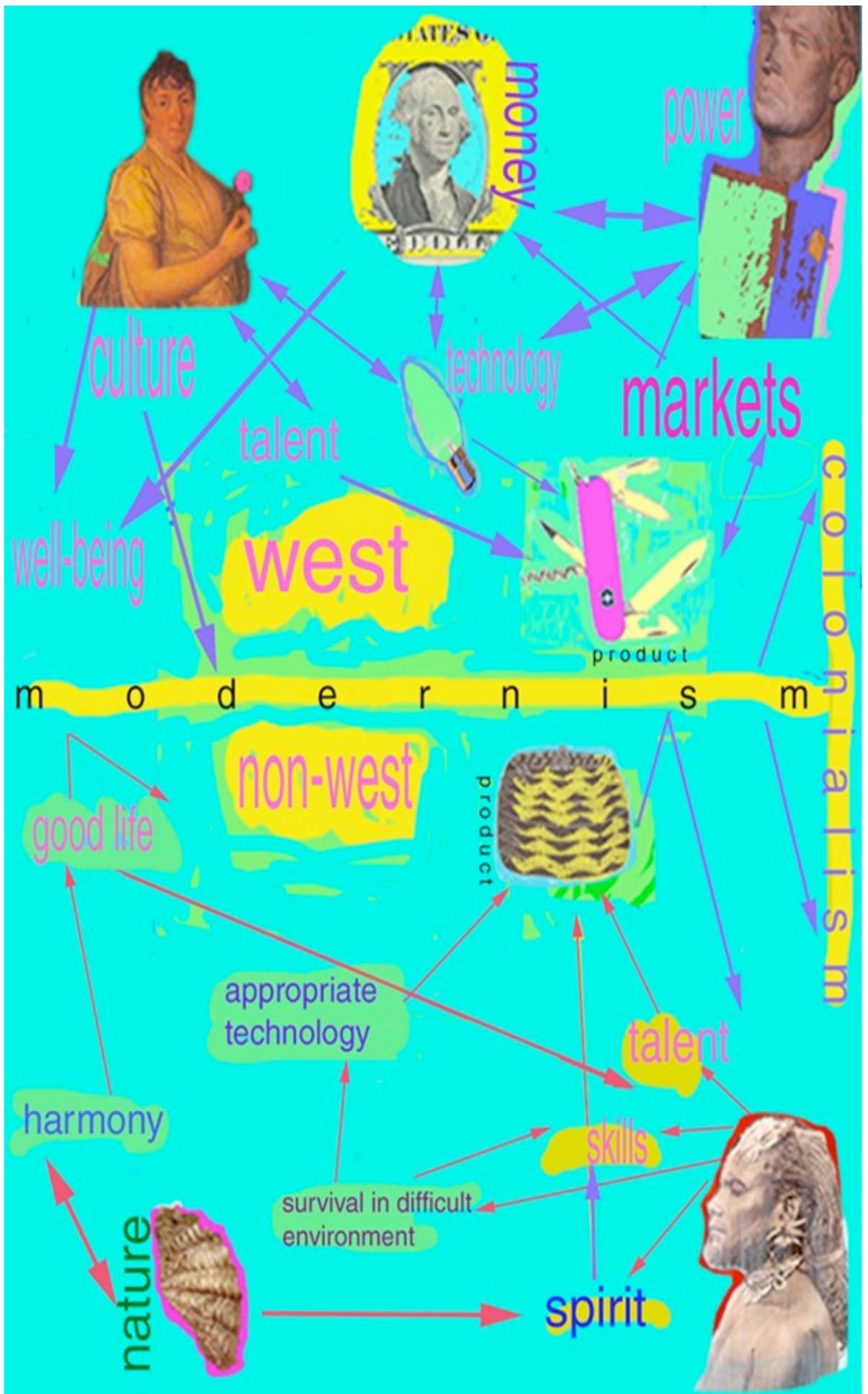
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ENHANCING THE CAPABILITIES OF SMALL PRODUCERS  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO MEET GLOBAL  
CHALLENGES:  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTRIBUTION OF  
INTERNATIONAL CRAFT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

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PhD

2010



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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTRIBUTION OF  
INTERNATIONAL CRAFT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

EEVA KATRIINA REIJONEN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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# Abstract

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A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Enhancing the capabilities of small producers in developing countries to meet global challenges: an investigation into the contribution of international craft development initiatives

Worldwide, externally supported craft development initiatives aim to enhance the capability of local craft producers to succeed in globalized markets. However, the contribution that these organizations make towards the abilities of local actors remains unclear.

Following a hermeneutic reflection on literature, empirical field experience derived from the African and South Pacific contexts and a multiple case study analysis of craft development organizations, the research investigates the pre-conceptions that lie behind approaches adopted in craft development initiatives. Two emerging elements of particular importance have been identified. Firstly, the Western ideological notion of craft, influenced particularly by the Arts and Crafts movement, and secondly the ethos of social design, built on the legacy of the appropriate technology movement. It is argued that both of these have a constraining impact on the development of indigenous design skills that underpin successful participation in global markets.

Noting that craft covers a wide range of practices, the research at hand furthermore identifies a category of craft that has become the epitome of Non-Western craft. These decorative and exotic artifacts are labor-intensive to produce, making them only marginally profitable for the makers. Yet there is an apparent emphasis on the promotion of this category within international craft development initiatives.

The research concludes that the current practice of craft development initiatives cannot fully contribute to the development of the response capability of the local craft producers. Enhancing the impact of these initiatives would require serious reconsideration of product strategies and a re-think of the premises under which initiatives are undertaken. A new approach is suggested, one that examines design within a framework of social, economic and ecological sustainability, taking into consideration such socio-cultural issues as the peoples' right to economic freedoms and the use of capabilities, building on the work of the economist and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen.

Keywords: craft, design, craft development, capabilities, developing countries

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I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my aunt Terttu Reijonen, who passed away during my research and never saw it completed. I hope I have used well the inheritance you left me!

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. *The Kaleidoscope of chaos: The evolution of an argument*

I started this research - a journey - twelve years ago, in 1998, when I came back from Africa, after having worked for four years in what was then the poorest country in the world. My starting point was the rather unstructured feeling that there was something essential in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) craft business that I did not understand; something that went beyond the usual considerations of inhibitors and enablers. I felt strongly that the present concept of designing and producing craft was problematic, though I could not say why.

Arriving in Mozambique in 1994, I did not know the language, or the country, and had no previous experience of development work or life in developing countries. It was my plan to make the most of my background in fine art and art education in order to benefit a country that was, in 1994, the poorest country in the world. Mozambique was also recovering from long and traumatic civil war that had left many scars on the people.

Jonson and Toulmin (1988) have said that practical knowledge develops through application of general principles to difficult cases<sup>1</sup>. Measured by any standards, Mozambique was indeed a difficult case. I was determined that through research and systematic inquiry some of the questions I was constantly confronted with could be answered. One can, of course, question this assumption. Tuhiwai Smith, who is of Maori origin, has questioned not only the appropriateness of Western research methods, but also the sense of Western research in general. She writes in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*:

"Many researchers, academics and project workers may see the benefits of their particular research projects as serving a greater good "for mankind", or serving a specific emancipator goal for an oppressed community. But belief in the ideal that benefiting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of ideology as it is academic training" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2002, 2).

### **Social and political factors**

Regardless of the best attempts, the Western - Non Western interaction is shadowed by the socio-historical and political factors that regulate the global relations and form cultural, social, economical, linguistic and spiritual (visible and hidden) barriers. Chaos and unpredictability, the well-documented reality of development work, have created problems for research

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<sup>1</sup> Jonson and Toulmin (1988) discuss "casuistry", a method that tests and evaluates ethical generalisations through particular cases. This relies on the notion that practical reason evolves through interaction with complex and difficult cases.

endeavour. How can one say anything at all of such a complex situation? How can one find focus in such a kaleidoscope of constantly changing perspectives?

It took a significant amount of time to identify the research problem, as there appeared to be nothing but unanswered questions around us. The starting point was the observation that, as seemingly attractive and valuable as it was from the cultural and social point of view, the low- or no-technology production of ornamental artefacts was not necessarily as good a tool for poverty alleviation as had been commonly assumed.

The case of Pulesea Tekopo, a woodcarver from the Solomon Islands, illustrates the challenges common to numerous developing country artisans (See Text Box 1.). It is clear that one of his main problems is his limited access to the globalized market place. He lives in an isolated community in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. He does not own a computer and his communication with customers is limited to the occasional contact with tourists. For him, it may come as a surprise that the well-crafted bowls with shell-inlays he makes are not necessarily admired outside the tourist context. Their price may be considered to be high, even though it probably corresponds to the labour-intensive production costs. And another problem is the bowls themselves. What would be their place in today's globalized market place, where the market for ethnic artefacts is quite competitive and saturated?

### **Underlying factors**

A number of other factors also emerged from the research. First, the category of ornamental, non-essential artefacts that had become so popular in craft endeavours (so much so that one could perhaps consider it as the epitome of Non-Western craft), appeared to be particularly problematic in terms of cross-cultural agreement on quality, aesthetics, and taste.

Secondly, the concept of craft was seen in a different way in Western and Non-Western cultures. It appeared as though making craft was not at all as exciting an option for cash income than, for instance, selling tomatoes at the market place. In Vanuatu and Mozambique, the symbolic attributes linked to the production of craft and craft itself were very different and certainly much less romantic than in Europe.

Designer and development worker John Ballyn (2002, 22) has somewhat sarcastically written that craft making is not necessarily considered any more rewarding than "putting on wheel nuts in a car factory" is to us.

## Text Box 1.

### Stories: Pulesea's bowls



**Fig. 1.1 Pulesea's workshop in Honiara, Solomon Islands**

**Pulesea Tekopo** is a wood carver, working in a shabby workshop in the outskirts of Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands.

Pulesea, the Master Carver, works with 3-4 colleagues. The men carve wooden bowls, according to a *kastom* that is about 500 years old. They also have some new designs in their product range, made to attract tourists, such as bowls with the shape of a clamshell or naturalistic sculptures of eagles.

Solomon Island woodcarvers have been very customer oriented since they entered into the tourist business a half a century ago. The now common shell inlay tradition, for instance, was a result of the interaction with the allied troops that were based in the South Pacific in the WW II. Along with the growth of tourism industry, more and more men, skilled or unskilled, have started carving souvenirs. At the moment, there are more woodcarvers in the country than ever before, both absolutely and relatively.

Pulesea finds it increasingly hard to sustain his big family. The purchasing power among the local people is low, making the carvers increasingly dependent on tourist markets. The long lasting violent ethnic tension, along with global tragedies such as 9/11 and the SARS epidemic have paralyzed the infrastructure of Honiara and frightened the tourists away. When I met Pulesea, in May 2003, he said he had last seen a tourist more than a month ago. He had sold nothing since then.

Pulesea is now looking at exporting for more steady business. He has sold some carvings to New Caledonia and is also interested in finding markets in Europe. This is not easy. The bowls are expensive as they are extremely labour intensive. Mother-of-pearl is first cut into little pieces and then glued to wooden bowls, using the resin of Tita-tree. This painstaking process is followed by a lot of careful sanding, to create a satin like surface. The work is slow and difficult. Even experienced carvers do not produce more than a few pieces per month.

I showed one of the bowls to a group of PhD students. Its origin raised interest, but it did not cause genuine admiration. It was categorized as "ethnic chic". They thought that while it was nice, they did not like it enough to buy it. The price (about 20 euros) was considered as too high - for *ethnic chic*.

Furthermore, there didn't seem to exist a common ground for the idea of *craft*. Organizations such as the World Craft Council (WCC) had made efforts to emphasize the “common thread of empathy and understanding and artistry running through the whole craft world” (Alfoldy, 2006), but these attempts were framed by the reality of the economic, ethnographic and geographic dichotomies between Western and Non-Western craft producers. In the exhibitions of *world craft*, the Non-Western (usually anonymous) artefacts have often been positioned in the margin, as “demonstrators outside the exhibition rather than as official exhibiting artists inside the exhibition” as Alfoldy (2006) has argued.



**Fig. 1.2.** Non-Western Craft: Images from the World Craft Council website.

At an early stage of my research I came across some visuals on the WCC website (see Figures 1-2 and 1-3). There was a presentation of world craft (in this context craft originating from various places around the world); the images were probably meant to illustrate the richness and diversity of world traditions, but the implicit message they delivered was quite different. Many of the featured Non-Western products fell into the category of kitsch while the Western products appeared sleek, stylish and avant-garde. The (perhaps unintended) message of the website was two-fold: first, much of the Non-Western craft seems to have degenerated to the level of tourist craft, and second, the strength of Non-Western craft was to be found in the *traditional* forms of production. The Western craft, on the other hand, was portrayed as progressive, modern and experimental.



**Fig.1.3.** Western Craft: Images from the World Craft Council web.

### **Ethnicity**

The concept of ethnicity turned out to be of particular importance in the research context. The label *ethnic* had evolved into a curse and a blessing, sometimes being used as an asset (as in *ethnic chic* or *ethnic style*) and another times as a disadvantage (*ethnic knick-knacks*). It was considered as a feature that should be either toned down (to improve the marketability of products) or boosted (to enhance the market appeal).

Craft development endeavours have been found to focus on the shortcomings in the producer sector. Like so many other development workers, I had come to Mozambique with the unspoken presupposition that the artisans were not quite *up to* the challenge of global trade and had to be equipped to survive there. This assumption was followed by the idea that I, as a well-educated Western person with an extensive knowledge of how markets work (from the consumer's point of view), would be competent to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to develop appropriate products and marketing schemes.

The 8 years spent in fieldwork proved this assumption to be false.

The field experiences directed my attention from the developing country producers to the other end, into the markets and, finally, to the people and organisations that aimed to assist the artisans to access and survive in the globalized markets.

The 1997 article by Mirjam Southwell, where she introduced her notion of Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome (OCS), drew my attention to the world of the craft development organizations and particularly to their rhetoric (Southwell, 1997). I realized that it was this sector that had an important role in the process, as gatekeepers, educators and opinion leaders, in the South as well

as in the North, for both producers and consumers. The key point of OCS is that certain well-meaning aid organizations, such as Oxfam, have *mummified* the Non-Western commodity production, by promoting romanticized view of the craft industries of those countries and by supporting of outdated modes of production.

### **Craft development organisations**

The article brought the craft development organisations into the focus of my research. The research thereafter took on a novel direction. What was the role of the organisations in the globalized business of ethnic craft? Was Southwell right in her argument that the well-meaning organisations had become part of the very problem they had been set up to alleviate?

Another major breakthrough in the research came about through adopting Amartya Sen's capability approach as a theoretical framework to describe, examine and explore the development of individual capability and the reduction of wider, often social, constraints. This joint examination led to a search for enablers that would lead to more holistic, balanced development initiatives that bring out the full potential of the individuals in the craft industry for the benefit of all.

Through incorporating Southwell's thinking, the study arrived at the research context of the craft development initiatives as the units of analysis. The Senian approach created the impetus to search for the specific contributions that these initiatives would and could have towards developing the response capability of the local craft producers.

### **A divided world**

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) form the context of the study. LDCs are a group of 49 countries that have been identified by the United Nations as being "least developed" in terms of their low income (GDP per capita), their weak human assets and their high degree of economic vulnerability<sup>2</sup>. The LDCs form a subgroup within the developing countries. For the purposes of this research these countries are referred to as non-Western, while the wealthier, industrialized countries of the world are called Western. These terms, which originally came into being to mark the distinction between the Orient (the East) and Europe, are commonly used today to illustrate the fact that the world is divided into two halves, the have's (Western) and have-nots (non-Western). While it is recognized that this distinction simplifies the complexity of the global economy and that the use of these terms is problematic overall, they are used within this study by choice, in order to maintain clarity in nomenclature.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/l dc/default.htm>

## **1.2. Research aims, relevance and objectives**

The overall aim of the research has been to increase the understanding of craft development through a new perspective, one that looks at the situation from the development agency perspective rather than the producers' point of view, particularly in terms of product concepts. This understanding is needed in order for craft development organisations to improve on their practices of conceptualizing, planning, and implementing future initiatives. This enhanced understanding of the operational context is also the key argument of the research relevance – it potentially impacts positively on the lives of many local craft producers.

The overall aim is translated into three objectives. In the first place there is an attempt to bring clarity to the semantic confusion in the research area that is seen to exist in the intersection of the concepts of craft, development, and design. Secondly, the study looks at current product design and manufacture in craft development initiatives, in order to describe and examine the contribution that said initiatives have had towards the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of globalized markets. Thirdly, the study explores the possibilities for improving future contributions by the craft development initiatives.

## **1.3. Research Question**

The research question of the study has been formulated as:

*What is the contribution of externally supported craft development initiatives towards the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets? How could this contribution be enhanced?*

## **1.4. Research assumptions and limitations**

Several assumptions underpin the research question (and the research setting as a whole). In the first place it is assumed that globalization is a key driver for change in the world economy- one that impacts also on local craft producers (Appadurai, 1996; Scholte, 2000; Verhelst, 1993). Secondly, it is assumed that a coherent and effective (even if partial and incomplete) response can be developed towards neutralizing some of the negative impact of globalization, and that building on the positive aspects can benefit local craft producers (Ballyn, 2002; UNCTAD, 1991; Richards, 1999). As the third major assumption, it is put forward that the response capability of local craft producers can be enhanced by craft development initiatives that receive external support (Eames & Eames, 1958; Mvusi, 1997; Noy, 1994).

The research also has some limitations. Firstly, the structure, scope and adopted methodology does not allow for very wide generalizations, as it is based on a series of cases (Yin, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Ghauri, 2004). Secondly, the research mostly looks at projects that have external support linkages built into them. This excludes internal and fully indigenous initiatives,

except in one case, which has been used for triangulation. In the third instance the research examines the capability of local producers to design products that are able to meet market demands. It is thus not a market or a marketing study, but a study of what capabilities are needed to act on the market. This implies also that e.g. artistic, household and not-for-profit craft production is left outside of the scope of the study. It also leaves the study of production methods and techniques in the background. Fourthly, as the study is linked to the effects of globalization, only markets that are affected by the phenomenon are considered. That being said, it could be argued that there are very few, if any, unaffected markets.

In this study as a whole, the perspective is Western, and the issues related to development, aid, craft and design are basically defined, described, examined and explored from a Western researcher's perspective. There are two main reasons for this. In the first place the researcher is of Western origin, and secondly, the research examines the interaction between the Western and Non-Western contexts in the craft development initiatives. The main audience of this research is Western academia.

### ***1.5. Thesis structure***

The thesis is structured through a Contextual review and subsequent sections on Research design, Case studies, and Discussion, followed by the final section, Conclusions.

The Contextual Review locates the study on the map of previous research and identifies the gap in the knowledge, while the section on research design describes the approach and methodology used to study the issues at hand. The developed research construct is used to structure the subsequent case studies. The triangulated three sets of cases is followed by the Discussion section, where the research findings are discussed and analysed using the framework of Amartya Sen's Capability theory. The section on Conclusions summarizes the research and suggests some key topics of further research. Please note that the key concepts are explained in the glossary.

## Chapter 2: The Contextual Review

### 2.1. The scope of the chapter

The purpose of this section is to establish the context for craft development initiatives, which are the units of analysis in the study, and to introduce the theoretical approaches adopted. To achieve this, the research examines development, craft and design in this section. The initial focus is on development, as it underpins the whole study. The field is sketched out, and the theoretical approach to understand capabilities and constraints is introduced. In the following section, craft is examined from multiple aspects, recognizing that such a multi-disciplinary field can produce a variety of perspectives into craft development. The third section examines design in the context of craft and development. In short, it could be said that the development section frames the study and provides the general context for the problem that is defined in the craft section. Design is analysed within and through the framework of Amartya Sen's Capability approach, exploring possible solutions.

#### A focus on craft development

As was noted in the introduction, there is no commonly agreed clear definition for craft

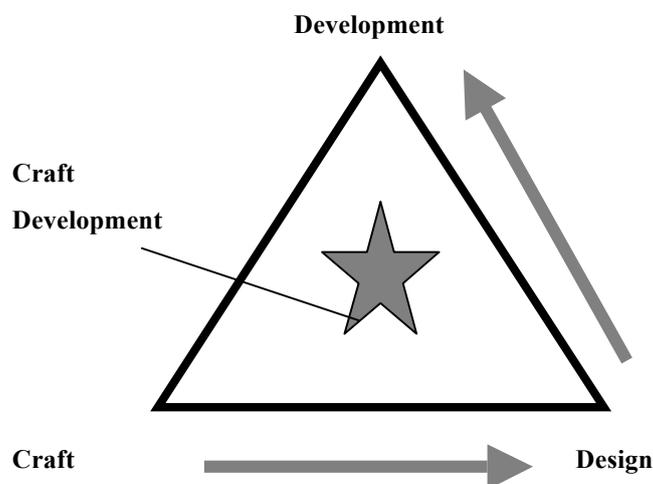


Figure 2.1. Craft development in the craft-design-development triangle

development. There has not been much formal research undertaken in this field. Craft development in this research is positioned in the centre of a triangle demarcated by craft, design and development (see figure 2.1). The star-shape illustrates the many dimensions of this complex phenomenon, only a few of which can be addressed in this research.

Dormer (1997) and Lucie-Smith (1997) define craft as a practice, where the maker, the artisan, is in control over the whole production from the sketching to marketing and the product is produced at least partially without machinery. This makes it different from decorative arts, a

category of craft where the "craftsman may produce unique objects but works under the strict control of an outside designer" (Lucie-Smith, 1986).

Bruce Metcalf (1997) makes a distinction between *craft-as-a-skilful-labour* and *craft-as-a-class-of-objects*. While the former refers to multiple activities, the latter covers a range of artefacts and techniques, such as carpentry, metalwork, pottery, or weaving, with one common feature: they are all objects. Metcalf lists additional requirements for a craft object as being substantially made by hand, with hand tools, Metcalf furthermore suggests a third criterion, the use of traditional craft materials (traditional meaning the materials, techniques and formats that survive from pre-industrial production). To be identified as craft, the object needs to meet at least one of the criteria (ibid).

Craft-as-a-class-of-objects can be approached as either ethnographic specimens, commodities, or artwork, and craft-as-a-skilful-labour can be approached through a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from anthropology, cultural studies, art history, craft science, design studies and design history to development studies, economics and social sciences. In this rapidly changing kaleidoscope finding a relevant perspective is complex, and the research has to inevitably make a choice of the adopted perspective. The craft section narrows this perspective down to a specific product category and the perspectives that are linked to it, recognizing also the evolutionary development of craft and the connectedness that the practice embeds.

In the context of this study, craft development is seen as the promotion of the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of product design in globalized markets. This is a narrow view that allows for the study to focus on three basic key elements: craft, development, and design, and the composite elements of both craft and design development, situated between the basic key elements. Out of these elements, the study has a focus on the composite craft development element. While the narrow view can be a source of criticism, it also makes it possible to adopt a mechanism to evaluate the craft initiatives under study.

## **2.2. Development**

The first part of this section examines the concept of development. This is the key element that underpins the whole study, and the subsequent section, which deals with craft and design, is later examined through the development perspective. The second part of this section looks at development initiatives, or programmes and projects that have developmental aims and are situated in the area of craft. The third part examines a theoretical perspective to human development.

Development has been defined in the context of this study as social or human development, which is based on access to resources and choice regarding one's life. Resources implies not only to goods and services to meet basic needs, but also to opportunity, employment, education, fair and equal justice, security and health care. Choice refers to individual freedom to make

choices about one's situation and future including, but not limited to, marriage, children and work (Sen, 2000; Donaldsson, 2004).

### **2.2.1. Building on the Enlightenment**

The idea of Western development intervention is a fruit of Enlightenment philosophy and the notion of European supremacy over the other cultures (Gylling, 2004). The Enlightenment philosophers, perhaps led most prominently by Antoine-Nicolas de Concorde (1743-1793), believed that the Europeans were at the head of development, with the other, less-developed nations following them. This was based on the assumption that the path of development was believed to be the same for all. This techno-rationalistic view was challenged later by romantic philosophy, and, among others, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who saw nations as natural organisms that could not be compared to each other, but that represented different levels of development, with the Europeans representing the highest level (Gylling, 2004).

The rationalistic notion of development inherited from the Enlightenment is still a powerful undercurrent even today, although alternative views have been introduced throughout the 20th century. In particular Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908) has promoted a Rousseausque notion of the noble savage, seeing the Non-Westerners as more authentic and genuine than the corrupted Westerners, whose minds have been contaminated by consumerism and accelerating technological development.

Clifford's book *Predicament of Culture* (Clifford, 1988) discusses the way in which the Western society privileges its own culture at the expense of others, showing the many ways that assumptions of (and in) the definition of culture define this privilege. He proposes a different historical vision, not populated by endangered authenticities, but by pathways through modernity to enter a new world while having the freedom of movement and newness (Clifford, 1988). He challenges the prevailing, somewhat romanticized view of the *Other*, introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

While the disillusioned traveller in *Tristes Tropiques* (Lévi-Strauss, 1995) observes the expanding Western filth that has been thrown in the face of world societies, Clifford in the same context also sees new raw materials, a compost for new orders of difference. As he sees it, modern cultural contacts should not, and need not be romanticized, erasing the violence and continuing forms of neo-colonial domination. He furthermore notes, as an example, the Caribbean history filled with violence, degradation and blocked possibilities, from which Césaire derived an idealized *negritude*. Within these idealizations, there are also rebelliousness, syncretism, and elements that create the kind of ambiguity that regenerates the world. There appears to be no master narrative that is able to reconcile the tragic with the comic in global cultural history (Clifford, 1988).

### 2.2.1.1. Development aid

The idea of development aid, as we understand it now, is relatively new, born out of the cold war and the need of super-powers to guard their interests in the Least Developed Countries. The cold war drove the establishment of international financial institutions and the Marshall Aid initiative.

The Anglo-American political thought has been strongly represented in the theoretical approaches used in international development since the Second World War (Bartlett, 2007). Through Rostow and Friedman, this thinking evolved into the neo-liberalist agenda of the 70's and 80's (Parfitt, 2002; Thomas, 2000). While the neo-liberalist agenda drove structural adjustment programmes and extensive privatisation, the voice of criticism to this agenda started to take form already in the 60's, and through the civil action against some of the adjustment programmes in the 70's and 80's, gained momentum. The alternative agenda focused on human needs and capabilities through the contributions of Streetan, Haq and Sen, among others (Fukuda-Parr & Shivakumar, 2004; Parfitt 2002; Bhaduri, 2005). Some of these initiatives were incorporated into policies and programmes, as notable with the case of the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Reports.

Currently, the international community has embarked on the ambitious goal of reducing poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>3</sup>. Other voices call for *trade, not aid* as the way forward (e.g. Nabli, 2005, Typu & Preble, 2005).

The question of the impact of foreign aid on the reduction of poverty has been at the centre of debate in development economics. It has been suggested that development aid has been relatively inefficient and sometimes even detrimental to the economic development of low-income countries, particularly in the Sub-Saharan Africa (Kuisma, 2005). The so-called *micro-macro paradox* has been one of the topics of discussion, referring to a situation where micro evidence demonstrates the success of the aid endeavours although macro evidence does not support this (ibid). It has been suggested that the effectiveness of aid is better in countries with good policies. This idea has become the prevailing one in many multilateral donor organisations (such as the World bank) but has become increasingly debated in recent times, by e.g. Easterly et al (2002), who have maintained that aid stimulates growth despite policies. Kuisma concludes that despite the contradicting ideas, most economists agree that that "aid has not been as effective as it should and could be", one of the possible reasons being the failure of donors to take the policy environment into account (Kuisma, 2005).

The recent development economics research, such as Todaro & Smith (2006) describes the

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<sup>3</sup> [www.un.org/millenniumgoals/](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)

rapidly changing relationship between the haves and have-nots. The Least Developed Countries are becoming a fast growing export market for developed countries. While the poor (particularly the Sub-Saharan Africa that continues to challenge the development optimism) remain vulnerable, the rich countries have become increasingly more aware of the need to promote peace and justice in the world community through more equitable international economic order (ibid). The impact on globalisation, as was seen above, remains to be debated, but there is an agreement on the fact that the future of all mankind is more closely linked today than ever before (ibid).

In terms of the debate around globalisation, there is a shift in development economics between pessimism and optimism in trade (Todaro & Smith, 2006). According to the former views, the LDC exports grow slowly because the developed countries have moved on from low-technology material intensive goods to high-technology skill-intensive goods, decreasing the need for raw material. The demand for raw material has further decreased due to increased industrial efficiency and the substitution of synthetics for natural material. Furthermore, there is a rise of a new protectionism affecting negatively on agriculture and labour-intensive industries typical to developing countries (such as craft products); a reaction to fears of job losses by workers in the developed countries due to cheap imports from developing nations. The idea of trade pessimism is based on the view that developing nations continue to serve the global markets as providers of primary products instead of more lucrative industrial production, with no control over their own development.

Trade optimists, on the other hand, maintain that free market provides a number of benefits also to the poor, such as generating pressure for increased efficiencies and product improvement, accelerating economic growth and generates foreign exchange needed to overcome difficult periods caused by, say, natural catastrophes.

According to Kavoussi (quoted in Todaro & Smith, 2006), neither the optimists nor the pessimists are correct as everything depends on the fluctuations of the world economy. There is no unambiguous answer as to whether developing nations should promote import substitution or export promotion; the situation is somewhat different in each country, requiring an adaptation of the appropriate approaches and strategies to each case.

### **2.2.1.2. Globalization**

With the world becoming increasingly linked, globalized, and connected, previously held national comparative advantages may turn into liabilities, and it would appear that economies intent on catching up would need to obtain knowledge intensive skill-sets in order to compete effectively in the global context (Fairbanks and Lindsay, 1997). Over time, many catch-up approaches have been proposed to bring the less wealthy countries up to speed with the

developed economies, but, so far, no single, easy leap-frogging method has been found (Perkins, 2003). To make matters worse, a paradigm gap seems to exist; industrialized countries have entered into a phase of knowledge -intensive growth, while developing countries are still often tied to pre-industrial or industrial production paradigms (Scholte, 2000; Giddens, 2000).

During the era of globalization, the discussion about the correct course of development has become heated. The very word development has been in the centre of the debate. As a reaction to the Western tradition of over-powerment and domination (Week, 2000), the pendulum seems to have swung to the other extreme. There has been a tendency to be overly critical of Western intervention and see all forms of development in a negative light. As Myers (2002, 11), referring to Clifford has put it, there have been concerns to “secure disciplinary authority over the representation of non -Western peoples against missionaries and government”. The somewhat uncritical stance on traditions that Western anthropology has applied is an indication of this. Myers refers to Aboriginal resentment of (Western) notions of Aboriginal Tradition, which they may see as working against their own understanding of the indigenous invention of tradition (ibid). Myers describes the awkward relationship between what he has named localism (anthropology) and cosmopolitanism (the art world) with respect to Aboriginal acrylic paintings.

Appadurai (1996) has pointed out that globalization is not the same as homogenization, noting, however, that several instruments of homogenization exist within the globalization process, such as advertising, mass media, and mass culture. He talks about the hybridization of cultures. The Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (quoted in Clifford, 1988, 16) has written, that the world changes and the traditions change - but they do not disappear. Instead, and in an increasing rate, autonomy will be replaced by global interaction. Scholte (2000) refers to the process of de-territorialization as a key attribute of the globalization process.

The approach of Thierry Verhelst is somewhat different. He criticises the present momentum towards globalisation, which, he says, is powered by competition towards economic growth (Verhelst & Tyndale, 2002). He points out those market mechanisms should not be an end to themselves, but a means to a higher goal, which could be, as Amartya Sen has proposed, freedom and human well being (Sen, 1999). According to Verhelst, progress with only material goals is alien to most human beings. Globalization has, however, a positive impact as well, as it offers us a unique occasion for learning from the other" (Verhelst & Tyndale, 2002).

As early as in the 60's, the South-African designer Selby Mvusi stressed that the low-income societies must have access to an advanced level of technology which is available to the West, but he also strongly emphasized that, instead of staying as passive objects of aid, the people in the developing countries must themselves develop relevant and progressive attitudes and ideas (Mvusi, 1997; Schou, 2007; Miles, 1996).

### **2.2.2. Craft development & initiatives**

"In seeking to alleviate poverty, practical skills training has been provided by numerous NGO's. Providing training through workshops or short courses has a positive short-term impact, particularly in the networking of ideas. But the objective must be to establish design education and training - integrated into a long term program for professional development - embracing strategic planning and financial management; sourcing, marketing and promotion; production planning and quality control; environmental and economic issues; career advice and personal development - alongside the imparting of practical and creative skills" (Guille, 1997, 18).

The term craft development means (active) interference to the natural evolutionary process of craft, to guide the industry to a favourable direction or to bring a positive or desirable change into the crafts practice, in order to improve it.

This favourable direction depends on the set aims. The UK based Cardiff Group defines development as a process leading to greater prosperity and economic well-being (particularly in low-income economies) for individuals, communities and nations (Coward, Fathers and Thomas, 2002). While the concept is mainly used in the context of income generation and poverty alleviation in the developing countries, the implied change is only partly economic. One could almost say that economic aspirations are in a minor role or an instrumental one, compared to the other aspirations for craft development. While any action in income generation necessarily applies commercialization of some sort, it is generally agreed that in the development context it is not expected to happen at any cost, but in a sustainable manner.

While this study is concerned with development overall, this research is specifically concerned with those initiatives that have support from external sources. This support can be extended in two principal ways: either through long standing support to existing systems, or temporary initiatives that aim to support the development of specific issues during a determined period of time. In the development language the latter are projects or programmes, while long-term support is often referred to as sector aid. Craft development initiatives that are reviewed fall into the category of temporal, fairly short-term endeavours that support local producers in skills training, marketing and other initiatives.

#### **2.2.2.1. A balance to be found**

Some of the key issues in craft development initiatives are linked to ownership, advantage and convenience aspects. In the development discourse today, the ownership and participation of the local parties are emphasized (Ostrom et al, 2002; Hickey & Mohan, 2004), and development rests on the principle that indigenous abilities are developed, taking into account local culture, socio-economic circumstance and local governance (Wilson & Whitmore, 1995).

In some cases, however, development initiatives support existing, static and sometimes stagnant structures and organisations. Often development initiatives are set up in project formats, which tend to be linked to a functionalist, reductionist ideology of organising for work activities. (Packendorff, 1995; Buchanan and Badham, 1999). There is often an inbuilt tension between the donors and the aid recipients due to differing capabilities, worldviews and on the perception of how projects and support should be delivered. The asymmetric capabilities tend to favour the donor (Ostrom et al., 2002), and in some cases the real ownership of projects does not rest with the recipients of aid (Franks et al., 2004; Sinha et al., 2001). The projects sometimes end up only meeting the structural demands of the donor itself (Ariyabandi & Bhatti, 2005; Saasa et al., 2003).

### **2.2.2.2. Different roles of craft**

In a preliminary review of craft initiatives and projects, it was discovered that craft can have many roles in the development context.

Firstly, craft can be seen instrumentally, as a tool for income generation and for poverty alleviation. The initiatives belonging to this group focus either on business development or charity, rather than on actual craft development. In this group, there is usually less concern for questions of authenticity or traditions, or discussion of the role and meaning of external intervention. The main thing is that money is generated – though without compromising the social and cultural sustainability.

Secondly, craft making can also be seen as a valuable and empowering activity in its own right, regardless of its profitability. And finally, craft can be seen as a compromise between these two extremes - as a sustainable business that respects and makes the most of indigenous traditions while at the same time modifying them for modern market purposes.

Craft can be the main industry of an organization or a part of its operations. There are initiatives that are set up by established development organizations like Oxfam, and others by institutions like the United Nations, or the European Union. These endeavours have often been set up on a non-commercial basis, as parts of larger community development and poverty alleviation drives. There are also (mainly Non-Governmental) initiatives by concerned individuals, *Outsiders*, as Brenda Schmachmann (2001) calls them, that have set up craft promotion projects, usually after “falling in love” with the local skills and talents. Sometimes they are hybrids of the two: for instance, the development workers continue their work with the craft community after their contract has expired - as in the case of Stephanie Odegard from Odegard Carpets<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.odegard.inc](http://www.odegard.inc)

### 2.2.2.3. Craft for charity

An example of a craft project with an emphasis on income generation and charitable aims, is the Ithemba network, set up by the French designer Cyrille Varet, to bring hope to the South African AIDS victims. Varet says the project results from personal frustration. He got tired of “just sitting and watching the misery” and decided to put his expertise to work ([www.ithemba.org](http://www.ithemba.org)). Ithemba designs objects inspired by the local culture that are handmade by women affected by poverty and malaise. These products are sold at Varet’s own up-market design boutique in Paris. He has been successful in involving some of the major names of Parisian haute couture, such as Cacharel, Christian Lacroix and Sonya Rykiel. Ithemba flagship products are the light bulbs covered with silicone and decorated by the HIV positive women with the designs of the haute couturiers. The light bulbs have become sought after collectibles and a considerable amount of money has been raised.



**Fig. 2.2 Ithemba products of junk metal**

Ithemba also develops and sells home décor products made of junk metal, such as candle-holders, photo frames and table ornaments. The products appear to reflect traditional styles and are made to *look indigenous*, with a rustic and hand-made appearance. The success of these products appears to be more marginal than that of the light bulbs.

In the case of Ithemba, craft development is not explicitly addressed. The development of indigenous craft skills is not a priority, nor is the external design intervention discussed. The producers are usually assisted in product design to make the products more appealing, and some development effects may therefore appear in this case as well, as the artisans are exposed to new ideas, learning what kind of products are likely to find markets outside.

### 2.2.2.4. Craft for healing

As an end in it self, craft can promote social empowerment and spiritual well-being. In initiatives with this focus, economic aspects play a minor role - or no role at all. In this group, traditions are usually held in high regard and the external intervention is minimal.

Making things by hand is widely accepted to have therapeutic dimensions. According to Thomas Aquinas, a human being enjoys nothing more than to be “creatively, usefully, productively engaged with both his hands and brains” (Schumacher, 1973). William Morris

exploited this idea in the Arts and Crafts movement and since then, craft making has become an acknowledged means of healing the traumatized.

Calcutta Rescue, a NGO that works towards improving the health and education of the urban poor and disadvantaged in Kolkata is an example of an initiative in which craft making is seen, above all, as a means of improving social well being. In this case, enhanced income or employment opportunities are on a par with an increasing level of participation of the marginalized members of the society. A craft project has been set up for the ex-patients, widows of patients, students, and physically challenged individuals, to use their creativity in sewing, embroidery, art, woodwork and weaving<sup>5</sup>.

Another similar case of a charity is the Nepal Leprosy Trust, where leprosy patients are given an opportunity to become meaningfully engaged in the society through craft making. In this context, the issues concerning the quality and concept of craft products are secondary to the therapeutic aspects of craft making. Nonetheless, income generation still remains relevant for the empowerment that the projects aim for. The ability to earn money with ones own skills and work is liberating for the oppressed as many researches have indicated (Donaldsson, 2004).

#### **2.2.2.5. Craft as business**

The majority of the cases locate themselves in between the two extremes, considering craft as a tool that is valuable in its own right and regard it as a sustainable business, that has economic potential to lift the marginalized communities from poverty - without compromising the respect of traditions and risking the extinction of indigenous lifestyles.

As noted previously, there is a rather widely shared belief that small-scale rural craft can potentially develop into a profitable business. The Indian NGO, Dastkar, declare themselves to “strongly believe in craft as a social, cultural and economic force, that despite being marginalized due to urbanisation and industrialisation, has enormous strength and potential and has thus a vital role to play within the economic mainstream of the country”<sup>6</sup>.

The Fair Trade Federation<sup>7</sup> argues that traditions have a permanent and growing appeal in today’s world, as craft items possess an important role in a society’s culture. Utensils, clothes, baskets, bowls, and ritual items are seen to be the windows of culture, and as the world becomes more linked, there is a growing appreciation for craft items from abroad, making it also good business.

It is within this sector that there is the most pressure towards development. The traditions and existing skills are taken as starting points, as in the case of Dastkar, with the aim of translating

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ganesha.co.uk/profiles/CalcuttaRescue.htm>

<sup>6</sup> [www.dastkar.org](http://www.dastkar.org)

<sup>7</sup> [www.fairtradefederation.com.ftfaq.html](http://www.fairtradefederation.com.ftfaq.html)

the traditions into viable products that would meet the demands of the global markets. The products can be traditional and indigenous (as in the case of Dastkar) or stylish and Western looking (as in the case of Heartwear, the non-profit association founded by “a group of stylish friends”<sup>8</sup>), but in both cases the products must be commercially viable.

### **2.2.3. Capabilities and freedoms**

For this research, Amartya Sen’s notion of development has been chosen as the general framework of thought on development. In his seminal work, *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 1999), Sen develops an alternative approach to economic and social development, in which he stresses the role of freedom as both the primary end and the principal means of development. In this approach, *unfreedoms*, as Sen chose to name them, inhibit choice and capture of opportunity, leading to the persistence of social and economic deprivations, in both rich and poor societies. In this way, development is seen as a process of expanding freedoms that underpin and enable development itself. This approach is particularly suitable in the context of capability development, which is central to the aims of craft development initiatives.

#### **2.2.3.1. The Capability Approach**

Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach (CA), with significant contributions also by Martha Nussbaum, provides an alternative approach to social and economic development. It looks beyond the material condition and utilities into the substantive freedoms (capabilities) of individuals to choose a life one has reason to value. While development theory was based on measurable indicators of well-fare, such as gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP), and poverty has been seen as income-deprivation, the CA takes into account the larger picture, including not only the commodities but the freedom to pursue the things that a person as a free individual may or may not value. The basis is, then, non-utilitarian, as there are claims such as rights and freedom, that, while being acknowledged by society, are not necessarily chosen if they are not valued (Anand et al., 2008). As Nussbaum (1999) put it, the key issue is not to ask people about their preferences or resources (as is done in conventional micro-economics), but instead to ask what is it that they are actually able to do or be.

For Sen the basic social and economic factors, such as health care, basic education and employment are important, not only in their own right but also by providing people with opportunity to approach the world courageously and with freedom (Sen, 1999). In the CA the central concept is of freedom and the distinction between what people are free to do and what they actually do (Anand et al., 2008). The focus is, then, on the individuals’ real opportunity to pursue their objectives and to convert the *primary goods*, such as rights, liberties, opportunities,

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<sup>8</sup> [www.edelkoort.com](http://www.edelkoort.com)

income and wealth and the social basis for self-respect, into the ability to promote their ends (Sen, 1999). Sen differs from Rawls' notion of primary goods (Rawls, 1971) as the basic resources needed for good life in that in CA, income or the possession of commodities should be seen in the light of the freedom they provide, not as ends in themselves (Sen, 1999). As Navarro (2000) notes, Sen does not fully explore the institutional and individual power relations that mediate social action in the CA. This detracts somewhat from the explanatory power that the CA has.

The key concepts in Sen's thinking are: i) Capabilities; ii) Functionings; and iii) Freedom. There is also an additional concept, important to understanding the Capability Approach (CA): constraints, or *unfreedoms* as Sen calls them, preventing the individual to capture the opportunities, thus leading to deprivation.

### **2.2.3.2. Capabilities & functionings**

Capabilities are central for Sen's notion of development. There is a difference between Sen's approach and the traditional notion of opportunities at the centre of many theories of equality, such as in John Rawls' Theory of Justice<sup>9</sup> (Rawls, 1971). Many see equality essentially as having equal access to, and distribution of, opportunities, and while Sen's notion of capability comes close to this, he expands the idea to include the *freedom to achieve* as a basic right of mankind. In this sense, Sen links in with the rights-based-approach (RBA) of human development, developed in the context of the UN and the Vienna Declaration of 1993.

In this sense, all capabilities are functionings but not all functionings are capabilities. According to Robyens (2003) issues such as resources, economic growth and technological development should be evaluated according to their ability to contribute to human wellbeing. They are not ends in themselves. The central idea is that different people transform the same bundle of goods into opportunities for achieving their goals in different ways. Sen lists five sources of differences: personal, environmental, relational perspectives, variations in social climate and distribution in family (Alampay, 2003). As Sen writes: "For example, an affluent person who fasts may have the same functioning achievement in terms of eating or nourishment as a destitute person who is forced to starve, but the first person does have a different "capability set" than the second (the first can choose to eat well and be nourished in a way the second cannot)" (Sen, 1999, 75).

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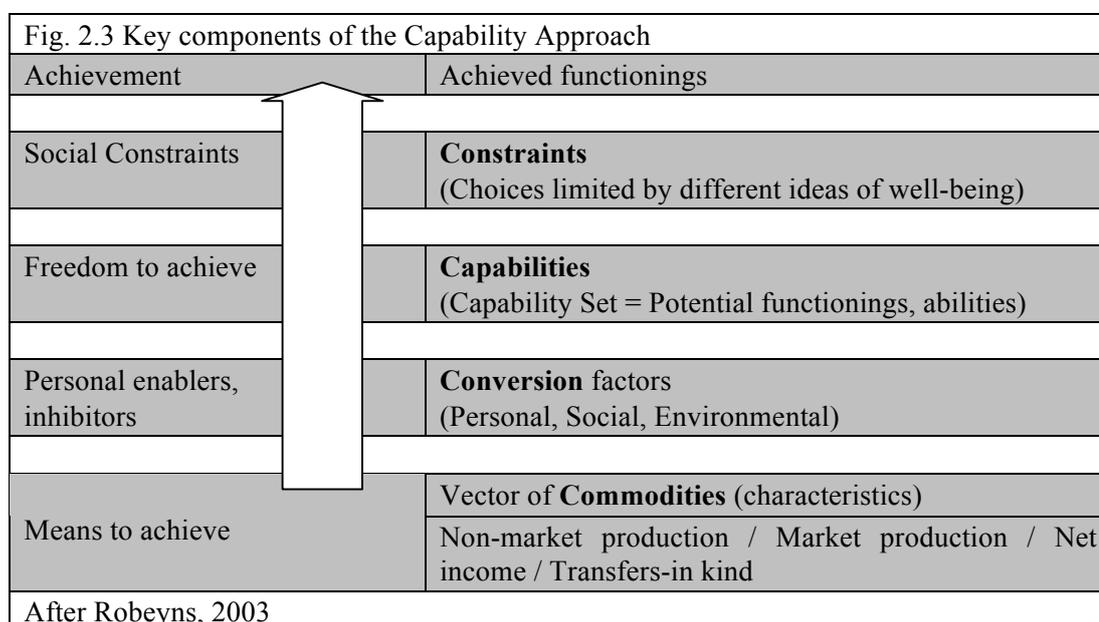
<sup>9</sup> The two basic concepts in Rawl's theory of justice are the Difference Principle, according to which the social and economic inequalities should be organised so that they are to be of the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society and the Fair Equality of Opportunity, that states that offices and positions must be open to everyone under conditions of (Rawls, 1971).

Gasper (2000) has defined functionings as components or aspects of how a person lives. Alampay has pointed out that evaluating functionings requires the identification and weighing the valuable things that people are able to be and do (Alampay, 2003).

### 2.2.3.3. Freedom

Gasper (2002) has argued that in Sen's notion of freedom the emphasis is on choice. Freedom is an essential condition for being a human. An individual should have positive and negative freedoms, not only to decide what to do but also have the right not to take up an opportunity even if they have the required means and capabilities.

The following figure by Robeyns (2003) illustrates the levels of human achievement:



There are three basic levels: the means to achieve, the freedom to achieve and the achievement.

The first level, the means to achieve, includes commodities (goods and services) of both market and non-market value. The conversion factors are personal characteristics (such as age, gender, intelligence), social characteristics (such as hierarchies and norms) or environmental characteristics that influence the conversion of the characteristics into functionings. A particularly important conversion factor is education and skills development that provides the individual with the opportunity to gain new knowledge.

The second level, the freedom to achieve includes the *Capability set*, a group of capabilities that determine all the possible abilities an individual may have. The conversions of capability sets into achieved functionings are limited by constraints, which restrict the choices that can be made from the available capability sets. These constraints are socially constructed, inhibiting

people from making free choices, related to the parameters of *good life*, such as religion, family, social class. For example, religion may have restricting implications on peoples' diet.

#### **2.2.3.4. Operationalizing the Capability Approach**

The major difficulty of the Capability Approach concerns its operationalization. It has to be noted that equal capabilities can lead to very different functionings, which makes it difficult to assess them in practice. The real intentions of people are difficult to measure and evaluate; how to measure what people could do, as opposed to what they actually do?

While Sen himself does not present a list of capabilities, Nussbaum (2000), building on Marx and Aristotle, has suggested the following record of the central capabilities that are elementary for human well-being and needed for the operationalization of the Capability Approach:

- Life
- Bodily health
- Bodily integrity
- Senses, Imagination and Thought
- Emotions
- Practical reason
- Affiliation
- Other species
- Play
- Control over one's environment

#### **Types of capabilities**

According to Nussbaum (2000), there are three types of capabilities.

- ***Basic capabilities*** (as those listed above) are the necessary base for developing more advanced capabilities. Nussbaum gives the example of education: while the ability to learn exists in all children, they are only able to use it through the provision of education.
- ***Internal capabilities*** like the use of speech. Given suitable conditions, the capability of speech turns into a functioning (speech or talk).
- ***Combined capabilities*** consist of internal capabilities together with external conditions that make the exercise of a function a real possibility and an option. Public policy is meant to promote combined capabilities. This is achievable through a twin effort of promoting an internal capability (say through education), and supplying the necessary material and institutional conditions.

## Measuring capabilities

Whether or not capabilities, as listed by Nussbaum, can be measured has been a topic of much discussion recently. Another point of discussion is whether the listed capabilities are in fact related to well being. It is suggested that Nussbaum's list, in practical terms, can be considered as "check list of capabilities essential for human flourishing" (Anand et al, 2008). Nussbaum attempted to make her list to be a high-level one.

As Anand et al. (2008) point out, Nussbaum's list is normative and cannot thus be shown to be true or false. On the other hand, a growing number of economists have attempted to develop tools of quantitative measurement of well-being. The UK based Open University has launched a website, Capability Measurement Project, that calls for economists, social scientists and philosophers to develop instruments for the operationalization of the CA<sup>10</sup>. This has been discussed in more details by e.g. Anand et al. (2008).

In terms of practical application, the CA has provided the framework for establishment of Human Development Index by UNDP, a method for evaluating the well being, making international comparisons of welfare possible. Nevertheless, making the CA operational may be a daunting task, as Alampay (2003) has pointed out, in an application where the poor applied the Senian approach to the analysis of access to information technologies. Alampay examined how individual differences, capabilities and choice affect the use of IT in poor communities. He concludes that while new technologies provide more opportunities for people to communicate, there is no certainty that groups with long histories of disadvantages could access these without government intervention.

### 2.2.3.5. Capability Approach and craft development

The CA has not explicitly been applied in craft development, though e.g. Kasturi refers to Sen in her article *Design for Freedom* (Kasturi, 2005). Kasturi proposes design as a capability-enhancing tool that should redefine its boundaries, and be seen in a wider sense, not only as a contributor to the economics of craft. From the Senian perspective, design has direct and indirect relevance to the freedom of the craftsman: it contributes directly to her well-being by providing her with tools of control and self-respect and indirectly through influencing social change by enhancing economic production.

Kasturi strongly emphasizes craft as a meaningful industry that can tackle the many challenges imposed by globalization. Unfortunately she is less clear about the practical methods to achieve this. She also doesn't define craft in any specific way but considers it as a *rooted tradition*, by which the communities reflect on their condition and identity. For Kasturi the question is not about providing designs but facilitating the design processes, giving the artisans tools to

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/capabilities/index.shtml>

improve the designs themselves so that they would meet the challenges of the rapidly changing global economy.

In this research the Senian approach is used as a framework of thought. It is argued that in the context of craft development initiatives, the CA allows the individual projects, programmes and other endeavours to link the development of individual skills to the attempt to remove the constraints that are imposed on the local producers. In practice this could mean developing technical skills in design, production and marketing, which could address both local production and global marketing issues.

## **2.3. Craft**

Paul Greenhalgh (1997) approaches the word craft<sup>11</sup>, which he says has been forming for over two and half centuries, through three distinct threads or elements that have become intertwined only relatively recently. He calls them the decorative arts, the vernacular and the politics of work. While the first of these is a feature of all civilisations, the others were formed during the nineteenth century. Arts and Crafts movement brought all these elements together in the late nineteenth century, to form the concept of craft, as known today (Greenhalgh, 1997).

When people talk about craft, they may mean objects, or a certain class of objects, a certain form of (manual) labour or an institution with ideological connotations. It was particularly the last dimension that drew my attention. I became interested in the Western craft ethos. During my years in developing countries I had come to realize that the Western notion of craft differed greatly from the Non-Western notion. The Westerners tend to see craft - which is essentially a physical way to change the environment - as something worthy in its own right, while in Non-Western countries such connotations do not appear to exist.

The following section looks at the economic, symbolic and theoretical dimensions of craft. The aim is to put craft as a phenomenon in a general context, highlighting the aspects that are relevant for craft development. The Western context of craft production is reviewed, as it forms a part of the ideological basis of many craft development projects. The Non-Western context is furthermore examined, as it is the operational environment of the craft development initiatives.

### **2.3.1. Craft as commerce**

In this research, the term craft is used specifically to mean the practice of making marketable artefacts by hand. While the production is understood to take place in the developing countries, markets for the products may be local or global. The link of the marketplace with the product is an essential definer of craft; in this study, craft does not exist without markets.

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<sup>11</sup> In this research word “craft” is used instead of “handicraft”, a term that also appears in literature, referring to same category of objects, unless the original source uses the latter term.

Craft, making things by hand, is the oldest form of material production. Edward Lucie-Smith has divided the history of craft into three stages, indicating that initially everything was craft (Lucie-Smith, 1988). Later, in Europe from the Renaissance onwards, a distinction between craft and fine art emerged and finally, with the Industrial Revolution industrial production separates from craft, allowing the development of a new profession, design. It was the introduction of division of labour, Walker (1989) argues, that separated craft and design, bringing about also the debates of art in craft in the machine age.

As mentioned above, craft is a manifold practice, consisting of economic, and cultural elements. Pirkko Anttila (2001) provides the figure 2.4 to illustrate the dimensions of craft. It is based on Viktor Papanek's function analysis that he presented in his best-known book, *Design for the real World*, first published in 1972. Anttila views the field of craft and explains that it is comprised of many different materials and technological sectors, which can be approached from many different angles. It can be described as a prism, or double-pyramid, with the human on the top, the base representing the environment for the human activity and the arena where effects are felt. Craftsmanship means the command of these sectors.

The craft object is positioned in the middle of the figure and has the same six angles as Papanek's hexagon model that he used to describe the functions of a product. For Papanek, the use function is just one of the six factors that should all work together. He divides the functions into six parts: method, association, aesthetics, need, Telesis and use (Papanek, 1972). The six points of the Anttila's pyramids refer to the different angles through which the complex phenomenon, craft, can be approached. Psychophysical, natural, ecological, cultural, social and technological environments together form the entity of environments the core of which craft can be positioned.

Historically, craft production is firmly rooted in the economic environment. Craft making has been - and in many parts of the developing countries still is - an important means of generating an income. The economic role of craft changed rather drastically during the industrial revolution, even though, as Lucie-Smith (1981) points out, the process wasn't as straightforward as has sometimes been considered. Craft did, however, lose its role as the primary mode of production. In a response to this changed role of production, the Arts and Crafts movement was instrumental in creating a new ethos for craft in the West, based on the symbolic, ideological and political rather than economic factors (Greenhalgh, 1997). This approach to craft in the West has greatly influenced the conception, planning, and implementation of craft development initiatives, as it has linked the economic values to symbolic and ideological attributes that are assumed to be valid also in Non-Western contexts.

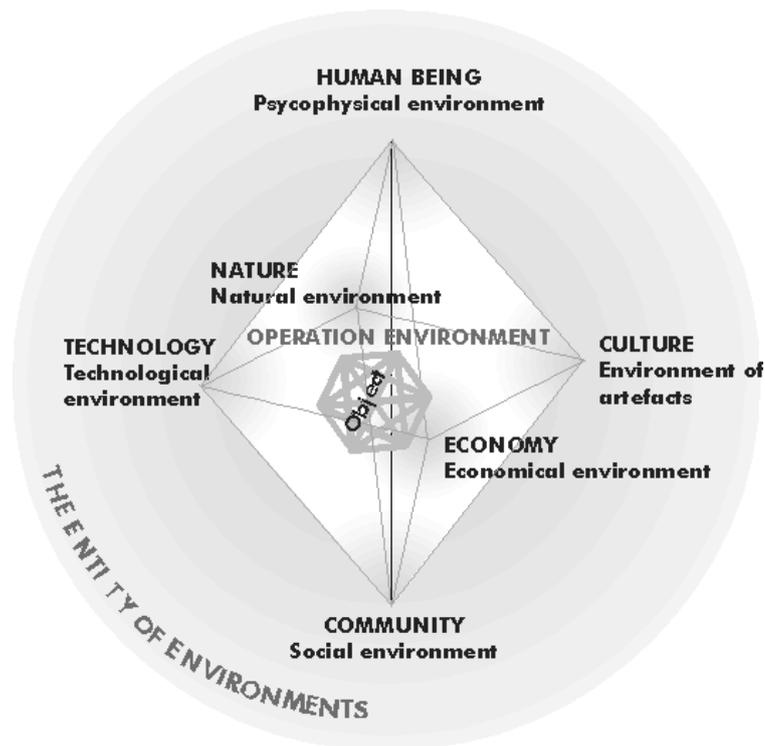


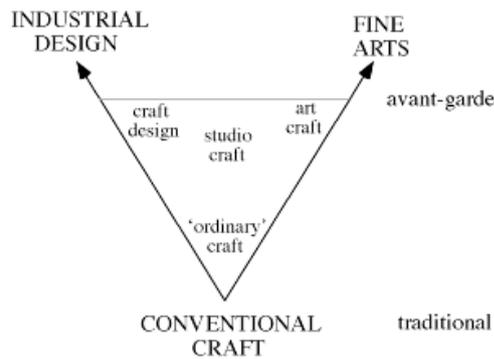
Fig. 2.4 The dimensions of craft: Anttila, 2001

### 2.3.1.1. The functions of practice

Marileea Vuori (1998) addresses the process of commercialization of craft from the point of view of economics. For Vuori, the essential question is the function of the practice. She argues that the Western studio craft is all too often considered within the context of art. Vuori refers to Anna-Maija Ihatsu's (1998) model for classifying craft objects. Ihatsu has provided the following triangle model to illustrate the dimensions of contemporary craft. Objects belonging to the class of traditional craft or vernacular - as opposed to the objects belonging to the class of art-craft<sup>12</sup> that have been made for artistic (self expression) purposes - have generally been made for exchange or commerce.

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<sup>12</sup> Ihatsu uses the term "art craft", which appears to be relatively little used in the British craft discourse, even though British craft is said to be more art oriented than, for instance, Finnish craft, which is design oriented (Ihatsu, 1998, Arts Council England, 2004). There are national differences in craft terminology and in the way craft is perceived. In Norway, for instance, the term "craft art" is sometimes used and defined as a creative art form, based on materials incorporated into a concept-based artistic process ([www.gallerif15.no/catalogue/Tendenser2001/catJV.htm](http://www.gallerif15.no/catalogue/Tendenser2001/catJV.htm)). Veiteberg does argue that this definition, based on the assumption that craft art is a static category, is somewhat misleading. She proposes the more elastic definition where clear boundaries cannot be drawn, positioning craft in between art and design. She utilizes then term undecidedable to describe the way in which art craft crosses over boundaries and adapts to new contexts and situations (ibid.).



**Fig. 2.5 The triangle model of craft: Source Ihatsu, 1996**

Traditional craft is positioned on the bottom of the triangle. Depending on the orientation of the maker, it can develop into art or industrial design. On the left continuum, there is an emphasis on the fundamental function of the craft product - the service the product offers to users. It is characterized by rationality and technology. On the right continuum, we find such modernistic (=Western) ideals as self-expression and artistic ambition, free expression, imagination and intuition (Ihatsu, 1998).<sup>13</sup>

It is therefore not the aesthetics of the products, but the motivation of the maker that determines the position of an artefact in the triangle above. Traditional craft and industrial design are essentially commercial activities, but art craft and high design are essentially artistic.

According to Ihatsu, the triangle is symbolic in two senses. It is indicative of a historical change (how design developed from craft) and it shows the hierarchy by showing the most valued in the top and least valued in the bottom. The sides of the triangle (the arrows) are like hands of the artisan, demonstrating that craft can be made relying on either design or art (Ihatsu, 1996). As Ihatsu points out, craft is in a permanent state of struggle between two opposites, change and constancy. On the one hand, there is a need to reach for new ideas and forms and on the other, to hold on to the past. Craft carries, even in its most artistic and extravagant forms, traces of nostalgia. The very fact that it is made (mostly) by hand unlike most products that we are surrounded with these days, links it to our history, to the past, when people, not money, still had control of the production (Ihatsu, 1996).

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<sup>13</sup> In this research, the discussion of the (possible) hierarchy between craft, design and art in the Western world is not addressed. The question is complex and has been widely discussed, recently by e.g. Veiteberg (2005), Risatti (2007) and Adamson (2007). Further research would be needed to find out if “art envy” (Clark, 2007) has an impact on craft development initiatives, in the sense that function is seen to be of secondary importance to the artistic value of the product.

### 2.3.1.2. Economic significance of craft in the West

Craft business in Europe is said to be marginal and symbolic (Rees, 1997), thus implicitly not contributing significantly to economic growth or exports. In many countries in Europe, such as UK, craft businesses tend to be micro-enterprises, often employing no more than one or two persons (Arts Council, 2004). Self-employment is high and turnover relatively low; in the UK approximately ten thousand pounds per year, with extended working hours. Money is not the major motivation among craft practitioners, but the need to create (ibid). Being a craftspeople is a life-style choice in the West, as craft making is considered to be economically risky, and not viable without subsidies or other support systems. As Dormer writes, craftspeople are "dependent upon state patronage via the Crafts Council and the regional arts associations, school teaching and a clientele of salary earners or professional workers" (Quoted in Walker, 1989, 41; also Arts Council, 2004).

On the other hand, craft is also considered as one of the main lines of business, as 20% of all European businesses are in fact craft businesses, the total number being around 4 million (Johnsson & Äyväri, 2002). In Finland only there are 13,000 firms in the sector and, craft is taught in a number of vocational schools and universities and education is provided from basic to post-graduate levels. This can be considered as a significant input in a field where the work opportunities are generally considered to be limited.

In fact, Europe is sometimes looked at as a positive example of the potential of craft industry. Jaitly (2005) excitedly cites the UK statistics, where in 2003 there were 32,000 makers generating a turnover of £826m, making the craft industry bigger than the divisions of fishing, forestry and logging, and bicycle, motorcycle, and sports goods manufacturing altogether. If this is possible in Britain, then there seems to be no limit for the Indian artisans, provided that the state actively supports these endeavours.

The sector also benefits from diversity. An extensive survey was recently commissioned by the Crafts Council, the Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales, called *Making it in the 21st century. A socio-economic survey of craft activity in England and Wales, 2002-03*. It describes the key words of the sector: stability, entrepreneurial spirit, networking, collaboration, portfolio working, and lifestyle fulfilment. This enables pushing boundaries of creative industries, while generating meaningful employment on a wide front. The report states that British craft sector is considered as vibrant, innovative and capable of surprises, and that it should not be seen as the backyard of the economy (Craft Council, 2004). The field is capable of growth and internationalization, and makes a vital contribution to the wider economy through connections with tourism industry and rural development. The craft sector has multiple roles to play in sustaining rural economies, providing job opportunities and entrepreneurial activity for micro-enterprises, and acting as a source of creativity and innovation (Rigg, 2005).

It is perhaps the last one of the mentioned dimension, the potential of craft to contribute to the creative and experience economies that has attracted increasing interest throughout the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, in tourism development, a new concept named creative tourism has been introduced by Greg Richards (Richards and Wilson, 2007). Richards argues that there has occurred a shift from cultural tourism, where the tourist remains as the outside observer, towards creative tourism and even craft tourism, where the tourist is involved in the experience creation by participating in local activities, for instance in souvenir making (Richards and Wilson, 2007; Miettinen, 2007). Craft becomes a part of the service experience, as Satu Miettinen has discussed in her dissertation, *Designing the Creative Tourism Experience* (Miettinen, 2007).

While craft continues to be exploited in new ways in the creative economy, the fact still remains that there appears to be little systematic research on the overall economic significance of craft industry. There is however a growing interest towards craft as a business, or at least growing concern of making it into a successful profession in a world where the status and appreciation of making items by hand is constantly changing.

### ***2.3.2. Craft in the Western context***

In the West, craft making is presented as a worthwhile industry, one that has a definite financial potential, while also having non-monetary value. The financial prospect of craft and other small or micro industries is a complicated issue and much debated. While there are views both for and against craft having a wider economic significance, there appears to be more of a common understanding on the symbolic value of craft.

The shift between the value of physical and mental labour in material production emerged in the late Renaissance, when painters started using craftsmen in the production of artwork (Lucie-Smith 1986). While physical work was already idealised during the time of St Thomas of Aquinas, it was only after industrialisation and at the onset of the breakthrough of mass production that the concerns for disappearing craft skills broke into public awareness.

As Greenhalgh (1997) and Lucie-Smith (1986) have pointed out, the romantic notion of Western craft has its roots in the mid-19th century Arts and Crafts movement that first promoted the idea of the intrinsic value of craft and hand, as a counterattack against industrialization and the alienating forces of machinery. According to Greenhalgh, the very concept of craft is partly based on the ethos of the Arts and Crafts movement and its appreciation of the vernacular (Greenhalgh, 1997).

#### **2.3.2.1. Arts & Crafts**

William Morris, one of the two men behind Arts and Crafts movement, adopted a socialist ideology and naturalistic aesthetic as a reaction to the ugliness of industrialization (Cooper and

Press, 1990; Naylor, 1990). He recalled the time of the Pre-Raphaelites of the Middle Ages as the ideal age of happy artisans making beautiful, meaningful items by hand. Morris was also among the first to criticize the excessive consumerism, addressing the luxury of the rich and asking whether a designer should put his energy into revolutionizing the institutions that uphold the rotten and corrupt system. Ironically, Morris himself ended up serving the rich by designing labour intensive craft products that were priced beyond the reach of ordinary customers (Cooper and Press, 1999). Nevertheless, as Nigel Whiteley (1993) writes, Morris was the first to realize that design reflects political power and control and that a proper reform of design would grow out of a reform of politics.

John Ruskin, the other mastermind behind the Arts and Crafts movement, announced three rules of craft that form the basis of the Western craft ethos: "Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which "invention" has no share; Never demand an exact finish for its own sake but only for some practical or noble end; Never encourage imitations or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving records of great works" (quoted in Lucie-Smith, 1986, 21). John Ruskin followed Marx in saying that "you must make a tool of the creature or a man of him". There was a declared causal relationship between work conditions and degradation of human personality (Greenhalgh, 1997, 33).

### **2.3.2.2. Adopted symbolism**

The legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement was held in high value later in the Bauhaus school of design in Weimar. The Morrisian emphasis of the inseparability of process and product was visible in early functionalism. Like Morris, functionalists believed that there was ethical and aesthetic value in an object, and that it was derived from the way in which the object is made (Margolin, 2005).

The Modernist movement, in the beginning of the 20th century, transformed Morris's ideas into the aesthetic principles of the Machine Age. It was technology-friendly and believed in mass production. The Bauhaus-concept of design education emphasized solid craft skills and valued manual work. Machines replaced handwork, which was considered as not progressive and vernacular was considered as politically reactionary (Greenhalgh, 1997).

The Bauhaus students were expected to find employment in industrial production. Later, the craft students were encouraged to study new movements in contemporary art and became closer to fine art than had been the original Bauhaus concept of producing prototypes for industry<sup>14</sup>. The crafts students were affected by the contemporary movement of Abstract Expressionism

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<sup>14</sup> Adams (2006) sources the inferiority complex or "art envy" (Clark, 2007), considered as typical for Western craft practitioners, back to the modernist regime that had exploited the legacy of arts and crafts movement but all the same considered craft products as too bourgeois to be exhibited e.g. in the Museum of Modern Art (where industrially manufactured but not handmade teapots may be exhibited).

that was highly focused on individualism and on the nature of the psyche of the individual (Lucie-Smith, 1986, 32-3).

In America, craft continued to be sheltered by and propagated through institutions like the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan, providing environments for artists, craftsmen and designers (Lucie-Smith, 1986). While Bauhaus, having always had a strong commitment to craft began in the mid-20's to move towards industrial design, Cranbrook kept its focus on handwork and a non-industrial ethos (Lucie-Smith, 1986).

The Bauhaus school had an immense impact on craft and design throughout the Western world and also, quite particularly, to art education. For instance, in America, Bauhaus was influential in the extensive expansion of higher education involvement with the crafts after the Second World War. The craftsmen emphasized the acquisition of skills, building a technical tradition and recovering techniques from the past that could be made the subject of research in a university context. The production of work to be sold in the marketplace was not the primary goal (Lucie-Smith, 1986).

### **2.3.2.3. A transfer of context**

Bauhaus has shaped the curriculum in numerous art/craft/design schools and this model has been adopted by a number of Non-Western institutions (Reijonen, 2004).

The phenomenon of contemporary or avant-garde craft appeared in the 60's when the barrier between art and craft broke down (Lucie-Smith, 1986). According to Lucie-Smith, two attitudes were essential in paving way for this: the craftsperson learned about the world and society through commitment to craft, and craft was a means for self-expression. Craft making, mastering a craft skill is believed to give satisfaction that purely material goals can never provide.

Craft has, then, come to be appreciated as a valuable practice in its own right, something that is worth being kept alive by various support systems. Some call it the memory of mankind (Stenros, 1999), the conservation of which is essential for our cultural heritage. As Ihatsu has noted, our notion of craft is characterized by nostalgia. Modern craftsmen and designers are seen as responsible for conserving and passing on a cultural inheritance (Tamminen 1981, quoted in Vuori 1998).

In the Western world today, people seem to be attracted by craft. Rees (1997) explains this attraction of craft items residing in the explicit values of social continuity, personalized creation, and fulfilment from and through the making of something. Craft's persistent existence has sometimes been explained by the fact that people need both to make things with their hands and to consume hand made items, something that does not seem to disappear. Instead of taking nutritional pills, people still want to indulge in gastronomic delights, and instead of streamlined

industrial design, people desire hand made products. Adamson (2007) has described the “charm” of craft and how handmade items can appeal to our senses and emotions on a purely aesthetical basis.

#### **2.3.2.4. Periodic revivals**

Craft comes back through periodic craft revivals as a reaction to “cheap, standardized, machine made goods” (Walker, 1989, 39). According to Dormer, the appeal of craft is enhanced by the brutal black box aesthetics of modernism that lacks humanity and ubiquity. He blames the form-follows-function of being “only a style: not to disguise what the product does, how it works and what it was made from” (Dormer 1990, 19).

Peach (2007) has traced the ongoing craft revival in Britain to the 70’s, the age of both the revival and reinvention of British craft. The Crafts Advisory Committee was founded in 1971, as an attempt to articulate more clearly what was meant by the concept of craft. This was done to better define the identity and giving the makers a more prominent position in society. There was an attempt to change the rural, anti-industrial image that craft had become attached to into a more progressive and urban one (Arts Council, 2004).

In the West, craft items are saved for special occasions, and often given as gifts (Hickey, 1997). Apart from the fact that the choice of craft item is often an attempt to make a distinction, craft appeals to consumers because of the values that are involved, in the “truth to materials, a desire for natural as against synthetic materials, a respect for skill or workmanship, the role of imagination and the unity of mental and manual labour” (Walker, 1989, 39).

While craft is still a means of production even in the West, by far the majority of hand-made items available in the global market come from Non-Western countries. As Edward Lucie-Smith (1981) has written, the Westerners demand for craft products cannot be satisfied with their own declining industry. Western craft is limited in supply - and much more expensive than Non-Western products. The pre-industrial societies’ craft industry has had a growing market in satisfying this appetite. This has had an impact on the price-level. As the Arts Council (2004) survey notes, there is an abundance of mass produced, cheap and attractive alternatives to contemporary craft in functional and decorative objects<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> In research conducted by the British Craft Council, it was estimated that the number of potential buyers of craft products in the UK was to the tune of 7.3 million. This market segment had expressed their interest in purchasing craft products but had not done so, for one reason or another. Price was an important factor: the customers appeared to be less willing to spend money on fine craft than on fine art or other luxury items.

### 2.3.2.5. Evolution in craft

Craft, like any other human activity, is subject to evolutionary processes; it evolves constantly, as there is no stasis in culture. As Walker (1989) writes, the change in traditional societies is often analogous to natural evolution. During the long period of passing traditions from one generation to another, variations take place and eventually the forms and decorations change. This process is usually unselfconscious. The artisan may be unaware of the changes that have occurred.

Philip Steadman (1979) notes that the change in traditional cultures is analogous to evolution in nature. Artefacts are copied by successive generations of artisans. Due to the inconsistencies in the copying process, small variations occur. These can, in the long run, lead to significant changes in the artefact's form and decoration.

Graburn (1976) notes that symbols are the means through which material items express identity. They are essentially arbitrary, as Graburn argues that there is no necessary connection between the content of the sign and the object or category for which it stands. This implies that symbols can and would evolve jointly with material artefacts.

This sort of evolution is rather slow-paced, even stagnant, when compared to design in modern societies, which, according to Walker (1989) pursues change pro-actively and with a self-conscious deliberation, the intent being not to copy something, but to solve new problems using new designs (Walker, 1989).

Involvement in craft development implies an active role in the evolutionary process of craft. This has not yet attracted the wider interest of academic inquiry. This is probably not surprising - it is a field of a lot of practice but little theory. Much of the information available, is unpublished or published in the form of limited editions of reports, seminar/conference proceedings, not widely circulated or distributed in email debate lists and websites.

It is one thing to commercialize artefacts but quite another to commercialize them in the context of development cooperation. The projects in question, mostly non-profit by nature, differ from for-profit corporations in that the economical performance is not their main interest. The aim is not to try to develop commercially successful products at any cost but to do it in a way that would be socially, culturally and often also environmentally sustainable. This kind of business is sometimes called *green business* and it appears occasionally even in the context of for-profit businesses.

The knowledge transfer process behind these products needs to be sustainable. There are some requirements: the design process should be collaborative; the idea is not to propagate but to collaborate. Having Western designs manufactured – one-dimensional design intervention - in the Non-Western countries is therefore not desirable or even acceptable even if such a policy would lead to greater economical success than some alternative strategy. The aim is to build

knowledge from grassroots upwards, so as to make sure that the impact of the contribution by the Western experts is long lasting (Verhelst, 1993) - and sustainable.

### **2.3.3. Craft in Non-Western countries**

In development context, handicraft includes a variety of industries. ILO divides handicraft into three groups (Kiyenze, 1988, 13):

1. Traditional village industries.
2. Artistic handicraft.
3. Semi-manufacturing enterprises located in rural areas, using traditional techniques of production, producing utility items partly for outside markets and partly for local markets.

Artistic handicraft falls into the category most commonly understood as craft in the West: products of creative art, sold to tourist or export markets. The other groups Kiyenze sees as *servicing handicrafts*, providing, as an example among other things, for the installation, maintenance and repair of equipment. Regardless to which group they belong, certain characteristics are required: according to Kiyenze these are *creativity, originality and simplicity*. "Good handicraft is a work of good art and both art and handicraft are one and inseparable" (Kiyenze, 1988, 14).

Lucie-Smith (1981) characterized the nature of Non-Western craft as being both anonymous and abundant. While this was written more than two decades ago, it is still an essentially accurate analysis. Contrary to the Western conception of craft as a celebration of individuality and freedom, many artisans in Non-Western countries work to produce anonymous products under unsavoury conditions. Scrase (2003) describes artisan labour in developing countries as "precarious". A large part of the Non-Western artefacts that are marketed as being *hand-made* do not meet the criteria of craft but that of *decorative arts* (as defined by Lucie-Smith in page 11 of this study), as they are mass-produced under conditions that the artisan hardly has much control over (also Eversole, 2005, Jena, 2007)<sup>16</sup>. This seems to contradict the very idea of craft as a celebration of uniqueness, individuality and self-control. In the case of Non-Western craft production, there is the added complication of the designer not necessarily coming from the same country, but from another culture, often imposing alien concepts and forms onto locally made products (Eversole, 2005).

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<sup>16</sup> Abuse of craftsmanship was a problem already in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and in the USA, where labour was according to Boris (1989), both "joyful" and "sweated". Particularly the craft skills of women were often abused and child labour wasn't uncommon during the time of the Arts and Crafts movement.

This refers to the stratification of the global craft industry. Many of the artisans in the world are occupied in mass-producing cheap “hand made” commodities for multi-national chains such as IKEA (Scrase, 2003, Davenport & Low, 2000). The big companies address the ethical questions to an increasing degree, as a response to the growing consumer awareness, and this may have a positive impact on the crafts industry on the long run (Jena, 2007). This thesis emphasizes, however, that simply being called “craft” does not mean the artefact has been manufactured according to the Western notion of craft as articulated by Western craft thinkers, such as Dormer (1997)

Jaitly’s (2005) comment on craft having a decentralized structure that prevents exploitation by capitalist tycoons controlling production and people is a reflection of the past. This section aims to give an overview of the problems behind the craft industry in Non-Western countries. It illustrates the complexity of the field and identifies the issues that have been regarded as the key inhibitors of success in Non-Western commodity production.

### **2.3.3.1. Craft: a suitable enterprise?**

Millions of people in the world get either their main or partial income from craft practice. It provides a much-needed cash income for food security, school costs, health care, consumables and transport (Suich & Murphy, 2002). It is an important means of material production in many parts of the world and one of the main sources of employment in developing societies. As John Walker says, "the less a society is developed industrially and technologically, the more it relies upon crafts in everyday life and hence craft continues to play an important role in Third World countries" (Walker, 1989, 39).

Craft making is often considered as a suitable industry for low-income countries, as, inter alia, it requires no major technical investments, makes the most of the local skill base and materials, generates employment even in remote and rural areas and among uneducated people, can supplement other livelihoods, and provides work and income during periods when agriculture requires less work (UN Pacific Human Development Report, 1999). Craft making is particularly convenient in fitting in women’s role in traditional societies, as a homemaker and a child minder (Suich & Murphy, 2002).

The Artisan Enterprise Network (AEN) notes that "the sale of handmade crafts serves as an incentive to continue production, thereby helping to preserve rich cultural traditions from one generation to the next". According to AEN the entrepreneurial energy of craft sector businesses "is a strong base on which to build diversified community businesses that could encourage economic stability and sustainability"<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> This quotation was sourced from [www.miami.edu/nsc/index.html](http://www.miami.edu/nsc/index.html), which is not active any more as AEN has finished. See <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/>

There appears to be strong evidence that craft is an industry worth supporting in low income countries (Scrase, 2003). The Indian craft organization Dastkar observes that rural communities depend on their traditional craft skills for a second source of income, in times of drought, low harvests, or famine. Traditional skills in weaving and embroidery are a means to achieve financial independence - provided market access is developed<sup>18</sup>. The Pacific Human Development Report (1999) notes that increased populations, higher consumption, and demands for commercial expansion imply a need for new forms of rural craft enterprise for additional and alternative sources of income. This rise in non-farm income and opportunities needs to happen on a sustainable basis, to provide an alternative to the urban attraction.

### **2.3.3.2. Value to national economies**

According to the UNCTAD handbook for Third World artisans, policy makers have overlooked crafts and cottage industries as significant sources of income generation in rural areas (International Trade Centre, 1991). There has been a tendency to under-value the informal sector of small and medium sized (SME) industries in general, of which the craft industry is a typical example, the support being given mainly to formal industries. The chances for small producers to get heard by governments are slimmer than those of larger companies. Small businesses and artisans, who mostly work in the informal sector, seldom have a say in large decision making organisations. Governments are known to be more interested in projects with extensive funding (Beck et al., 2003).

There are, however, other more important factors than size, such as openness, technology, efficiency and growth potential. Cooperation and clustering have been identified as the key strategies for growth. In recent years, developing organizations have also recognized the meaning of small industries. For instance the World Bank has supported the SME sector with more than 10 billion dollars during the past five years. There has been a widely shared belief that the SME sector has boosted competition, entrepreneurship and the efficiency of economies, increased jobs and alleviated poverty more than larger enterprises (Joseph, 2002). Returns from investment in the craft sector are, in general, much higher than returns in the organized sector (ibid). On the other hand, some argue that preferring small businesses to the larger ones has not, in the light of recent research, alleviated poverty or generated growth in the poorest countries to the extent that was previously thought (Beck et al., 2005).

The topic remains to be debated. The debate around the potential of craft production appears to be particularly vivid in India (Kasturi, 2005; Sethi, 2005; Ghose, 1998; Jaitly 2005). Kasturi (2005) argues that there is an anti-craft atmosphere in India, one that looks at design as a tool to upgrade craft (considered as kitschy and irrelevant) to a meaningful industry. This mentality is

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<sup>18</sup> [www.dastkar.org](http://www.dastkar.org)

crystallized in the often posed question as to whether the children of craft persons wish to continue the trade. She lists 4 myths that overshadow the true nature and potential of craft as a culturally and socially valuable production form. Firstly, artisans are believed to be in constant need for external assistance to be able to compete in international markets. Secondly, artisans are said to be in need of training in skills and new technologies. Thirdly, there are claims to increase export in the manner of software industry and finally, craft is believed to be antiquated and in need to get in line with 21<sup>st</sup> century.

According to Kasturi, the artisans are under enormous pressure, as the government calls for standardization, designers for an upgrade, change and modernization, and the markets demand new products never made before. The artisans do not know how to respond to this. This, in Kasturi's opinion is a result of a limited understanding of craft. She views craft as an example of a flexible industry, that is in line with the transition of a capitalistic industrial society into a post-industrial flexible economy and flexible economies by creating meaningful and holistic work for individuals.

Wherry (2003) states that in social sciences, the interest towards assessing the importance of crafts for local economies has been of interest in the mid- to late 1990s, as it was after the serious economic crisis of the 80's that the global community set up to export their way out of debt. At the same time, there was a radical rise in global tourism, which in turn boosted the trade of tourist curios.

There are some indications that the craft industry is becoming more acknowledged, both in developing countries and in industrialized countries. Three main issues can be identified in this context. First, we seem to be experiencing another craft revival and the demand for the hand made, particularly sector of ethnic art, is said to be rising (Wherry, 2003, DTI, 2005). Second, globalization, particularly new information technologies, has opened a new prospect for marketing products of isolated communities (UNDP, 1999). Third, craft has, once again, become considered a viable livelihood, even in some industrialized countries (Johnsson & Äyväri, 1996).

### **2.3.3.3. Craft as a stepping-stone for industrialization?**

There are, roughly speaking, two main approaches to craft in the context of development: craft is either seen as a valuable industry in its own right, regardless of its actual contribution to local economies, or it is viewed instrumentally, as a stepping-stone for further industrialization. The former view has a strong position in development, particularly in the NGO sector, that looks at craft as a relevant option for income generation and poverty alleviation, and as a means to enhance cultural identities.

The latter view is strong in the Pevsnerian perspective of design history that sees craft as predecessor of both art and design, regarding it as a development stage of what is considered

modern design (Walker, 1989). Craft industry has been labelled as a *dwarf industry* (Kiyenze, 1985, 25). When looked at from the Marxist framework of economic development, craft is a pre-industrial production mode that is bound to disappear along with the process of industrialization. Marx and John Stuart Mill considered manual work as a stage of development that would be swept away by the introduction of machinery. Lenin considered the term craft as a "useless term for scientific investigation" (Kiyenze, 1985). That craft is just a step on the road towards industrialization is present also in the writings of the late South African designer Selby Mvusi, who, perhaps reflecting the optimism of the 60's, declared that craft production was irrelevant to global industrialisation, which he held as the long-term goal of development (Mvusi, 1991). In this context, craft can be seen as a predecessor of industrialization, technology being the prime mover of industrialization and social change, craft having only instrumental value, as the basis for the capitalist manufacturing industry (Kiyenze, 1985).

History has challenged the view of craft as a simple predecessor for industrialization. The industrialization of the entire world has taken somewhat longer than perhaps both Marx and Mill anticipated, and it has developed forms and systems that would not be recognizable as industries at the outset of the industrial revolution. Craft industry provides either the main or supplementary incomes for millions of people in the semi-industrial societies of the developing countries. As has also been noted elsewhere, its economic impact is substantial, even if undervalued and perhaps un-quantified to a great degree (DTI, 2005). It has also been noted that crafts and small businesses in general do not disappear with industrialization, but undergo a qualitative transformation (Kiyenze, 1988), and under propitious circumstances become key parts of large economic and production value chains.

According to Walker (1989), one category of craft, the so-called *rural craft* has virtually disappeared in the affluent post-industrial societies, where the prevailing form of craft is the so-called studio-craft, made by designer-makers that are driven by creative rather than economic needs. The Art Council England (2004) makes a distinction between different kinds of craft, using the following criteria:

- Original craft: handmade unique items or limited production of handmade items
- Original handmade work by a living designer-maker: contemporary crafts (even though it might look traditional)
- Original handmade contemporary work: modern or contemporary in style
- Cutting-edge original, handmade contemporary work that is by designer-makers, recognised to be at the cutting edge of contemporary craft and whose work is acclaimed by people within the contemporary craft circles.

The cutting-edge or contemporary fine craft section is juxtaposed with fine arts. These products demonstrate a high level of craftsmanship, innovativeness both in the use of materials and in

aesthetics and reflect ability of critical enquiry. These expensive, very individualistic hand made items possess a strong appeal to consumers that can afford the high-end prices and want to distinguish themselves via the artefacts (an example would be the work of the Turner Prize winner, Grayson Perry).

#### **2.3.3.4. Employment with meagre benefits**

While the debate on a wider significance goes on, the fact remains that the informal sector is a major provider of urban jobs. As the World Employment Report of 1998-99 notes, informal employment accounts for over 60% of total worldwide urban employment. According to the report, increasing competition through globalization creates a demand for better quality standards and new skills, an evidently difficult task for informal sector enterprises.

Craft has a significant employment role in developing economies (DTI, 2005). In India, crafts and wood products are now in the top 10 major export items, with a total export value of \$550 million last year, or a 40 per cent year-on-year growth. Craft employs the most people after agriculture, with 30 million people working in the sector. Craft exports are rising - the export target for 2006-07 was pegged at \$3.73 billion (16,500 Rupees), according to Mr Rakesh Kumar, Executive Director, Export Promotion Council for Crafts (Srivats, 2006). On the other hand, with its 30 million artisans, India accounts for only 2% of the world craft trade, with China holding 17% (Jaitly, 2005).

The individual artisans, however, are struggling (Scrase, 2003). Many of them live in abject poverty and work under distressing conditions, particularly in South East Asia, which has become a global factory of craft (Reijonen, 2003). Traditional craft in LDCs is often labour intensive, physically draining and with low productivity and added value resulting in low-income levels for the producers. As one Namibian basket-weaver has commented, the "job is big but money small" (Suich & Murphy, 2002). The Bangladeshi micro-enterprise Aranya states on their website that the biggest challenge in working with craftspeople is linked to the quality of the products and timely delivery. While the supply of raw materials (source locally) is sometimes inconsistent, the craft production must also compete in terms of time usage – in the case of the Katha women, embroidery can only be done in addition to the other daily tasks-leaving very little time for the alternative income generation<sup>19</sup>.

Though meagre, from the Western point of view, the income is still often considered as better than nothing in situations where other options for cash generation are limited (Suich & Murphy, 2002). There is a major downside in the low level of income, however: it may act as an inhibitor to personal and professional development and improvement of living conditions, and might even lead to the extinction of traditional skills. This is seemingly underway in many parts of the

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ganesha.co.uk/profiles/Aranya.htm>

developing world (International Trade Centre, 1991; Cohen, 1989). These concerns resonate with the general fear of losing traditions, common in the Western world today (Philips & Steiner, 1999).

#### **2.3.4. Volatile markets**

Dwindling markets have been suggested as the main problem the artisans face in the globalized world (Courtney, 1986). The local demand for handcrafted items has experienced changes during the last few decades, due to the import of cheap industrial products on one hand and the limited economic means available to purchase costly handmade goods on the other.

While the local demand indeed seems to be dwindling, and is not enough to provide the artisans with an adequate income, the world market for crafts appears to be on the rise. The Western consumers are said to have developed a taste for authentic, local products, and made with natural, possibly renewable materials (DTI, 2005; Wherry, 2005). This is partly due to the ongoing globalization processes. Better communication and transportation have facilitated the acquisition of a taste for crafts. International consumers also have more income and global purchasing, particularly via the Internet, is on the rise. The search for novelty is widespread, and in the West the alienation between humans and machines results in people seeking ways to enliven their dull environments with something hand made. Hand made and ethnic goods have become fashionable in irregular intervals, as can be seen in interior and home decoration magazines and publications.

Additionally, as can be seen in the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development, the greening of markets provide new trade opportunities for the developing countries in the form of environmentally preferable products (EPPs). These evolving markets represent new opportunities for developing countries, as they produce environment-friendly natural products in contrast to the industrial manufacture of synthetics (UNCTAD Secretariat, 1995).

Whether the global demand is rising or not - a fact that cannot easily be verified - the supply of craft products has definitively taken on upward curve. On the Internet alone, one finds countless websites selling craft from Non-Western countries. Additionally, these products are readily available for Western consumers in major retail chains and home ware stores, such as IKEA and Habitat. There are also multinational chains specializing in *oriental* or *exotic* products, such as the Swedish Indiska, the British Pier and the Indian Indiq Living.

During the last century, the demand for Non-Western craft has experienced qualitative changes. While there is still a clear market for exclusive, indigenous art pieces, it is fairly limited, catering mainly to the desires of a small number of collectors and connoisseurs. The majority of the artisans are involved in production of what Lucie-Smith has called *tourist art*, “hybrids of colonial influence, souvenirs, and local styles” (Lucie-Smith, 1981, 275). While some of these hybrids are indeed original and authentic manifestations of indigenous survival strategies and

original responses to modernization, many have been manufactured with one purpose only: to generate quick cash.

#### **2.3.4.1. A gap between artists and markets**

The problem does not appear to be that the markets are limited, but that the artisans do not have access to these markets and even if they do, they are not able to survive the harsh competition. Many rural artisans still suffer from low orders, either because their products do not match the latest trends or are not sufficiently different from the others, or are priced too high (Davenport & Low, 2000). Such factors as the lack of related marketing skills, problems in communication with consumers and retailers, and lack of control of the distribution channels form formidable barriers of entry for the producers in terms of access to and competitiveness in the global markets.

The UN Pacific Human Development Report 1999 describes the situation in the South Pacific as a shortage of skills and opportunities that is a reflection of general conservatism and a lack of innovative ideas as to possible types of business, ways to add value to products or how to diversify them. It is also seen in the copy-cat (or band-wagon) behaviour of many businesses. The UNCTAD guidebook for Third world artisans points out that the limited knowledge of markets, low entrepreneurial capabilities, and the small scale of the operations make artisans dependent on third parties and intermediaries that operate between the producers and the retailers (International Trade Centre, 1991). This evidently reduces the income to the producers.

This gap between the artists and the markets goes beyond the considerations of the external qualities of the products, as the market success of products depends on a wide variety of issues, of which the quality of the products is but one, even though a significant one.

Craft has been manufactured in developing countries for thousands of years, during which the artisans have mostly coped well, requiring no external assistance. Providing the local communities with craft items for ceremonial or functional use can be done by relying on local strategies that have developed through centuries by the people themselves. The need for assistance has risen along with globalization. The change that the Non-Western artisans are confronted with reflects the general change from communal society to capitalist economy, from use values to exchange values. Products are no longer made for personal consumption but for exchange (Kiyenze, 1985). Also, according to Kiyenze, coercion, cash cropping, taxation, imports and the money economy have been the major mechanisms that have disturbed the traditional social organizations of agricultural and craft production, sometimes forcing craftsmen into wage-labour or cash-crop production (Kiyenze, 1985).

Globalisation brings both threats and promises to the marginalized producers. As pointed out by Practical Action, an organization dedicated to lifting the poor from poverty by appropriate technological solutions, global markets have the potential to bring good quality, affordable and

mass-produced tools and technology to the reach of artisans. This potential is not always realized, however, as imported technologies may not be affordable to the most vulnerable groups, the women and the poor. The cost of adopting and maintaining new technologies may be prohibitive. It may also lead to a situation, which undermines the local ability to produce goods and tools for the local market, the worst scenario being that local goods are no longer being made, while imported goods are not affordable<sup>20</sup>.

The small enterprises, having very little market power, are vulnerable and the least likely to benefit from changes, as they don't have the ability to identify and exploit new opportunities due to lack of skills and knowledge. According to UBINIG, an organization that promotes handloom weaving in India, promotional activities are required. Failing in this leads to significant adversarial consequences in terms of unemployment and socio-economic problems<sup>21</sup>.

There is a need for adjustment to modern markets, acknowledged by many organisations. According to UNCTAD guidebook for third world artisans, the life or death question for the artisans in developing economies is whether they can adapt their products to meet the requirements of global markets or not, as the purchasing power of local markets is limited and likely to stay so (Noy 1994, International Trade Centre, 1991). On the other hand, in some developing societies with a burgeoning middle-class, such as South Africa, there are indications of growing local market, fuelled by increasing levels of national pride and steady annual economic growth (DTI, 2005).

#### **2.3.4.2. The challenge of exporting**

While many see craft as a worthwhile industry, there are differing views as to how it should be promoted (Ghose, 2000). There is disagreement particularly concerning export endeavours. Many see export as a relevant option for marginalized artisans, while others see it as risking the artisan's and developing economies' independence and tying them into the vagaries of global trade (Ghose, 2000).

The doubting voices reflect the Centre-periphery model of development (Kohler & Chaves, 2003). This approach sees unequal relations between the centre and periphery as barriers of development, weakening the possibilities of creating indigenous strategies for modernization. Instead of transferring models from the centre to the periphery, the peripheries should rely on their own innate strategies, to develop their own way of modernization (Ghose, 2000).

The notion of Centre-periphery addresses the unequal dynamics between the wealthy states (centres) and poor areas (peripheries). The idea was first expressed as the so-called "Singer-Prebisch thesis" in 1949, by Raúl Prebisch and Hans Singer, and later been developed by

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<sup>20</sup> <http://practicalaction.org/?id=manufacturing>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ganesh.co.uk/profiles/Prabartana.htm>

Immanuel Wallerstein, who coined the term “world-system” (Kohler & Chaves, 2003). According to Wallerstein, there is only one world (instead of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> worlds) that is divided between centres, semi-peripheries peripheries and dominated by capitalist system. Wallersteins notion has been used to explain the industrialization processes in the newly industrialized nations (Kohler & Chaves, 2003).

When looked at from the point of view of the Centre-periphery model, exporting craft from developing countries to developed economies appears problematic. Papanek (1997) sharply criticized any export endeavours of Non-Western craft and opposed *souvenir-like decorative objects* that are used as decorative elements and/or fashion accessories, designed by a Western person and manufactured using indigenous materials and skills, “with the expectation that these would sell in the West” (Papanek, 1997).

Gui Bonsiepe observes what he calls *a return to the feudal system of middle- ages* in Latin America, where the majority of the population only lives to make tributes to the ruling class. Following Papanek, he notes that the finance-driven policies do not take into account local needs, populations, or industries, focusing only on debt servicing and an export focus (Fathers, 2000).

Wherry (2003) points out that the neo-liberal social scientists have emphasized the transformative power of global markets that open new opportunities for the craft producers to create innovative responses to free-market capitalism. From this perspective, the artisans are said to have achieved remarkable success. From the point of view of neo-Marxian sociology, the situation is more complex. There is evidence that in most cases the artisans are only responding to the lack of opportunities they face, particularly in the agricultural sector (ibid).

Central to the challenges of exporting are also the competitive strategies adopted. Conventionally, economists identify two main ways of competing: either through price or through differentiation (Porter, 1998). Evidence shows, however, that the globalized economy is effectively creating a need to adopt a joint strategy, of being both a price leader and of having differentiated products at the same time. As an example, mobile telephones are sold not only on price but also on sophisticated attributes.

### **2.3.4.3. Going global**

The Non-Western economies are linked to the global economy with many bonds on many levels. For instance, tourism has become one of the major industries in developing economies. The global craft trade is also fairly established and has a long history, even though its nature has drastically changed in the era of globalisation, characterized by a process of a "thoroughgoing commoditisation" of practically everything” (Giddens, 2000, 6).

The age-old strategies developed for solving local problems do not seem to be working in the context of global markets<sup>22</sup>. Hopkins (2000) writes in an Oxfam assessment report that the main constraint is in matching the supply with the demand of craft. While there is a great degree of competition in the marketplace, there is also the impact of new technology, which has changed the way the trade is managed.

Exporting sets new requirements for the indigenous artisans - many of which they find hard to meet (Davenport & Low, 2000, see also text box 3, stories: Pintade). The big multinational corporations expect high volumes, regular supplies and steady quality - and low prices. Christer Bauer from Ikea (Helsingin Sanomat 17.11.2004) says that: "Ultimately, it is the price that counts - but we are not compromising the quality". The requirements for the products are the same, whether the cupboard, table or chair is made in Finland, Russia or Poland.

The growing and changing tourist markets also set new requirements for production, demanding new forms of consumer-producer interaction, as Richards (1999) has noted. Richards argues further that the global demands can only be tackled with product innovation and marketing. He notes that the aim of a marketing process is to satisfy consumer expectations in a profitable manner. To achieve this, innovative approaches to design, production, and management must be adopted, and potential consumers must be targeted, while reacting proactively to changing market environments. Richards proposes a *crafts culture* where craft is seen to be a part of local life, existing everywhere (Richards, 1999).

Balancing between traditions and customer expectations in the global markets is, however, difficult. Panmai, a Thai based community business has noted the significant problems in getting the products to match the consumer expectations in a consistent manner. The group is also working on raising awareness with customers, as product attributes are subject to a natural cycle of change (as with dye colours changing slightly from season to season). These variations are an in-built attribute of the product, and should be taken as a sign of local, natural manufacture<sup>23</sup>.

The perceived product quality is one question that causes problems in the global context, but there is also the issue of rapidly changing trends, that is typical for the product sector where the ornamental craft products compete. The story of Anokhi, Indian based clothing-business, illustrates the problem. Anokhis indigenous Indian designs broke into the high-street fashion world through Monsoon, the exclusive London based fashion retail chain, in the early 70's. While for the first decade the oriental look of Anokhi remained trendy, by the end of the 70's its

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, climate change, volatility in the global economy and man-made political turbulence may create problems that require interventions that exceed the local resources and capabilities. Having said this, it has to be acknowledged that the indigenous cultures have unexplored potential that is often overlooked and remains therefore hidden (eg. Papanek, 2000, Levi-Strauss, 1997, Diamond, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.ganesha.co.uk/profiles/Panmai.htm>

success had led to many copies, placing the Indian style out of fashion. After this, Anokhi has experienced ups and downs, according to changing appreciation of the exotic in the West. Recently Anokhi has focused on the emerging Indian markets, and has twelve shops around the subcontinent (Singh, 2005).

#### **2.3.4.4. Pressures to commercialize**

The commercialization of craft has had both a positive and a negative impact. On one hand, it has saved or even revived many indigenous techniques and forms from becoming extinct (Kupiainen, 2000, Phillips and Steiner, 1999, Scrase, 2003). Cohen (1989) has pointed out that the growing demand may increase the involvement of young people in the making of traditional artefacts and thus help passing the almost forgotten and moribund traditions from one generation to another.

There are concerns that, due to the growing global demand of craft commodities and the invasion of the colonial mode of production, some forms of traditional craft have become increasingly and excessively commercialized (Suich & Murphy, 2002, Scrase, 2003). Excessive commercialization may have a negative impact on the quality and authenticity of products, as the symbolic meanings of art and craft products have been lost, leading to a fall in the quality of design (Kiyenze, 1988, Scrase, 2003). Examples show that artisans in poor economic situations, who depend on their practice for cash flow, are more likely to adopt time-saving devices or simpler forms in their production, in order to produce artefacts more rapidly and in higher volumes. (Cohodas, 1999). The quality appears to be at risk particularly in the tourist markets.

Cohen (1989) makes a distinction between four types of commercialization that either emerge spontaneously or are sponsored by external agencies etc.

The artisans can first sell their crafts spontaneously for foreign customers to complement their business, which mainly takes place in the local context (Complementary Commercialization), or they can be forced to start developing market craft in the absence of other options (Substitutive Commercialization). In both of these cases there is a risk of declining quality, as the encounters with the customers are too occasional to get constructive tools for product development and the pressure to generate quick cash leads to compromises in quality. In both of these cases of spontaneous commercialization there can also be successful examples, where quality has not been compromised and products of high quality have resulted.

There are two types of sponsored processes; firstly, cases where the artisans that are still involved in the production of indigenous craft and without an access to the tourist market, sell their products to the sponsoring agencies (Encroaching Commercialization). If the agencies operate on purely commercial terms, exploitation is likely to take place and the artisans may be

seduced into stopping serving the local markets altogether. This will result in the disappearance of indigenous skills.

The most common strategy, according to Cohen, is what he terms "Rehabilitative commercialization" (Cohen, 1989). It refers to commercialization and thus reviving of declining crafts of an ethnic group. Cohen points out that this type of strategy is far less detrimental to indigenous lifestyles than the Encroaching commercialization, as "there is much less left to destroy" and, without the intervention, the local craft would die out anyway (ibid). There are also better chances to avoid market saturation, which often follows the Substitutive commercialization as the sponsoring agency has a better knowledge of market demand. The agencies also have a better understanding of quality criteria, which may prevent the deterioration of the production.

The problem of Rehabilitative commercialization is that, in the long run, it tends to lead to routinization and standardization and loss of individuality (Cohen, 1989). To meet the global demand and high quantity orders, the producers often have to standardize the materials, sizes, colours and patterns. The production starts to resemble mass production. In the worst cases, this may block innovations (ibid, Scrase, 2003).

#### **2.3.4.5. Tourist craft**

As mentioned before, while the interest appears to be raising towards Non-Western art commodities, particularly in recent anthropology, the commercialization of craft has not been a popular topic for research. The main context of marketable product development in developing countries is tourism (Richards 1999).

Richards proposes a marketing orientated approach, as crafts will only be produced if there is a livelihood to be made out of it. He furthermore argues for a growth of cultural tourism, with an increasing interest of tourists in local cultures, traditions and products. As cultural tourists are in search of unique cultural experiences, it is important that local craft producers are closely linked to the local culture and form an integral part of it. That being said, a different products profile may be needed for those tourists who come in search of relaxation, curiosity and fun, not necessarily being interested in culture as such (Richards, 1999).

The tourist market is an interesting laboratory of product development and is increasingly more explored. This research adopts a somewhat critical view on tourism. In terms of product and business development and development of innate strategies for modernization, the impact of tourism is controversial, to say the least. Its impact on product development is the most questionable, as the craft markets are seldom incubators for real design innovations. Product development in the curio sector very seldom leads to import substitution as the products seldom have any value or meaning for local communities.

As Schildkrout points out, curios meant for tourists come out of new responses to market demand and can initially contain significant product innovation. This leads to mass manufacture, with innovation disappearing over time. He notes that the responses shift from innovation to repetition in function of the market forces (Schildkrout, 1999). Tourism is also a very vulnerable industry, and subject to constant fluctuations of market forces. Even though the events of 9/11 and the SARS epidemic have apparently not had much long-term impact on global tourism in general, they did cause problems for the artisans for instance in the South Pacific, where craft industry relies heavily on tourism. The impact of climate change on global travelling remains to be seen but it is likely to change the industry in a significant way.

Schildkrout continues by saying that ethnic art is moving towards the static, due to the fact that it expresses the interaction stereotypes that exist between consumer and producers (Schildkrout, 1999). While not highly appreciated by connoisseurs of art, tourist craft, along with the ethno kitsch, is very popular among the mainstream (Western) consumers. As noted elsewhere, these categories emerged as the response to a specific market demand. Their commerciality is considered as an indication of their lesser value, as opposed to the more authentic forms of art, such as traditional crafts. According to Ben-Amos: "Tourist art...operates as a minimal system which must make meanings as accessible as possible across visual boundary lines, a reduction in semantic level of traditional forms, expansion of neo-traditional secular motifs and utilization of adjunct communicative systems"(quoted in Graburn, 1976). Tourism is about seeking signs and evidence of the *real thing*, making souvenirs de-facto semiotic reproductions of the tourist experience itself (Peach, 2007).

Both Graburn (1976) and Lucie-Smith (1986) have argued that the growing interest towards and demand for the exotic has extensively changed the global craft trade, together with the Western perception of Non-Western artefacts.

It has to be noted that there is market for representations of indigenous identities within the inter-Western tourist context as well. Peach (2007) has written of Scottish tourism industry and its impact on the commoditisation of *Scottishness*, when visitors wanted to take home their own little piece of Scotland.

#### **2.3.4.6. The missing thing: innovation?**

Of the identified problems preventing the artisans - and SMEs in general - from succeeding in global markets is the lack of innovation. It is often considered the only sustainable form of competitive advantage (Week, 2000). Lack of innovation is mentioned nearly always when the problems of Non-Western craft industry are listed (e.g. Jaitly, 2005). Indeed, Non-Western people are often cited as not being innovative. Traditional societies often appear, as Jared Diamond has written, conservative, with an inward perspective and being reluctant, even hostile, to change (Diamond, 1998). Repeating old patterns is not innovative - and this is what

seems to happen in many workshops in developing countries. Traditional patterns and forms are followed and copying is a common practice in traditional craft (Walker, 1989). According to Wherry (2003), “dynamism among handicraft producers is a rare occurrence”, though clearly the workshops with strong ties to the export markets appear more dynamic than those without.

Charles Randrianarivelo, a craftsman from Madagascar, notes that craft is tending towards the arts, but lacks the same inspiration and creative originality. Craftsmen tend to seem to follow what their parents have done, and there is no spirit of invention. Designs from twenty years ago influence sculpture, embroidery and pottery today (Randrianarivelo, 1990). Randrianarivelo continues his account by saying that the artisans work by routine, the most important thing being cash flow income from products (Randrianarivelo, 1990).

Some economists argue that many of the traditional assets in developing countries, previously considered as strengths, are turning out to be weaknesses. Fairbanks and Lindsay make this point succinctly, when they argue that the natural resources (such as cheap labour and fertile soil) have become the factors that keep the poor in poverty (Fairbanks & Lindsay, 1997). According to them, there are hidden sources of growth - knowledge, innovation and human capital - that remain significantly untapped in developing countries.

Credit systems and technology transfer have been suggested as the missing bridges of development (Dawson & Jeans, 1997). Recently, small credit programmes, such as the Grameen banking (a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate), have been criticized for not being a sufficient means to lift the marginalized small businesses from poverty in the long term, as they tend to lead to market saturation. Dawson and Jeans consider the lack of innovation among micro-credit recipients, in terms of adopting higher quality processes or an enhanced capability to adapt fluid market conditions, as the most important inhibitor of development (Dawson and Jeans, 1997).

Wherry (2003) has pointed out that micro- and small-scale businesses sometimes don't want to use credit based funding as they have concerns of becoming too indebted. Only when credit-system combine with market interfaces do the loans produce positive effects. In this way, there is an identified need for state initiatives to provide assistance in design and production processes, to create officially recognized craft communities, and to advertise them on identified new markets.

While, product differentiation and diversification are essential for competitiveness in global markets, price is also a key factor. Traditionally (Porter, 1998) economists have considered low price strategies as alternatives to product differentiation. This seems to have changed in the recent decade, and differentiated products must also compete on price. It is clear that innovation is needed to enable this dual strategy.

One of the key issues that developing country producers find difficult is the pace of innovation in the West. As discussed elsewhere in this text, the cycle of seeing, assimilating and

recontextualizing knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), also coined as the absorptive capacity, is a key enabler of innovation. This is history and path dependent, and experience and practice allows one to use new knowledge quicker than the competition; this translates into competitive advantage. To get onboard this train which is in full speed is extremely difficult, and most probably out of the reach of the artisans in the Non-Western contexts.

On another level, while technology in craft tends not to be very complex, the producers or craft are nonetheless embedded in the web of technological innovation through, say, information and communication technologies, which enable for example the simplification of supply chains. Thus overall, producers are being dragged into the pace of doing business (and thus innovation) in the West, if they wish to participate in the global economy. The option of staying back may exist, but this may have a significant opportunity cost, both in terms of learning and not being able to direct one's own life. It remains to be seen if the emerging movement of slowing down the pace in the West will affect the artisans in Non-Western contexts in any way. It is also hard to say whether the symbolic content of locally produced goods is enough to warrant remaining outside of the hectic pace of Western business and innovation. It may be that spirituality in objects is demanded instantaneously.

#### **2.3.4.7. More innovation: more of what?**

While there seems to be a rather general agreement that more innovation is needed, there is less understanding as to what the concept innovation really means and how it should be promoted in the craft context. Robert Rosenfield and Jenny C.Servo (1991) have written that when creativity refers to new ideas, innovation is linked to successfully commercializing them. The Non-Western artisans are creative and inventive, as survival in harsh conditions requires a fair amount of inventiveness (Diamond, 1998). But they certainly don't seem to be making much money with their inventions.

If the key enabler of innovation is creativity and generation of novel ideas, one can point out that not all societies encourage such practice. If nothing else, the immense bureaucracy in these countries beats the innovativeness of even the most entrepreneurial individuals. Fernando de Soto describes the process of opening a little garment workshop in the outskirts of Lima, Peru. It took 289 days and countless bus trips to central Lima to get all the certificates required by law to open a small business. There was only one worker in the workshop and yet the cost of registration was USD 1, 231, more than thirty times the monthly minimum wage (de Soto, 2000). In another case, obtaining legal authorization to build a house on state-owned land took six years and eleven months, "requiring 207 administrative steps in fifty two government offices" (de Soto, 2000, 19-20).

Another factor that may block an innovative mind is the way artisans are trained in developing societies. As stated in the International Labour Organisation World Employment Report 1998-

99, present apprenticeship systems in the micro enterprise sector need to be updated and improved (ILO, 1999). While successful informal apprenticeship may have proved to be effective in transferring skills from one generation to the next, there is ample scope for improvement. For instance, the working conditions of apprentices are often poor and child labour common. The basic model of apprenticeship-type education is conservative, and does not enable the incorporation of new ideas in to production.

There are also many other issues that regulate and control the development endeavours . As Kiyenze notes, the social arrangement linked to craft production in pre-colonial Tanzania were kinship based (Kiyenze, 1988). It was regulated by taboos and rituals, which, while maintaining social control, effectively restricted skills to a small group of people, hindering wider dynamic development. Traditional livelihoods carry the problem of belonging to a social structure that is under transformation. In Melanesia, the indigenous copyright system, *kastom right*, is another way to control the craft production and limit its development.

Kiyenze (1988) writes of craft development in Tanzania that in the framework of craft development theory, traditional structures can be in contradiction with the development endeavours. Colonialism only made the situation worse, by bringing along many changes but no improvements. Some craft skills were maintained while others were destroyed. No real industrial investment was undertaken by the colonial state to develop Tanzania (Kiyenze, 1988).

#### **2.3.4.8. Everything that the researcher did not expect**

Pieter van Dijk and Henry Sandee have written that the problem is not so much that people cannot be innovative, as it is that innovation has a different meaning from that used in the West (van Dijk & Sandee, 2002). Adapting Levi-Strauss, it could perhaps be said that the signifier *innovation* refers to a signified, which is different in the Non-Western reality or, perhaps, non-existent (Levi-Strauss, 1971). According to van Dijk and Sandee, the technological change implies four stages: introduction, imitation, adaptation, and development. Innovation in the case of developing countries is often linked to a recontextualization of an existing way of doing things, or a transfer of this into a new area, where it has not been used beforehand. They conclude that the artisans might use existing technology in an innovative way, illustrating this with their quote of innovation as "...everything the researcher did not expect, given the traditional context and way of doing things can be called an innovation in the local context" (van Dijk & Sandee, 2002, 4).

The perceived lack of innovation, considered generally as characteristic of primitive cultures, can also be seen as a reflection of the evolutionary and modernization paradigms that, according to Cohodas (1999) have been dominant features in the Western civilization during the second half of the nineteenth century. The evolutionary paradigm was based on sequential links between objects and people, forming a linear trajectory of social and technological progress

that, over time, was replaced with the modernization paradigm. The latter, a more relativist construct, sees a polar opposition of the modern and pre-modern with the primitive, dividing peoples into categories, relevant either to the past or to the future (Cohodas, 1999).

### **2.3.5. The Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome**

The Western notion of ethnic craft is complex. While preserving traditions is seen to be a valuable practice in itself, it is doubtful whether promoting the making of traditional artefacts is a viable tool for poverty alleviation - which has been put forward as a major (if not the ultimate) aim of craft development initiatives operating in the Least Developed Countries. Doubts have been raised in the field of economics and development theory about the potential of traditional assets to contribute significantly to development (Fairbanks & Lindsay, 1997), but in the area of craft development these concerns have been less vocal.

One of the few critics is Miriam Southwell, who introduced the concept Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome (OCS) in her paper *Magic by Design. Technology Transformed* (Southwell, 1997). Southwell, a designer and a development activist, writes that the various development organizations, such as Oxfam, have essentially mummified the material artefact production of developing countries, continuing furthermore to suggest that these organizations help to keep the production on a very basic technological level, with and through an argument that development and modernity can be achieved in this way. Craft is time and again marketed as the area that the non-industrial countries are particularly capable of and where they should stay with advanced technology being withheld from them through various justifications (Southwell, 1997).

Southwell argues that within present craft development initiatives, the perception of craft is extremely limited, seen as principally the manufacture of *non-essential items* or *knick-knacks* categorized within the sector of traditional and ethnic art<sup>24</sup>. This sector is problematic but especially because the rapidly growing demand for ethnic artefacts has seemingly had a negative impact on the evolution of genuine local design skills. As Ewins (1980) and Cohen (1989) have noted, the best skills are occupied in the production of tourist curios.

Southwell notes the limited notion of technology that development organizations and the Design and Development movement have adopted in their initiatives. She argues that industrialized nations have not modernized through the mass-production of craft products, but through technological development and applications (Southwell, 1997).

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<sup>24</sup> According to Scrase (2003) there is 'selective traditionalism' behind the Western interest in the decorative items, whereas brick or tile making are not considered as worthwhile crafts to preserve.

Southwell is particularly critical towards what she calls the *ethnic knick-knack market*, which appears to be the dominating form of craft trade. She holds the view that they have resulted in the loss of the tacit knowledge and indigenous design skills, through the sense of inferiority so common in the South. The North sees design as being dominated by tradition and ethnicity. There is a perceived lack of technology in the production methods and a complete absence of embedded technology in the products made for sale.

As Southwell suggests, there is an unequal relationship or consciousness between the consumer and producer, with the consumer being saddled with a sense of superiority. While browsing the well-intending sales catalogues of the development organizations, the understanding of other cultures does not necessarily grow, instead, present is a commoditised aesthetic, with an imperialist view of a globalized availability (Southwell, 1997). Southwell refers to Plumwood (1993), who rather provocatively writes that the relationship between the consumers and producers can be described as dualism that does not make equality and mutuality possible, due to the intense, established and developed cultural hierarchies. This leads to an internalized inferiority and a lock-in effect of low value.

## **2.4. Design**

A point of interest for this study is the relationship between craft and design. Many craft organisations, such as Aid to Artisans, suggest that design is a tool for taking craft into a more sustainable direction through a higher value-addition. In this chapter, the relation between design and craft is looked at from the Western market perspective. Art in the context of the Non-West is reviewed in the subsequent section, and thereafter design in the development context is examined, framed by the legacy of responsible design, as coined by Viktor Papanek.

### **2.4.1. Intrinsically commercial design**

In a development context, design is suggested as a tool for enhancing the competitiveness and market appeal of products, and for taking craft into more profitable (or service-oriented) markets (Richards, 1999). Designers are called in when customers' needs require product adaptation as design is expected to add value to products. The cooperation between the designers and craftsmen is seen to be beneficial, as design enables distinctive products, offering designers also a chance to learn from craftsmen (ibid.). Richards notes that craft producers need to understand design in order to create a positive relationship between marketing and design, providing also market information to support design decisions (Richards, 1999).

While many argue that design is needed in the developing countries, there is less understanding as to where and how design should be implemented to fill the built-in design deficit that "plagues the production in low-income countries" (Mvusi, 1991, 34). Many think that the various design aid programs that have been initiated to correct this deficit, are not showing the

returns expected from them (Mvusi, 1991). There is a fairly widespread fear that design transfer is imposing Western forms to Non-Western realities, where they seldom (if ever) fit.

In terms of exporting craft items, the design deficit appears on one hand in the product development sector and on the other hand, in marketing. There does not seem to be a clear understanding as to what exactly design could offer to producers in developing countries. Often the deficit appears to be in the ability to modify traditional products to meet modern demands or to bring about product differentiation. In this process, innovation, in one form or another, is usually mentioned as a key enabler.

### **2.4.2. Design and craft**

Reflecting on the previously introduced Ihatsu's triangle model (Fig. 2.5), there is a notable relationship between design and craft. The question of the nature of design goes back to its definition - something that there does not seem to be wide agreement on. Historically, the gradual introduction of a more intensive division of labour is thought to have brought about the separation of craft and design, also prompting the debate on the fate of art and craft in the modern age of industrial production (Walker, 1989).

Helen Rees (1997) writes that, from the 1920's onwards, a new business called design grew aggressively. Dormer, quite provocatively, calls design a new business in which "creative people with an eye on making money created the lucrative consultancy" and compares it with cutting salami: "one takes the business of manufacturing and one sees how many separate businesses can be created from it - the design profession was one of them, public relations another" (Dormer 1997, 12).

The definitions of design, an old activity but a new profession, are as many as the definers. Through the course of time, different aspects of design have been emphasized. Ken Friedman, for instance, frames design as a problem solving, goal-oriented and dynamic process, *a verb instead of a noun* (Friedman, 2000; 2003). He refers to Simon's definition of design as an action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones (Friedman, 2003).

#### **2.4.2.1. A market context**

In the public eye, however, design is often considered only in the market context, as a synonym for styling. This attitude is seen in Bob Parks' article about the Magic Touch of Design: "Take an ordinary object, give it sleek curves, cool colours and - poof! - instant market domination!" (Parks, 2002) The Swedish business gurus Jonas Ridderstråle and Kjell Nordsröm are on the same track. "When things get increasingly alike", they say, "We must start competing through the exterior appearance of products and services". In this "design-driven world, everything is a fashion accessory", they write in their book *Funky Business* (Ridderstråle & Nordsröm, 1999, 237)

This view is understandable when considering that design became an important tool in the process of increasing the desirability of industrially made objects. Adrian Forty, in his book *Objects of Desire*, notes that design played a vital role in the history of capitalism and wealth the creation (Forty, 1992). Therefore design has been, in the sense it has developed since the industrial revolution, closely linked to consumerism. As noted previously, according to Ihatsu, *art craft* and *design craft* are different in their fundamental functions. While *art craft* emphasises products' appearance and artistic qualities, *design craft* emphasizes the product's basic function that drives the physical form (Ihatsu, 1996). In this framework design is seen as a service from the maker's point of view; but when seen as an object it becomes a function (Ihatsu, 1996).

According to Vuori, in many industrialized countries (particularly in Finland), craft has moved closer to *art craft* (see figure 12), with the fundamental purpose of being treated as an object of art. The art craftsmen do not necessarily seek a wide audience for their products as long as they receive recognition from art collectors, experts and museums – the judges of good taste today (Queensberry, 1993, quoted in Vuori, 1998). In Britain, it is the *cutting-edge*-type of contemporary fine craft, which appears to dominate the craft discourse. In the extensive survey conducted by the UK Arts Council (2004), survival strategies for craft are sought from the fine arts rather than traditional craft sector.

The design process of *design craft* implies creating products in which the artist's personality and ideology is combined with the prevailing culture and its values, tradition and semantics (Anttila 1992, 32-33). Heikki Jylhä-Vuorio has written that design searches for meanings, and gives them a visual form (Vuori, 1990). The more market oriented a product is meant to be, the more external factors should affect the forms given. In a successful design product, the designer's commercial and artistic goals are combined with demands of the market (Vuori, 1990).

While the commercial nature of products is often not much talked about - *commercial art* having somewhat negative connotations in the West - most craft products are, nevertheless, meant to be sold and bought. The approach to markets differs according to the category of craft the artisan represents. The artist-craftspeople, for instance, adopt the fine art approach and produce one-off pieces and limited editions. Designer-craftspeople, on the other hand, according to Ihatsu (1996), aim at producing quality objects comparable with industrial equivalents through good design and manufacture.

Vuori suggests stepping out of the *traditional* or *art* category into the *design* category, in order to make the craft practice more profitable. Design, for Vuori, is a service, and more customer-oriented than both traditional and art craft (Vuori, 1997). Here she is in line with many craft theorists, for instance Susan Rees, who notes that studio craft is maker oriented, while design has a market orientation (Rees 1997). Vuori (1990) furthermore comments on the duality found

in craft design; it is not only market driven, and the self-expression and ideology of the maker also act as key drivers in the process.

#### **2.4.2.2. Value through communication**

Harold Nelson (2003) considers service as the key function of design, in terms of differentiating design from art and science. Design is a service on behalf of someone else - in a contractual relationship. While artists and scientists engage in forms of service that focus on their interests (artists in emotions and feelings, scientists through curiosity and exploration), designers serve the needs (and desires) of others. This does not imply a lack of aesthetic vision, or a lack of rationalism. Design has both elements built into it, but in the emphatic service of others (ibid).

One can stipulate that a product's success in markets depends on its function. Function is the service the product delivers to its user. Rosenblad-Wallin (in Vuori, 1998) divides the basic functions of a product into two groups according to the types of values they are a reflection of. These are material values (form and material directly related to its use) and symbolic values (related to the use-context of the product). The symbolic functions of products have gained increasingly more attention in the research of commodities and particularly the human/product interaction, as it has become acknowledged that products are a means of self-expression, communicating and revealing the user's identity to externalities, creating personal pleasure for the user in the process (Karjalainen, 2004). Product semantics is commonly used to analyze the symbolic meanings of industrially manufactured commodities. Product semantics looks at the meanings of products embedded in their physical appearance (Anttila, 1992).

According to Hammer, the commercial success depends on the communication between designers and consumers. He defines design as a "general process of communication between a producer/designer on the one hand and a buyer/user on the other" (Hammer, 1992, 5). He considers the product as an object of communication, transporting a message within a visual code. Referring to Donald Norman's model, he notes that design products communicate through a mutual fit of the conceptual model in question between the designer and the user (Hammer, 1992). This approximates to Klaus Krippendorff's notion of design as *making sense*. Krippendorff argues that individuals surround themselves with objects that make sense to them. This approach is based on the idea that the meaning is not derived from the object itself but from the context of understanding (Diaz-Kommonen, 2002).

Building on gestalt-principles of visual perception, Baxter (1995) discusses symbolic attractiveness and inherent attractiveness as the key factors enhancing market appeal of products. Symbolic attractiveness refers to the personal and social values of the customer, as customers desire the kind of products they want to be associated with and inherent attractiveness to the beauty and aesthetic appeal of the product's external form.

### **2.4.2.3. Awareness through semiotics**

Krippendorff (1992) argues that the designer's awareness of product semantics can improve the product's marketability and use.

He does, however, criticize mainstream semiotics (which he also calls objectivist), in that it claims to know what meanings other cultures attach to products – this is seen as non-reflexive and authoritarian in not caring for the cognition of those affected by the semiotic analysis. Krippendorff furthermore sees the risk of falling into ethnocentrism or even intellectual imperialism, if one considers one's own perceptions as equal to everybody else's, regardless of when and where they live or have lived. This can amount to disrespect towards the ability of individuals to make their own sense of their world and act as a tool of oppression towards ethnic minorities, other cultures and the less privileged (Krippendorff, 1992).

Product semantics have been applied infrequently in the research of other cultures and only very sparsely in the research of craft products. Balaram (1998) explores product semantics in the research of the symbolic qualities of Indian products; that being said, product semantics is apparently rarely suggested as a tool to enhance the market appeal of craft products. This is probably due to the fact that, in the West, craft products are considered less as consumables than as works of art. The idea that the external appearance of a craft item should be manipulated to gain more market interest sounds dubious, as craft is believed to be the result of an artisan's creative talent or, in the case of traditional craft, the response to the continuation of a craft skill. In both cases, craft items are protected from the requirements of the market forces at least in terms of their outer appearance and style. Craft innovation is, after all, thought to be more maker than market led (Rees, 1997).

Wiyancoko (2002) suggests the implementation of the semiotic method to encourage innovative product development of community-based industries. The starting point is to search for cultural characteristics, determining initially the product theme to be developed. The collecting of folklore, myths and tales (that operate as a referential level) acts as an inspiration to develop symbolic schemes. These schemes may be classified into three codes of signification (also called signification levels): iconic, indexical and of symbolic concept, viewed through metaphoric and metonymic appreciation. A transforming process follows, where the classified expressions are adjustable to the product's affordability, followed by a configuration of separate visual expressions into a whole form (colour, structure, technique, ornamentation) through understandable sketches and models. Wiyancoko's model is a theoretical construct and he does not provide concrete examples as to how this method can be applied.

### **2.4.3. Art of the Other**

The art of the Non-Western cultures has been scrutinized from various perspectives quite extensively. Anthropologists, art historians and critics have all come up with different classifications and theories concerning art in the New World. They have struggled to find typical characteristics of, for example, African art and with these typologies, to find its place in the hierarchical structure of World art. Papanek notes that "It is not possible to just move objects, tools or artefacts from one culture to another and then expect them to work. Exotic decorative accessories or art-objects can be translated in this way but their value seems to lie precisely in the fact that they are exotic - in other words - seen in an unfamiliar context" (Papanek, 1997, 18).

Non-Western art has been a source of inspiration for Westerners. The seemingly alien styles have been exploited in the Western art and craft industry early on producing extravagant fantasies. An example of these is the Tiffany vase, imitating the native Indian basket motifs, or the chinoiserie vases produced in some European porcelain factories, made to resemble Qing dynasty artefacts (Lucie-Smith, 1986, 20). Since then, Western artisans have sought inspiration from Non-Western styles and countries at irregular intervals. These countries were considered as sanctuaries of past times, where one could visit when the pressure of modern times became too hard to deal with. Lucie-Smith has written that with East India Trade it was perfectly possible to travel back in time, to "commission the crafts from men of the middle-ages to make things which fitted the society of the 18th century"(Lucie-Smith,1981,191). The idea that these countries lived in the past has been persistent and has clearly shaped the view of what is possible for them.

#### **2.4.3.1. An evolving concept**

In everyday talk, the word ethnic is related to the other, alien segment of society, found interesting not so much in its own right but because it differentiates from the mainstream, as in ethnic food or ethnic costume. The word ethnic came into being at a certain phase of history, modernism, to mark a distinction from the art of the Other. It differs from folk art, which Garcia-Canclini (1992) regards as a way people (in the South as well as in the North) have dealt with the pressures of modernization. Additionally, the term ethnic mainly refers to art from Non-Western countries or from the ethnic minorities of Western countries. When the Western indigenous art is referred to, it is mainly called folk art instead of ethnic.

While the word ethnic is fairly regularly used in everyday language, it is difficult to define. In terms of material culture, the word appears to be used in two main ways: first, to denote a certain style - ethnic style, also known as ethnic décor etc. and second, to a certain art or product category, e.g. ethnic arts, ethnic crafts. For neither case are there any clear definitions.

Marcelo Velez, a New York based designer describes ethnic décor as a feeling rather than a science:

*“When you say modern, country, French et cetera; an instant picture comes to mind. Ethnic décor is different. Many cannot define it, but know it when they see it” (Black, 2003<sup>25</sup>).*

Nicholas Barnard (1991), uses the term folk art in his book *Living with Folk Art* but has attached the sub-title *Ethnic Styles from Around the World*, hence emphasizing the close relation between folk art and ethnic styles. While ethnic art can be seen in a positive as well as negative light, in common talk, tourist art and other related terms, denote “rather pejorative meanings” (Schmachmann, 2001, 55), suggesting “mass production, lack of creative inventiveness and the act of passing off low-grade limitations of objects of material culture as "authentic" works that have been in use” (ibid).

The Western approach to Non-Western craft has experienced changes. Since the first contact between European missionaries and explorers with natives, Non-Western curios have been collected by Westerners. These collections have been displayed in ethnographic museums, as ethnographic specimens, and later in art museums, as tokens of tribal art (Clifford, 1988). The items have always been contextualized as the art of the other, hence the word curio that comes from the word curiosity something considered novel, rare or bizarre (Penguin English Dictionary, 1985).

Dhlomo (1995) describes the ambivalent reaction of the Westerners to the strange objects they found in the new continents. As an example, outsiders considered objects that had been used for centuries by African communities heathen. Instead of destroying them, however, as one might have expected, they were sent to the West, to become objects of further amazement. Dhlomo goes further and argues that the same items are now, centuries later, being repatriated to museums and galleries, modelled on the Western image, providing academics once more a source of material to write about. The artefacts are being analyzed without reference to the makers, as Dhlomo argues, as the invisibility of the black artist has implied a focus on the artefact and not the maker (Dhlomo 1995). According to Clifford, museums have taken part in the process of marginalizing Non-Western art by creating an illusion of adequate representation based on single objects removed from their original context (either cultural, historical or inter-subjective). As an example, a Bambara mask, became an ethnographic metonym for the whole Bambara culture (Clifford, 1988).

According to Lucie-Smith, in the West, the popularity of primitive and tribal art took off only in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before this, there were occasional waves of interest towards

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<sup>25</sup> [www.dreamsalivemagazine.com/summer2003/features/ethnicdecor/](http://www.dreamsalivemagazine.com/summer2003/features/ethnicdecor/)

the art of the other, such as to Native American art. This interest was intertwined with the concern of losing indigenous lifestyles and in discovering the economic potential of craft making to improve living conditions of the natives. The growing demand for native art encouraged the development of non-traditional forms, such as rugs with sacred designs and transferring traditional pottery and textile patterns to silverware, an entirely new media for the artisans. This changed the social relationships, by introducing patrons that proposed changes in the practice, such as signing the works, which was not customary in a tribal community. Native American art has maintained its Indian nature as it was promoted by patrons and later accepted by the makers as a sign of separate identity (Lucie-Smith, 1986).

#### **2.4.3.2. Research from various perspectives**

While Non-Western craft objects have been researched by various disciplines quite extensively, they have mainly been approached as ethnographic specimens or art pieces (Clifford, 1988). As Philips and Steiner (1999) point out, this classification has ignored the artefacts as commodities, even though this was a central feature in human/product relationships in the 20th century. The recent anthropological research has raised art commodities - especially tourist art - into the focus of attention. While previously curios were over-looked as a form of lesser art, not worthy of academic interest, the pendulum seems to have swung to the other extreme. This renewed interest can probably be seen as a reflection of the increasing interest towards so called *lesser*, more commercial forms of culture, such as folk art, entertainment, fashion, consumption, and television that took place particularly from the 80's onwards, in the hype of post-modernism. Curios have begun to be taken not as an indication of commercial corruption but as a means of controlling the processes of modernization and social change in marginalized communities (Kupiainen, 2000; Wherry, 2003). The discourses of authenticity and originality have been the main threads in this debate.

For instance, Niessen writes that the Non-Westerners should not be seen as passive victims of modernization as they, through their production of artefacts, conceptualize and control the process of modernization. Their products are, like the Silindung Valley textiles, a "feast of technical, artistic, economic and ethnic survival in a rapidly changing world" (Niessen, 1999, 177). Product innovations and inventions demonstrate the profound ability of material construction procedures to mirror changes within society as a whole. Cohen's article *The Commercialization of Ethnic Craft* (Cohen, 1989) is one of the few references that explicitly address the process of commercialization in this context. Cohen follows Graburn, and argues strongly against seeing commercialization as the debasement of ethnic art.

Graburn's (1976) seminal book *Ethnic And Tourist Arts* has had a ground-breaking role in finding a new perspective on Non-Western material production, by being the first to pay attention to the art commodities by marginalized communities and to recognize their importance

as authentic representations of their cultures of origin, and their meaning for maintaining and producing local identities in the turmoil of modernization and rapid social change (Philips and Steiner, 1999). This research follows Graburn's classification of the arts of the *Fourth world*<sup>26</sup> (Graburn, 1976).

Graburn explores the changing meanings, forms, and functions in the Fourth world arts in changing socio-economic contexts, and builds his theories on a traditional, post-Durkheimian notion of anthropology as an examination into the nature of social integration and differentiation. In this context, Graburn writes: "Integration and differentiation are but two sides of the same coin, essential to the processes of solidarity within groups and between parts of groups, or between groups that go together to form parts of larger entities" (Graburn, 1976, 3).

### **2.4.3.3. Multiple categories**

These groups or segments are called by many names, among them classes, castes, tribes, ethnic groups, identity groups. The arts of these groups have been called *primitive*, *folk art* but these categories, satisfying for the Europeans of the 19th century, are not adequate any more, due to their innate personalization (Graburn, 1976). According to J. Maquet, there are two kinds of art: art by destination and art by metamorphosis (Graburn, 1976). The former class means artefacts that are meant to be art by the maker and the latter group refers to artefacts that have been classified as art after they were made. An example of the latter class are artefacts that are made in one society and transported to another where they are labelled as art, regardless of what the original use of the artefact was in the place of origin (Graburn, 1976).

Graburn furthermore divides the arts of the so-called conquered peoples in stratified societies into two main groups. The first group is art that has been made for and used by the peoples within their own community, thus having important functions in maintaining ethnic identity and social structure. The second group of art is made for the external world (such as tourist arts or airport crafts), and while it is often not appreciated by the dominant structures, it is nonetheless an important marker of ethnic images.

Graburn classifies seven differing directions of the processes of artistic change. The first of them is extinction, referring to the disappearance of an indigenous art form. The second group, the traditional and functional fine arts refers to the persistence of a traditional form, even while a change in the form or technique takes place, as long as it serves the community with a non-changing the purpose of the practice. With the third group, the commercial fine arts, Graburn means artefacts that are made for sale, while still adhering to culturally embedded aesthetic and

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<sup>26</sup> Graburn defines concept the Fourth World as "a collective name for all aboriginal and native peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and technobureaucratic administrations of the countries of First, Second and Least developed Countries" (Graburn, 2006, 412). The fourth world people, usually in the minority, are people without possibilities to control their lives.

formal standards. The fourth group, souvenirs are artefacts, where the commercial motivation overrides the aesthetic standards and satisfying the customer is more important than pleasing the artist. Graburn notes that the symbolic content is reduced and ends up conforming with the consumers' popular notions of the salient characteristics of the minority group, leading to naming these items ethno-kitsch. The reintegrated arts, the fifth group in Graburn's classification, present the new syntheses, hybrids of tradition and modernity. Graburn gives Navajo blankets as examples of this group: going from a new integrated synthesis to a Navajo tradition to form a highly valued commercial art. The sixth group, the assimilated fine arts refer to the adoption of the conqueror's art. And finally, the popular art meaning Non-Westerners using Western means to express their feelings.

Fig. 2.6 Aesthetic-Formal Sources and Traditions Source: Graburn, 1976

	Minority Society	Novel/Synthetic	Dominant Society	
Intended Audience	Minority Fourth World	<i>Functional Traditional</i> e.g. Lega, Maori <i>merae</i> , some pueblo pottery	<i>Reintegrated</i> e.g. Cuna <i>melas</i> , Puebla <i>kochinas</i>	<i>Popular</i> e.g. Zaire Mozambique, Navajo jewellery
	External Civilizations	<i>Commercial Fine</i> e.g. Maori woodcarving, New Guinea shields	<i>Souvenir Novelty</i> e.g. Seri, Makonde carving, Xalitla <i>amate</i>	<i>Assimilated Fine</i> e.g. Santa Fe Indian painting, Namatjira watercolours, Eskimo prints

For this research, it is the lower half of the diagram of the figure that we are interested in, artefacts targeted for so called external civilisations and taking the form of commercial fine arts, souvenirs and assimilated arts. In this sector of artefact production, the economic forces lead to changes in size, simplification of form and decoration (Graburn, 1976). Also machinery can be used, which might not lead to declining quality but may well lead to uniformity and standardization.

#### 2.4.3.4. A new category

In the context of this study, a new category is brought forward, as a sub category to the commercial and tourist art, that we call ethno décor, meaning items that respond to the rapidly growing demand for ethnic decorations. These products have a moderately ethnic look, though being often anonymous. They appear to be mostly designed by Western companies, to meet the Western demand. By far the majority of these products come from South East Asia and India. They are usually mass-produced in presumably unsavoury conditions. It is this group of

artefacts in which the commoditisation has been taken to an extreme. This new genre of craft products is being promoted by a number of indigenous governments, for instance Mexico and Columbia, but has also become popular also in the West, where the traditions of our own indigenous minorities are now considered as "suitable markers of cultural identity" (Hickey, 1997, 91). Craft is believed to promote a favourable image of the countries and to bring in revenue from tourists (Lucie-Smith, 1981).



**Fig. 2.7, 2.8 Hand-made products from Ikea catalogue 2008**

The articles in figures 2.7, 2.8, sold on the IKEA website in spring 2005, are marketed as hand-made. According to the IKEA policy, information (even though quite limited) is given about the products' environmental qualities (for instance that they are disposable) but nothing is said about the conditions they are made under - or in which country. The materials of the products, rattan and bamboo, along with the technique (basketry, bamboo work) and their low price refer to Non-Western countries, presumably in South East Asia.

It is particularly in this sector of craft, in ethno décor, that a global demand seems to be rising. It is not craft in the strictest sense of the word, as it is not necessarily designed in the country of production, and generally meets the criteria of decorative art (Lucie-Smith, 1986). The low retail price refers to production methods where manual work is not well remunerated, and where hands have essentially become extensions of machines.

#### **2.4.3.5. Ethnic features**

According to Graburn, the expected features of ethnicity include a few key attributes, such as black skin, a prowess for hunting, or for traditional occupations and/or past glories (Graburn, 1976). The Western notion of Non-Western art is caught up in preconceptions. The Africans, for instance, are supposed to be good carvers, and even when they are not (such as in East

Africa), they take up the metier and become good at it. The commercial Non-Western art commodities must also correspond to the buyer's prevalent vision of the maker. For instance, African or Melanesian carvings have to be black, corresponding to the blackness of the makers and if black timber is not available, the wood has to be painted black (Graburn, 1976).

Philips and Steiner (1999) have identified three major themes in the mainstream conception of ethnic art. In the first place, ethnic art is closer to nature and therefore less artificial than its modern counterpart. Secondly, ethnic arts of all regions share a common denominator: making them largely interchangeable and somehow comparable on a formal level. And thirdly, ethnic art represents the final, fleeing testimony to the tenuous existence of rapidly vanishing worlds.

#### **2.4.3.6. Contact zones**

Ethnicity appears, then, to be not so much a feature in the object than a category within which the object is received, although there are some visual characteristics people attach to *ethnicity*, such as decorative style, certain indigenous materials, visual references to a country of origin such as sequined artefacts reminiscent of India, or baskets of Africa.

As Cohodas (1999) has written, the exchange of art not only creates representations of culture (and art) but also the culture itself, as producers invent and re-invent themselves and their societies in the form of marketable traditions. This happens everywhere and at all times; but in colonial situations, in the asymmetrical power relations, inequality is often inherent in the contact zones (social space where the cultures meet). In Africa, for instance, the fact that the Western consumers have access to cash while the Africans have not, the Western taste has a formative effect on the production of craft.

In fashion and home décor magazines ethnicity is above all a stylistic category (ethnic style or ethno décor). Regardless of the context, Westerners are not very particular as to what they count as ethnic. It can be anything considered as exotic, bearing the glamour attached to things coming from distant, often tropical, countries (Philips and Steiner, 1999). In everyday talk, the ethnic and exotic often get mixed up. As the interior journalist Black notes, the Western consumers are free to: "decide which ethnicity (ies) you will focus on: African style is different from Middle Eastern is different from American Indian et cetera. However, don't be afraid to blend elements from several cultures. Again, that's the fun of ethnic décor - the possibilities are endless" (Black, 2003<sup>27</sup>).

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<sup>27</sup> [www.dreamsalivemagazine.com/summer2003/features/ethnicdecor/](http://www.dreamsalivemagazine.com/summer2003/features/ethnicdecor/)

### 2.4.3.7. The fascination of the vernacular

Vernacular, according to the Collins English Dictionary 1994, comes from the Latin word *verna*, meaning *household slave* from which the word *vernaculus* has developed, meaning something belonging to the slave. Vernacular has a strong emphasis on the location of things.

Vernacular, as ethnic and to some extent also traditional, is above all a semantic construction. According to Papanek (1995, 114), the word is used to mean "anonymous, indigenous, naive, primitive, rude, popular, spontaneous, local or folk-based".

Paul Greenhalgh has stressed the social dimensions of the vernacular. He defines vernacular as a "popular culture of a group" (Greenhalgh, 1997). According to Greenhalgh (1997), the Arts and Crafts movement gained its force from idealization of the (past) vernacular and an urge to return to it. Greenhalgh lists the following as the main features of the discourse of the vernacular (ibid, 34-35):

1. As it refers to the cultural produce of a community (things collectively made, spoken, performed).
2. As it is as close to nature as culture can get (unpolluted by outside influence).
3. As carries the mystique of being the authentic voice of society.
4. As there is a tendency to associate this authenticity with pre-industrial, rural communities, static and timeless, as opposed to the dynamics of modernization.
5. As noticed only when was being destroyed.
6. As urbanism and industrialization revived it (by Gothic revivalists).

While, in the West, adherence to tradition is not among the most sought after characteristics in products (Kälviäinen, 1996), it is the traditional ways of living that draw many Westerners to other cultures (see e.g. Stairs, 2002). As Graburn (1976) has noted, the Western search for hand-made items that are rare, authentic and primitive leads to the past. The somewhat static and conservative feel to the craft development organisations' websites and products and their display can be understood against this background.

"There is a well-developed cult of the authentic that translates as the cult of the antique for both Western and Non-Western arts: things that stand the test of time" "come from a long ancestry", are "mature", and "grow rare and more valuable" (Graburn, 1976, 19).

Papanek (2000) writes that vernacular design, a result of multiple causation, is based on knowledge of traditional practises and techniques. They are usually self-built and reveal a high regard for craftsmanship and quality. Vernacular structures are easy to understand, made of local material, and they are ecologically apt (they fit in local climate). They are never self-conscious; they recede into the environment rather than serving as proclaiming design

statements. They are human in scale. The process of making is more or less equally important as the end product. "This combination of good ecological fit, human scale, craftsmanship and striving for quality together with strong concern of decoration, ornamentation and embellishment, leads to a sensuous frugality that results in true elegance" (Papanek, 2000, 118).

Indigenous architecture and design has been hailed with enthusiasm by a number of scholars, reflecting on Rousseau's and, later, Levi-Strauss's notion of the *Noble Savage* (Shapira, 1995). The indigenous survival mechanisms among Inuit and Bedouins have raised admiration, along with their seemingly harmonious life styles. As Walker (1989) writes: "Primitive architecture, it seems, is the result of pragmatic wisdom evolved over many centuries. For the native peoples, there is only one way to build - the traditional way - hence the modern idea of choosing a spectrum of types and styles is inconceivable to them "(Walker 1989, 86).

Walker argues that the major difference between so called *primitive* and modern cultures is that Western technology has enabled the mass production of a huge range of materials and goods, which are distributed around the world, implying that the link between design and natural environment or place has been broken. This means that the choice of materials, forms and styles available to the designer has expanded immeasurably; on the other, it means that an organic relationship to place and necessity had been lost (Walker, 1989).

The ultimate justification for the vernacular comes from the fact that it is appropriate for the indigenous peoples, as Gandhi has argued (Akubue, 2000).

#### **2.4.3.8. Ethnic essentialism**

The concept of otherness is central to the post-colonial theory that has, since the 70's, scrutinized how the representatives of the others and the artefacts they make are seen in the world today. Ethnic essentialism has become to mean seeking some essential features in the indigenous peoples or their artefacts and then considering them as their least common denominator. Salman Rushdie describes essentialism as "the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition"<sup>28</sup>.

Diana Fuss says that essentialism "is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties that define the 'whatness' of a given entity. . . . Importantly, essentialism is typically defined in opposition to difference. . . . The opposition is a helpful one in that it reminds us that a complex system of cultural, social, psychological, and historical differences, and not a set of pre-existent human essences, position and constitute the subject. However, the binary articulation of essentialism and difference can also be restrictive,

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<sup>28</sup> [www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Essentialism.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Essentialism.html)

even obfuscating, in that it allows us to ignore or deny the differences within essentialism" (Fuss, 1989, xi-xii).

Ethnicity becomes a problem on an essentialist level. By carefully identifying typical features of tribal art (e.g. repetitiveness and adherence to tradition), according to Jonathan Meuli (1998), Westerners often fall into ethnic essentialism, failing to see such typicality in their own art. As Meuli writes: "...where this essentialism forms part of our preconceptions about non Western art forms, it tends to lead us to stress their repetitiveness and traditionalism as opposed to our own (supposed) freshness and originality" (Meuli 1998, 209-210). Similarly, Clifford has pointed out that, for instance, Haitian primitive painting, much admired today, is still valued not as a work of individual artists but of Haitians, the exotic people who come from the country of voodoo, magic, and negritude. "Though specific artists have come to be known and prized, the aura of cultural production attaches to them much more than, say, Picasso, who is not in any essential way valued as a Spanish artist (Clifford, 1988, 101).

In the problematic core around ethnic essentialism is the very concept of *ethnic* that has no clear meaning. Vernacular, in the sense that Gandhi used the word when talking about the traditional Indian spinning wheel and the indigenous knowledge incorporated within, has nothing to do with copying and pasting ethnic markings on the surface of products, to give them an exotic touch in the Western environments. Traditional, vernacular, forms are considered as attractive as they are seen as an antidote to the alienation of the machine-age and modern times. As was seen above, there is a lot of romanticism and nostalgia involved in the Western appreciation of traditional forms.



Fig. 2.9 "Chineseness"

### **2.4.3.9. Contextualising ethnic craft**

Not only are the Non-Westerner artisans encouraged to produce ethnic artefacts, but also their products are contextualised and categorized as ethnic regardless of what they make.

In the context of commodities, the now common practice of classification emerged with the 18th century need to classify - first plants (as in Linnaean taxonomy) and later collectibles (Clifford, 1988). To collect, own and to classify the collectibles has been important for Westerners, so much so that Clifford talks about obsessive possessiveness, referring to C.B. Macpherson's analysis of Western possessive individualism (Clifford, 1988). Philips & Steiner note, for the last century, that the re-contextualisation and consumption of art commodities in homes has provided the rationale for their production (Philips & Steiner, 1999).

Andre Malraux wrote about the *Imaginary Museum*, where objects are transformed into works of art, exhibited in a museum, where religious symbols become works of art, sacred pictures become paintings, or effigies become sculptures (quoted in Battro, 1999). Malraux noted that illustrated art books have broadened our definition of art, as the ancient and Non-Western artefacts have become accessible to ordinary people (Lucie-Smith, 1986). These items are not considered anymore as ethnographic specimens but as art pieces, questioning the traditional distinction between the fine arts and applied arts. This distinction, an outcome of Renaissance art theory, has never been established within Non-Western cultures, with a very different notion of art (see e.g. Dissanayake, 1988)

According to Lucie-Smith, Meraux's theory has impacted through changing the perception of an object to include various perspectives. A chair can simultaneously be something to sit on, a sculpture, or a decorative item. Since the time of Malraux, the increased travel and increased interest and trade in exotic artefacts have removed the focus of the transformation from museums to private homes (Lucie-Smith, 1986).

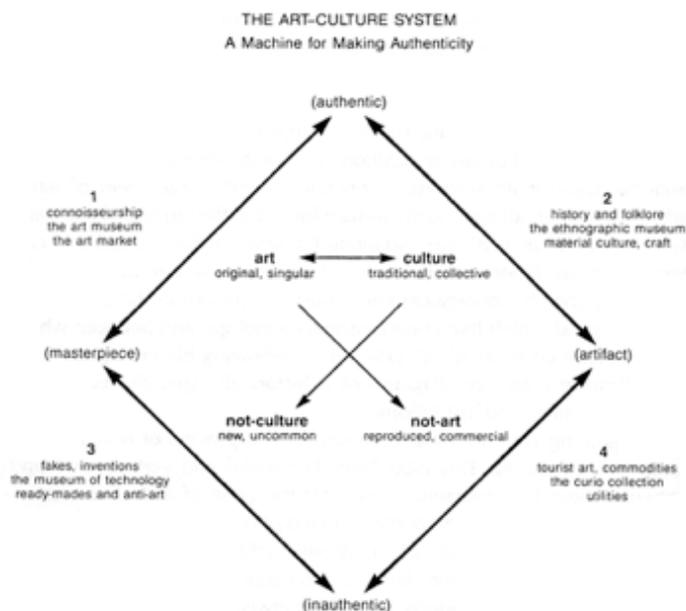
For the conceptual notion of modern art, contextualisation of artefacts is essential. A well-known case is Marcel Duchamp's famous *Fountain*, a ready-made pissoir that acquired a new meaning when presented in an art gallery. The artist Joseph Kosuth wrote in his 1969 essay, *Art after Philosophy*: "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually" (Kosuth, 1992, 845).

### **2.4.3.10. Two models for contextualization**

For the present purpose, two models of contextualisation are seen as applicable. Meuli (1997, 202) suggests Giselda Pollock's reference-deference-difference model through which she analyzed the avant-garde in Paris in the nineteenth century. According to Pollock, the idea of originality is not absolute but relative. In order to get art work accepted as *original* and genuine fine art, it has to refer to the present trends (reference), it has to defer to the existing leader,

work, project or the definite statement of shared concerns (deference), and, finally, the work has to establish a difference, legible in terms of current aesthetics and criticism (ibid).

James Clifford (1988) has pointed out that since the turn of the century, Non-Western artefacts have been classified into two major categories: cultural artefacts or art pieces. Other classes of objects, such as consumables (e.g. tourist art) have been less systematically valued (Clifford, 1999, 222; also Graburn, 1976). They usually find their place in technology or folklore, if at all. According to Clifford, in the West it is the ideological and institutional art-culture system, which he calls *the machine for making authenticity* (Clifford, 1998, 224) that has, by setting the standards for aesthetic evaluation and having the ultimate authority to contextualize, determined the position of Non Western artefacts in the map of global material culture. Clifford proposes the following figure to illustrate the process of contextualization. In Clifford's system artistic masterpieces and cultural artefacts are evaluated as authentic or inauthentic, deriving from age and exoticism: the less influenced by the modern west an object appears to be, the more authentic it is judged to be.



**Fig. 2.10 Clifford's Art and Culture system, an adaptation of Greimas's semiotic square**

The figure 2.10. is a modification of Greimas's Square<sup>29</sup>. Greimas's semiotic square shows us that binary opposition can, through negotiation and synthesis, create a more extensive field of terms while all remain locked in the original system (Jameson, 1981).

Clifford's version shows the way different artefacts can or cannot become promoted to the exclusive class of fine art, as much of current Non-Western work migrates between the status of *tourist art* and creative cultural-artistic strategy". Clifford argues that there cannot be direct

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.factoryschool.org/backlight/diagrammatica/Templates/index.html>

traffic from the zone 4 to zone 1. He continues by arguing that occasional travel occurs between zones 4 and 2, or 4 and 3, as when especially inventive creations are in play. Objects of mass culture can become a museum feature. These can include commodities that are displayed, say, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Clifford, 1988).

Traditional craft, which is essentially of low technology and contains little creativity, appears to be problematic in the square. If it meets the criteria of authenticity, it can become valued as folklore or a piece of ethnographic interest. But if there is a technological innovation included, it can be classed in zone 3, the zone of design (Clifford, 1988).

#### **2.4.4. Design and Development**

As Victor and Sylvia Margolin have pointed out, while the market model of design has been extensively examined, there has been little theorizing on social design, concerned about a model of product design for social need (Margolin & Margolin, 2002). The lack of research and the obscurity of the basic concepts has been a constant challenge for this research. In design histories, social design is generally mentioned as a footnote (Walker, 1989), a fact that reveals the marginal status that the ethical issues have in the design discourse. Even though interest appears to be rising, while an in-depth analysis of the application of design in socially complex situations in marginalized communities still waits to be realized. It is, however, possible to give an account of the involvement and evolution of the concerns that address wider-than-market agendas among the designers.

This section locates the development initiatives in craft on the map of social design and design & development movement. A historic perspective is needed to understand why the sustainable commercialization of craft has not been higher up on the agenda of design for development initiatives and approaches. It also gives an overview of the development that has led to a paradigm change, from form-led notion of design to non-formal design of social concept and services.

##### **2.4.4.1. Towards responsible design**

In a design context, craft development has been approached from the perspective of responsible design, coined by thinkers such as Viktor Papanek (1997) as an attempt to make design into a more socially conscious practice. There are other terms that belong to the alternative notion for design (as opposed to the mainstream perspective), echoing voices of those forgotten by the market-oriented design, such as design for need or design for all. Green design, in the same vein, means environmentally conscious design practice. The concerns of environment and social and economical justice appear to spring from the same soil and often these questions are jointly dealt with in the discussion.

All these terms have political agendas built in them. They do not exist without their opposites. There cannot be responsible design without irresponsible design, just as there cannot be fair trade without unfair trade.

The Cardiff group proposes the words design for capability, stressing that the label developing country covers a diverse range of economies, some of which are characterized by a vast gulf between the haves and the have-nots. In such societies, design has two distinct areas of application: design for capability and design for liberated consumption (Coward et al., 2002).

The capability-role has been understood in a limited sense, as a method to survive in difficult circumstances. Design in this sense gets very close to the strategy of appropriate technology, providing technological solutions to support the everyday living in harsh environments, such as fuel saving stoves, hygienic latrines, improved wells and transport systems, and finding alternative ways for the much too common practice of exporting Western industrial paradigms that might not be sustainable in the name of development (Shiva, 2000, see also Kaplinsky, 1990).

Design in/for/and development is a new concept, addressing the needs of marginalized people particularly in the developing countries. The common concern of these endeavours has been to widen the agenda of design, to provide also unprivileged and marginalized communities with design-based tools for problem solving (Fathers, 2003; Margolin, 2003).

As responsible design emerged as a criticism of the notion of design as marketing tool, it is therefore understandable that questions concerning business development and commercialisation of artefacts were left aside, the focus being on the development of appropriate technology and on improving the living conditions of marginalized communities.

#### **2.4.4.2. The early innovators**

The Social design movement is based on a long chain of critical thinking that started with the first concerns raised by the threats of industrialisation, calling for the responsibility of designers to counteract the negative impact of the power of machines. Many consider William Morris to have been the first one to address the social agenda of design, but it is Viktor Papanek who has become to be known as the father of social design. He challenged the designers to look beyond material forms and see design as a methodology that can employ the problem solving attributes of the design process to creatively facilitate the social and economic needs (Gomez, 1997).

Before Papanek, several other designer-thinkers addressed the needs of the marginalized in our global village, such as Buckminster Fuller, who introduced a holistic perspective to design in the 50's. In the true spirit of the Machine Age, Fuller sought the most advanced levels of technology to realize his projects. His destiny, however, was to remain better known for his famous domes that he designed to solve the post-war housing problem than by his ideas of

social design. Nevertheless, as Margolin has said, the emergence of civil society and globalisation has put his ideas into new perspective (Margolin, 2003; see also Baldwin, 2001).

Charles and Ray Eames were among the early innovators in design and development, whose visits to India in the 50's resulted in the set up of the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad in 1961. The Eames' project, summarized in their notorious India Report, encouraged the Indians to look back to their roots for the development of viable design strategies for their small-scale industries. Ray and Charles Eames themselves were awed by the indigenous Indian design skills that, for example, materialized in the traditional water container *lota* (fig. 2.11). However, as Fathers (2000) notes, regardless of the undeniable achievements of the Eames project, design has so far failed to address the needs of the unprivileged and continues to be used as a tool for making profits.



**Fig.2.11 Lota, an indigenous water container**

During the era of functionalism, technology and consumerism were approached from a critical perspective, but as Nigel Whiteley has observed, even though some promoters of green design valued the modernist less is more -philosophy, the modernists and the green designers were essentially at odds. While the modernists were committed to industrialism, mass-production, and celebrated the triumph of man's will over nature, the green designers saw humans as an integral part of the eco systems (Whiteley, 1993).

It was, however, in the 70's, with the oil crisis and increasing awareness of environmental issues, that alternative ideas started to attract the attention in the design community. Schumacher wrote his book *Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* in 1973. The concern of both pollution and the ending of non-renewable resources were high in the agenda of the book. In a strong statement for a more humane world, where capital should be in the service of mankind (instead of the other way around), Schumacher urged people to search for the traditional wisdom of mankind (Schumacher, 1973).

The central concept in Schumacher's thinking was the concept of intermediate or appropriate technology that would provide sustainable solutions to the needs of the people. While according

to Schumacher, poor people had skills and ability to self-help, their primitive methods were in need of an upgrade.

While Schumacher can be credited as having popularized the notion of Appropriate Technology, it was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi that many regard not only as the father of appropriate technology but also the first appropriate technologist (Akubue, 2000). Gandhi's idea of peasants and villages as the basis of economic development was groundbreaking. The symbol of his approach to technology was *charkha*, the indigenous spinning wheel that he regarded as an example of an ideal device, suitable for India, not only just for the elites but the whole population. Gandhi's idea was that the charkha will be basis of the social order of the future, including all that promotes well-being of villagers (Akubue, 2000).

Akubue further notes that Gandhi did not uncompromisingly oppose the industrial production, but saw it in a supplementing role, supporting the small-scale industries in rural areas. In Gandhi's own words "I do visualize electricity, ship-building, ironworks, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village crafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto, the industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and the village crafts. In the State of the future it will sub-serve the villages and their crafts..." (quoted in Akubue, 2000<sup>30</sup>).

Craft, for Gandhi, had metaphoric and symbolic dimensions and he worked determinedly for the promotion of village industries, founding for instance several associations to support the artisans.

The 70's were also the time of the second wave of interest towards developing countries, which emerged when United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) organized a conference on *The development of engineering design capabilities in Developing Countries* (Fathers, 2000). One outcome was a series of design centres based in developing countries. One of the scholars who worked for this conference was Gui Bonsiepe from the Ulm Design School in Germany. For Bonsiepe, decentralization was the key point in development. Bonsiepe has been an active promoter of the *Centre and periphery* model of development, in which the unequal relations between centre and periphery act as barriers to development, weakening the possibilities of creating indigenous strategies for modernisation. Instead of transferring models from the centre to the periphery, the peripheries should rely on their own innate strategies (Ghose, 1998). In effect, Bonsiepe has been determined to avoid the phrase developing country, replacing it with the phrase peripheral countries. Bonsiepe's thoughts have been highly valued particularly in some of the newly industrialised countries (NIC), such as Turkey (Fathers, 2000).

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<sup>30</sup> <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JOTS/Winter-Spring-2000/akabue.html>

It was, however, Viktor Papanek who has become known for introducing the gandhian-schumacherian agenda to design. His best-known book *Design for the Real World*, first published in 1971, he labelled industrial design as harmful, serving the wants of affluent middle-class consumers rather than the real needs of the majority. Designers should at least dedicate part of their time and skills to serve the greater good of mankind - providing poor, marginalized, elderly, disabled people with appropriate design solutions. According to him, design should become an innovative, highly creative, cross-disciplinary tool responsive to the true needs of men (Papanek, 1997).

Papanek not only ignored the market-use of design, he was fiercely against it. With Fuller, technology had the potential to solve mankind's many problems; Papanek on the other hand writes that "new technological fixes come accompanied by dozens of unforeseen side-effects" (Papanek, 1997, 9). He shares Schumacher's gloomy view of the state of Western civilization as opposed to the more humane conditions of the countries we call *developing*. He considered foreign expertise an unwanted intrusion, as the poor were competent to solve their own problems (Papanek, 1997).

Papanek introduced a new perspective to design discourse - but with marginal impact (Walker, 1989). While greatly admired, he was also extensively criticized. According to Margolin, Papanek was not able to "threaten the underlying premise of design practice that the role of the designer is to provide services to his or her clients within the system of consumer culture"(Margolin, 2003, 84).

Some regarded Papanek's ideas as insulting; others considered him as being naive, with a limited understanding of the realities related to profitable design enterprise, as Adam Richardson wrote in his obituary (Richardson, 1998). Walker (1989) described Papanek's conception of design as anti-modern but not traditionalist, while criticising his all-encompassing definition of design as a problem solving activity. The truism that design is everything ignores the specialized, professional character of design in a modern society and is also contradictory, as Papanek later attacked the design profession for failing to meet the needs of the needy (Walker, 1989).

According to Margolin (2005), Papanek mostly failed in institutionalizing the aims he had envisaged for design and his projects remained short-living. Bonsiepe argues that the Design for Need movement never really took off (Fathers, 2003), because there was a lack of a design vision and inadequate understanding of the political economy of design. Papanek was also too interested in the do-it-yourself-design (such as educational tape cassette players and tin can radios) having no real interest in industrialization and the wider economical development. The "appropriateness" of appropriate technology has since Papanek's times been critically discussed (see e.g. Willoughby, 1990).

While Bonsiepe began working with development about the same time, Viktor Papanek's past impact on the discourse of design and development (and evidently also on craft development) has remained unparalleled (although controversial). In his book *Green Imperative*, Papanek continued to develop his ideas concerning green or sustainable design while addressing concerns related to global inequality (Papanek, 2000).

### **2.4.4.3. Towards a new paradigm**

The 80's was, as Cooper and Press (1999) have pointed out, the time when (market) design came of age; it was a decade of glossy consumerism, the high point of market design and the low point of social design - even though postmodernism did give way to new social values, such as a new concern for the environment, gender equality, and the disabled.

According to Fathers (2000), throughout the 70's, 80's and 90's the interest towards development issues relied on committed individuals, rather than systematic policies. According to some critics, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) had done little in this respect, in spite of some reactive (not generative) actions, such as Design for Need Conference (1979) and Humane Village Congress in Toronto (1997).

In 1998 ICSID gave birth to the Design for the World -organization, which worked towards making design accessible to marginalized communities. There appears to be an increasing number of projects and organizations operating in the field of design and development today. The Designers Without Borders organization, for instance, was established to provide assistance to Africans by helping people to learn the communication skills needed to be able to compete in global markets (Davis, 2002).

According to Li Edelkoort, the legacy of social design survived through the individualist 90's until the 21st century, while getting increasingly more socially conscious, probably as a response to the challenges of globalization and increasing poverty and other problems (van der Berg, 2003). Some even talk about paradigm shift, with design moving from a formalistic, form-giving stance towards non-formal, immaterial design and social concepts (van der Berg, 2003).

These views are supported e.g. by Krippendorff: "I think that form is a concept that comes from the logical positivist period of the sciences, i.e., modernism. It should be replaced by meaning, or interpretation. Especially if it is a matter of life and death, I wouldn't want to face a form or forms but artefacts that I understand naturally, instantly, and unfailingly. The old preoccupation of designers with the form of artefacts, while having the potential of providing pleasurable sensory experiences, being fashionable, or having sales appeal, should be secondary to the semantics of the use of artefacts" (Krippendorff in the PhD Design email-list/ 2003). Margolin argues that social design can become a new paradigm for designers, as a complement to market

design, rather than an instance of the broader concept of design. He furthermore sees a continuum between design for the market and social design (Margolin, 2003).

#### **2.4.4.4. From opposites to complements**

Southwell (1995) has echoed the view common in design discourse today that market design and social design are not separate or opposites, but the two faces of the same coin, as there cannot be pure social design and there cannot be pure market design. Design, an intermediary between the economy and culture, has social implications, whether or not the designers choose to take social responsibility for their practice. It can be realized in a participatory way, building bridges between people and technology. Southwell (1997) is very critical towards the Design and Development movement, which she blames for cultural imperialism and paternalism and being caught by the 70's notion of appropriate technology.

Victor Margolin (1998) indicates that the significance of design is bound to rise in the post-product society, due to it enabling "ordering the world rather than merely shaping commodities". Ezio Manzini in turn challenges designers to use their creative thinking to design low cost solutions. He calls for a radical change, a systemic discontinuity, which would imply promoting highly context-related, intensive and low-material socio-technical systems. Design is needed to promote this discontinuity and to conceive and develop these very systems (Manzini, 2006).

Manzini's central argument is that designers are responsible for creating a habitable world. He proposes a new perspective to design that would take into account the complexity of the modern world. Instead of designing objects, the designers should explore alternatives and innovative answers to the social and environmental problems. He prefers reproduction to production, noting that the world imposes limits always (Manzini, 1995<sup>31</sup>).

#### **2.4.4.5. From interest groups to events**

The rising interest towards an alternative approach to design appears to be a phenomenon of the 21st century and is visible in many directions. In the UK based PhD Design email list, a separate discussion forum was opened, focusing specifically on questions related to design and development. The email debates have been very useful not only for networking, but also for sourcing unpublished information that literature searches would not discover. There are ongoing PhD projects in design and development, particularly related to craft development, such as Inkeri Huhtamaa's and Adhi Nugraha's projects and Satu Miettinen's completed thesis *Designing the Creative Tourism Experience* (2007) in the University of Art and Design Helsinki in Finland. So far, there has been but a few completed theses on the topic. In the field of

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<sup>31</sup> [www.sustainable-everyday.net/manzini](http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/manzini)

architecture David Week's PhD (2000) *Hermeneutic Approach to the Practice of Architecture in a Foreign Culture* for the University of Sydney, Australia can be mentioned. Week suggests a hermeneutic approach for the Western practitioners working in Non-Western countries.

There are also research groups, such as the UK based Cardiff group and WorlDesign-group at the University of Art and Design Helsinki, specialising in design and development questions. The Cardiff Group aims to bring its combined experience and skills to bear on the following: research into the contribution of design and design education in developing countries; application of research outcomes through the conduct of action research projects; evaluation and dissemination of the outcomes of the group's work; and promotion of the group's aims and outcomes<sup>32</sup>.

In the absence of published references, conferences and conference publications, as well as exhibitions and exhibition catalogs related to the area of design and development have been important for this research. The Design Education for Developing Countries Conferences, organized by the South African Design Forum (Cape Town, 1995, and Johannesburg, 1997), have been crucial initial milestones for this research. It was in Cape Town that the author came to know professor emeritus Nathan Shapira from UCLA, who made a significant contribution to the establishment of the design department in the University of Nairobi in the 60's. Professor Shapira introduced the work and writings of Selby Mvusi, the South African artist and designer, whose book *Design for Developing Countries* stayed unpublished due to his sudden death in a car accident in the late 60's. The author also had the opportunity to visit the first Johannesburg Biennale *Africus*, in 1997; an ambitious attempt to get the post-apartheid South-Africa back on the map of global art, from which it had been excluded for such a long time. Some of the articles in the *Africus* catalogue, in particular Bongi Dhlomo's (1997) *Emerging from the Margins* and Thomas McEvelley's *Here Comes Everybody* (1997), while focusing mainly on the fine arts, opened a critical perspective to art and culture in the globalized world.

#### **2.4.4.6. Design approaches**

Two main approaches to design in the development context have been identified.

In the first place, design can be seen as being connected with new technological breakthroughs, mass production with specialization, new sources of energy, and a global quest for markets (Ghose, 1998). In this view, technology and consumerism are intrinsically linked to design as well as being the propagators of modernity and Design is seen as a way to transfer Western values to Non-Western environments. In *Design, Development, Culture and Cultural Legacies in Asia*, Ghose gives an account of the problems design developers face particularly in Asia and in India, while addressing the obscurity of the concept of design, in the context of developing

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.thecardiffgroup.org.uk/>

countries (Ghose, 1998). While this perspective is often seen as a negative one, one could observe that high-design cell-phones have brought ICT to the reach of millions of rural people all around the world.

Secondly, design can be seen as an empowering problem solving methodology, that can enable and facilitate fulfilling social and economic needs in marginalized communities (Gomez, 1997). In this view, design can and should be applied for the greater good of mankind. In the development context, design's social application is particularly relevant. Margolin has talked about design *healing the world* (Margolin, 2003); Guy Bonsiepe talks about *design empowerment* (Fathers, 2003).

The critical issue in design and development endeavours is that design, as a concept, comes from the Western context. The situation is even more complicated with issues related to business development. The limited understanding and appreciation of trade in the design and development movement has not provided sufficient means to analyze the questions related to commercialization and business development.

Selby Mvusi (1991) has written that "...we cannot divorce design for development from design development. Similarly, we may not confuse design development with design for development. This distinction is important if designers are not to flounder in contradiction and conflict. Failure to confront this duality of otherwise unified concern, has in recent times led many designers to take on an evolutionist attitude to design development in low-income countries. This Design Darwinism has had negative effect on both design practice as a whole, as well as on design participation in development programming in low-income economies" (Mvusi, 1991, 33).

The Design and Development movement started as a criticism towards design getting too closely allied with corporate interest (Margolin, 2003). Paradoxically, it may be that what has been considered as the designers' worst fault in this context, their expertise in market design, is what makes them most useful in the present context - the context of the commercialization of artefacts. Perhaps the focus should be on enabling enforcing horizontal communication and getting rid of the tradition of over-powering domination (Week, 2000).

## **2.5. Concluding notes**

This section has reviewed the three main elements of development, craft and design in their mutual context of craft development. In the context of this study, craft development has been defined as the promotion of the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets. This section examined the premises of craft development, weaving together the multiple threads presented in the above sections. As seen above, craft development is anything but a straightforward conception. The emerging contextual environment is summarized below.

The initial part of the contextual review noted the overall importance of craft in development, as a key enabler of sustainable human wellbeing, especially in the process of globalization, which affects local craft producers both positively and negatively (Suich & Murphy, 2002). Craft is seen either as a stepping-stone for industrialization (Mvusi, 1991), or as a valuable industry in its own right (Walker, 1989, International Trade Centre, 1991).

While it appears that global demand for hand-made quality goods is on the rise, operating in the volatile global markets is not easy, and requires specific abilities (International Trade Centre, 1991; Davenport & Low, 2000). Craft development initiatives, in the form of projects, programmes and other endeavours address this issue, supporting local producers in many ways. However, they are often riddled with problems linked to the relationships between donors and aid recipients, cultural gaps and preconceptions of what development and products should be (Ghose, 2000). The product categories in these initiatives are limited leading to less than desirable outcomes in terms of new opportunities in global markets. Southwell (1997) has called this the *Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome* and sees it instrumental in not enabling product innovation (Southwell, 1997).

On the other hand, craft, like any other human activity, is subject to evolutionary processes; it evolves constantly, as there is no stasis in culture. This evolutionary perspective enables the idea that craft can develop to further accommodate commercialization and yet remain contextually and culturally significant (Walker, 1989; Phillips & Steiner, 1999). Graburn (1976) and Lucie-Smith (1986) indicate that the growing (if often shallow) interest towards and demand for the exotic has already changed the global craft trade and the Western perception of Non-Western artefacts.

Design, in the context of craft development, can be seen as market driven, aiming to maximise commercial value to external parties (with evident, if meagre, returns for local producers as well) through outsourced craft production to suit Western tastes (Margolin, 2003, Papanek, 1997). It can also be seen as a system of problem solving that enables local producers to steer their own capabilities, enhancing local well being, and design can be seen to add value to the local craft producers (Fathers, 2003, Margolin, 2003).

Finally, Amartya Sen's Capability Approach has been suggested by the researcher as a framework of thought, useful in understanding the conversion of the capabilities into functionings, in the dual processes of enhancing peoples' capability and in removing constraints. The Senian thinking has also been suggested as a new framework for understanding social responsibility in design (Manzini 2006; Morelli 2007), and as a framework for a new design theory (as Manzini proposed in his key-note lecture at a UIAH conference in 2004). It has also been suggested that the Capability Approach and participatory approaches are complementary in nature and can be applied concurrently (Frediani, 2005).

## **Chapter 3: Research design**

The following section discusses the objectives of the research and then identifies the research questions. This discussion is followed by an overview of the methodology. A research construct is proposed as a structure and a tool in the analysis of the case studies.

### ***3.1. The phenomenon***

The research is motivated by the initial observation that local craft producers appear not to possess the capability to be responsive to the demand of global markets on favourable terms. Secondly, well-meaning craft development initiatives do not seem to have been able to contribute effectively towards enabling local producers to respond to the challenges of global markets.

The research assumes that there are advantages for local producers to place their products into external markets. This assumption is justified by the fact that global markets are seen to be expanding and new opportunities exist outside for improved livelihood (Appadurai, 1996; Scholte, 2000; Verhelst, 1993). An improved economic situation allows the local producers to not only sustain their craft production, but to develop it in order to continuously improve their technical and market skills, thus improving the sustainability of their craft production (Ballyn, 2002; UNCTAD, 1991; Richards, 1999). It is also assumed that placing products in outside markets does not necessarily imply improved livelihoods, unless the products are responsive to market demand, of an acceptable technical quality, and are delivered on favourable terms for the producers. The third assumption is that for products to be responsive to demand, they must possess some exceptional qualities that make them distinct and desirable. The fourth assumption in the research is that the production of distinct products, made with appropriate quality, and delivered as deemed, requires specific capabilities in local producers (Eames & Eames, 1958; Mvusi, 1997; Noy, 1994).

As its unit of analysis, the research adopts the craft development initiatives. Within these initiatives, the study has a focus on product attributes and the capabilities needed to make them. Product design is seen to be a key enabler of access to global markets on favourable terms. In order to be able to create and maintain appropriate designs in their products, local producers need to have the necessary ability to conceptualize products that are responsive to global markets. The research has named this ability as the response capability.

### ***3.2. Objectives and approach***

The overall aim of the research is to contribute to the knowledge of conceptualizing, planning, and implementing externally supported craft development initiatives in developing countries. This contribution is expected to add to the wider knowledge base in all of the three broader

fields of study (development, craft, design) that form the contextual base for this research. The contribution to knowledge in these three areas is expected to be specifically applicable at the intersection of the three major fields of study.

The overall aim of the research is seen to be achievable through the three specific objectives set for the research. In the first instance the study has the objective of clarifying the semantic confusion in the research area, in the intersection of the concepts of development, craft, and design. This is done in the contextual review and the definitions section of the introduction; key literature has been reviewed, and some significant non-published writings have emerged from various sources over time. Conferences have been instrumental in feeding threads of thoughts into the study, and anecdotal primary evidence and data has been used to deepen the reflection. Establishing the boundaries of the field of enquiry has meant defining, *inter alia*, the adopted perspective on development and capability; the notions of craft, craft development, and craft development initiative; and the relevant issues linked to product design in the global markets.

The second objective of the research has been to describe and examine the contribution of craft development initiatives towards the response capability of local producers in product design in global markets. In order to assess the contribution, three sets of cases are examined in the scope of the research. The initial set of cases examined in Chapter 4 is approached through a personal narrative. In Chapter 5, a second set of cases is examined for the contributions that craft development initiatives have had on the response capability of local producers. In Chapter 6, the third set of cases is examined through a specific perspective of product design. Taken together, these three sets triangulate the issue from three slightly different perspectives, and, while being interconnected, each set brings novel findings to the study, enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the research.

The third objective has been to explore the possibilities of improving the contribution that craft development initiatives are able to make towards the response capability of the local producers. While one can imagine a whole range of support activities, methods and outcomes, the focus has been established (as a research decision that has emerged from the study) in the future (this is discussed in the conclusions and managerial implications section).

### **3.3. Research Questions**

The two research questions can be summarized as follows:

- 1. What is the contribution of externally supported craft development initiatives towards the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets?*
- 2. How could this contribution be enhanced?*

The first part of the research question is linked to the present state of affairs. In this sense it is purely analytical, as it describes and examines current practice. It queries the present contribution that emerges from the study of the case projects; the contribution that the study describes and examines is specifically linked to the challenges of product design. These challenges in the context of this study are understood to be two-fold: in the first instance, it is necessary to examine the attributes of products in the function of the global markets, and secondly, the capabilities that underpin the making of these products. The second part of the research question relates to ways and means of improving the current contributions. This is a prescriptive section of the study, where exploratory proposals are made to enhance future initiatives. While the first part of the research question is progressively elaborated on through the case studies, the discussion and conclusions, the exploratory section is presented in the conclusions. The enhanced contribution is seen to rest on the improved capability of the local producers to design products that can access the global markets.

### ***3.4. Positioning of the study***

This study takes an overall subjective and interpretive position. The definition of the phenomenon is subjective and a result of social construction. The research makes multiple subjective assumptions in terms of what local producers may wish to do, and even though there are widely accepted views of the impact of globalization on international trade arrangements, on a detailed level these are subject to much interpretation and debate. The study is interpretive in the sense that the researcher uses prior knowledge, values and perceptions to evaluate documents, archival knowledge, physical artefacts and the action between the subjects of the study. In line with Ditley (as quoted in Miles and Huberman, 1994) and other phenomenologists, the meaning of social action and arrangements comes through interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This interpretation is made by both the researcher and the object(s) of the investigation.

The qualitative research tradition underpins the study, and the study does not establish measurable nominal causal relationships, quantities, intensities, or frequencies. The study does describe, examine, and give meaning to processes between actors, and makes sense of the use of language and the semantic confusion surrounding key concepts. Furthermore, through using a construct framework, the study describes and examines socially constructed documentation and archival records. The study furthermore adopts the position that the realities studied have a local and specific nature, with social arrangements socially constructed, implying a constructivist position (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

The case study approach has been chosen as the basic research strategy, as the study looks at contemporary events within its context, as the research question attempts to answer questions of

how a contribution is defined and made (and how it can be enhanced), and as a great variety of data and evidence has been used, involving also participatory approaches.

The first set of cases is approached through a personal narrative. This is done to give an emphasis on the participatory nature of the involvement. The second set of cases is examined from a distance, through documents and archival sources, and the third set of cases is approached through public domain information available on the Internet.

### ***3.5. The case study as a research approach***

The research strategy is based on a case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Yin, 2003; Ghauri, 2005; Flyvberg et al, 2003).

In line with Yin (2003), this study has defined the case study as a research strategy. The case study has been adopted to respond to the variety of empirical and documentary evidence used in the study (observation, previous literature, other documents, and experience), and to allow for the contemporary nature of the events.

The research adopts Eisenhardt's (1989) view that traditional case studies can be further developed to suit the research needs. In this study, a research question has been established, a construct is utilized to clarify the analysis of the data, and multiple case sets are used. In line with Eisenhardt, the research was begun with no theoretical underpinning, and no hypothesis to test.

The construct established in the study is destined to support the cross case analysis and triangulation, and does not in itself propose new theoretical models. It does embed two theoretical propositions (the Capability Approach by Amartya Sen and Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome by Mirjam Southwell), however, which are used as tools of analysis. The validation of the construct is seen to happen through the analysis itself, i.e. a successful analysis validates the tool used. It should be noted that the construct is not an a priori set-up, but has evolved through the writing and re-writing of the cases. The very process through which the construct has been developed acts partly as a validation process.

The case study approach is used to explain existing practice and describe how contributions are made and can be improved upon. The research is structured around three sets of craft development initiatives, examined through three differing approaches. These sets of multiple cases are used as the basic source of evidence, and the same research construct is used to examine all three sets. The specific nature of the data and the research circumstance in each one of the sets has made the data collection approach somewhat different in each one. The research construct is the uniting element between the cases.

### 3.6. Cases as sources of evidence

The sources of evidence are reviewed in the table below. The classification is based on Yin (2003).

<b>Table 3.1 The nature of the research and sources of evidence</b>				
	Case Set 1	Case Set 2	Case Set 3	Notes
<i>Nature of research</i>				
Empirical research	X			Participatory observation / fieldwork
Secondary research	X	X	X	Literature, documents*, archival records
<i>Sources of evidence (in order of general importance)</i>				
Participatory observation	X			The key source of evidence for Case set 1 was participatory observation
Physical artefacts	X	X	X	In all case sets, the craft products themselves gave valuable clues as to the products attributes, capabilities and constraints. Analyzed first hand and through media (mainly photographs)
Documentation	X	X	X	Used in all cases, the documentation varied from media excerpts, letters, communiqués, printed brochures, manuals, to instructions
Archival records		X		Museum and media archives used to deepen the understanding of cases
Notes: * physical artefacts have been reviewed based on photographs, web, videos				
Adapted from Yin (2003)				

The choice of the cases for the study has been iterative. The first case set has involved a personal journey and participation in the cases. As the methods used have included immersion and participation, the voice of the researcher is the principal one used in the study. It has also involved a story-telling format in the sense that its is the researcher telling the story to the wider audience, and a personal narrative is the way in which the findings have been discussed in the study. The choice of the cases has been emergent, i.e. cases in which the researcher has been involved have been included in the study. This implies that the cases are not fully compatible with each other in terms of evidence, situation and are thus not good subjects to wider generalisations. They do, however, offer significant insights due to the depth of observations.

The second set of cases was chosen based on secondary research, and the basic departure took Ghose (1998) as starting point, in which two extreme cases were presented. The first of the cases (Dastkar) was a locally embedded project with minimal external inputs, while the second case (the Golden Eye) relied on maximal external design input. While the latter was subject to heated debate and criticism in the Western media, the former appeared to be generally considered as appropriate and an example of sustainable development (Ghose, 1998). The third case (Weya), was chosen due to the fact that it had such a strong impact on Zimbabwean souvenir industry during the time of the fieldwork in Mozambique (1994-1998). While the

Western impact on Weya was undeniable strong, it was generally considered as a “local” success story, where the local skills and capabilities were a starting point. There was also literature available of Weya. During the research a working continuum developed, where Dastkar and Golden Eye were in the opposite extremes and Weya a compromise between them. Naturally, this continuum is an abstraction of reality, but it turned out to be useful for the research and helped bring clarity to the rather chaotic reality of craft development initiatives.

The third set of cases consists of three major and perhaps the best-known international craft development initiatives. As Oxfam catalogue syndrome is central to the argument of the study, is Oxfam a natural choice. Aid to Artisans and Traidcraft are both well established and widely known organisations that provide good examples of the present day development initiatives in the craft sector.

### **3.6.1. The first case set**

The fieldwork of the research (case set 1) is based on methods grouped under the general title of participatory observation (Wadsworth, 1998). The researcher is involved in the phenomenon studied, not as a silent observer but as an actor that attempts to change the course of action with more or less active interference. The process is reflected on and the changes closely monitored. Yin (2003) has named this participant-observation, and indicates that the level of participation needs to be carefully controlled and perhaps limited as there may be prejudice to the research validity in the case study approach. Another form of observation linked with action is called Action Research (AR), a research approach where the researcher is very proactively involved in modifying the phenomenon that is studied. The researcher has the dual roles of both understanding and promoting change and therefore working for both society and science (Robson, 1997). According to Kurt Lewin, who first coined the term AR in the 40’s, the process of enquiry in an action research context forms a cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Robson, 1997). In this study, the difference between participant-observation and Action Research is taken to mean the level of action that the researcher induces, and the degree in which the researcher is an outsider. This research uses the term participatory observation, and understands that the level of involvement in the initial set of cases is deeper than what Yin (2003) understands a participant observer should commit to. That being said, the study is not really of an Action Research nature either, as the researcher is a temporal member of the studied community of actors, and is, due to nationality and origin, a cultural outsider by definition. The multiple sources of evidence are instrumental in creating robustness in terms of research validity, effectively countering the potential negative effects of deep involvement in the case.

#### **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**

There are number of applications of participatory observation in use in development work, such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) a collaborative method for testing new ideas and

bringing about changes through action. PAR is based on Paulo Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed*, where he promoted the idea of development as a dialogue where people work with each other in mutual respect (Chambers, 2000), making a difference in the world. Wadsforth has defined PAR as actions that are researched, changed and re-researched, inside the process of the research itself by the participants (Wadsforth, 1998). PAR challenges the conventional notion of research conducted by academics that visit target groups collecting data, and then interpret it in their institutions for their publications and theses. Research in PAR terms is a knowledge building process by the people and for them. The participatory models reflect the new paradigm of development, changing the often bureaucratic and centralized development agencies into more holistic, experimentalist and collaborative learning organizations (Pasteur, 2004).

### **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)**

Robert Chambers has promoted another participatory method, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as the alternative model for community development work. The key in Chambers thinking is *new professionalism* as opposed to *old professionalism*, where the "underlying values are not hidden in assumptions of objectivity, but made explicit" (Chambers, 2000, 229). Rather than experts, facilitators are called for. Chambers calls for eclectic pluralism that values doubt, self-critical awareness and open-mindedness, respects the views of others, including the marginalized and the privileged, and facilitates the power transformations between them (Chambers, 2000). The general idea of PRA is to place the local realities at the centre of development interventions

Participatory methods, subjective and interpretivist as they are, rely on constant and rigorous self-reflection. The link between action and reflection was also important in Freire's thinking (Chambers 2000), though the emphasis was on dialogue rather than individual reflection (Pasteur, 2004). The learning model in PRA can be defined as double-looped as opposed to single-loop learning, where knowledge is acquired to support what has already been known. Double-loop learning, first introduced by Argyris and Schön, emphasizes the need to deepen the level of questioning in the learning processes (Pasteur, 2004), while questioning what was previously known and creating alternative ways to deal with problems (Irvine et al, 2004).

Schön (1983), argued that reflection-in-action is a way to unite theory and practise, referring to the *swamp* where confusing problems defy technical solutions that originate from high ground. The problems of greatest human concern lie in the swamp and the practitioner on the high ground can only deal with problems of little relevance (Schön quoted in Chambers, 2000). Chambers declares that, for the new professionals, the swamp has become the new high ground. The central values of the new, evolving paradigm of development are decentralization, democracy, diversity, empowerment and dynamism.

### **Some critical views**

The participatory methods, popular as they have become particularly in the NGO sector, have also been extensively scrutinized, debated and criticized. A well-known critique of participatory development models is provided by Cooke and Kothari (2001), who regard participation the new tyranny, claiming that the actual results of these methods have been modest to say the least, and at times downright detrimental towards the original aims. They argue that the participatory models are based on simplistic distinctions and dichotomies and fail to see the complexity of the power structure between Western and Non-Western countries. There has also been a tendency to prioritize local knowledge over foreign expertise. There is evidence that the development agencies often seek justification for their own programmes and objectives through the *human software*, the local participants (Hildyard et al., 2001). The writers argue that more transparency is needed to assess the approaches of grass root development work, if the aim is to enhance empowerment on a more sustainable basis.

Hickey & Mohan (2004) have responded to the critique with the counter argument that the problems hampering the participatory approaches have arisen because of the methodological individualism caused by a donor induced narrow focus on development interventions and not development overall. It would appear that participation is here to stay, but what is needed is a greater conceptual and theoretical coherence and more attention to the transformative role of participation in eradicating exclusion and subordination (Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

### **Immersion**

Irvine et al (2004) define immersions, essentially double-looped learning processes, as reality-checks, encounters where the development workers gain deeper and more grounded understanding through living and sharing experiences with marginalized people. Immersions usually take several days, and include reflective observation and participation in the daily lives of the target groups.

In this study the immersion went on over several years. The first cases are based on two extended period immersions. In this context, the most important research tool used was time. Altogether, eight years were spent in the tropics, and while this is by no means enough for a researcher to familiarize oneself fully with alien cultures, this period of time provided an opportunity for extended immersions. After each event/workshop, the researcher stayed long enough, not only to assess the impacts, but to exchange the post event experiences with the partners.

### **Interviews and ethnographic methods**

Early on in the research, the idea of interviews as a source of data was dropped. In the experimental interviews made, the answers appeared to be exactly the ones informants thought the researcher would appreciate, and this method was abandoned in formal terms. This is well

in line with Marshal Sahlins (1996), who notes that there is no easy access to indigenous minds. In his thought provoking book *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, For Example*, Sahlins (1996) argues that understanding indigenous people requires mastering sophisticated ethnographic and ethno-historic methods that go beyond the questionnaires and interviews, through which Western researchers try to get into the heads of indigenous cultures. Thus ethnographic methods were used to collect data. By working with, talking to and observing indigenous colleagues a very diverse body of evidence was collected: photographs, diary notes, reports, memos, personal letters. The process was participatory, and the researcher worked with the people, sharing problems and achievements with them. The outcome was a number of narrative documents that have served as the basis of the cases presented in the first case set.

### **3.6.2. The data collection for the second case set**

In terms of data collection, the second and third case sets were much more straightforward and rapid when compared to the first set of cases. Both the second and the third case sets rely on data that is available in the public domain, although secondary research has been fairly extensive in the case of the second set, with direct contacts to institutions in various countries, and sources established through personal research contacts. This has enabled a rich and deep view of the initiatives at hand. The data used includes secondary references, marketing information, personal observations and third party communications, archival data from exhibitions, related commentaries from media archives, and anecdotal comments, written pieces and public information. Piecing the cases together has taken some time.

### **3.6.3. Physical artefacts and the third case set**

A central set of evidence along side the whole research (including the three case sets) has been the physical artefact, the products themselves. In all of the case sets, products have been examined either first hand, or through other media (video, photographs, textual descriptions). The examination has been based on experience, comparison with markets, and observed preferences from third parties. While being a very informal process, it has not been uninformed. This constant and ongoing analysis process from day one has contributed to the definition of the research set-up and question, and is formalized in the research construct.

The data for the third set of cases is basically the most straightforward of the three case sets. It consists essentially of marketing information of products, obtained from the public domain, through web sites and printed brochure information. This is in line with the purpose of the third case set. It is intended to triangulate and validate the findings of the two previous case sets but only in terms of product attributes (key element 1).

### **3.7. Working towards a research construct**

The case study approach is used to explain existing practice, describe how contributions are (or are not) made, and to explore how this contribution can be improved upon. On the basis of the contextual review, a tentative construct has been defined. The construct is a framework for organizing the research aims, objectives, and context into a manageable structure that enables a relative valuation between the case studies. As the research is essentially qualitative in nature, absolute, universally comparable data is not achievable, nor has it been attempted.

#### **Searching for evidence of contribution**

The construct sets out the elements that establish the response capability of the local producers. The data is used to establish a snap shot of this response capability. The test of a positive contribution is whether there has been a positive change in the elements that the construct examines.

The construct is set up to identify a contribution, and whether it is positive or negative. The strength of the contribution is not quantified in exact terms (nor can it be in the case of documentary evidence and the methods used in the research). The element set is such that key findings create strength through adding onto each other.

In order to understand how a contribution can be enhanced, there is a need to make sense of the present contribution.

The construct is based on the analysis of the key issues that have been factored into three key elements:

1. The attributes of products that would be expected to meet the demand of global markets on favourable terms.
2. The capabilities that local producers need in order to design appropriate products.
3. The constraints that limit capabilities

#### **Key element 1 / Product attributes**

The commercial acceptance of the products in external markets is seen to rest on their desirability more than other factors. Desirability has been broken down into a series of factors, which, when put together, give a picture of the (perception of) desirability of product.

For the sake of analysis, perceivable quality has been examined from the viewpoint of the buyer, i.e. quality is seen to be sufficient if the buyer accepts the quality on sale. Having a high stock of items that no-one wants to buy indicates either insufficient quality or inappropriate pricing. Secondly, appropriate cost is a buyer-related indicator, as cost is accepted on sale. If items are always out of stock, prices are elastic upward. In this examination, marketing efforts are not factored into the analysis.

The origins and authorship of the product are elements that can add or detract value from the products, depending on the circumstance. In some cases, and in some product categories, the origin is a key selling point, while in others it is a handicap. Global designs imply designs that have both Western and Non-Western influences built into the aesthetic and functional attributes.

The distinctive aspects of product attributes are somewhat difficult to establish in an exact manner, and are in the cases evaluated by the researcher only. This includes a visual and (when possible) functional examination, which attempts to establish if and how the product(s) are positively distinctive when compared to other products in the same category.

### **Key element 2 / Capabilities of local producers**

The construct is used to examine the contributions made by the craft development initiatives to the development of the capabilities of local producers to make products that meet the demand of global markets.

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 1999) underpins the approach to the evaluation of the contribution to capability. From the original capability list by Nussbaum (2000), four main capabilities have been further defined into more focused capabilities that are relevant to the research at hand. These derived capabilities are linked with the creativity that is needed for new product development, which is further dissected into the abilities of seeing, understanding and using new knowledge to create innovations (Cohen & Levinthal, 1989; Zahra & George, 2002).

Nussbaum's category of practical reason is translated in the context of the study into the practical knowledge needed to run a trade and develop new products. Affiliation in turn is linked to the participation that local producers have with each other and with trade communities. These are seen as major channels of information, influence and innovation, and would, as an assumption benefit from external knowledge.

The last of the main categories of Nussbaum, control over one's environment has been focused down into the control of the trade environment. Earning a decent living is seen to be the key to sustainable development and the acid test of any linked initiative.

### **Key element 3 / Constraints**

As the third main item in the construct, constraints are factors that limit the full use of capabilities. This again has a basis on the original Senian thinking (Sen, 1999). Constraints have been identified in the overall global trading arrangements, in product categories, in production and distributions. No doubt other constraints also exist, but these four touch on the major issues confronting any attempt to reach external markets and opportunities.

In global markets a significant constraint on local producers is the lack of information and knowledge about external markets, logistics, regulation, tariffs, preferences, supply networks and similar trans-national webs that form the framework of international trade. It is not an easy

web to navigate, and significant contribution could be made by craft development initiatives to unravel these issues for local producers.

Product categories are the second most important items in constraints. While categories themselves are not a constraint, lock-ins are. With the lock-in effect, producers are limited to producing only those products that they have traditionally been producing, with the technology and distribution systems used before. It also impacts on the products themselves – all products originating from a certain place are easily lumped into one category, irrespective of their other attributes.

Products range, product categories, level of technology, and the vernacular aesthetics are elements that help define a product category. Changes in these attributes may help to free up the constraining lock-ins, and enable product innovation to take place. Southwell's (1997) Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome is linked to this lock –in effect.

Production issues are clearly major constraints, as steady quality and steady supply are often quoted as major issues in craft production and development. There is also an issue from the production perspective: does one sell to produce, or produce to sell? They may also have a bearing on the distributions, as it has been suggested that one reason for the failure of craft is due to the fact that it has been distributed through inappropriate channels (Randall, 2005). Two issues have emerged: in the first place the fair trade arrangements that work well with foodstuffs may not be so well suited for the context of craft. There is furthermore an ongoing debate on the fair trade system in general. Fair trade has been criticized either for being paternalistic and reflecting the consumers' rather than the producers' values (Dolan (2008), or for not being radical enough, as it has connections with multi-national companies (Jacquiau, 2006). The true impact of fair trade on the well-being of marginalized producers remains unclear. Also in the craft sector concerns have been voiced about fair trade arrangements. Scrase (2003) notes that fair trade shopping has been critiqued as “counter hegemonic consumerism” as it links first world consumers to Third World producers (Scrase, 2003, p. 455). According to Josee Johnson (quoted in Scrase, 2003), fair trade discourse supports a depoliticised vision of cultural difference, emphasizing ethnic branding (based on tradition and authenticity) in marketing of crafts. As an example of this she takes the *ethnicisation* of Mexican rugs – the fact that for consumers the ethnic branding is more important than the place of manufacturing (in this case, India).

Secondly, the value chains suited for current low-cost offshore production systems probably help to cause lock-in in product categories, while offering little in terms of returns to the local producer.

<b>Table 3.2 The key elements of the construct</b>		
Through the craft development initiatives, this study examines three key elements of the response capability:		
<b>1. The attributes of products that would be expected to meet the demand of global markets on favourable terms.</b>		
<i>Product attributes</i>	<i>Contributing to:</i>	
Desirable products	Improvements in perceivable quality	
	Strive toward appropriate cost	
	Manage the implications of origin	
	Develop authored vs anonymous products	
	Develop global designs vs local designs	
	Enhance distinction	
<b>2. The capabilities that local producers need to make products that could be expected to meet the demand of global markets.</b>		
<i>Nussbaum's basic capabilities</i>	<i>Derived capability</i>	<i>Contributing to:</i>
Senses, Imagination, Thought	Creativity to make new products	Seeing the value of new ideas
		Incorporating new ideas into existing products
		Creating new products
Practical reason	Access to trade knowledge	Embedding tacit trade knowledge
		Distributing explicit trade knowledge
Affiliation	Participate in trade community	Fostering joint learning
		Promoting trade ethics
		Developing trade representation
Control over one's environment	Control over trade environment	To earn decent wage
		To have decent work conditions
		To have sustainable work
<b>3. The constraints that limit capabilities.</b>		
<i>Identified constraints</i>	<i>Contributing to:</i>	
Asymmetric trade arrangement	Craft development bridging gap in asymmetric trade knowledge	
Product category lock-in	An enhanced product range	
	Transfers in product categories	
	More varied use of technology	
	Conscious use of vernacular aesthetics	
Production issues	Ability to provide a steady supply	
	Ability to provide a steady quality	
	Developing a market driven approach	
Distribution issues	Craft sold through fair trade distribution	
	Bypassing sweatshop value chains	

### **3.8. Analysis of the cases**

The interpretation of qualitative data, the *attractive nuisance* as it is sometimes called (Robson, 1997), is challenging to say the least. The strategy that was adopted was constant auto-reflection and referring my observations and experiences to the framework of theories.

As the research question is concerned with establishing the contribution of the craft development initiatives to the response capability of the local producers, the interpretation of the data is focused on finding evidence of this contribution, by using the developed construct. More specifically, the analysis is concerned with establishing a change in the response capability, if it is positive or negative, and whether the craft development initiative has been instrumental in contributing to this change.

According to Kakkuri-Knuuttila (1998) the interpretation should start with preliminary understanding, which requires a thorough familiarization with the background of the phenomenon. The second step is to create a hermeneutic circle of the phenomenon. Once a general picture of the whole is created, it is possible to examine and make sense of the details in relation to the whole. At this stage, the process can be supported by other researches and research outcomes. This is reflected in the development of the construct, and the initial analysis of the case sets.

#### **The case sets**

In the first set of cases all three key elements of the construct are analyzed. The choice of the cases is based on an emerging unique local context, with data obtained through participatory observation. The first case set is different from the others in two key aspects. It is based on participatory methods and immersion, and the observations have been made over a period of time. It is also reflexive in nature, as it looks back at participatory processes that have ended; that being said, it is still contemporary in nature.

The second set of case studies is also examined using the developed construct, but the documentary evidence is not sufficiently wide enough to give comprehensive evidence of all of the sub-sections of the key elements. That being said, it is argued that the triangulated construct is robust enough and adds information even when not all sub-sections of elements are reviewed in all case sets. Missing data does not invalidate the results, as it potentially would in quantitative approaches. Choice of cases is based on wide geographical distribution and extreme and unique circumstances, with documentary case data.

The third case set is used to triangulate and validate the findings of the two previous case sets. It should be noted that this is done in terms of the product attributes only (key element 1). The choice of cases and data is based on public domain commercial information.

The discussion chapter looks at the perceived changes induced by the craft development initiatives, and the ways and means in which this change can be directed towards a positive contribution.

### **3.9. Validity and reliability**

The internal and external validity is achieved through triangulation within multiple cases and case sets. The construct of research validity is built on multiple sources of evidence: literature, participatory observation, multiple case types, and cases from other sources (Eisenhardt, 1989; Anttila, 1992).

The main concern in terms of validity of the research is to achieve coherence between the research questions and the research design. The research construct and the choice of the underpinning theoretical approaches are seen to address this issue. These have been extensively demonstrated in the contextual review and this research design section. Secondly, the interpretations and conclusions should be valid within the environment where the research takes place. The case study approach addresses this issue, especially the initial cases in Chapter 4. The question of validity, as Anttila (1996) points out, is present during the qualitative research from beginning to end. The observations that rise from the research data should be based on reflection of the hypotheses driven by the theoretical framework. The theoretical concepts and research findings should have a logical relationship – again this has been addressed in research decisions leading to the construct, which runs through the various case sets and forms the backbone of the triangulation efforts.

Reliability is addressed through the research design. Research reliability in this study is particularly concerned with the visibility and transparency of the process of transformation of the empirical observations and evidence into a coherent analysis and interpretation. In this research the process has been made as open as possible for readers to critically follow the reasoning; this is especially the case with the narrative cases. Due to the highly contextualized cases, the replicability of the study may not be possible, but the used methods can be replicated under similar circumstances. The credibility aspect has been addressed by operationalizing the CA according to Nussbaum's list of basic capabilities in the analysis.

### **3.10. Summary of the Research Design**

The research is based on a case study approach, used to explain existing practice and describe how contributions are made and can be improved upon. Three sets of cases are involved. Both first-hand cases from field work and second-hand cases of existing and past development projects have been used to triangulate the findings of the research. The findings were analyzed through a construct framework developed from Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA), an alternative approach to economic and social development, which is seen to be particularly

useful in the analysis of product and development strategies in the craft development context. In the CA, Sen stresses the role of freedom as both the primary end and the principal means of development, seen as a process of expanding freedoms that underpin and enable development itself. The CA looks beyond the material condition and utilities into the substantive freedoms (capabilities) of individuals to choose a life one has reason to value. It is precisely the thinking on capabilities that is relevant to this study; they form a framework of thought that has been used to create the construct for the analysis of the initiatives.

Building on Nussbaum (2000), a list of composite capabilities (that craft development initiatives should address) was created, to form the basis for a construct through which the initiatives and the promoted product ranges were analysed. Data was collected from the websites of major craft development organisations, such as Aid to Artisans, Oxfam and Traidcraft, in addition to findings obtained from three “archetypical” craft projects. This allowed for an understanding of both desirable and undesirable practice. Out of the three projects, the Golden Eye, realized in the mid-80’s in India, had the aim of uniting high-level European design expertise with indigenous Indian craft skills. It also turned out to be an undesirable case, considered to be highly patronizing, imposing Western modes onto an Indian reality. Another one of the cases, an Indian based craft society Dastkar, was based on an appreciation of local traditional skills and minimal external interference. This was considered an appropriate and sustainable mode of development. The third case, the Zimbabwean Weya-community, can be positioned in the middle of the continuum, as it seeks to express an “African” look by modifying representations of indigenous inter-African traditions in order to develop a series of commercially successful products. The initial research design and observations was built around participatory observation undertaken within another set of three cases in Africa and Oceania.

The table 3.3. summarizes the research design.

Research phenomenon	Craft development initiatives do not seem to be able to contribute to the capability of local producers to be responsive to the demand of global markets on favourable terms,
Research assumptions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The research assumes that local producers can improve livelihoods through producing for expanding external markets.</li> <li>2. Global markets are seen to be expanding and new opportunities exist outside the local ones for improved livelihood.</li> <li>3. Improved income allows local producers to sustain and develop craft production.</li> <li>4. Products must possess some exceptional qualities that make them distinct and desirable; this requires specific capabilities from local producers.</li> </ol>
Research gap	International craft development initiatives support local producers. However, their contribution to the development of the response capability of local craft producers is unclear in terms of making products that would meet global market demand on favourable terms, and in terms of the capability of local producers to design these products.
Research aim	To contribute to the knowledge of conceptualizing, planning, and implementing externally supported craft development initiatives in developing countries.
Research objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarify the semantics in the research area, in the intersection of development, craft, and design.</li> <li>2. Describe and examine the contribution of craft development initiatives towards the response capability of local producers in product design in global markets.</li> <li>3. Explore the possibilities to improve contribution.</li> </ol>
Unit of analysis	Craft development initiatives supported by external organisations
Research question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the contribution of externally supported craft development initiatives towards the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets?</li> <li>2. How could this contribution be enhanced?</li> </ol>
Methodology & research data	<p>The overall research strategy is based on a case study approach, used to explain existing practice and describe how contributions are made and can be improved upon. Three sets of multiple cases are used as the basic source of evidence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The first set of cases is examined through a research construct. The examination of the cases is based on participatory observation and immersion in the field. Choice of cases is based on unique local context, with data obtained through participatory observation.</li> <li>2. The second set of case studies is examined using the developed construct. It aims to establish the existence and extent of a possible contribution, linking products attributes with producer capabilities. The investigation needs to validate the construct. Choice of cases is based on wide geographical distribution and extreme and unique circumstances, with documentary case data.</li> <li>3. The third case set is used to triangulate and validate the findings of the two previous case sets in terms of product attributes. Key assumptions of the construct have been triangulated through the third case set. Choice of cases and data is based on public domain commercial information.</li> </ol>
Validity and reliability	The construct validity is built on multiple sources of evidence (literature, participatory observation, multiple cases and case types, and cases from other sources). The internal and external validity is achieved through triangulation within multiple cases and case sets. Reliability is addressed through the research design.

## **Chapter 4: Being there - the first set of cases**

The first set of cases is approached through a personal narrative. This is done to give emphasis to the participatory nature of the involvement, and to enable a storytelling format, in line with Dyer & Wilkins (1991), who argue that good narratives override the creation of good constructs (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989). They furthermore argue that a well laid out narrative makes it possible for the reader to see and understand, relating with the phenomenon under study to their own experience. The choice of the narrative voice in this set of cases is a conscious attempt to join a rigorous examination of a construct into a storytelling format (it should be noted that a construct is examined through a narrative). Also, writing is considered here partially as a method of enquiry, not only a means of reporting, in line with Richardson's (2000) view of situating the voice of the speaker. Still yet, the audience of this research report is the academic who is technically well aware of research-related issues, and in many cases the craft-related technical issues as well, but who might not be aware of the complex circumstances that exist in both the developing country and the craft development environment. This personal account is a way of conveying a personal record of making sense of a complex and foreign circumstance to the reader, almost as an ethnographic record (Van Maanen, 1988; Zsuzsa & O'Rian, 2002). It also illustrates the personal challenges that individuals who are engaged in craft development initiatives face in the field. It is an experiment, and the reader must take the final decision as to its success.

### **4.1. Introduction**

This research is based on personal involvement in grass-root craft development in the context of non-governmental and governmental organisations in Mozambique (1994-1998) and Vanuatu (1999-2003). The following section includes several reports of the fieldwork, constructed as narratives.

The initial research questions emerged after the four-year period in Mozambique, where two Mozambican cultural activists and myself founded an NGO, *Associação dos Artistas do Planalto* (AAP), which I coordinated on a voluntary basis during my stay. In Vanuatu I worked as a Technical Assistant for the local craft organisation, Vanuatu Village Craft Development Association in 2001-2003. I was also involved as an advisor in the *Natangura*-carving project of the Foundation of People of the South Pacific (FSP), an international development organisation with a focus on the South Pacific. During my stay I also supported a soapstone carving community in the Solomon Islands, in their attempts to involve young unemployed men in income generation activities.

At the time of moving to Mozambique, I did not know the language or the country, and had no previous experience of development work or life in developing countries. It was my plan to make the most of my background in fine art and art education for the benefit of a country that was, in 1994, the poorest country in the world. Mozambique was also recovering from a long and traumatic civil war that had left many scars on the people. Measuring by any standards, Mozambique was indeed a difficult case at the time.

The difficulties were, however, not obvious to me on the first encounter. In fact, it took about two years before the scope of the challenge I was planning to tackle was revealed to me. In retrospect one can ask whether there were ever real possibilities for me to make any relevant contributions in income generation or poverty alleviation through low - or no technology craft production. By the time I was able to reflect on this from a realistic perspective, I had become deeply involved in the every-day management of an organisation that gradually became a show-case of most of the problems common to grass-root development projects.

This research has been an attempt to make sense and deepen an understanding through difficult cases. One can probably not think of a case more difficult than post-war Mozambique, particularly from the craft development point of view. Mozambique was abjectly poor and had a war-ruined infrastructure. There was a very limited market for hand made artefacts due to the practically non-existent tourism and local people were too poor to purchase even the most basic consumables. But if the market for craft was limited, so were the other options for cash generation. And cash was desperately needed: for school fees and medicine, fuel and food.

Vanuatu was quite a different story - but difficult all the same. Within the group of Least Developed Countries, Vanuatu is by no means the worst off country. Also in terms of craft industry, the prospects appeared better than those of Mozambique, as tourism was one of the main industries of the country. The craft market in the South Pacific was, however, extremely competitive, and one where low prices are the main competitive advantage. The craft market in Port Vila was dominated by cheap Far East imports, many of them with a glued label reading *Hand made in Vanuatu*.

## **4.2. Mozambique**

### **4.2.1. The Country**

In 1994 Mozambique was ranked by the World Bank as the poorest country in the world, with the per capita income at less than 60 United States Dollars per year. It was a post-war society, recovering from a long and traumatic civil war that took place from 1975-1994.



**Fig. 4.1 Map of Mozambique**

I lived in a town called *Chimoio*, the capital of the *Manica Province* (see the Fig. 4.1 above), with a population of just under one million people. It is also the administration centre of the province. *Direcção Provincial de Juventude, Esporto e Cultura* coordinated the local policy and activities in the area of youth, sports and culture of the corresponding ministry. They had an office, called *Casa da Cultura*, in the centre of town, with approximately ten employees. The resources of the cultural directorate were limited, their budget covering only the meagre salaries of the officials. In the 90's practically every thinkable aid organisation was present in Chimoio: *Medecins Sans Frontiers, UNICEF, UNCHR, Save the Children, Red Cross, SIDA, Finnida, Danida, Norad, Care, Concern, GTZ, Cooperazione Italiana*, to mention but a few.

Most of the Mozambicans were involved in food production, in one way or another. Practically everybody, including those living in urban areas and possessing jobs, had a *machamba*, a farm, where at least maize, the basic foodstuff in Manica Province, was cultivated for private consumption. The salaries did not correspond to the actual cost of living - this made the subsistent agriculture a necessity. In a country with a low level of technology, farming requires hard work. The mere process of getting to the farm - not to mention getting the crops back home without proper transport - was an extreme effort.

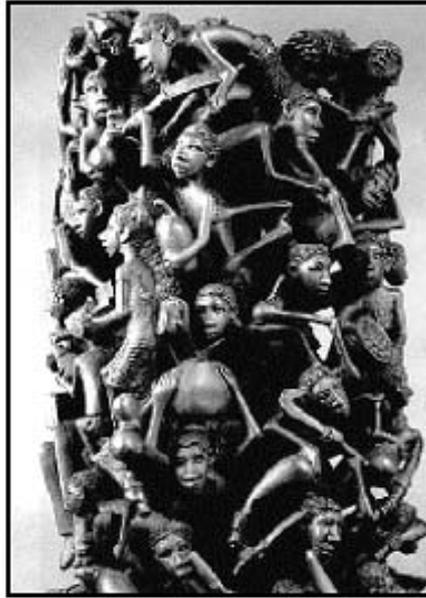
In terms of indigenous craft the country did not have a generous offering. Unlike in many West African countries, traditional clothing was not visible in the streets and craft objects were not sold widely. There were very few tourists, and the local purchasing power was limited. In the *bairros*, or indigenous suburbs of huts, clay pots, baskets and tin items were made and bought for everyday use. They were increasingly being replaced by imports from South Asia, originating mainly from India, as it was the Indians (and their descendants) that dominated the petty trade in the Manica area.



**Fig. 4.2 Shikisa Foundation store**

Mozambique has been under foreign influence since the first Arab traders arrived on the coastline in the 8th century. Portugal colonized the country in the early 16th century. The keywords of Portugal's colonial policy were tradition and continuity. Whatever their original intentions were, the Portuguese were not very successful in maintaining - not to mention improving - either of them. The worst outcome of the colonial period was perhaps the low self-esteem that prevented the Mozambicans from trusting their own skills and capabilities.

In Zimbabwe (a hundred kilometres to the west) it was difficult to avoid seeing tourist attractions, but in Chimoio to find any required effort. There were no organized dance performances for tourists and the game park in Gorongosa had been deserted ever since the hungry people ate many of the animals during the war. Due to the chronic shortage of resources the governmental cultural directorate was not able to sufficiently support the local culture. Out of the countless international governmental and non-governmental organisations, only a few had shown interest in allocating resources to the cultural dimension in development. Curiously enough, before independence the coast of Mozambique was a popular tourist attraction, where mainly South Africans and Zimbabweans went to relax.



**Fig. 4.3 Makonde sculpture**

#### **4.2.2. The story of Associação de Artistas do Planalto (AAP)**

In May 1995, Jorge Gulambondo (see Text Box 2.), myself, and a young street child worker from the Save The Children organisation went to the local notary's office with stamps, couple of hundred of thousand Meticais (the local currency<sup>33</sup>) and the constitution of an association with the name Associação de Artistas do Planalto (The Association of The Artists of the Plateau-AAP). After long discussions we had come to the conclusion that an organisation should be founded, to support the local artisans, to coordinate the field and to get funding.

The basic idea of AAP was to get together the local artists to then find best ways to support, maintain and develop the local art traditions, promote the communication between artists within and outside of Mozambique and encourage the interest in and recognition of art, especially in the young generation. The guiding principle of the association was the firm belief in the strength of the Mozambican traditions and of their importance to the cultural identity of the nation.

By the end of its first year of existence, AAP had twenty members, artists from different fields. AAP applied for and also received some funding from the Foreign Ministry of Finland. AAP arranged several meetings with the local artists. It organised six art & craft - exhibitions (the first art exhibitions ever in Chimoio). It participated twice in the exhibition of the International Day of the Environment organised by the Ministry of Environmental and Gender Issues. It also participated three times in the annual fair of Chimoio and has twice won the first and once the

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<sup>33</sup> In the mid-90's the unofficial (real) exchange rate of Metical was 1125 Mts to the United States Dollar

third prize with its pavilion. Four workshops were arranged in batik, *sadza* painting<sup>34</sup>, *papier-mâché* and fine arts. To celebrate its anniversary, two special African Night events were arranged in the local restaurants, with Mozambican music, dance and food. In May 1997, a permanent Women's Workshop *Mudzimai* was started as a sub-project of AAP. The aim was to encourage unemployed women to generate income from craft production and at the same time to improve the quality of local craft products in general. Before *Mudzimai*, female participation in the activities of AAP was almost non-existent.

In November 1995 the association opened an office in Chimoio. In March 1996, a part-time administrator was hired to take care of the office and to organise the activities. As a result of the batik workshop, AAP received an order from the Provincial Health Directorate to produce all the curtains for the newly opened Training Centre. This was a big step forward in the long process of becoming economically independent.



**Fig. 4.4 AAP exhibition of craft**

### **Setting up the AAP**

We had our first meeting in the provincial library of Manica. The library was situated in the same building as the Provincial Directorate of Sports and Culture and was known as Casa da Cultura. It was a beautiful colonial villa surrounded by a balcony and shadowed by jacaranda trees where the workers would gather when there was nothing better to do, which happened a lot, as the yearly allowance the government addressed to provincial directorate was enough for the insufficient salaries of the staff but did not cover the running costs of any activities. The office was equipped with a couple of pencils and a few blocks of paper - and that was it.

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<sup>34</sup> A batik technique where maize porridge is used instead of wax



**Fig. 4.5 AAP batik experiments**

Getting people together in Chimoio was always a problem. The *bairros*, the hut settlements around the city centre, were extensive, and the bad roads not always accessible by cars, especially during the rainy season. There were practically no telephones; the mail system didn't reach the *bairros*. Distributing invitations was a painstaking process even in the city of Chimoio but to reach the people in the scarcely populated rural areas of Manica Province was difficult and time-consuming. When we started, there was no funding available and no other resources excluding my car and the limited financial input I could provide. Mainly because of these practical limitations we decided to focus the AAP activities in the area of Chimoio.

We had managed to reach about twenty artists and artisans and other people involved in culture and most of them came. The atmosphere could perhaps be described as slightly hopeful. I am sure that the participants did not have many expectations as many of them had previous experiences of seminars that led to nothing. On the other hand, at the time, the AAP was the first culturally focused organisation in the province. Local art and culture were attractive phenomena among socio-culturally aware expatriates and it was easy to draw their attention to cultural activities. But there seemed to be little interest in improving the then situation, which to me – along with many others - seemed quite poor overall.

How poor it really was, was something we expected to hear from the artists. We did not have any reports, figures or studies to base our operations on. We could only use the information we got from observing the reality around us and from discussing it with the people. We talked to the artisans, we saw how they worked, and under what conditions they lived. The artists were poor, but so was everybody else.



**Fig. 4.6 The administrator of AAP, Carlos Manuel, showing his potato print experiment**

### **The initial communities of woodcarvers & tinsmiths**

Whereas the other artisans normally worked on individual basis, the woodcarvers and tinsmiths were organised as small cooperatives. It is evident that some sort of joining of forces (*juntar as forcas*) had been common among the woodcarvers' community even before Samora Machel's time. The woodcarvers in Chimoio were successors to the noble trade of Maconde carvers, who originated in the North of Mozambique, in the plateau of Mueda south of Rovuma-river. The tribe of the Maconde created an art form that is unique in the East African art. They are particularly known for the so-called Mapico-masks used originally in the male initiation rites. These masks are rarely sold in open markets and are nowadays available in exclusive galleries in Maputo and in art museums. There are also statues that reflect the characteristics of the matrilineal society of Macondes. These statues that are today available mainly in black wood, take the form of a female body full of figures of offspring of the family (Westbärg, 1987).

In Chimoio, a group called *Artistas do Contentor* (the container artists named after their workshop which they had installed in a container) had gained a reputation in sculpting but also in carving objects of black wood, such as boxes, crucifixes, and jewellery. Unlike the other woodcarvers in the area, they hardly used lathes and carved their work with their hands, which was extremely heavy work considering the hardness of the black wood. The container artists became active members of the AAP.

The local tinsmiths produced items for everyday consumption, such as water containers, dustbins and cooking pots. Even though their products were not aimed at the tourist markets even but some of them did sell their goods on local market places unlike the other artisans.

## Text Box 2.

### Stories: Jorge Gulambondo

In 1994, Jorge Gulambondo owned the only shop that sold craft in Chimoio. Jorge was an activist, artist, businessman and the head of a large family. His energy was overwhelming: he seemed to be into everything and would talk about his plans and ideas with endless enthusiasm. Galleria Shikisa, the shop, provided the basic income for his family. When I met him in 1994 he was struggling hard to support his extended family. While his two wives and other members of the family worked in the shop, Jorge travelled all over the Manica province and even to other provinces to look for things to sell. He didn't even own a bicycle. He was on the road practically all the time and would travel with the transport available, even if it meant sitting on the top of a pile of coconuts in an old truck for the 1.400 km trip from Chimoio to Maputo. Everybody in Chimoio knew Jorge and the local craftsmen would visit regularly and sell their supplies to him. Jorge also ran the dancing group Shikisa, a regular performer at parties and known for its *kwaza kwaza* – dance. He organised training in embroidery for single mothers and in tapestry for unemployed young men. He taught traditional drumming and dancing to the children of his *bairro*. Every Saturday the children would sing and dance for the public and they performed at all the festivals that were arranged in the area.

The Shikisa gallery could be found the best selection of local craft available in Chimoio. It was a modest bamboo construction – but with a shining tin roof. One could easily see the sunlight through the sparse wall and the mud floor would constantly raise dust. In the rainy season everything - excluding the hard black wood items - would become wet and mouldy and at any time the termites would eat whatever they found in their way, and especially anything made of bamboo.

There were ceramic pots of all sizes. Small pots for cooking a baby's meals, bigger pots for cooking relish, still bigger ones for making maize porridge, and giant pots for water and the traditional maize beer, *ndoro* and *maheu*. The pots were burned on open fire and their colour varied from a smoked black to a brownish red. They were heavy and thick but not especially resistant and many had cracks in them. They had a nice round shape and some of them had even rough ornamentation. There were baskets made of bamboo canes - usually full of small round termite's holes - and beautifully shaped flat reed baskets in all sizes - usually covered with mould. There were bags and purses and hats made of reeds and dyed with either gentian violet (a common disinfectant with intensive colour - presumably stolen from local hospitals) or a liquid made of cooked carbon paper. There were beautifully carved wooden spoons and ladles with burned ornaments. In addition, there was black wood: statues in complicated Maconde style and an endless variety of masks, crucifixes, elephants, and crocodiles. There were useful objects like ashtrays, jars, mortars and candleholders carefully turned from black wood, with a smooth surface, polished with floor wax for a shiny - and sometimes sticky - finish.

There were also white embroidered napkins and tablecloths with flower and bird ornaments and tapestries made from old rice sacks and cross-stitched with acrylic yarn from second-hand sweaters - of all the colours available in the local flea market. The embroideries and tapestries recalled their Portuguese origins, and the turned black wood objects go along well with the heavy, and perhaps a bit gloomy Portuguese style of furnishing. While popular among the local people, these products were generally not appreciated by the tourists, who usually wanted to buy something that was *African* - and, unlike other people - seemed to have a clear vision of what it was.

To the agony of the neighbours, the gallery expanded. Over the next few years Jorge opened a health practice for traditional medicine, a bar, held various workshops and a kindergarten for the children of his *bairro*. Jorge knew how to negotiate with donors. He never missed a meeting, seminar or training session of any kind. If he was too busy to attend, he sent someone else instead. He wrote long and abstruse project documents and requests. When the governor had official guests, Jorge's gallery was the place where he took them. Whenever the expatriates needed curios, Jorge's gallery was the place to get it.

Finally Jorge Gulambondo had fulfilled his dream: out of a small shop had come a complete cultural centre with different activities. The centre was named *Cabeça do Velho*, after a mountain in Chimoio that resembles an old man's profile. But Chimoio was too small for Jorge and so he started another project in the nearby town, Gondola. He set off to build a huge bamboo gallery in the middle of the market place.

Jorge was successful. When I last met him in 1998 he had gained weight (a clear indication of social ascension in Mozambique), had a bicycle, two sewing machines and a good job as the President of FOCAMO, an organisation co-ordinating the activities of local NGO's and generously funded by the Irish NGO Concern. The spirits were indeed favourable to him: after two daughters a healthy son was born to the family. He continued travelling but now by aeroplanes instead of coconut trucks. He did not have time for his shop anymore and when I left in August 1998 the expatriates complained that there was nothing for sale there anymore.

## **Marketing**

In an initial survey done with the artists, some other problems were identified. Marketing the products was the number one issue mentioned by the artists. In Chimoio, excluding the Shikisa Gallery, there were practically no places to sell craft on an organised basis. Unlike many other provinces, in Manica the tradition of regular craft fairs (*feiras*) had not - for some reason - developed. The locally made goods that were needed in everyday life, such as clay pots or tin containers for cooking and fetching water were normally bought straight from the manufacturers. Practically every *bairro* had their own potter and a tinsmith. The baskets were mostly made in other Provinces, normally in the south in places along the coastline like Inhambane where proper reeds were grown, or in Tête along the Zambezi-river where there is intense bamboo production. The peddlers loaded with baskets, bags, purses and hats were a regular sight on the streets of Chimoio.

The woodcarvers and *batik* makers aiming at tourist markets used to sell their products from door to door, which required a lot of time and was not always efficient and productive.

According to a common view, the tie - dye- fabrics - or *batiks* as they were erroneously called - were things worth making. These fabrics with vague patterns on white background were much appreciated by the local people but the price made them unattainable for the majority. The prices were high due to the high cost of material but also due to the general practice of overpricing, probably an outcome of the comparatively large foreign community living in the country, working with the massive aid operations. In any case, what was considered as a reasonable price varied and rarely had anything to do with the factors normally regulating the prices, such as demand and availability.

## **Materials**

Lack of material and proper equipment was often mentioned as one of the biggest problems among the artists. It seemed that quite a lot of time was constantly wasted on waiting for the money needed to buy material and equipment. The *I-would-if-I-could*-mentality was relatively common and if my observations are correct, more common in areas that had been assisted by foreign help.

Imported material such as paints, dyes, varnish, nails, wire and glues were relatively expensive and hard to obtain, especially in the rural areas. As a constructive result of the chronic lack of material, there existed a vivid tradition of the creative use of waste material. Tins, tyres, junk aluminium and plastic bags etc. were used in many imaginative ways to produce goods needed in everyday life (such as oil lamps, kettles, toys, and decorations). This was a lifestyle where nothing was thrown away: old newspapers were used for papering the walls and plastic bags for patching the thatched roofs.

There was also a vast variety of natural resources such as sisal, roots, leaves, and seeds that could have been used e.g. for craft production. The people, however, preferred commercial material. In one community, the reason for not constructing a fence around the vegetable garden to keep the goats out was that there was no money to buy the chicken wire. The use of traditional (and easily available) fencing material such as bamboo, was not seen as an option - and the goats kept eating the valuable tomatoes.

### **Transport**

The lack of transport is a general problem all over sub-Saharan Africa, but especially in post-war societies like Mozambique. Public transport was insufficient and private vehicles rare. Draught animals such as donkeys or oxen - not to mention horses - were not commonly used in Manica Province, for reasons I am not familiar with. In urban areas wheelbarrows and push carts were generally used for transporting, say to get the goods to marketplaces. Skinny men pushing huge carts with sweat on their forehead was a regular sight in the streets of Chimoio. To buy one was usually beyond the means of the locals and thus they were rented.

Due to the war many of the roads and bridges were in a poor condition, cut and even in some cases still mined. During the rainy season the floods frequently cut off the access from the rural areas to the marketing centres. The transportation of products and raw material was thus expensive, hard to get and unreliable. This was a general problem, although there are huge differences between the districts. The woodcarvers especially complained of the difficulty of getting timber for their carvings. They had to transport heavy trunks of black wood and due to the growing demand for firewood in the Chimoio area, the wood had to be fetched from far away, as close-by forests had been cut down during the war, when the countryside was not accessible.

AAP tried to encourage the artists to join forces for their mutual benefit, for example hire a truck or a tractor. This, however, turned out to be difficult. The cooperation between the different cooperatives and individual artists in the artisan community seemed to be problematic, and the various communities did not trust each other in terms of joint commitments.

### **Quality**

The different views about quality were a constant challenge. The foreigners, who seemed to have surprisingly clear vision of what they wanted, constantly criticized the sculptors. The complex and skilfully made Maconde statues were seemingly too complex for them. They wanted to fill their suitcases with masks, animal figures, boxes and ashtrays. When it came to sculptures, they preferred reproductions of Masai-warriors or hunters with bows and arrows even though these were not indigenous in the region.

This context is certainly not favourable for risk taking or preserving one's own esthetical preferences. The artisans were entirely dependant on (Western) customers. If the laborious

*Maconde* carvings of black wood were not to the taste of the occasional customers, the carver had no other choice than to start carving something that the customer did like, for instance sculptures of *Masai* warriors that the customer had seen in a tourist shop in Harare. While adaptation to customer demand is indeed one of the preconditions of success, the carvers were not always happy with the feedback they got. They considered themselves as *artistas* and their artworks as one-off pieces that could not be copied or modified to the changing taste of visitors. The surprising readiness of many Western visitors to propose changes to artefacts suggests their failure to contextualize the objects as *art* – a similar reaction in the context of Western art would hardly be considered as acceptable.

### **Mudzimai**

In May 1997, a Women's Workshop *Mudzimai* was established as a sub-project of AAP. The aim was to encourage unemployed women to generate income from craft production and, at the same time, to improve the quality of local craft products in general. The initiative of the project came from the women themselves: one day a group of women came to the office of AAP and expressed the wish to learn to make *batiks*. Eventually the two-week batik workshop became a permanent Women's Craft Workshop as the women stayed with the project and showed interest in learning new things. Out of the seven women, five stayed with the project until the end. The women were mostly single mothers, unemployed, without any experience in arts and craft, excluding embroidery - which seems to be a basic skill among the Mozambican women.

Through the course of time several craft techniques were experimented with: tie-dye *batiks*, *sadza* paintings, jewellery, doll making, embroidery and *papier-mâché*. For the sake of sustainability, the focus was on products made of locally available, low cost, natural material, such as seeds, seed pods, sisal and waste material like newspapers, telephone cables, jute sacks, and the like. During the first year of the project the emphasis was on product development and on marketing. Even in the absence of organised craft markets in Chimoio, the sale of the products from Mudzimai was satisfactory and the women managed to earn desperately needed cash income.

In July 1998 a major exhibition was arranged in Chimoio with the theme *As mulheres sabem!* (Women can do it!) as the launch occasion of the Mudzimai project. The total sale over the one-week exhibition was more than 400 USD (5 000 000 Mts), which was considerable under the economic circumstances<sup>35</sup>. The experience was important and encouraging and shows that there was, under certain conditions, a demand for craft - and emphasized the need to establish a permanent selling site.

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<sup>35</sup> An average monthly wage at the time of the research was about 40-50 USD.



**Fig. 4.7 A sadza-painting made in the AAP workshop**

The work with the women's group was rewarding, challenging and exciting. It was also frustrating, disappointing and stressful. It was rewarding to follow the process of learning, to see the women find their way in the jungle of artistic expression. It was also exciting to see the ideas the women came up with all by themselves. It was challenging to try to create products out of practically nothing, in a situation where there was no access to even the basic materials (paints, glues, brushes, fabrics), either because of the high cost or unavailability. Waste material (telephone cables, wire, pieces of zinc) and natural materials found on the ground such as seeds, bark, roots, coconut shells, sisal, seedpods found their way into the production.

Towards the end of the project, the women could not - and did not even want to - continue to work as a group. Starting a co-operative was suggested to them several times but it was met with little enthusiasm. They wished to work as employees rather than run a business alone. This can be understood considering the difficult economic situation in Mozambique today: to receive a salary every month is surely a more attractive possibility than trying to deal with business in a very unbalanced society, where envy is the most destructive force. They especially found selling the products a problem, and it was extremely difficult to encourage them to sell their products on the streets, which, unfortunately, was the only option for selling craft in Chimoio at the time.

Mudzimai had common problems with many other projects. In a situation where the only income came from the sale of the products, there was no time for product development and marketing. There was also the constant problem of the differences in taste between my local colleagues and myself. Another topic of regular debate was the question of quality. In the West, quality may sound like a clear concept but in Mozambique people had very different ideas about it. The aspects people valued in the products appeared to be different from those valued in the Western countries. The attribute *bonito* (beautiful) covered all items that were considered as appealing, whether or not they were well made or not from the Western point of view.

## 4.3. Vanuatu

### 4.3.1. The country

Vanuatu is a small island state, situated in the South Pacific, between Australia and the Fiji islands. I stayed there during the years 1999-2003.

The World Bank has estimated that about 18% of the Vanuatu labour force is non-active and only 21% work in the formal sector. Of the rest, about 60% work in the informal sector, including various semi-subsistence livelihoods, craft making in the urban areas being one of them (Rofeta 1989; World Bank, 1992). It is estimated that less than 10% of the time is used for income generating activities in the informal sector (including craft production), which, at the moment, augments rather than replaces other sources of livelihood (UNDP, 1999).

According to the Pacific Human Development Report (1999), craft production in Vanuatu suffers from all of the typical problems of informal sector businesses in developing societies; the productivity and profitability are low, innovations few, and entrepreneurial skills insufficient. In Vanuatu, as in the other countries in the Pacific, a shortage of skills results in a conservative attitude and lack of innovation and ideas for new businesses. It is also visible in the copycat or bandwagon effect, where perceived successful businesses are replicated and copied, resulting in rapid overall saturation.



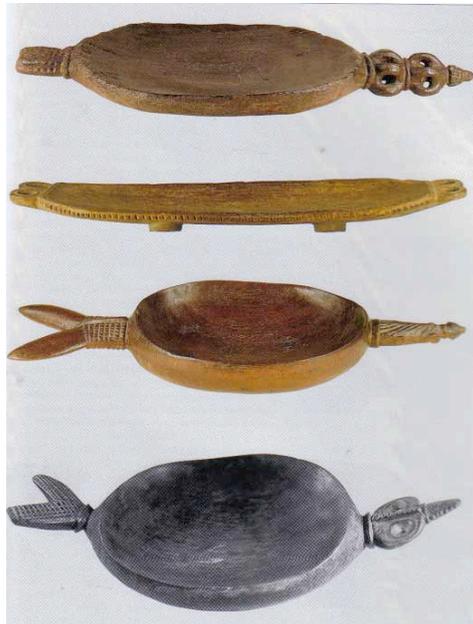
Fig. 4.8 Map of Vanuatu

At the time of my stay, Vanuatu imported rather than exported craft. Unfortunately, no thorough studies have yet been made of the commercial aspects of the Vanuatu craft industry and as to why countries such as Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands, both ranked lower in the UNDP Human Development Index, seem to have better competitive status than Vanuatu in this sector. A common complaint from the expatriates and tourists was that the craft products of

Vanuatu were of poorer quality than those in other Pacific countries, such as Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, that also have significant exports of craft products to Vanuatu.

The first natural reason for this is that, while Vanuatu, with its 190 000 inhabitants, while being a relatively large small island developing state, is small when compared to the Solomon Islands (440 000) and particularly to PNG (4.5 million), having a longer history of tourism. The second factor is that the tourism industry in Vanuatu is somewhat younger and less well established than in the other two countries. The organised craft trade started in the Solomon Islands in the 50's (Kupiainen, 2000, 228), but in Vanuatu only thirty years later, when the Handikraf Blong Vanuatu (HBV) started its operations and opened the first retail outlet specialising in local crafts.

Another reason is the structure of the tourism. Approximately half of its tourists (in 2001 a total of 53 000), come to Vanuatu with the cruise ships that anchor exclusively in the capital, Port Vila, where, instead of a homogenous supply of locally made custom artefacts, they find a colourful mixture of souvenirs originating not only from Vanuatu but also from the other Pacific Countries and the Far East. The competitive situation is not very favourable for the indigenous Vanuatu artisans, who cannot compete with the Far Eastern items in prices or with their neighbours in quality.



**Fig. 4.9 Indigenous Vanuatu woodcarvings**

There are also cultural issues that probably have an impact on the craft industry and might explain the differences. The entrepreneurial mentality in Vanuatu differs from that of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon islands, where life has been harder and the options fewer.

*“In Vanuatu no-one needs to work for cash for their survival. The people are seemingly relatively affluent, a contributing factor to the lack of success of craft workshops - a common problem in Vanuatu.”* (private discussion with Ralph Regenvanu, the Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Center,)

From the point of view of global economy, Vanuatu is in the same situation as its neighbours and faces the same challenges as the other small island developing states. The islands of Vanuatu each have their unique traditions and traditional artefacts were still being produced for their original (ceremonial, utilitarian) purposes, even though some skills were apparently fading away due to the apparent process of modernisation (e.g. production of tapa cloth that has been replaced by the imported fabrics.).

#### **4.3.2. The craft markets in Port Vila**

The majority of artefacts in Port Vila were sold through formal retail channels, owned mainly by the Chinese or the expatriates. The only substantial exceptions being the *Hebrida Bazaar*, where local women sold their craft items, mainly shirts and dresses of hand painted fabric that had become popular in the area. While the bazaar was a lively place and well worth visiting, the product variety was somewhat monotonous. The influence of the local (but Russian-born) artist Alioko Michoutouchine and his Melanesian partner Pilioko was clearly visible in the products, to a point that they appeared to be copies of their style (see fig. 4.12.).



**Fig.4.10 Michoutouchine gallery in Port Vila.**

There were the Handikraf Blong Vanuatu (HBV) shop and the Museum Shop at the Cultural Centre, with some interesting and, indeed, authentic island art and craft. Some hotels organised

craft fairs or gave individual artisans the opportunity to sell their products on their premises. Souvenirs were also sold in the central market place but the supplies consisted mainly of non-traditional curios (plastic dolls, coconut shell decorations and plastic hula skirts etc.). The expansion of the market place in 2003 expanded the trade of traditional artefacts like carvings, and it will remain to be seen if it will develop into a substantial art market, where *kastom items* (traditional items, like carvings and weavings) will be sold in the manner of the neighbouring Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. At the time of my stay (1999-2003), there were no such art markets in Port Vila.

In many cases the retailers were not very particular with the origins of the products and "*Made in Vanuatu*" stickers could be found on a variety of foreign made items. In some cases the tourists are deliberately misled with a brand name such as "*Exotic Art Gallery Vanuatu*" that had nothing to do with Vanuatu but promoted the sale of artefacts of South and South-East Asian origin.

There was a relatively steady local market for useful items such as baskets and mats. While these items were available in various outlets in Port Vila, their supply was not particularly stable and the supply did not necessarily represent the Vanuatu weavings in its full range. A customer interested specifically in *Futuna* baskets or *Ambrym*<sup>36</sup> mats needed luck to find these specific products in the market (or had to order them specifically, sometimes with extensive leading times).

In Vanuatu, training in craft has followed the same paths as everywhere in the developing world: the apprentices learn skills from masters. The *kastom raet* system, indigenous copy right system, created special conditions for this practice: the traditions are controlled and transferred from one generation to another through ceremonies not open to everyone. While the *kastom raet* system was in itself viewed to be a valuable way to protect the cultural heritage of Vanuatu however, it did seem to limit the reproduction of the art and craft skills by restricting and controlling them. The regulations had an impact especially on the younger generation, who were not allowed to express their opinions and were thus denied the right to freely interpret the custom and create their own modifications of it - a necessary condition for sound development and evolution in art and craft.

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<sup>36</sup> Islands in Vanuatu



**Fig 4.11 Goods on sale at Handikraf Blong Vanuatu Vanuatu**

There are several issues that challenge the export endeavours in Vanuatu. The traditional craft techniques (of which carving and weaving are the most important) are not easily adapted for export purposes. Local *Ni-Vanuatu* artisans are not very well equipped to compete. Weaving and carving are labour intensive and time consuming techniques. The volumes and profitability were low. The artisans are not organised and the supplies are unsteady. The cost level in Vanuatu is high, which results in relatively high prices. This makes it difficult to compete with other countries in the global markets of ethnic artefacts. Competing with, say Kenyan sisal baskets that are by far more resistant than the fragile *pandanus* baskets in Vanuatu and yet cheaper, is an example of the challenges the Vanuatu artisans will face in the global markets.

### **4.3.3. Handikraf Blong Vanuatu (HBV)**

In September 2001, after two years on Vanuatu, I was requested to do a consultancy in capacity building for the *Vanuatu Crafts Development Association*, a non-profit charity, by the then Chairman of the Board, The charity was started under the initiative of Vanuatu National Council of Women (VNCW) to gather support of the island artisans, particularly women. The initiative was strongly supported by the government wishing to maximize the benefits of tourism and give the Vanuatu people a chance to take over the souvenirs business. The governing body of the association was a committee, which consisted of representatives from several governmental organisations.



**Fig. 4.12 Handikraf Blong Vanuatu shop after the renovation**

To sustain its operations the Association, registered in October 1982, opened a retail outlet named *Handikraf Blong Vanuatu* (HBV) in Port Vila. HBV was the oldest craft shop in Port Vila and the only one owned and operated entirely by the indigenous people of Vanuatu. There had been, in the beginning, a General Manager to run the shop, with the help of 1-3 shop assistants. For the first two years, the Association received technical assistance from Canadian NGO *Canadian University Students Overseas* (CUSO) and financial assistance from the British High Commission and Australian High Commission.

For the first decade the project was self-sufficient and even profitable but gradually the operations declined. Due to the worsening financial crisis, the decision was made to ask for technical assistance in order to restore sustainability. As a Consultant, I went through HBV files as presented by the Acting Manager and had regular discussions with her. I made observations of the everyday proceedings in the shop: the customer service, interaction between the producers and the Management. I evaluated the display and appearance of the shop, and the quality and the selection of the products. I prepared a plan to address the most urgent problems in the shop and assisted in its implementation. The action plan included a quick renovation, which was carried out in three days.

After the facelift, I saw the need to address the other problem, the insufficient management skills that hampered the everyday operations - a problem that had also been frequently addressed by the Committee and the Acting Manager herself. With the help of FSP and authorized by the Chairman, I found a candidate for the position of General Manager, who was

appointed as the Interim Manager in December but, due to several problems, started his term only on January 7th 2002. The Acting Manager became increasingly unwilling to cooperate with the new management team and our work was only possible after she went on her holiday. I worked in the shop with the Interim Manager between 7th of January until March 8th, authorized by the committee, with the aim to liquidate the old stock, increase the cash flow, assess the business and make suggestions for the future. This work was planned to last until April but was terminated earlier, as the Acting Manager refused cooperating with us. As a result of this situation, the Interim Manager resigned.

From March 8th, I focused on preparing a proposal for a national craft project, based on an earlier proposal prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) that had failed to receive funding. This proposal aimed to continue the work of HBV but on a more sustainable basis. I also continued attending the Committee meetings where the difficult situation of HBV was discussed. In April the Committee made the decision to terminate the Association and close the shop. The Manager was given the opportunity to buy the shop at a price that corresponded her severance pay (which, at the time of this report, was still unclear). This was seen as the only way out of the difficult situation that was quickly worsening as the reserve funds were being drained.

The key limitations in the work were the unavailability of some basic documents (e.g. annual reports) and the uncooperativeness of the Acting Manager. As a Consultant, I did not have free access to the project archive or a chance to interview the manager, the key person in HBV. The difficulty to get the busy Committee members together for meetings was another problem, which resulted in extensive decision-making delays.

### **Lessons learned**

The work on the consultancy assignment felt the impact of the operational environment common to developing societies in general; constant changes, general unpredictability, and lack of resources, together with an inbuilt inertia created blockages that were difficult to overcome. The final outcomes of the Consultancy evolved very differently from the Terms of References; in retrospect one could say that no other course of action was possible, given that the ship that was to be rescued had already gone under.

Handikraf Blong Vanuatu operated nearly for 20 years, and as a pioneer of craft development in Vanuatu deserves full credit. HBV had survived for two decades in the hard competitive environment of Port Vila, dominated by the Chinese and expatriate owned businesses. The reasons for the problems and ultimate failure can be found in the organisational structure, and in the inadequate planning within the organisation. The original project included both a commercial and a developmental component; it was never possible to realize the latter. At the end of the day, the retail outlet, HBV, ended up being the only concrete activity of the Association. This was unfortunate, as the business could have benefited greatly from a strong

developmental component. Workshops and training would not only have resulted in better quality and product variety but possibly also in lower product prices due to repeat business and volume.

In the initial years of the retail operation the quality was an issue that was regularly addressed by the management. There was, apparently, no particular need to create mechanisms for product development during the first years of the operations, as there was practically no competition in the retailing of local craft at that time. This situation changed drastically when the first competitors opened shop (particularly the art shop *Connies's Art Blong Yumi*, opened in 1995 by an Australian woman). The planning of the project failed to equip HBV with proper tools to survive. The organisation structure was not supportive to evolution and change, and the relationship between the shop management and the oversight Committee of the Association gave too much space for personal intrigues that finally wrecked the whole Project. The Committee members, all busy high level officials, were apparently not committed to their duties and did not possess sufficient expertise to support the management. The Management was not adequately trained and did not possess the needed skills. Due to these reasons, the business concept or the management strategies were not revised to accommodate changes in the operational environment. HBV remained unchanged although the world around it evolved rapidly.

By the time the consultancy began, the situation at HBV was serious but not entirely hopeless. With brisk action the retail business could have been saved. It should be noted that the ultimate reason for this failure could be found in personal relationships. While the root of the problem can be located in inadequate planning and other shortcomings in the organisational sector, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that the Project was finally wrecked through the strong position and influence that the Acting Manager had gained in the organisation.

The Manager's strong presence, reinforced by her 19-year history in the organisation, and inability to accept and adapt to changes, became the ultimate obstacle for the Project to take its operations into the new millennium. The Manager's influence is apparent in the Committee's decision to terminate the Association rather than the Manager's contract and the transfer of the shop from the Association to the Manager's private business. Such a move can only be justified (or understood) as a manifestation of indigenous problem solving mechanisms, *the Melanesian way*, where the complicated interaction between people set the parameters for the course of action and the dignity of an individual is considered as more important than the Western concept of financial sense, fair play, justice, or common good (see e.g. van Trease, 1995). These processes are difficult to fully understand by a person not entirely familiar with the local culture, and this was the most important lesson learned from the Consultancy that, indeed, failed to bring sustainability back to the organisation. The Vanuatu Council of Women took over

Handikraf Blong Vanuatu management but after a few months of struggling, the business was finally closed in 2003.

#### **4.3.4. The Natangura Carvers**

The Natangura project, hosted by the NGO Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP) was one of the projects consulted for by the author in Vanuatu. Initiated by the Coordinator of the organisation, a number of unemployed men were introduced to carving Sago palm seeds, referred to as *Natangura* by the natives, which is also known as vegetable ivory. It is a hard white material relatively easy to carve. Palm seed carving, while quite common in Zimbabwe and Asia for example, is not widely used for craft purpose in the South Pacific.

As most of the tourist craft business in Vanuatu was in the hands of Chinese retailers, who would sell imported artefacts from the Far East, there was a niche for indigenous souvenirs made in Vanuatu. These were rare in supply and accessible only in few shops in Port Vila.

The Natangura struggled hard to become self-supportive although it remained dependant on the support of FSP. The designs were mainly naturalistic images of turtles and dolphins with a glossy coat of epoxy or varnish, resulting in a plastic-like appearance. The natural texture of unvarnished Natangura palm seed is quite rich and beautiful. The product range varied from pendants, earrings to napkin rings and brooches. The plastic-looking jewels had too much trinket-character to justify the relatively high prices.

One of the basic problems, that had been identified by some external advisors, including myself, was product design. In 2003 Jeff Liew, a visiting consultant for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), made a brief assessment of the project. He suggested that they consider making “more expressive and one-off jewelry items rather than little trinkets being done would also be also worth exploring – there is so much artistic expression in Vila – so they don’t have to do boring things like carving little dolphins after dolphins.” (Liew, 2003, personal email to K. Reijonen).

Liew considered the products too ordinary, having only curiosity value and appealing to restricted consumer segment, “old hippies, odd curious tourists and development types who feel compelled to purchase” (Liew, 2003, personal email to K.Reijonen).

Eventually a technical assistant, an economist, was appointed to assist the project. His duties were not limited to marketing but included also product and package design, for which he had no training. The artisans were professional woodcarvers, but *Natangura* carving was new to them. During this 2-year assistance, Air Vanuatu included frangipani-brooch and -earrings in their catalogue and a new packaging concept was developed to add to market value. The carvings were packaged in indigenous-looking baskets, woven in the outer islands and made of *Pandanus* palm leaves. The new packaging received good response but there were problems

with the inconsistent supply and quality. The island women had their own ideas of what was meant by a good basket and these were sometimes in contradiction with the aims of the management.

Despite the attempts to increase the sales, the business remained barely profitable. The sales continued to be low. Liew writes in his assessment report:

“The (hotel) Le Meridien sales point presents an interesting comparison between the natangura product and the other lady who makes and sells necklaces and bracelets from various natural seeds and shells. From my fleeting inquiry and curiosity, I believe she makes more sales than the carver. No mystery here – hers is cheaper per unit, more versatile, main-stream, simple yet reasonably attractive product. Being a woman sitting on a mat threading seeds may also help with sales. This is despite the fact that there are so many other people making and selling the same products in the market – even cheaper there.” (Liew, 2003, personal email to K.Reijonen).

To tackle the challenge, Liew suggested turning the Natangura-products into high value products. Liew did not see any necessary bearing between the labour-intensiveness and price – pricing being dependent on what people were willing to buy. Liew’s recommendations included establishing a unique identity by emphasizing the story behind the carvings and the altruistic nature of the project that generated income for unemployed men in the marketing write-ups – and continuously addressing the main problem, quality. In terms of product development, Liew suggested new product concepts, such as the Japanese *netsuke* miniatures that were usually carved from ivory. Natangura was an ideal substitute to this banned material. Netsuke is, however, a competitive product category, where high quality and refined aesthetics are taken for granted. Contemporary designer jewellery was also suggested as well as more native, chunky ethnic style with seeds and shells. For this, however an European designer would be required. More emphasis on marketing was needed. Liew suggested making a CD ROM of pieces with good quality images, artist biography, description and price, and sending this to various art galleries in the South Pacific area. The presentation and displays should be classy *ethnic chic*, in the manner of some curio shops in Suva (Fiji Islands) where young talented artisans are employed to supply the stores and additional products are bought from sub-contractors. Liew’s comment: “if you have a great layout, even junk looks good and can be priced accordingly” is unorthodox but probably also an honest reflection of the conditions (Liew, 2003, personal email to K.Reijonen).

My role in the project was that of a volunteer assistant who visited the workshop occasionally to assist the carvers. We spent numerous afternoons together, discussing ways of making the practice more profitable. I gave the carvers a workshop on indigenous art, showing them slides of the products their ancestors had made in pre-colonial times and examples of Maori bone carving.

The different and contradicting ideas of product development became the ultimate obstacle for the cooperation. As an example, I commissioned a copy of a whale tooth -necklace I had seen in the book *Arts of Vanuatu*, thinking that the Natangura nut would be perfect material for whale tooth imitations as it is the right size and shape. I promised to pay the carver ten times more than what he earned for the dolphins. This idea was rejected. He looked at the image and refused. When I asked why he had declined it, he said he did not like the carving and thought it was ugly. The fact that it was indigenous appeared irrelevant to him. After several discussions and experiments, it became clear that the carvers considered the indigenous Vanuatu designs as ugly and preferred to carve dolphins and turtles.



**Fig. 4.13 Natangura carvings**

#### **4.4. Summarizing**

The stories in this chapter visualize the colourful ambiance of craft development in developing societies. All of the initiatives, the AAP, *Mudzimai*, the HBV, and the *Natangura* carvers failed in some aspects and were successful in others. Projects or similar initiatives can fail (or succeed) on two levels. First, there is the failure to implement the project effectively within budgets and according to the plan. Second, when this implementation has been completed but the initiative fails to achieve the effects intended. Responsibility for failure to achieve the effects intended lies more often with the planners and designers than managers. According to Paul (1983) the most important factors contributing to success are a supportive environment, a flexible, realistic project strategy and set of objectives, an appropriate organisational structure and effective management. There are usually both internal and external failures. The internal failures are susceptible to influence and control by managers and planners. The external failures are not. These include the cases where there is no high-level political commitment and/or where there is a lack of strong, supporting oversight, enabling management and support to leadership. Some times there is a cultural misfit between the project's objectives and a lack of local knowledge and understanding, leading to the rejection of the project by the intended beneficiaries.

#### **Products**

I was not only involved in the administration of AAP but also in the production of the artefacts and the experiments of each craft technique that we explored. For days, weeks and months I sat on the ground with the artisans making the *papier-mâché* bowls or jewellery, talking to them,

and listening to what they had to say. Though my position was one of a volunteer it would be wrong to say that I was one of them. I was in many ways a very privileged expatriate and the authority that came with my origin and perceived wealth was never explicitly questioned. That it may have been implicitly questioned was something I often pondered.

The case of HBV showed the difficulties that craft development endeavours frequently face: the sponsors (the foreign agencies and the like) and the sponsored (the beneficiaries) may not share the same notion of art and craft as-a-class-of-objects. While the foreigners may be excited about the skills they find while in alien cultures, their understanding of the artefacts is likely to be superficial and subject to fallacies, as Viktor Papanek (1995) has pointed out. According to Kupiainen (2000), the artisans are likely to reject product ideas they don't understand and cannot relate to (Kupianen -Reijonen private email, 2003).

One of my main discoveries was that craft making, while fascinating and in many ways exciting, was also a very problematic notion. There quite simply did not appear to be a common ground applicable to the phenomenon known as craft. The equivalent of craft in Portuguese is *artesanato*. The difference between the words *artesanato* and *arte* were unclear. The artisans (*artesões*) were often called *artistas* (artists), notwithstanding what products they made. The tin makers, basket weavers and traditional healers were all called *artistas*. The case of the HBV shows that the management did not have a clear idea of craft. The difference between authentic artefacts and ethnic knick-knacks was not as clear as often thought. For a native Vanuatu person, *kastom* can mean many things (see Kupiainen, 2000, Nicholas, 1991), while a Westerner often expects authenticity and originality. Of all industries it appears that traditional craft is one of the most controversial and difficult ones. As an example, Portuguese style embroideries and turned wood objects were constantly marketed as *Cultura Africana*.

The other problem in Vanuatu is, paradoxically, the very industry that keeps craft business alive: tourism. In the Vanuatu tourist markets the demand for costly and original island craft was low, while cheap curios were in high demand. Vanuatu craftsmen had become dependant on tourism. Vanuatu is a remote set of islands, which makes exporting difficult. There was local demand for craft items, particularly for mats and baskets, but these were usually exchanged, not bought and sold with cash money. And cash money was needed for many purposes, most importantly for school fees.

### **Capabilities**

Western aid workers were commonly called *cooperantes*, reflecting the idea that development should be a cooperative endeavour, and about a horizontal rather than vertical change of ideas. The interaction between my partners and myself was mostly respectful as the *cooperante's* input was usually appreciated. This does not mean that at times the cooperation necessarily happened with a mutual understanding. The difficulties in communication were obvious, and in many cases linked to language issues. While most of the people living in Chimoio could speak

the colonial language, Portuguese, in rural areas the situation was quite different. The Manica province, shares a culture with northern Zimbabwe, and *Shona*, a *Bantu* language, was mainly spoken. There were many other local languages as well, as there was a huge settlement of immigrants in Manica province and other areas along the so-called *Beira-corridor*, a pathway from Harare to Beira that was guarded by Zimbabwean troops during the civil war.

The Western – Non-Western interaction in the development context is framed by many issues. The impacts of poverty (malnutrition and disease) and war-related social problems were constant challenges. In Mozambique I worked with people who had been subjected to the many and unthinkable horrors of war, ex-soldiers who had been involved in cruelties and women and children who had seen their families killed. The colonial history affected our work and our lives in general, particularly through its most visible results, the over-whelming bureaucracy and corruption (see de Soto, 2000).

Behind these visible and obvious problems there was the complex net of relations of power and domination, tracing back to the first contact and colonial times. This tedious power structure between the haves and have-nots needs to be addressed, perhaps through Bourdieu, known as the conflict sociologist, as he sees the competition and the following conflicts as the basic features of social life. Bourdieu's notion of capitals defines the way people interact in the society, and he considers the cultural capital as the most important, and it includes multiple capacities (such as knowledge, taste, habits etc) that are accessed through education and social relations (Bourdieu, 1986). When the capital is generally acknowledged, the power struggle is transformed from the level of individuals into social institutions and the strategies of domination become indirect. One could say, then, that there was a barrier between myself and my local partners, which prevented us from interacting on the same level.

From the HBV case can be concluded that the success or failure of a project depends mostly on the skills of management. The fate of HBV reveals that management of a craft project in a Non-Western country sets requirements that are not easy to fill for even an experienced and educated person. The crucial question is the concept of craft. The case of HBV illustrates the problems that are created when a Western notion of the value of craft collides with the Non-Western. Nowhere is this conflict more visible than in the endeavours aiming at developing craft. In Vanuatu, the *kastom right* system, and the concept of *kastom*<sup>37</sup> sets the boundaries for any development endeavours.

The observation I made in Mozambique was that practitioners with a family history of art or craft making or formal education in the field, often identified themselves as *artistas*. Because of the lack of local art and design schools, there were a few practitioners who had been trained

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<sup>37</sup> The term “kastom” is a bislama word deriving from the English word “custom” but with a wider scope of meaning, ranging from traditions and local culture to conventions and norms (e.g. Kupiainen, 2000).

in Portugal. Such an ascribed professional pride was difficult to bestow on those that had been introduced to the industry later in their lives, and/or had no family ties to it. Craft making appeared to be just another form of physical labour, which had a relatively low status (when compared to more valued work, such as office work and nursing, that requires formal education and was therefore not open to all). Craft (*artesanato*) did not have the same obvious appeal to the people in Mozambique as it had for the Westerners.

### **Constraints**

I was constantly confronted with the differences between Western and Non-Western conceptions. I have already referred to Norman Sheehan's comment on the inability of the Westerners to understand Non-Western (in this case, Australian Aboriginal) art. He considers language as an important signifier of this difference. Sheehan notes that an object in English language is always a noun, while many indigenous artefacts can best be described as a verb<sup>38</sup>. As Levi-Strauss has written, the choices that different societies make cannot be compared as they are each a valid answer to a locally experienced problem. He considered the misunderstanding between “the East”<sup>39</sup> and the West as a primarily semantic problem: “the concepts of ‘signifiers’ that we try to propagate in the East refer ‘signified’ which are different there or non-existent” (Levi-Strauss, 1973, 148).

It was clear that in the extreme hardship of post-war Mozambique, development projects were seen above all as financial prospects, to be used by local parties as survival strategies. While it is difficult to assess the impact of AAP on software issues such as empowerment (that are extremely difficult to measure), the possibilities for earning money through the AAP activities were probably the most appealing incentive to the local artisans and artists.

As previously stated, for many AAP members, craft making was not a particularly attractive option for income generation. On the other hand, there were groups of artists that had worked in their own field in an uncompromising manner. The Container woodcarvers were one such group, continuing the *Maconde* tradition with dignity and dedication. Given that the markets were limited and their artistic attempts were restricted by what was popular in the expatriate community at any given period of time, their determination can only be admired. The Container artists were conscious of the cultural values of their work and the many compromises they were forced to make, to develop their artwork into more lucrative directions must have caused distress in their workshop.

The fact that post-war Mozambique was highly dependant on outside help had a certain impact on the general mentality. People tended to see the organisations more as sources for funding

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<sup>38</sup> Sheehan on PhD-design@jiscmail.ac.uk debate list on 8/2 2000

<sup>39</sup> Levi-Strauss uses the term East to denote the opposite of the Western world. See discussion on p. 7

their enterprises than anything else. Due to the shortcomings of the local banking system -and in the midst of extreme poverty - the possibilities for ordinary people to receive credit was practically non-existent - which left the people with no other choice than to turn to the numerous foreign organisations in the hope of receiving support for their enterprises.

However difficult it was to get external aid, it was much more complicated to keep things going without it. People were desperate to find money. This desperation along with the good will of some foreign NGO's resulted in bizarre situations. When an American NGO, focused on women's issues, came to Chimoio on its mission to help Least Developed Countries women, it generously declared that it would give away considerable sums of money for funding women's projects. An occasion was arranged where more than 100 women arrived, not only for the free Coke and sandwiches but to get their share of the aid money this project was offering. I saw desperate women with hastily prepared project proposals, mainly for rural development. I don't know which of them - if any - were successful.

In Manica Province one easily got the impression, that the Mozambicans had not commercialized their culture the way many - or even most - of the other African countries had. Many rituals were taboos for foreigners. It is possible that this had saved performing arts and certain religious rituals from becoming corrupted but on the other hand, the extreme poverty created probably unfavourable conditions for preserving such phenomena.

## Chapter 5: Three cases

The second set of cases is different from the previous set, in that the study examines three documented cases from a distance, with the only (physical) touching points being the artefacts produced in one of the cases. From the immersion of the previous cases, the research turned into reading evidence from a more conventional, established perspective of relative objectivity. Objectivity is referred to as being relative, as the documentary evidence is socially constructed (an example is the media coverage in the New York Times on the Golden Eye project), and the artefacts are examined also from the researchers personal perspective and experience. This implies that the value sets of the researcher come forcibly into play in the research set up, data analysis and interpretation. As mentioned in the methodology section, the types of evidence available in this case set (physical artefacts, documentation, archival records) limits the use of the construct somewhat. However, as missing data is not an issue, the construct is seen to be applicable and has been used without modification from the previous case sets.

### **5.1. Introduction: The three cases**

In the context of the study, the researcher was repeatedly confronted with the problem of the products not meeting the requirements of global markets. Craft making simply appeared not to be a very lucrative business. The category of non-essential items and decorative artefacts (of little practical use) turned out to be more problematic than had been anticipated. This was a product category where the mutual understanding of what makes for a good product appeared to be the weakest. Decorative items are usually chosen for their external qualities and appearance, and thus the question of taste and aesthetic preferences have a strong impact, particularly in this sector of products. In this section, three cases are used to map the terrain of the craft development. They illustrate the problems of craft development, each from different perspectives, while sharing the common firm belief in the potential of craft to alleviate poverty. On the institutional level the three cases are very different: *Golden Eye* was a one-time experiment that only lasted for a limited time, *Weya* was a project, and *Dastkar* is a society. The degree of involvement of external parties in the cases varies; the *Golden Eye* was a joint venture between Western designers and Non-Western artisans, while *Weya* was supported extensively on design by an external party, and *Dastkar* in a fully indigenous affair reaching for global markets.

### **5.2. Trickle down, Golden Eye**

A starting point of the Golden Eye Project was the attempt of the young New Delhi designer, Rajeev Sethi, to improve the business of the many impoverished artisans he saw in the crowded marketplaces of New Delhi. Could the wisdom incorporated in the traditional artefacts be

transferred to objects that would appeal to consumers in the West? This was by no means a new question. In 1883 a Briton, E.C.Buck, wondered how to adapt the oriental workmanship and designs to products that would have modern utility in the Western world (Sethi, 1985).

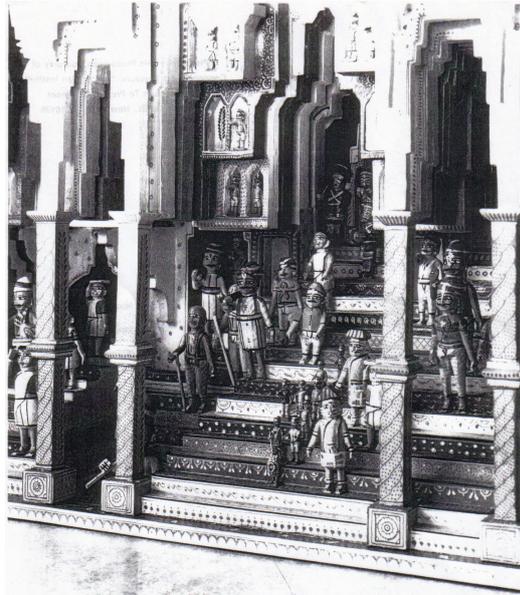
Sethi was concerned about the decline in the quality of Indian craft products. In 1985, he wrote that catering to the Western desire for ethnic items had not been favourable for the development of indigenous Indian design. Craft had degenerated into the jammed category of *ethnic craft* (Sethi, 1985).

Craft is one of the major export items in India. At the time of the Golden Eye project, there were an estimated 15 million artisans in the country, involved in craft exports worth 15 billion Rupees. The basic question behind Golden Eye project was whether it would be possible to increase the understanding of the overseas markets through a cross-cultural dialogue. Sethi interviewed artisans and found out that there was a need for such a dialogue and that the artisans needed new markets, as the urban centres absorbed labour force increasingly from rural villages, where the fields were not able to provide the growing population with food anymore. The craft industry, traditionally restricted to lower castes, now attracted even those from upper castes (Sethi, 1985).

Building bridges was not going to be easy. “Foreign influence has always been accommodated with a measure of caution and concern in India”, Sethi wrote (Sethi, 1985, unpaginated). This did not discourage Sethi, however, as for him change was inherent; foreigners may have left behind chaos, perhaps, but also new traditions. As Sethi noted, forms will change as preferences modify over time and functionality and usage aspects develop; things are evolved through dialogues, and designers can act as interpreters and catalysts in cross-cultural contexts (Sethi, 1985).

Sethi sold his idea to the Delhi based Golden Eye studio and the Crafts and Handlooms Corporation of India Ltd., which in turn contacted the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of New York. The project team decided to ask assistance from the highest ranked designers of the time: Sir Hugh Casson, Mario Bellini, Frei Otto, Jack Lenor Larsen, Bernard Rudofsky, Mary McFadden, Charles Moore, Ettore Sottsass, Hans Hollein, Ivan Chermayeff and Milton Glaser.

Workshops were arranged, experiences exchanged, prototypes designed and manufactured, and then everything was sent to New York, to be displayed at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum (see figures 5.1., 5.2.) A major exhibition was organized, under the patronage of the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President Ronald Reagan. Jackie Kennedy and some Indian Maharanis were also involved. The occasion was part of the India Festival and was considered an important milestone for Indo-American cultural relations. It received extensive coverage in the media and raised a huge debate.



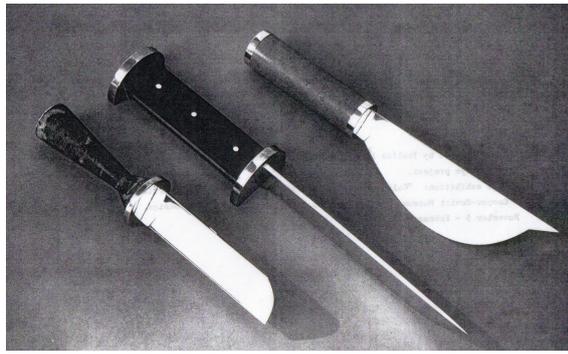
**Fig. 5.1 A Golden Eye product. Design by Charles Moore, artisan unknown**

“A patronizing event”! “Another case of “pasta imperialism!” , “Forgery”, wrote the Craft Journal (Courtney, 1985). “Another foreign intrusion”, exclaimed the Indian architectural community (Ghose, 1998). Indian Times did not agree with the concerns but asked: “Can India be depleted of its riches and robbed of its strengths by a handful of well-meaning men who are coming to learn and transmit rather than loot and take away?” (K.D.S., 1986)

“Was it such a good idea after all - to mate East and West”, asked John Russell, the New York Times art critic, after having what he called a “horrifying moment” in front of a piece dedicated to Henri Matisse, made by the artisans from Agra. With its “spastic forms, rancid colour and niggling execution”, Russell suspected it to be “one of the most hideous things ever put in an exhibition” (Russell, 1985, unpaginated article). The *demonic cheese knives* (fig. 5.3.) designed by Ettore Sottsass, however, made him conclude that it would be a “bad day for all of us” to lose the skills that brought such remarkable designs into being (ibid).



**Fig. 5.2 Golden Eye products. Papier mache boxes by Glaser and Chermayeff, artisan unknown**



**Fig. 5.3 Golden Eye products. The demonic cheese knives by Ettore Sottsass. Artisan unknown.**

The results of this example of Indo-American collaboration were never taken into production. Similar to the boldest design statements of the 80's, they remained as show pieces, to be collected by the wealthiest connoisseurs, but not manufactured in big quantities - hence the claims of forgery (Courtney, 1985). The designers involved became (even more) famous, though the initiative was controversial. But even in the 80's, which many consider as the era of high design and the low point of social design, assisting Least Developed Countries artisans must have sounded like a responsible thing to do.

The Golden Eye project, then, failed in its mission to generate international markets for craft products, but it is unclear whether this was because of the adopted strategy itself - asking the internationally acclaimed designers to provide a face lift for Indian craft- or because this strategy was poorly implemented? The critics argued that in spite of the high-profile patronage and government involvement, there wasn't enough political will or commitment to realize the project. The project ended where it should have started, in the high-profile exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum.

One can also ask whether marketing was ever seriously addressed. There were ideas to develop a long-term strategy, based on a designer-oriented National Directory of Crafts, to bring together the designers, craftsmen and producers. These ideas were never implemented. The reasons for this are unknown. Whatever the original intentions were, the marketing strategy seemed to have relied on the international reputation of the Western designer stars, with the apparent premise that the names of the haute auteur, would be enough to catapult the products they designed into marketing success.

If it had managed to save traditional skills, generate jobs and alleviate poverty, the minor patronizing details linked to Golden Eye project would perhaps have been forgiven. While it is obvious that mistakes were made, the scope of the critique seems somewhat out of proportion, revealing perhaps more about the critics than about the event. There was something about Golden Eye that seemed to have particularly irritated the Western media. Interestingly, in India the reception was far less critical. Rafique Kathwari, an Indian designer originally involved in

the initiative, commented (private email) to the researcher on 1.10.2004: “Intrigued that you call Golden Eye controversial. Never thought of it in those terms”.

Sethi himself, in a conference paper (Sethi, 2005, unpaginated conference paper) described the project as being “conceived to strategically position the sub-continent’s unique traditions of craft skills as a muscular vocabulary capable of supporting the most contemporary imagination of architects and designers everywhere”. He regretted that China and Southeast Asia later overtook his initiative to give a creative edge to arts and blamed India’s *short-term quick-fix* approach for this, as it has consistently left out the commercial aspects of craft development.

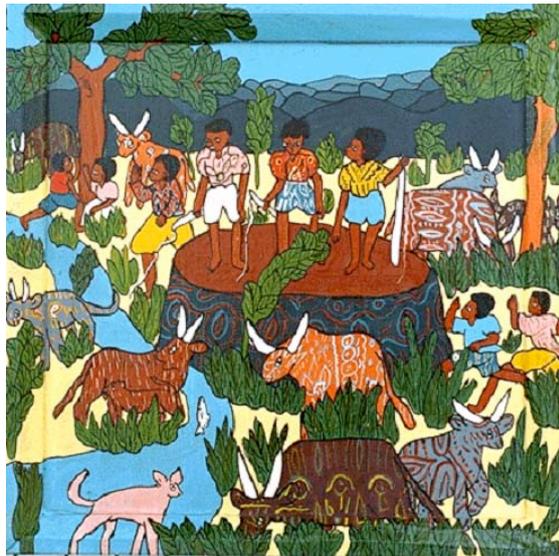
For Sethi the collaboration between Western designers and Non-Western artisans was not a problem. In an interview almost two decades after Golden Eye project he said: “There is no conflict. I am not living in two different worlds. My world is one where a master stone craftsman, like Kesariya Ram, works on designs created by Mario Bellini” (Bhandare, 2003, unpaginated article).

### **5.3. Weya**

In the 90’s, Zimbabwean craft was well known for its joyful and funky designs. There was one particular range of products, a Weya-style that featured colourful figures and village scenes that attracted special attention. These products were made by a group of women, in the poor communal area of Weya, in rural Zimbabwe. The Weya style was the outcome of a project initiated by a German arts teacher Ilse Noy, who taught sewing and painting skills at a training centre for unemployed women. This training centre was located in a rural communal area, known before as tribal trust lands (effectively native reserves), characterized by being overpopulated, poor and with few options for livelihoods and income generation (Noy, 1994).

She writes of the background of the Weya project: “I came to Weya at the end of 1987. Several women who knew me from earlier visits approached me asking for a course that would not only save costs but would earn money. I would like to have developed a type of art or craft based on traditional crafts, such as pottery or basketry, produced by the women of Weya. Unfortunately these skills have been lost. The only crafts actively practiced by the women were knitting or crocheting. Although the stitches are often very complicated, the whole product looks so little “African” that it will never sell in Western market “(Noy, 1994, 18).

The above quotation from Ilse Noy, the *Outsider* behind the project, illustrates the starting points. First, the primary motivation was to generate income. Second, the chosen means to achieve this was craft making. Third, as the traditional skills had been lost and the presently applied skills were not viable (not *African-looking* enough), new product concepts needed to be discovered.

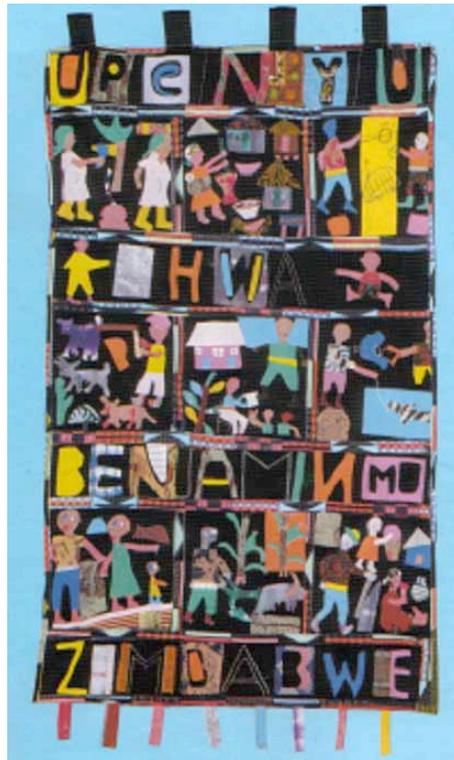


**Fig. 5.4 A Weya painting**

The project was successful. The uneducated women were catapulted into unexpected fame with their applications and paintings that many considered as significant contributions to the contemporary art of Zimbabwe. In April 1989, the women had a major exhibition in the National Gallery in Harare, becoming the first female African artists ever to exhibit there. Not only did the Weya phenomenon have an impact on fine art, it also left a significant mark on craft. The Weya style was copied by a number of artisans, in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Southern Africa. The Weya embroideries and appliqués were particularly popular, but also tin mugs and plates and even beer bottle corks have been painted in Weya style.

The Weya project was an attempt to revive traditional *African* style by introducing an embroidery technique that was new in Zimbabwe at that time. Noy found the formula in a publication of traditional appliqués from Benin, West Africa. The aim was to replace the usual garment making that was not lucrative but still a popular means to generate income among rural Zimbabwean women, with a new technique, one that had more market potential.

Not only did the Weya project reach the set aim for income generation, it also evolved into a relevant means to process the transition and change that took place in modernizing Zimbabwe. The Weya women were able to touch delicate and taboo-like matters in their applications and paintings in a way that would have been impossible to do orally.



**Fig. 5.5 The first Weya textile work**

Despite all its achievements, the Weya project has also been subject to criticism. Ilse Noy herself acknowledged the difficulties caused by operating at the problematic crossroad of craft and art, where the question of authenticity and commercialization arises (Noy, 1994). Brenda Schmachmann, who organised an exhibition of Weya appliqués entitled *Material Matters*, followed by a critical book with the same name, categorized Weya art as *tourist art* in the sense that the artifacts were made primarily for visitors to Zimbabwe rather than for the residents of the country (Schmachmann, 2001, 55). This, she says, has probably contributed to the tendency not to award the Weya artefacts the status of art. The Weya women started with appliqués, which Schmachmann considers a problematic product category, having denigrating implications of being made by women rather than men, or being regarded as craft rather than art. Similarly, these products are inauthentic rather than authentic and considered as tourist art rather than objects of material culture (Schmachmann, 2001).

Following Graburn's taxonomy of the Art of the Fourth World (see figure 2.6), Weya paintings would probably be positioned in the category of commercial fine arts, that is, artefacts made for sale, while still adhering to culturally embedded aesthetic and formal standards or reintegrated arts, new syntheses, hybrids of tradition and modernity. The Weya style is naive, child like, colourful, narrative and sympathetic. They are visualized narratives, reflecting the power of the African story-telling tradition.

Scmachmann has also found the collective nature of Weya art as problematic, though it appears to be an appropriate, perhaps even ideal, social arrangement for art production in rural Africa, where work is shared by people and individual success is not always encouraged. In (Western) art market individuality is nevertheless valued (Scmachmann, 2001). Collective art such as the Weyan art, doesn't fit to the modernist conception of art based on the notion of individuality and the idea of *auteur*. The Weya project started as a collective but later took a more individualistic direction, as the women started making their artwork on their own, in their own homes. Whether this is, as Schmachmann argues, because the individual art works had greater value in the art market or because there was jealousy in the community, is unclear.

Hemmings (2004) argues that Weya shared the problem typical to many other similar projects of framing the economic opportunities for women by assumptions about the suitability of work for them. Needlework is an industry that has become gendered as female only after missionary influence (Nettleton, 2001). Needlework was introduced to the African women on the pretext that it was suitable for ladies in the Victorian times. To consider needlework and other textile related skills, as inherently female in Africa is fallacious. Nettleton goes further in saying that in contemporary Africa needlework is considered as exclusively female only in collectives, aiming at external markets (Nettleton, 2001). Hemmings furthermore compares the Weya art to Zimbabwean stone sculptures, that are also of recent origin and rootless, without precedents, in the Zimbabwean culture. This relatively successful line of production is dominated by men and has proven to be far more lucrative than the Weya project.

Though Weya women generated small income, it was not enough to lift them from poverty in the long term. On the other hand it can be said that Weya provided the women with a possibility to process their experiences and express even taboo-like topics that could not be verbalized in their community. Weya can be said to have achieved empowerment, both in (short-term) economic and social terms. There was also another problem of sustainability: Weya relied heavily on its foreign facilitator, the Outsider as Schmachmann calls them, and when she left, the project ran into difficulties of management. Whether it is because of this or for other reasons that the project's continuation has been uncertain, is unclear. The most recent news is that Weya in its original form has ended.

#### **5.4. Dastkar**

According to Ghose, Golden Eye project fits into the trickle-down model of development, where the achievements of the elites are expected to slowly reach the marginalized, leading to a general well being and prosperity (Ghose, 1998). In Gereffi's model of global value chains, Golden Eye can be positioned closer to the buyer-driven approach, where the supplies are modified to match the market requirements, than the supplier-driven approach, where the makers seek markets for their existing products (Gereffi, 1994).

An example of a decentralized, supplier-driven approach, and building on centre-periphery thinking, is another Indian craft project called Dastkar. It shares the same general goals as Golden Eye project in protecting indigenous craft skills, but operates through different means (Ghose, 1998). Dastkar started out as a pressure group, based on the conception that the security and solidarity of operating in the local markets took priority over an exposure to the complex and volatile external markets. It was Dastkar's mission to make crafts a part of everyday living in the local communities. At first exporting was ruled out.

The strategy of Dastkar is based on the belief, made explicit on their website [www.dastkar.org](http://www.dastkar.org) that, craft, while being marginalized due to urbanization and industrialization, possesses great potential and strength and is vital to the economic mainstream of the country. Dastkar was set up to help craftspeople use their traditional skill-sets as a means of employment, income generation and to enable economic independence and self-sufficiency. The strategy was to adapt the products to new uses and markets. In Dastkar, craft is seen as not only a cultural or economic but also (and perhaps especially) as a social force, with craft revivalism being seen as an internal agent of social transformation and an indigenous solution to social and economic dislocation (Ghose, 1998).



**Fig. 5.6 Dastkar products from the online store**

According to the Dastkar, the ultimate rationale for supporting traditional craft making is the fact that so many artisans (23 million in India today) depend on it for their livelihood. The competitive advantage comes from the existing skills and raw materials, making the products both aesthetically appealing and affordable. The original focus was on providing the

communities with assistance in marketing and product development to boost the local demand, which, according to Dastkar, is the only way to make the industry sustainable. In recent years, however, Dastkar has changed its strategy. It is now their wish to find a niche in the global marketplace.<sup>40</sup>

On the opening page of their web site, Dastkar places the emphasis not on products or commercial aspects, but on the organisation and its aims. In the first sentence of the opening page, the mission statement is summarized: “A society for crafts and craftspeople Dastkar is a registered society that aims at improving the economic status of craftspeople, thereby promoting the survival of traditional crafts” ([www.dastkar.org](http://www.dastkar.org)). In the website, we see images of women dressed in indigenous Indian clothing, making traditional craft items. Dastkar is dedicated to preserving traditions but it also wants to appear as a dynamic organisation, that understands the demands of the modern consumer. They announce that the traditional skills need to be adapted to suit the tastes and needs of modern consumers. For Dastkar, design is not about making pretty patterns, but about technique and function.

To the frequently asked question why would craftsmen with centuries of skilled tradition need outside intervention at all, the Dastkar answer is that tradition is a springboard, not a cage, changing constantly. The production has to respond to the changes of markets, consumer lifestyle, fashion and usage and in this process, designers are needed to interpret the changes to craftspeople physically removed from the external, new markets. Designers are seen to have access to museums and books, and are able to provide ideas and stimuli for creativity and innovation for the craftsmen. They are also needed to harmoniously incorporate traditional motifs, colours and shapes into products that appeal, in price and usefulness, to the widest possible market.

The website has an online shop with a product range that most people would identify as Indian or, more generally, ethnic. The selection is diverse, featuring a wide range of products from shoes to furnishings, from jewellery to toys, including sequined purses, leatherwork with ornaments, and Indian style sandals, among others. Dastkar aims to ensure that products are competitive, in cost and utility, and that consumers do not buy out of compassion.

That compassion is needed, however, becomes apparent in the way Dastkar is presented in the media. A sentence in a web advert says: "If you want to sport the ethnic look and help the weavers of the State, head to Dastkar sale" ([www.dastkar.org](http://www.dastkar.org)).

The Dastkar design and product developments are based on traditional motifs, techniques and cuts. According to the website, this strategy has turned out to be problematic. For instance, women's traditional skills such as sewing, embroidering, appliqué, crocheting, knitting and

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<sup>40</sup> [www.delhi123.com/shops/shahpur/dastakar.php3](http://www.delhi123.com/shops/shahpur/dastakar.php3)

tatting are almost always used firstly to make cushion covers and tea cosies, even though most rural women have a poor understanding of tea cosies (not having seen a proper teapot before). The Dastkar answer is to make women understand the needs of today's consumers and the environments they live in, both of which might be very different from those of the rural artisans.

Dastkar criticizes the approach of producing decorative bric-a-brac, targeted for tourists and the urban elite, and consider the terms exclusive and ethnic as inappropriate constraints when marketing skills and products of 23 million artisans. The firm aim is to avoid the further marginalization of the growing number of artisans, and they note that restricting craft sales to only specific outlets like Government Emporia, the Crafts Museum or craft bazaars, is a mind-set that will only perpetuate the marginalisation of craft and their producers. Furthermore, selling through craft oriented outlets will limit the public's awareness of the cost effectiveness, functionality and wide range of products available.

## **5.5. Key findings**

The success of the projects should be assessed in relation to their aims. The ultimate aim of all of the three projects was to find new markets for craft products and to alleviate poverty through income generation. An important aim was to protect the crafts skills from disappearing. All three cases share the firm belief that craft has a cultural, social and economic potential for improving marginalized communities.

### **Perceived quality and distinction**

In Golden Eye, there was a deliberate attempt to appeal to Western consumers through designing products that would make a distinction in the craft market. The rationale for the Western design intervention was that Indian craft had become less than what it used to be. According to Sethi, the craft world in India at the time was caught up in a state of indecision (Sethi 1984). For some time, the traditional skills and forms flourished with the ethnic trends, which sustained the craft world for three decades after the independence. The interest in both the Western and the Indian market for ethnic and exotic bric-a-brac inevitably declined, whereupon the craft trade quickly tried to move into a Western design ethos, without a proper understanding of the skills and technology required to enter this new market (Sethi, 1985). Sethi proposed an instant fix to the problem, which failed and was considered inappropriate. In retrospect one can say that parading international design stars in front of marginalized Indian artisans probably was not the best strategy for an event that aimed to open a cross-cultural dialogue. That being said, many of the designers, particularly Ettore Sottsass, could hardly be called what Viktor Papanek sarcastically labelled as *instant experts* (Papanek, 1997, 84-5) - referring to Western consultants that pop in and out of development projects without managing to make any real contribution to anything but the expense account. The designers had been in India several times, had been deeply influenced by Indian mysticism and symbolism,

particularly Sottsass who incorporated these aspects in his own work. In one sense it could be said that Sottsass was trying to give back to India what India had given him.

Did the Golden Eye project achieve distinction with the products? The critique of the products was controversial, ranging from *hideousness* to *demonic* (in the positive sense). It is, however, difficult to draw any precise conclusions related to the quality from the reviews, as the main thread of the debate was not whether the product quality was adequate, but whether the approach overall was acceptable. It was dismissed by the critics as a patronizing attempt to cash in on the international reputation of top class designers (Ghose, 1998). The Golden Eye product range incorporated elements of indigenous Indian design such as gowns designed by Mary McFadden, decorated with Indian *zardozi* embroidery and hand-block prints (McGill, 1985) and a Hugh Casson cabinet lined with Indian silk and peacock feathers. It appears that Indian arts and crafts were used mainly as a source of inspiration for ideas of external embellishment. This was perhaps somewhat in contrast with the original idea to prove that traditional Indian crafts were alive and capable of fruitful collaboration with the 20-century designers (McGill, 1985).

### **Global vs local design**

Despite the strong aspiration of Sethi to restore the glory of Indian crafts by breaking the perception of the *Made in India*-label to mean cheap and shoddy, and his deep understanding of design as dealing with processes, not objects, the project relied on a narrow concept of design: giving the products a new appearance, a styling that would please the Western eye. The Golden Eye project did not get beyond formalist considerations. There were ideas for long-term action, such as the directory of local craftsmen, but this was never realized. Sethi also had planned to found a New Delhi based company for Western-Indian design collaboration; it is unclear whether this plan was put into action. The Golden Eye products were not anonymous (silent design) and there appeared to be more focus on parading the international design stars than celebrating the individual artisans that had actually made the products.

Ghose (1998) takes Dastkar and the Golden Eye project as examples of different strategies in terms of issues such as exporting and external design input. The core difference lies in their views of social transformation and responding to the rapid social and economic dislocation that is apparent in India today. Dastkar believes that the answer is in creating conditions for enhancing indigenous identities while the Golden Eye project considers the external intervention in a less critical way.

The perceivable quality is perhaps the weak link in Dastkar. This does not mean that the quality of the individual items would necessarily be low. Ghose (1998) writes that from the beginning the organisation had worked on keeping up excellent workmanship in embroidered and appliquéd cloth. Quality is also regularly addressed in the website rhetoric. The problem is therefore not a lack of or low quality but the fact that the products do not stand out in the vast supply of Indian craft. The way the website is set up does little to change this. For one thing, the

small and hazy images in the website probably fail to give a correct impression of the product aesthetic or quality. Secondly, the design of the website contextualizes the products into the category of ethnic chic. There appears to be an overflow of products whose identities remain unclear.

To the Indian consumers, used to more colourful and decorated style than the Westerners (Balaram, 1998), the products' sequined and ornamental style can be appealing. While exporting has entered into the Dastkar agenda, their eyes are also directed towards India's rapidly growing middle class, which, according to Dastkar, is in search of a link between India and the contemporary world. They provide a natural and growing market for utilitarian yet aesthetic handcrafted products that are competitive and cost-effective. Dastkar has grown into a fairly large and established organisation that sells craft worldwide.

The panacea is design. As mentioned on the website, helping artisans redesign their products means redesigning their lives. Dastkar, however, points out that design does not necessarily mean development. In the context of traditional craft the twin roles of designer and development person are not always synonymous though design can lead to development and development should be designed. There is, according to Dastkar, a conflict of function and responsibility.

Weya's approach was different, though it has not escaped from the critique entirely. The starting point of Weya is indeed interesting: a new tradition emerges in Africa, after an encounter with a European art-teacher (Ilse Noy), whose notion of authentic *Africanism* becomes a stylistic trend. While in Weya, the products were gradually developed in a collaborative effort; it was Noy's conception of *African* that led the process. The Weya women themselves opposed the Weya style until it became commercially successful. On the other hand, making Weya art did provide the women not only with a small income but also with a possibility to process their experiences and express even taboo-like topics that could not be verbalized in their community. Weya can be said to have achieved *empowerment*, both in economic and social terms.

In terms of economic and social empowerment, the short-term impact of Weya can hardly be questioned. In terms of sustainable and long-term business development the approach used appears more problematic. Weya based product development on aesthetical considerations, embellishing the exterior look of the products, making them match to a rather shallow idea of Africa. The techniques used, embroidery and appliqué, are both time consuming and labour intensive. As there was not a significant price premium for using these techniques, the end result was low productivity and profitability, particularly when contextualized in the tourist craft sector. The re-contextualization of Weya craft into the art category meant improved earnings for the women, though from the Western point of view the question whether the Weya paintings can be considered as fine arts, remains unanswered. They were exhibited in galleries

but even then, they were somewhat marginalized as *collective art*. After all, for the Weya women, the primary motivation to make artwork was income generation, not to be acknowledged as fine artists, in the Western sense of the phrase.

The aim of Weya was to produce artefacts that would appeal to Westerners. As the Weya art, in spite of its brief courtship with the Fine Arts sector, can best be characterized as tourist art, it was essential that the products met the expectations of the consumers. Ilse Noy rejected the embroideries the Weya women had made before, because they did not look *African enough*. The appliqué's of Benin, the models for the new Weya needlework, have become popular curios in the West African tourist markets, though in somewhat diluted form. Their bright colours and vivid characters have an appeal to tourists because they appear to correspond to what Westerners expect from African art. The same applies to Weya textiles and paintings. They are colourful and naive and their anticipated authenticity is enhanced by the fact that the texts attached to artworks contain spelling mistakes and errors (Schmachmann, 2001).

The popularity of the Weya style indicates that the quality was sufficient in its own category. There was also an element of distinction as in the existing markets for Zimbabwean tourist art, as Weya products stood out to an extent that they were copied. Weya can be said to have operated as a trademark or a brand but its impact remained local. Weya never broke into international art commodity markets during its relatively short life cycle, though this was never the intention either. Weya products were anonymous – it was Ilse Noy whom we knew by name, not the many women making the products.

### **Capability and creativity**

Nussbaum's original list of basic capabilities included senses, imagination, thought. When these are operationalised through the construct, they can be translated into creativity to make new products, involving a three stage approach of: i) seeing the value of new ideas; thereafter ii) incorporating new ideas into existing products; and iii) finally creating fully new products or significantly improved existing ones. There are issues in all of the projects in terms of enhancing creativity and developing new tools for product development.

In the case of Golden Eye project, the problem was the trickle-down model that the project applied. It is unclear whether there was true collaboration between the artisans and the designers. One has good reasons to believe that, given Sethi's deep understanding of design and his genuine passion for indigenous crafts (evident in his writings), simple cutting and pasting of Western forms into Indian craft (that many reviews referred to) was not the aim. The interaction appears to have been more complex, but we do not know any of the artisans by their names, and their true role and contribution remains unclear. The aim of the Golden Eye project was to give a creative edge to the indigenous Indian product design that had fallen into a state of indecision.

*The Golden Eye: an International Tribute to the artisans of India* – was conceived to strategically position the subcontinent's unique traditions of craft skills as a muscular vocabulary capable of supporting the most contemporary imagination of architects and designers everywhere (Sethi, 2005). The metaphor draws interesting parallels to Aristotle's distinction between *techne* and *praxis*. Sethi considers the knowledge and skill (*techne*) of making as capable of supporting the most contemporary imagination (*praxis*) of the architects and designers everywhere. For Sethi, the key issue is commerce, as it is not possible to save the crafts without it. One could perhaps say that his views on craft development are realistic. According to Sethi, China and Southeast Asia have since gained ground and overtaken the thinking behind the Golden Eye project, which is an indication of the evolution linked to craft and its inherently commercial nature (which includes competition as a driver).

### **Recontextualized techniques**

Weya was also concerned about the marketability of the products, and the very reason for exploring new techniques was that the present skills (e.g. knitting, crocheting and dress making) did not have enough appeal in the tourist markets. Due to the imports of (relatively) cheap second hand clothes the local dressmaking industry was in trouble and there were not enough local markets for embroidered textiles. Weya aimed to revitalize the sleeping African spirit, through introducing techniques that, while not being of African origin (appliqués and oil paintings) and hence not fully authentic, gave the Weya women a forum to express their creativity. The reason for not revitalizing the indigenous craft techniques (such as pottery and basket making) was that these skills had been lost in the community and replaced by the economically, and perhaps culturally, unsustainable industries such as dressmaking.

In many respects, Weya appears to have succeeded, as the project was educational from the start and based on collaborative skills development. Despite the success, problems linked to the self-esteem among women are documented by Noy. The women tend to see men as naturally more gifted in drawing than women, and some confess to approaching men for help (Noy, 1994). This is despite the fact that Noy constantly encouraged the women and praised their visual skills that were, in her opinion, superior to those of men.

The idea for the new designs came from outside but this can hardly be criticized as the Weya women themselves acknowledged the need for assistance. Nevertheless, the fact that the life-cycle of the Weya project remained relatively short and the project fell into difficulties after Noy, the outsider, left, indicates that the ownership of the project was unclear. The Weya women, whom we only know by their first names, had problems with the Weya products before they became financially lucrative. There probably were issues with the lack of commitment from the women, that later jeopardized the sustainability of the project. Though the Weya concept was a collaborative effort, it relied on the creativity of the external initiator.

Dastkar appears to be most problematic in the respect of creativity enhancement. While cultural and social sustainability were placed in the top priority of the projects, there is acknowledgement of the demands of the modern market place - at least on the level of the rhetoric. The organisation seemingly wants to appear as dynamic and understanding of the demands of modern consumers. This is translated into adapting the traditional skill to suit contemporary needs and tastes. Design is seen as a tool of matching technique with function. There is a consistent named effort on product development – modifying the products to meet global needs. This raises high expectations. The products we are presented with, however, are a selection of artefacts known from bazaar-style retail outlets around the world. There appears to be contradiction between the text and visual images on the websites. For a consumer looking for innovative, stylish, or even interesting or truly ethnic artefacts, the Dastkar catalogue is a disappointment. The Dastkar website design, as discussed above, does little to help the customer with an interest in genuine Indian craft.

### **Supporting access**

In terms of issues related to the access to trade knowledge and participation in global trade community, none of these three projects did very well. The Golden Eye project became a one-off experiment that did not live on after the exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. It is therefore difficult to estimate the fate of the products had they actually broken into the markets. The reception from the critics was controversial, to say the least, but as the debate concerned more the appropriateness of the whole approach than the actual characteristics of the products, it is difficult to draw conclusions. The reasons for the modest outcome of the Golden Eye project are not entirely clear. Sethi's own words can be interpreted as a lack of commitment to the Golden Eye mission. A private discussion with Ms Sunita Kaistha (March 7, 2008) revealed more complex and personal reasons for the partial failure of the Golden Eye project. The plan of the designer-oriented National Directory of Crafts to bring together the designers, craftsmen and producers was unfortunately not realized, and thus the lack of an institutional framework effectively stopped any further developments.

The Weya Community Training Centre hosted the project aimed at providing training in skills for supplementary income to complement subsistence farming. The Weya project was initiated as a cooperative with the aim of uniting the women under a common brand, for income generation purposes. The women got the first raw material on a loan and were advised to put a percentage of the sales aside for marketing and administration and for the purchase of raw materials (Noy, 1994). The Weya women can be said to have been equipped to act in the local economy and within the framework of tourist art. There were no plans to export – Weya was always meant to provide supplementary income and not become the women's main activity (though they often earned much more than their husbands, which in itself created certain problems of the power-structure in the local communities). This can be considered a positive

issue, and the control over the production remained in the hands of the women. On the other hand, it did not lead to long-term change in the conditions and it did not solve the problem of poverty in the long run.

In terms of enhancing practical wisdom of trade among the stakeholders, the Dastkar strategy is not easy to assess. We know that Dastkar's approach has been to make itself redundant, with the objective of making the craftspeople self-reliant, independent of both the commercial middleman and organisations like Dastkar to market and sell contemporary products directly. Dastkar does not embrace craft subsidies, and wishes to ensure that the end product is competitive in utility and aesthetic, while ensuring a worthiness of purpose and the need for its produce. On the Dastkar website many success stories are told. It is also frequently noted that income generation alone, even when allied to other developmental inputs from outside, does not rebuild the community spirit and confidence of marginalized people. They must share and participate, agree with and augment, eventually plan, coordinate and spearhead local activity and action issues for themselves. Dastkar communities are encouraged to become self-sustaining and they appear to market their products through their own channels, though partly also through Dastkar's own distribution system. To what extent the artisans can expect to be successful while relying on their own market channels is not quite clear. Dastkar is a brand name that gives the artisans a boost in the markets. Another issue is the kind of craft the Dastkar societies make. They are typical low-technology labour intensive techniques and while Dastkar has assisted the artisans with marketing, it has not extended the existing technical skills base. The dying skills have been a central concern for Dastkar.

### **Affiliation**

The artisans are part of their own communities and enhancing their sense of belonging is one of the main rationales that are used to defend the decentralized, small-scale craft production. Wherry (2003) has written how important social and cultural capital is for artisans to succeed. In terms of supporting the development of this aspect, both Weya and Dastkar deserve credit. That being said, from Noy's honest and transparent account it becomes clear that problems such as jealousy hampered the co-operation within the Weya community; similar issues have also been identified by Dastkar. The researcher's own experiences, particularly in Mozambique with a history of imposed cooperatives during the Machel period, indicate that cooperation and building up a common agenda is not an easy task, and at times not even possible, as people sometimes prefer to work alone and/or lack the mutual trust and respect essential for a successful cooperation.

Joining forces would appear to be a sensible strategy, particularly in resources-scarce communities. In a Western context, clustering and cooperatives have proved to increase the possibilities of success among SMEs (Beck et al, 2003, 2005). The question is how should the artisans become part of the global community, if and when they have export aspirations. This is

clearly a far more complex issue than the affiliation on a local scale. The artisans are marginalized and separated from global markets by many barriers, such as middlemen and intermediaries, local and global retailers, and, finally, the customers they never meet. The Golden Eye project aimed specifically at improving this: building bridges between the local artisans and the global design-community. Interestingly, this attempt was condemned as not being appropriate. While nothing is seen to be wrong with designers assisting artisans in rural Italy, such an intervention in a developing country raises questions (for a case in Italy, see Morone, 2002).

The Weya documentation clearly indicates that, even after their success, the women did not quite comprehend the requirements of the markets, or their new status as artists. This would imply that a new mental model would need time to take a root, and that interventions such as the Weya project would have to be thought out as extended term initiatives. As noted in the contextual review, the attempts to define any common thread of world craft have failed (Alfoldy, 2006). In the presentations of global craft the Non-Western artisans often stay in the margins, as curiosities and so-called *colourful natives* but not as equal partners with their Western colleagues. There simply appears to be too big a gap between Western and Non-Western artisans. The phenomenal success of British craftsmen during a craft fair in Trafalgar Square where craft products were sold for high prices may not be duplicated in India, as Jaitly (2005) notes.

### **Control over ones environment**

In terms of gaining decent, sustainable wages under adequate working conditions, Dastkar, in the light of the documents that are available, appears to have succeeded the best of the three. Golden Eye certainly aspired to these aims and, had the circumstances been more favourable for the realization of the long-term plans, could have had a chance to realize these aims. In the concept of the Golden Eye project, the added value due to the high design input could have made it more sustainable than lower distinction production. The relatively high price level of labour intensive craft products creates challenges for their market appeal. The products need to legitimize a high price and, as has been noted previously in the case of Pulesea Tekopo and by Randall (2005), the fact that a product has been labour intensive to make and celebrates high craftsmanship does not necessarily do so. If this were the case, the artisans would not need external assistance in product development in the first place, though marketing skills might still need supporting. The products are expected to stand out in the market. And in the case of Weya, this condition was fulfilled. Weya became a trademark, an easily identifiable style that resonated with the traveller's expectations of *Africanism*. Whether it was genuine or induced is perhaps not relevant, given that the ultimate aim was to assist the women in income generation. That the Weya phenomenon remained relatively short-lived is naturally a serious problem in terms of sustainability.

### **Constraints in asymmetric trade arrangements**

The ultimate challenge for craft producers is the asymmetric structure of world trade. Opportunities to access and compete in global trade are a function of the real capabilities of doing so. There are many inhibitors that prevent marginalised producers from taking full advantage of the global trade opportunities. At the same time, the division in the world between the haves and have-nots shows no immediate signs of disappearing, though estimates concerning this vary. While none of the three cases can correct the asymmetric trade arrangements, each of them have done something to ease the situation by providing the marginalized with assistance to improve their practice so as to better meet daily income needs. The contribution of projects with low technology, labour intensive production, such as Weya or Dastkar, is perhaps not drastic or permanent, but this does not in any way diminish their value as grass-root initiatives. Both projects have clearly defined scopes and aims and within these parameters the projects can be said to be successful on their own terms.

### **Product category lock-ins**

The problem, however, emerges when the perspective is changed from the micro to macro level. The problems of low-level, labour intensive production is that, as was seen in the contextual review, it is subject to market saturation, if product innovation is not introduced to a sufficient extent (Dawson & Greek, 1997).

In the contextual review, a tentative conclusion was made that the particular category of ornamental and non-essential craft products that has become representative of Non-Western craft, has become one of the key factors preventing the artisans from succeeding in global markets. Reasons for this are many and addressed in detail in the contextual review. The pre-industrial production mode and the vernacular aesthetics it implies are at the core of the problem. Southwell (1997) named it the *Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome*. The traditional assets of developing country artisans do not appear to have high market appeal in the market for craft consumables that are subject to constant trend variations, at least not in the high price category of fair trade. The appeal of ethnic products appears to be inextricably linked to the low price that the customers are used to paying for sweatshop products, such as IKEA's *hand made* bamboo bowls that are sold in Europe for three euros.

In terms of this dilemma, Dastkar appears to be especially problematic. Exporting is not the only strategy for Dastkar, but it rather aims to look for the best market for the existing skills that have commercial potential. The market can be local or global, and apparently Dastkar has sufficient experience to know that all producers are not able to cater to the varying desires of the unpredictable global consumer. However, the strong trust in the vernacular aesthetics makes it vulnerable in a world where traditions are considered as a fad - and where such fads are in and out of fashion, depending on the rapidly changing trends. The case of Anokhi referred to above revealed the difficulties for the traditional production to stay in tune with the hectic fashion

world. Additionally, Dastkar's diverse product category does not give a coherent picture of indigenous design skills, but has a bazaar-like appearance, that does not do justice to the individual artefacts.

In its own sector of tourist art, Weya, on the other hand, broke into new product categories, such as paintings and appliquéés, and developed a new style. While the actual product innovation was technically missing (in that the women stayed in the low-technological labour intensive needlework), the women in Weya not only learned new skills but also received tools for self-expression, which can be considered as empowerment. With Weya, the important thing is the coherent brand image, the *Weya look* that gave a boost to products and was also widely copied.

The strategy within the Golden Eye project was entirely different, and while the products resonated with the Western notion of Indian traditions and relied on the *muscular vocabulary* of craft, the outcomes were certainly new, hybrids of Western and Non-Western creativity. The project deliberately aimed to tone down the vernacular aesthetics and lift the products into the exclusive category of high design, with maximum added value effect.

### **Production issues & distribution**

A low perceived quality of the goods and an irregular supply are many times cited as two of the basic problems of Non-Western craft production. These are often structural problems rather than indications of missing skills. The global market puts small producers under enormous pressure and imposes expectations that are hard to meet, both in terms of the volume to be produced, and the small quality variation demanded. In the case of craft, turning into a more market-led strategy is also difficult for the fair trade retailers due to their commitment to particular producers chosen as a part of their development mandate. Not all the small producers can provide the global market with the desired products.

Achieving good quality is one thing, but maintaining it is quite another, especially in large quantities. The Weya women found it difficult to maintain quality at the standards that had become their trademark. It might have been difficult for the women to understand the quality requirements of paintings and appliquéés that were meant for consumers they rarely met and whose lives they could not imagine. The Weya products were not entirely the stakeholders' own inventions but something that had been induced from outside, though in a collaborative manner. It appears that the main motivation came from the fact that the business was lucrative, though the women did understand the intrinsic value of being able to express even painful and taboo-like matters. The Weya strategy was a compromise of market- and supply-driven, as the women were trained to develop new products themselves, though being systematically assisted in this by Noy. It is not clear whether market research was undertaken. Noy did not think of local markets due to their limited purchase power, nor was exporting considered, and the target market became the locally operating tourist market. The Weya products were sold by the women in the Zimbabwean tourist markets. While the actual marketing was limited, the positive

media coverage and exhibitions gave the project a market boost and led also to an increase in price.

The Golden Eye strategy appears to be market-driven, the idea being to give the public what it wants: Indian artefacts in the high design context, so as to ensure the maximum added value. It is not known, however, if market research was conducted, or whether the products were meant to be statements of their makers and designers' skills and creativity more than consumables. Some of the critique suggests this. There were plans to develop Golden Eye into a New Delhi based company for Western-Indian design collaboration, but as we know this did not happen.

The Dastkar strategy can be said to be supply-driven, though marketing is continuously addressed, as the customer is not expected to buy out of sympathy. Dastkar takes the existing skills base as the starting point and builds capacity to the prevailing framework. Given the complexity of both Indian and global markets, the challenge is daunting. On Dastkar's website, the difficulties in dealing with the most impoverished rural communities are openly reported. The problems were partly similar to those of the Weya community, in that in both cases the makers and the consumers seldom, if ever, meet. It is indeed difficult to design and make a proper tea cosy if one has never used such a thing. While Dastkar does not target tourist markets like Weya, there appears to be a similar gap between the rural producers and urban consumers as there is between the local and global markets, due to the enormous size of the Indian sub-continent. The ultimate aim of Dastkar is to make the producers independent and self-sustainable, but before this is achieved, the organisation provides market channels such as the cooperative shop, Dastkar exhibitions and Dastkar bazaars, where the makers are able to sell their products directly, giving them contact with their clients and getting first-hand knowledge of tastes and trends.

## **5.6. Summarizing**

While the three projects above share the similar aim of revitalizing local craft industry, they differ from each other in both their strategies and the products that result from the process. Quality was of particular concern of all the projects but the important question is that of distinction that has above been equated with desirability. Craft products are not necessities in the West but are rather purchased for their symbolic meanings and, perhaps, for their intrinsic beauty (Baxter, 1995). The Weya products can be said to have stood out in the Zimbabwean tourist market and even generated a style or a brand, though what their destiny would have been in the Western craft market is not clear. The Golden Eye products were meant to be bold design statements but they may have relied too heavily on the fame of their designers. Nevertheless, the products do stand out in the global craft market even today. Dastkar products on the other hand appear to have less clear an identity, sporting more the bazaar-style that has become the epitome of Indian craft.

All of the projects take local material culture as starting points, though from different perspectives. For Sethi and Ilse Noy, the widely available local craft skills had limited potential as they had become corrupted by the urgent need to generate cash money. The colonial impact has also resulted in transformations that did not do justice to indigenous craft skills. Because of this, change was needed. In the case of Dastkar, the assessment of existing skills and practices was less critical. No specific *Dastkar style* can be identified; the product range reflects the diversity of Indian craft, as it is perceived today, with minor changes in function and aesthetics.

Accessing markets and market knowledge was addressed in all of the projects. For Dastkar and Weya the aim was to make the artisans independent and self-supportive. The Golden Eye business concept is somewhat unclear as it was never realized but the aim of Sethi was to equip the artisans with the necessary skills to add value to the products.

The collaborative working methods that were applied in the projects through design intervention cannot escape the unbalance in power structure. The gap between the marginalised and affluent people is such that the bridges between them tend to become long and shaky. On the other hand, under the difficult conditions of extreme poverty, even small steps can result in empowerment experiences. In this respect, all the projects have certainly achieved positive results.

Weya and Dastkar have succeeded in small income generation, though in both cases the sustainability of the projects has been questionable. The labour intensive techniques result in low salaries though it should be kept in mind, that in absolute poverty any income is better than none and even a little bit may help the people to meet their immediate and most urgent needs. But as there are no reports of later success stories, it can be presumed that the projects haven't resulted in growing businesses and prosperity. Whether Golden Eye could have succeeded in this is unclear.

Golden Eye and Weya attempted to break the product lock-ins and both succeeded in this. For Dastkar, the somewhat uncritical trust in the vernacular aesthetics (as it appears today) makes it more difficult to open the existing lock-ins.

While Golden Eye and also Weya were market-driven, Dastkar can be described as being supply-driven in the sense that the while market demand has an impact on the products, the starting point is the existing product range. Dastkar however addresses the problems with quality, pricing and functionality and helps the artisans to get in touch with the customers, enabling feedback.

Projects such as Golden Eye are often criticized while the so-called revivalists, such as Dastkar, regardless of whether or not they have been successful by any measurable standard, are simply perceived to be doing the right thing.

## **Chapter 6: Craft development initiatives now**

The third set of cases examines the product being offered by Western companies. This section is thus concerned with what kinds of products are available, how they are marketed, and what seems to be the message that they are conveying to a potential customer. As noted in the research methodology chapter 3, this set of cases is the most straightforward of the three sets under analysis. The information is from the public domain, and the reading of the cases is intended to triangulate the findings from the previous case sets. As also noted previously, the reading of evidence allows only for a partial analysis of the construct elements, as the organisational and operational aims of the organisations can only be inferred from the public domain information. The products, do, however, speak a language of their own, and the researcher has interpreted their message to the audience.

### **6.1. Introduction**

The cases examined in this section are mostly not-for-profit organisations, operating in the field of fair trade. The term not-for-profit refers to projects whose mission is not to maximize financial outcome for the shareholders as in the case of business enterprises, but to use whatever profit is created for the benefit of the stakeholders and beneficiaries: the artisans or their communities.

Randall (2005) has identified three main types of Fair Trade organizations in the commodity sector:

- Producer organizations
- Fair trade Importing and Wholesale Organizations
- Fair trade labelling initiatives

In this research the focus is on organizations that provide assistance for marketing and product development. Some of these may also have marketing channels of their own.

Craft can be the main concern of the organisation or a part of its operations. There are initiatives by established development organisations, such as Oxfam and Governmental agencies, the United Nations or the European Union. These endeavours have been set up on a non-commercial basis, often as part of wider community developments and poverty alleviation programmes.

### Text Box 3.

#### Stories: Pintade

“Traditional African products have only a marginal demand. To break into markets where the money is, they have to be filtered somehow. If the products appear too ethnic, consumers are not interested for long. If we want the African products to stay *authentic*, we deny them an access to the markets. Product development and a high quality are needed”<sup>1</sup>.

A few years ago a business named *Pintade* was opened in Helsinki, importing Senegalese textiles to Finland. The aim was make a clear difference to the other shops selling African and Asian artefacts and to appeal to the more affluent segments of society. The product range included hand-woven textiles from a small community N’dem and exclusive designs of the Senegalese-French artist Aissa Dione<sup>2</sup>.

Great care was taken to avoid any clear connotation to *Africa* (such as zebra skins or wooden masks) in the boutique interior. The shop had previously been the office of an IT company and the high-tech interior look with stainless steel shelves and gold painted wall was maintained by *Pintade*. The products were of a high quality, both aesthetically and functionally. They were hand-embroidered but there were no clear ethnic references.

Before long, the business ran into difficulties. There appeared not to be enough customers in Helsinki willing to pay the relatively high prices of products that, while being indisputably of high quality and design, came from a developing country. *How can anything made in Africa be so expensive?* queried one customer. After all, the labour cost in Senegal must be much lower than in industrialised Finland.

The selling price of the products, beautifully decorated cushion covers, blankets and scarves were on par with similar Finnish products. While the labour costs in Senegal are lower than in Europe, there were other costs to consider. Weather conditions in West Africa are extreme, resulting in meagre harvests. Handloom weaving and embroidery are labour intensive and the volumes low. The many social obligations of the rural artisans make the supply irregular, and it is often difficult for them to cope with unexpected orders. The shipping from West Africa to the Northern Hemisphere was also costly.

There were no middlemen. The retail profits were kept as low as possible as *Pintade* was a fair trade business (though this label was avoided). After all, *Pintade* wanted to appeal to the mainstream consumers on a for-profit basis. As the owner once said, why stay in the margin with products that are not marginal in any way.

In spite of all the effort, however, the shop did not manage to escape the label of ethnicity. Whenever the *Pintade* products were presented in Finnish interior design and home décor magazines (there was quite a wide coverage), they were clearly positioned in the ethnic decor context.

*Pintade* closed its operations after 3 years of business.

<sup>1</sup> Interview of Anne Rosenlew, the owner of *Pintade*: [http://www.kepa.fi/kumppani/arkisto/2003\\_5/3227](http://www.kepa.fi/kumppani/arkisto/2003_5/3227)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.aissadione.com](http://www.aissadione.com)

There are also Non-Governmental projects, initiated by concerned individuals. *Outsiders*, as Brenda Schmachmann (2001) calls them, have set up craft promotion projects, usually after falling for local skills and talents. Sometimes they are hybrids of the two: for instance, the development workers continue their work with the craft community after their contract has expired - as in the case of Stephanie Odegard from Odegard Carpets<sup>41</sup>.

Another example of a personal craft project with the emphasis on income generation and charitable aims is the *Ithemba* network, set up by the French designer Cyrille Varet to bring hope to South African AIDS victims. Varet says the project results from personal frustration. He got tired of just sitting and watching the misery and decided to put his expertise to work. *Ithemba*<sup>42</sup> designs objects that are inspired by local culture and are handmade by women affected by poverty and disease. The objects are sold at Varet's own up-market design boutique in Paris. Varet has been successful in getting some of the major names of Parisian haute couture, such as *Cacharel*, *Christian Lacroix* and *Sonya Rykiel*, involved in the project. *Ithemba* flagship products are light bulbs covered with silicone and decorated by the HIV positive women with the designs of the haute couturiers. The light bulbs have become sought after collectibles and a considerable amount of money has been raised.

*Ithemba* also develops and sells other kind of products, various home décor items made of scrap metal, such as candleholders, photo frames and table ornaments (pls. see Figure 6.1, 6.2 at the end of the chapter). The products appear to reflect traditional styles and are made to *look indigenous*, that is, they have rustic and hand-made appearance. The success of these products appears to be more marginal than that of the light bulbs.

In the case of *Ithemba*, craft development is not explicitly addressed. The development of indigenous craft skills is not a priority, nor is the external design intervention discussed. The producers are usually assisted in product design to make the products more appealing. Some development may therefore appear in this case as well, as the artisans are exposed to new ideas, learning what kind of products are likely to find markets outside.

A third personal initiative is the South African non-profit organization Monkey Biz, which was initiated by two ceramic artists from Britain that are said to have been passionate collectors of South African beadwork. They were concerned for the future of this endangered craft skill and set up an organisation for the purpose of reviving the traditional beading craft in Southern Africa (see figure 6.3). Additionally, income generation and employment opportunities were to be created for disadvantaged women in Cape Town. Monkey Biz is both a craft development organization and a charity. The outcome of the sales is directed to community development, including health facilities for AIDS victims (see website figure 6.5.).

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<sup>41</sup> [www.odegard.inc](http://www.odegard.inc)

<sup>42</sup> [www.ithemba.org](http://www.ithemba.org)



**Fig. 6.1 A product visual from Monkey biz website**

Many of the individual projects are not financially self-supportive but rely on external funding. The sale of products therefore is usually not enough to sustain the product development and training and community services that vary from soup kitchens, day care centres to wellness centres to schools. In some cases, as in the case of Monkey Biz, the sales of the products only partially cover the costs of the community activities and further donors are needed to achieve the aims.

In this research the focus is on organisations that provide assistance in marketing and product development. Some of these also have marketing channels of their own. There are big organisations, as in the case of Aid to Artisans (ATA) or charities, like Traidcraft, that assist small NGOs and local producer groups in product development and marketing, and sell their products through their websites and distribution channels. Under these there is a colourful universe of small actors: NGOs and SMEs, of local or Western origin, that struggle to meet the demands of global markets.

### **6.3. Aid to Artisans (ATA)**

One of the biggest and most well established initiatives in craft development is the USA based Aid to Artisans, a non-Governmental, not-for-profit organisation, which claims to be offering “Practical assistance to artisan groups worldwide, working in partnership to foster artistic traditions, cultural vitality, improved livelihoods and community well being. Through collaboration in product-development, business skills training and development of new markets, Aid to Artisans provides sustainable economic and social benefits for craftspeople in an environmentally sensitive and culturally respectful manner”<sup>43</sup> (figure 6.5).

According to their website, ATA has the following goals:

1. To move into new markets with competitive products and management skills; and
2. To reinvigorate the craft traditions in danger of disappearing.

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<sup>43</sup> [www.aidtoartisans.org](http://www.aidtoartisans.org)

The rationale behind this is declared outright: “When such traditions can be adapted slightly or directed into saleable categories, the skills and the aesthetic behind them become important income-producing assets and are much more likely to endure<sup>44</sup>.”

The ATA strategy is to help artisans to use their existing production and products as a base to develop products that will have appeal in the European and North American markets. This is seen to be achievable through modifying existing product ranges, and the ATA design consultants focus on assisting the local artisans in developing the local traditions and the use of existing materials for functional and aesthetic products.

ATA designers may recommend a new use for a product, or show an artisan new techniques and tools to improve the quality of their current products. A different firing method, for example, might result in pottery that withstands the rigours of shipping more effectively. A new glazing technique may be required to conform to U.S. safety regulations.

An important factor that makes ATA different from programmes that focus more on conventional income generation is the long-term involvement and relationship it has with the artisans and markets. The concern of ATA about developing the marketability of products is often mentioned; it is also recognized that this is an area where external advice is needed. Like so many organisations, ATA describes their approach as market driven<sup>45</sup>.

### **ATA and products**

Given that ATA works in a number of countries and with numerous communities, the ATA marketed product variety is extremely wide and rich, making it impossible to draw any generalisations with respect to the overall product quality. ATA has a well designed and regularly updated website that brings out the organisation’s professionalism and the resources it is able to field in development. The fact that ATA is above all a development aid organisation becomes clear from the homepage of the website. The very name of the organisation, Aid to Artisans, incorporates the message that artisans are being helped by the organisation. The main links include *how to help* and *donate*. The colourful visuals of smiling native craftsmen around the globe enforce the message that we are dealing with Least Developed Countries craft.

The ATA online shop product catalogue contains the categories of home décor, fashion accessories, holiday items, unique treasures, gifts and publications. The selection is rich and varied. For instance, there is a category of unique treasures, featuring products such as up-market silk scarves (300 USD), felted dollies (40 USD), and Haitian voodoo flags (1500 USD); all featured in pictures of the same small size, as a collection. The fact that the paintings are not anonymous, but made by Jean Baptiste Jean Joseph, a famous and collectable flag artist in Haiti becomes clear only after clicking the image. Until then, the flags are just Haitian (See fig. 6.6).

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<sup>44</sup> [www.aidtoartisans.org](http://www.aidtoartisans.org)

<sup>45</sup> [www.aidtoartisans.org](http://www.aidtoartisans.org)

In terms of craftsmanship and product diversification, the quality of ATA products appears to be high. The problem is the presentation of this diversity. The catalogue tones down the value of individual artefacts by grouping them in rather mixed categories, and while the general cost level appears to be reasonable, there are also relatively expensive products in the catalogue, such as the Haitian flags (USD 1,500) and Kyrgyz carpets (USD 800-1,500). The problem is not the cost of individual products, but the fact that the presentation of high end products in the mixed product selection undermines the value of the more expensive products.

The places of origin of the products are always mentioned. ATA starts with existing skills, and the local skills base is visible in the products. Some of the products appear to have developed over the years, such as the Haitian stone hearts (see figure 6.7.), towards more stylish (mainstream) direction. In general, the ATA products are reminiscent less of their places of origins than for instance the Dastkar products are. One could perhaps say that ethnicity in ATA products is low-key, while with the Dastkar products it is emphasized as a part of the product appeal. Ethnic diversity is celebrated in ATA website. Nevertheless, the places of origin are emphasized in the texts. While the personality of the maker may be of secondary importance, her home country is vital for the marketing of the products.



**Figure 6.2. Left: Stone hearts from ATA catalogue September, 2008.**

**Right: Selection of ATA products from previous website**

As noted above, ATA communicates the makers' identities, though always after noting their nationality. Thus, Jean Baptiste Jean Joseph is first Haitian and only secondly a famous and collectable flag artist. In this respect ATA strategy has similarities with the Western museum

policies, where the Non-Western artefacts are typical representations of their cultures - while, as Clifford (1998), notes, there is nothing essentially Spanish in Picassos paintings.

ATA takes the local skills as the starting point, but sees external design interventions as essential to help the artisans make the necessary modifications to meet the global requirements.

It is not quite clear what the design input is in terms of product aesthetics but other cases (such as Weya and the author's own experiences) suggest that guidance is needed to make the products look suitably local and yet appealing enough for mainstream taste<sup>46</sup>.

Some of the ATA products achieve a degree of distinction, such as the (expensive) Kyrgyz hand felted rugs. The fact that these are sold in the company of a very varied selection of products undermines their market appeal. ATA continues to get rather good media coverage in up market glossy magazines but the products are usually presented as alternatives to mainstream selection (see figure 6.8.).

### **6.3. Traidcraft**

Traidcraft is not, as its name would indicate, a craft organisation, but a charity that works in five focus areas: tea and cotton producers, craft producers, business development services, fair trade, and advocacy. In fact, Traidcraft is probably better known for its fair trade chocolates and teas than craft products, which constitute only 15 % for its trade. The logo *Traidcraft – Fighting Poverty Through Trade* emphasizes the fact that the organisation is focused on reducing poverty through trade. The aim is to break down the barriers that prevent the producers from accessing global markets (Mellor and Moore, 2005).

According to Mellor and Moore, Traidcraft sells products from numerous organisations and NGOs that are committed to trade as an anti-poverty strategy, adopting a selling-with-a-message approach. There is hence a strong political agenda behind Traidcraft, based on a Christian point of view.

Traidcraft is a focused on business development, but as the development of competitive products is essential, attaches great importance to design and innovation. Traidcraft has announced design competitions, where skilful local craft makers are picked out, and then linked to the UK mainstream markets. It is unclear whether the charity provides design-assistance to the producers, but it does sell items from organisations that use external design assistance (such as Motif LTD, a Bangladesh based fair trade company).

The aim of Traidcraft is to support SME businesses and equip them to survive in the global market on a fair trade basis. The approach is based on self-help, and nothing is for free. Great

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<sup>46</sup> Ed Rossbach can weave a Mickey Mouse in his basket but such a style joke might not be appropriate coming from Non-Western artisans who should not imitate western popular culture. Then again, this observation can of course reflect a patronising attitude?

effort is put on sustainability, and Traidcraft develops a set of objectives and time-scales for each partner on a long-term basis, also offering exit strategies so as to avoid dependency.

The main marketing channel for Traidcraft products are volunteers who sell about 48 % of the products. 12% of the sales are made through the website and another 12% in outlet based retail, while the remaining 28% is sold through wholesale arrangements to third parties.

Traidcraft believes firmly in the growing mainstream market for fair trade craft products. The organisation works in various developing countries, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam, through training programmes in which the artisans are supported in the development of their design capacity. Attention is paid to improving the understanding of the importance of quality in the competitive export markets. This has involved training local people as business consultants who provide long-term support for the growing and developing businesses (Traidcraft Exchange Development Review, 2007).

### **Traidcraft and products**

According to Randall's list, Traidcraft is first and foremost a fair trade importing and wholesale organisation, selling products of various cooperatives and NGOs. The organisation also provides product design assistance to some of the producers. The Traidcraft product catalogue consists of products that have been selected from the suppliers apparently because they match the shop profile and are not too strong statements of ethnicity. When compared to the suppliers' own websites, the difference can be significant (see fig. 6.8)

Traidcraft's organisational website applies the typical visual coding of development organisations but the online shop website (see figure 6.9) has no clear visual reference to the context it deals with, though in the texts the company mission is occasionally mentioned. The online shop site design is clear and has a fresh and bright appearance, with smiling models and designer-style packed foods. The product categories include food, wine, beverages, clothes, accessories, footwear, jewellery, seasonal gifts, and home ware items. The ethnicity has been toned down both in the products and in the website design and there is nothing particular in the images to indicate that the products belong to the category of fair trade or ethnic arts. Particularly in the food sector, which forms the main line of Traidcraft products, the company delivers a stylish and clean image.

The price level in Traidcraft is reasonable, though in the fashion category, it is perceived to be somewhat higher than that of the mainstream rivals while Traidcraft has toned down the ethnicity of the products, making many of the products look anonymous, although the countries of origin are clearly stated in the text. That the online shop belongs to a charity is not emphasized but information on the producers and their respective cooperatives is provided through the links under the product images. The makers are not identified as individuals but as cooperatives.

Traidcraft could be said to have succeeded in recontextualising the products from the category of ethnic art into the mainstream. This becomes evident when one compares the Traidcraft website with the websites of the suppliers whose products have been taken into the Traidcraft selection<sup>47</sup>.

The problem in terms of the Traidcraft commodities is that they do not appear to make any real statements and don't stand out in the global supply of similar products. It appears as though the locality of the products has been eliminated, but nothing has been provided in replacement. There is a clear difference between the appearance of the Traidcraft consumables and food products and the craft items. While the chocolates and wines could well appeal to high-end consumers due to their stylish packages and the ethical message they deliver, the skirts and jewellery are too much like the selection of any low- to mid market chains such as Marks and Spencers and H&M, where the price is the main competitive edge.

#### **6.4. Oxfam**

Oxfam started in 1942, to help war victims and opened its first charity store in 1948. The Oxfam concept (retailing second-hand goods) was new, making the organisation a pioneer in the field. And one could argue that in terms of innovative campaigning and fund raising methods, Oxfam is still the champion.

Oxfam provides marginalized communities with assistance in funding, marketing and product development. Usually the question is of micro-enterprises, such as a Conceição das Crioulas community of Quilombolas (descendants of African slaves) in north-east Brazil that continue their ancient ancestors traditions, making products from locally cultivated cotton and *caroá*, a fibrous local plant. The aim is not only to keep the traditions alive but also to supplement the small income from farming. The community has had disputes over land ownership and with Oxfam's assistance has reclaimed their rights to the stolen land.

The crafts practice is still in its initial phase and as the artisans say, "needs time to become a successful business". The main articles being produced are dolls that represent the Quilombolas history and have become symbols of their identity and right to exist in their native land. This fact appears to be the main aspect in their marketing, though money is also needed. As one of the women says:

"The sale of one doll pays for a bag of rice. It doesn't sound much, but it can mean the difference between eating a decent meal and being hungry." – Bernadina Firmiana  
([www.oxfam.co.uk](http://www.oxfam.co.uk))

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<sup>47</sup> [http://www.mondafrica.co.ke/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=9&Itemid=3](http://www.mondafrica.co.ke/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=9&Itemid=3)

The emphasis at Oxfam is on sustainable income generation and preserving cultural identities – Oxfam stores have become epitomes of second-hand stores and they are perhaps better known in this sector than in the fair trade scheme. The shops are not the main distribution channels for the Oxfam supported artefacts<sup>48</sup>, and the organisation helps the producers to market their products through trade fairs and local shops.

In the online store, the fair trade goods form only a small percentage. The only fair trade craft category on their website is jewellery. The other fair trade products are chocolates. The website design is funky and frivolous, focusing more on making the helping fun than on promoting the products of marginalized artisans.

The Oxfam approach is reminiscent of Traidcraft, but with the difference that while the latter speaks little of the organisations mission (reducing poverty) Oxfam makes the most of its message. Every page and every product has information attached, such as *how does this gift help* and producer cooperative information. The message delivered appears to be that while the jewellery can be stylish or glamorous, the fact that they help is still more relevant (see figure 6.10).

The Impact Assessment Study of Oxfam Fair Trade (Final Report November 4/ 2000) states that while Oxfam Fair Trade made a difference in the livelihoods of producers, in terms of income, capacity building and in some dimensions of gender relations, it also provided the producers with a rich and interactive learning process. However, there were weaknesses, particularly in the crafts sector.

As Oxfam buys a high proportion of the crafts, the producers remain dependant on their benefactor.

In 2001, Oxfam reports that lessons have been learned:

”A drop in sales in the mid-1990s taught Oxfam that it should seek to help producers diversify their sales base, reducing dependency on Oxfam. Oxfam’s own inability to expand sufficiently the market it was able to offer brought it to the conclusion that the proper function of fair trade was for producers to learn to compete on open markets” (Mayoux & Williams, 2001).

### **Oxfam and products**

As noted before, Oxfam’s product range focuses on jewellery. The products vary from silver earrings from Peru to resin necklaces from India. The quality appears steady and while the designs are not perhaps as striking as they are advertised to be, they are nevertheless consistent

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48 <http://www.oxfam.org/en/programs/development/samerica/brazil2.htm>

and technically flawless. The cost of the products, vis-à-vis the technical quality and attractiveness appears to be reasonable in relation to the general cost-level today.

The jewellery has a somewhat anonymous look, but the countries of origin are clearly indicated, and while the individual makers' names are not stated, the links to the producers' websites are made available. The jewellery comes from cooperatives and NGOs, some of which have received product design assistance. An example is Tara design, an Indian cooperative.

While the *wow effect* is missing from the products and they don't stand out as particularly remarkable, the pieces appear to be of steady quality (see Fig. 6.11).

## **6.5. Summarizing**

The three organisations are examples of established craft development initiatives that assist artisans with trade by helping to locate local or global markets for their products and/or selling the products through their own channels.

While the majority of the products are sold within the fair trade sector, there appears to be occasional breaks into mainstream marketing channels. As an example, ATA receives regular media coverage in mainstream fashion and home décor magazines, although the ATA collaborative products are mainly featured as alternatives for ethically conscious consumers. ATA products are also sold in mainstream outlets, such as Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City. Traidcraft on the other hand has been successful in placing food products in mainstream retail chains and coffee shops such as M&S and Starbucks, but still the commodities, such as craft items, are still sold in the fair trade sector outlets and online stores.

The organisations' websites have adopted a colourful, appealing style, with clear emphasis on the philanthropic mission. The ultimate aim is not to do business but to contribute to the development of more fair and just trading arrangements and to provide assistance for the marginalized.

The websites have moved on from the somewhat shabby Dastkar bazaar type image into more modern, gay and at times even funky style, where the products as such are not the focal point but where a sustainable lifestyle is promoted. This message is the clearest on the Oxfam site, as Oxfam also have interest areas other than craft development.

The rhetoric of their site refers to projects, which are usually conscious of adopting an ethical business stance. As Motif, the British organisation providing products to Traidcraft, among other fair trade companies, states:

”Although all items are produced within a fair trade context, this is not a top selling point -quality of design/production, good prices, timely deliveries and strong relationships will guarantee continued sales and growth of our company. If a trade

buyer needs to know our practices, we proudly own our credentials as a fair trade supplier; if such “detail” is not important -it remains a nice surprise for when it is!”<sup>49</sup>

Customers are not expected to buy out of compassion but on the other hand, the website rhetoric is usually emotionally appealing. The images of big-eyed native children and smiling (but poor) women emphasize the image of a “heritage theme park where tradition and culture are preserved and experienced through living history”, as Southwell has provocatively pointed out (Southwell, 1997, unpaginated article). Hendrickson (1996) made similar observations on Maya export products in US mail-order catalogues.

Motif echoes the common commitment of organisations to making fair trade the norm for international trading, rather than a unique selling point.

The business aspirations are, however, framed by strong (and sometimes perhaps uncritical) appreciation of traditions, low-technology hand making and indigenouness as the central values in product development and in the way products are featured in the websites. Western impact is not emphasized, though the fact that the organizations have relied on external assistance for product development is not hidden either. That help is needed to add appeal for global markets has become a widely acknowledged fact. But at the root of the product design there is always the traditional skill, local materials and indigenous capability, the potential of which is seldom questioned. Western impact comes in the form of cross-cultural *modifications*, not as imposition of Western concepts on the local skills.



**Fig. 6.3 Ithemba products of junk metal**

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.ganesha.co.uk/profiles/Motif.htm>



Fig. 6.4 Ithemba website

**MONKEYBIZ BEAD PROJECT**

Ceramic artists [Barbara Jackson](#) and [Shirley Fintz](#), passionate collectors of African beadwork and art have facilitated a revival of an ancient beading tradition in Southern Africa. Together with [Mathapele Ngaka](#), they made their dream come true. A desire to create employment and empowerment for disadvantaged women in Cape Town has led to the creation of "MONKEYBIZ"

[home](#)  
[about us](#)  
[services](#)  
[products](#)  
[online shop](#)  
[links](#)  
[staff](#)  
[contacts](#)

[BARBARA JACKSON](#)      [SHIRLEY FINTZ](#)      [MATHAPELE NGAKA](#)

Monkeybiz supplies richly coloured glass beads to women in the townships of Cape Town. The 450 women involved in the project are currently producing exquisite hand beaded artworks - each a unique one-off creation. The women are paid for each piece they produce; and since they work from home, can look after their families and avoid transport costs. The beaded works are creating a sensation wherever they appear - locally and abroad.

Historically, bead work, in a South African context, has been the domain of women largely within the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Sotho communities. The women are introduced to the craft directly through their mothers, grandmothers and other women in the community.

**MonkeyBiz is a non-profit organisation - all profits go back into the communities via payment for bead art and the provision of community services.**

[CHECK OUT the December 2006 newsletter for all of our latest news and products!](#)

[CHECK OUT the October 2006 newsletter for all of our latest news and products!](#)

[CHECK OUT the May 2006 newsletter for all of our latest news and products!](#)

[CHECK OUT our latest news and products in our first-ever Monkeybiz newsletter!](#)

file:///Users/katireljonon/Desktop/Ceramic%20artists%20Barbara%20a...tz.%20passionate%20collectors%20of%20African%20beadwork.webarchive Page 1 of 1

Fig. 6.5 Monkey biz website



**Be an Angel Give Now**

**Shop ATA's Webstore**

**Upcoming ATA Events**

**Join Our Email List Search**

**Username**

**Password**

**Forgot Password?**

**Login**

**New User? Register**

### Aid to Artisans - Our Mission

Aid to Artisans, a nonprofit organization, offers practical assistance to artisan groups worldwide, working in partnerships to foster artistic traditions, cultural vitality, improved livelihoods and community well-being. Through collaboration in product development, business skills training and development of new markets, Aid to Artisans provides sustainable economic and social benefits for craftspeople in an environmentally sensitive and culturally respectful manner.

### News



#### Mexican Potters' Success Offers Hope for a Lead-Free World

In small Mexican villages, a dramatic story is unfolding: Traditional potters are learning innovative technologies developed by Aid to Artisans, ATA Board member Eric O'Leary and ATA's partner organization "Barro sin Plomo", allowing them to produce spectacular ceramics without contaminating their homes - reducing their families' exposure to the toxic dangers of lead. The experience of Nicolas Fabian and his daughter Dulce offers hope that the conversion to lead-free pottery can bring prosperity and a healthier environment to thousands in Mexico...and millions around the world. [Read More](#) about the recent Lead-Free Pottery celebration in Boston.



#### Dateline, Maputo, Mozambique

Thanks to an ATA connection, The Hunger Site, a division of Charity, USA is providing hundreds of handmade dolls to children in Mozambique who are still traumatized by the legacy of civil war, floods, cyclones and the terrifying explosions of March 22nd that shook the capital of Maputo. Learn more about this heart-warming project that is bringing comfort to the children of this recently war-ravaged country by providing a one-for-one match for every doll The Hunger Site sells on their website. [Read More](#)



#### Finally! A Way to Help in Afghanistan

Afghan women are alert to whatever markets are available to them but they want and need wider markets and the skills to meet market demands. ATA's design center in Kabul opened officially on April 5, 2007, but classes began in March. Working as part of the Afghan Women's Business Federation and the Center for International Private Enterprise, ATA hopes to reach artisans throughout the country. [Read More](#)



#### ATA's Network Keeps on Building in South Africa—and Beyond

Oprah Winfrey's support for beaders and basket weavers is part of the new Oprah Winfrey Academy for Girls. The Zenzulu weavers and their products decorate the school rooms and are featured for sale on Oprah's website. Both the artisans and their products are connected to ATA through ATA's longtime colleagues at the Bat Shop in Durban. [Read More](#)



#### iOtra Vez! Yet Again!

### Learn More About ATA

[Watch our video](#) or  
Read about [What We Do](#)

### Save the Date

#### 2007 ATA Awards

October 25  
New York City

### Other Exciting Events

original women

#### Original Women Artisan Celebration

June 6, 2007

6 - 9 pm

New York

[View the invitation](#)



#### Santa Fe

#### Folk Art Market

July 14 & 15, 2007

Now in its 4th year, the largest and most prestigious international folk art market in the U.S. with over 100 master craftspeople. Among them, Nancy Ngali, master weaver from Sarawak

### ATA Commercial Clients

#### Retailers, Wholesalers & Importers

If you are currently, an ATA Commercial Client, please login using the box on the left, then [click here](#) (or on "Commercial Clients" under the "Marketing" tab above)

Fig. 6.6 Aid to artisans website



[What We Do](#)   [Where We Work](#)   [Artisans](#)   [Marketing](#)   [How To Help](#)   [Resources](#)   [About ATA](#)

**Online Store**

ATA's own product gallery offers favorites, some new, some revivals, often hard-to-find. In stock in our warehouse—only while they last...



[Felt doll from Kyrgyzstan](#)

\$28.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Felt Eggs from Kyrgyzstan](#)

\$18.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Set of 3 Handcarved Wooden Seashells from Mozambique](#)

\$24.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Nylon Tote Bag](#)

\$19.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Recycled Plastic Chicken Pin](#)

\$14.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Set of 4 Jini Japa Bugs from Bolivia](#)

\$18.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Burnished terracotta vase with flower motif](#)

\$64.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Haitian Sequined Eyeglass Case](#)

\$36.00

[Add to Cart](#)



[Pink Sequin Heart from Haiti](#)

\$48.00

[Add to Cart](#)

Fig. 6.7 Images from Aid to artisans website



Fig. 6.8 ATA magazine coverage



Login | My Account | Contact Us | Need Help?

Search by: Keyword/Product Ref.    
Advanced Search

HOME | FASHION & ACCESSORIES | FASHION & ACCESSORIES

Traidcraft Shop: Homepage - Fashion and Accessories

**Fashion and Accessories**

- Accessories
- Bags & Purses
- Ladies Clothing
- Footwear
- Jewellery
- Fairtrade T-Shirts
- Men's Fair Trade Clothes
- Nightwear
- Scarves
- Fashion - Sale Items



Accessories

Bags & Purses



Ladies Clothing

Footwear

Jewellery



Fairtrade T-Shirts

Men's Fair Trade Clothes



Nightwear

Scarves

Fashion - Sale Items

Welcome to the Traidcraft Shop

**Your Basket**

Your basket is empty.

[VIEW / EDIT BASKET](#)

[My Saved Basket](#)

[My Favourite Products](#)

[Quick Order](#)

[Catalogue Quickshop](#)

[Login/Registration](#)

**Featured Products**

- Chulucanas Ceramic Set
- Leaf Tea Towel (2)
- Photo Albums in Box (2)
- Blueberry Geobar COU (24x35g)
- Siesta Bag Set (3)
- Pink Flower Brooch
- Fair Trade Fruit Snacks (10x40g)
- Palawa Box Set (4)

For Your Inspiration

- What is Fair Trade?
- Traidcraft Overview
- Contact Us
- Returns Policy
- Privacy Policy
- [Request Catalogue](#)
- [Email A Friend](#)

Fig. 6.9 Traidcraft website



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## shop

Online  
 On the High Street  
 Shop finder  
 Donate to our shops  
 Volunteer  
 Ethical purchasing



## Shop

100% of the profit made from Oxfam shops helps to fund our work in more than 70 countries. So you can make a difference - everything you buy from Oxfam will help to fund our work to overcome poverty and suffering.

> [Find your local shop](#)

### Delightfully different gifts



- > [Alpaca package - £20](#)
- > [Condom kits - £20](#)
- > [Your questions answered](#)
- > [More from Unwrapped](#)

### Oxfam and eBay



- > [Clothing](#)
- > [Homeware and collectibles](#)
- > [Music and Movies](#)
- > [More on eBay](#)

### High street shops



- > [Gifts and cards](#)
- > [Shop finder](#)
- > [Bridal wear](#)
- > [More on the High street](#)

### Online



- > [Oxfam Unwrapped](#)
- > [Books](#)
- > [Music and DVDs](#)
- > [More online shopping](#)



### "I couldn't bear to do nothing"

Having kids has made regular shopper Aofe Walsh think differently about poverty...

Meet Aofe



### Other shopping-related activities

- > [Volunteer](#)
- > [How to donate](#)
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Fig. 6.10. Oxfam website



# Dastkar

A society for Crafts and Craftspeople

[links](#) [profiles](#) [e-mail](#)

product search :

*"If I had known all the things that I know now, I would not have needed Dastkar at all"*  
Surbehn Devi, Kutch

ORGANISATIONAL MAP

OBJECTIVES

PROJECTS

ACTIVITIES

PRODUCTS

ENQUIRY

A society for crafts and craftspeople Dastkar is a registered society that aims at improving the economic status of craftspeople, thereby promoting the survival of traditional crafts. It was founded in 1981 by six women, who had worked in the craft and development sector including Laila Tyabji, who is the current Chairperson.

Dastkar strongly believes in "craft" as a social, cultural and economic force that despite being marginalized due to urbanisation and industrialization, has enormous strength and potential and has a vital role to play within the economic mainstream of the country. The crux of its programme is to help craftspeople, especially women, to use their own traditional craft skills as a means of employment, income generation and economic self-sufficiency. Dastkar guides the process of developing a craft – from identifying the skill and creating awareness of its potential in both craftspeople and consumer, developing, designing, costing and then marketing the product, and finally suggesting the proper usages and investment of the income generated. The objective is to make the craftspeople self-reliant, independent of both the commercial middleman and organisations like Dastkar to market and sell contemporary products directly, and not to subsidise craft. Dastkar ensures that the end product is competitive – not just in its worthiness of purpose or the neediness of its produce, but in cost utility and aesthetic – a consumer does not buy out of compassion!

The Dastkar cooperative shop, and the Dastkar exhibitions and Dastkar bazaars, where artisans sell their products directly to the customers, expose craftspeople to the market and given them a firsthand knowledge of customer tastes and trends. Recently, Dastkar acquired an export license, thus enabling it to provide an alternative as well as an international market for the craftspeople.

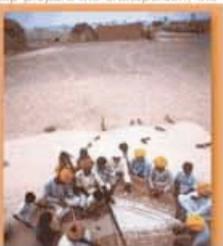
As groups become self-sufficient, Dastkar directs its support to new groups and assists them in their growth. Presently, Dastkar is working in most of the states of India with over 100 groups of which at least 75% receive the full gamut of Dastkar services, and the rest benefit from its marketing activities. Crafts skills range from textile based craft producer groups to terracotta. The product ranges developed include garments and accessories, home furnishings, toys, stationery and objets d'art.

Apart from the support services and craft development consultancies, Dastkar provides to its own family of craft producer groups, it has increasingly been asked to provide evaluation and consultancy services to other government, non-government and international agencies. It has grown into a professional full-time development and alternative marketing organisation that works with groups all over the country. Its Delhi office of 17 travels all over India, and it has sister organisations in Andhra and Rajasthan.

Crafts and craftspeople have a vital role to play in contemporary India – not just as part of its cultural and aesthetic past, but as part of its economic future. Dastkar is committed to help prepare the craftspeople, the craft product and the consumer, for the future.

Elaben Bhatt, Founder of the SEWA, Self-Employed Women's Association said "I see Dastkar as both: an organisation and a movement. The organisation started the movement and gave many NGOs and craftspeople the confidence to make good crafts products and market them directly. It showed us the way and gave us direction. Today, there is consequently an all-India movement of craft as a means to sustainable employment. It is not necessary for Dastkar to grow as large as the movement or to run the movement. At the same time without the organisation there would be no movement, and if there was no movement there would be little point in the organisation." This seems to sum up everything Dastkar feels about its growth and future development.





<http://www.dastkar.org/organisationalmap.htm>

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Fig. 6.11 Dastkar website

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## **Chapter 7: Discussion**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This study has been concerned with the contribution of externally supported craft development initiatives towards the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets. It has also been concerned with how this contribution could be enhanced.

In order to approach the issues, a construct was developed in Chapter 3, addressing three main elements related to the study of the contribution: the attributes of products, the capabilities of producers, and the constraints that limit the use of the capabilities. Each one of the key elements was further broken down into a series of factors that have been used in the analysis of the various case initiatives. At the end of the section a summary table of the findings is presented, based on the construct.

The thinking behind the construct has involved the notion of Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome, based on Mirjam Southwell's (1997) argument that craft development has become part of the problem it has set up to solve, by *mummifying* the production into a pre-industrial level that does not enable a full potential for development. Another underpinning key theoretical outlook has been Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 1999). The research took Nussbaum's evolved list of basic capabilities (Nussbaum, 1999) as the starting point and developed a number of key factors against which the initiatives were measured. While a construct with factors was developed, it should be noted that the study still operates in the realm of qualitative research, and no measurable nominal causal relationships, defined quantities, exact intensities or frequencies are established (nor can they be).

This section takes the three key elements of the construct, and pulls together the key findings from the three sets of cases. It should be noted that the observations from the contextual review are inbuilt into the construct. The last section of the chapter summarizes the key issues of the study from the perspective of contributions that craft development initiatives had had and could potentially have.

### **7.2. Product attributes**

In the original construct, product attributes were broken down into a series of factors that put together explain the desirability of the products. Desirability is a key factor in the types of products that craft development initiatives support. Utility is also to be considered, but evidence found in the research strongly suggests that desirability is the key selling point in the categories of products that craft development is involved in.

## 7.2.1. Desirable products:

### Quality

As was noted above, there appears to be a lack of mutual understanding of *craft* as a concept and what should be considered valuable in this context. Differences in taste create challenges, as there do not appear to be any objective criteria for beauty; even the concept of function is elusive and may differ in different societies.

The study finds that craft development initiatives address the issue of quality on a regular basis, and in many cases they achieve a balance between technical and aesthetic considerations. The problem appears not to be a lack of quality but the fact that the products do not stand out in the vast amount of craft on offer. Thus the key issue is linked to a perception of aesthetic quality, and not so much the technical quality of the products.

The issues with aesthetic or immaterial qualities of the products are extremely problematic to identify and classify, and this study approaches the issues through the concept of distinction. The contribution of craft initiatives could be significantly enhanced through products that addressed the *distinction*-aspect of quality. This would mean a need for a deeper understanding of what quality means in each case.

### Appropriate cost

As a general observation, it appears that the customers are not necessarily ready to pay the higher price of fair trade craft if similar products are marketed at a lower price in big retail chains. The fair trade sector price level tends to be higher than the sweatshop production, benefiting the individual artisan better than alternative systems<sup>50</sup>. On the other hand, low volumes may mean low income and unsteady demand leading to unsteady earnings. Both have been reported to be problems of the fair trade commodity business (Randall, 2005).

It seems quite difficult for craft development initiatives to address pricing strategies in a comprehensive way, as prices are essentially a function of a combination of marketing strategies (especially the distribution channels), customer segments and communities, product attributes and even the prevalent fashion. It is suggested that the only really sustainable strategy is a mix of strategies: justifying pricing of products from a platform of fair trade and equitable returns, alternative distribution channels to sweatshop value chains, and by selling desirable products.

### Implication of the origin of goods

Pure tradition (given that there are objective criteria for such a thing, which seems unlikely) does not exist anywhere any longer. What the artisans consider to be their own traditions are in

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<sup>50</sup> There could also be various other reasons, such as a lower volume of trade, resulting in inefficiencies of scale, or perhaps distribution systems that do not operate as efficiently as they could.

fact a mixture of different influences. The marginalized artisans often appear to produce artefacts that are hybrids of local and global styles, but as their opportunities to keep up with the changing trends (not to mention being able to identify weak signals and to forecast the future) are limited, it is difficult to keep pace with the latest fashion. For example, in Mozambique, the Portuguese style tapestries and embroideries were favoured although they did not appeal to global customers and appeared old fashioned (and in fact they were, as the tradition came with the Portuguese). Also, there is a risk of misinterpretations. The niVanuatu<sup>51</sup> *Natangura* carvers imitate plastic trinkets that they have become to value as part of *kalja blong waetman*<sup>52</sup>, and do not appreciate their own indigenous material culture as a source of inspiration.

It is unclear whether implication of origin adds market value to products in global markets, outside the tourist context. People may need carpets but not necessarily *Bhutanese* carpets. The origin of ethno décor products has become unclear; *Moroccan* lanterns and *African* baskets are manufactured in the Far East. The reason for this is that cost level appears to be one of the main competition assets in the craft commodity trade. This makes the competition hard for small, local producers.

While organisations such as Dastkar promote local styles as they emerge today in the communities, many fair trade businesses have actually toned down ethnicity and promote a more anonymous style that would fit into peoples' lives and interiors without making too strong a statement. However, the pre-industrial production mode has implications to the aesthetics of craft products and while visibly hand made items are something Westerners demand, it is unclear whether they are willing to pay a premium price for products that do not stand out in the plethora of similar artefacts.

Again, it appears that the contribution of craft initiatives is through a balancing act. Achieving product differentiation would seem to allow for distinctiveness also in origins. Or it could be stipulated that bringing out the distinctive origin could help to distinguish the product from the mass of anonymous craft that is marketed worldwide. In the best case, the product origin and distinctive nature of the design can mutually reinforce the sense of distinction, resulting in a possibility of obtaining a significant pricing premium. This may mean that products are hybrids by definition.

### **Authored vs. anonymous products**

Craft products are mainly anonymous; though the fair trade businesses often mention from which craft community the products originate, and may sometimes even name the artisans. The practice of emphasizing the *auteurship* of craft products is relatively new in Europe and takes

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<sup>51</sup> NiVanuatu = from, or of Vanuatu, indicating origin of people

<sup>52</sup> White mans's culture

place mainly in the exclusive studio craft sector, where one-off pieces are sold with high prices and where craft approximates high design.

It is clear that in many of the craft initiatives, effort has been made to recognize and publicize the artisans; but in marketing efforts the products' place of origin is still emphasized more than the identity of the makers. It is the products and their respective countries that speak in the websites more than the makers. It would appear that benefiting from the auteurship effect (such as in Europe) would require a re-categorization of the products into higher value added niches. While this could be possible it appears that none of the organisations has actively tried this, with the possible partial exception of ATA.

### **Global orientation**

To help the artisans keep up with the changing trends, The Crafts Centre, an NGO dedicated to improving the lives of low-income countries, has published periodic Trend Reports, which outline the current fashion and trends in the key markets. It is unclear whether tips such as *browsing top design magazines that cover your market, or watch what the big retailers are doing* are of much help to the rural artisans, who can barely afford purchasing expensive glossy magazines let alone jet setting around the globe to see what is hot in any given season (The Crafts Centre, 2004).

Much of the assistance available for rural artisans appears to have a limited impact on their lives. In many cases there is a lack of understanding of the living conditions of extreme poverty. Jaitly (1984) has sharply criticized for instance the support of the Indian government to the artisans. She writes that the poor cannot afford to visit places such as The Design Centre for Handicrafts in Bangalore, they have no means to deal with the bureaucracy involved in such assistance, and they cannot take the risk to start producing new ideas without a guarantee that these will sell. Jaitly is particularly critical towards the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad, where the artisans are taught new techniques. As an example, NID requires that the artisans leave their basic homes and invest in the bus fare, something that is not possible for the poorest groups.

The researched organisations tend to take existing skills as starting points and suggest modifications and product diversifications to meet global market requirements. The trends are apparently followed and new product ideas introduced accordingly, to the extent that is possible for small and marginalized producers. As the trends have short life cycles, it is a huge challenge to keep up with them. The organisations appear to be slightly behind what is the latest and hottest in any given season. The case of Anokhi, in a previous section, illustrates the problem of local traditional styles falling out of the fashion, though they may have lasting value for their own communities.

It can be quite difficult for not-for-profit organisations to keep up with trends as was observed above. The very structure of the organisations, the management culture, the funding arrangements, and the long partnership arrangements with local producers actually inhibit rapid change. For better or worse, the craft development organisations are not nimble or agile (with perhaps an exception being some of the initiatives that are led by individual designers, e.g. Varet). Perhaps a partial answer is to look for products segments that have longer cycles, or ones where several overlapping trends or fashions co-exist or happen at the same time. As an example, this could mean shifting products ranges from baskets to cutlery; this does imply a higher level of product sophistication and thus quality, durability, technology used, and production issues become more complex.

### **Distinction**

In the global market place, innovations are highly sought after and while there is no absolute recipe for success, the ability to make distinction and innovation are often mentioned as the key tools for competitive success. To make a distinction in the highly competed global trade of craft commodities is extremely demanding, as Western consumers are spoiled through an increasingly rapid cycle of new inventions. The *wow-effect* has become much sought after in the experience economy where people are constantly not only seeking for products but experiences that add value to products. That something comes from an exotic country might add to the *wow-effect* is recognized, but the fact that this is not an automatic reaction is also an issue which needs to be understood<sup>53</sup>.

The products promoted through the craft development initiatives, in general, tend to lack the *wow-effect*. Golden Eye was perhaps one of the few examples to achieve this. In every catalogue, particularly in the case of ATA, there are some products that celebrate excellence and achieve the distinctive quality. But, that being said, the presentation of these products, as part of the anonymous bulk of varied artefacts, does not enhance their distinctive nature. The problem appears to be the context in which the products are presented.

It could perhaps be said that while diluting ethnicity, the products appear to have also diluted their identities, without receiving anything to replace it. The products appear to get closer to the ethno decor items (as described above) sold in major retail chains (such as IKEA and Pier).

Even when the products are presented in the mainstream (featured in glossy interior design magazines or sold in up-market retail outlets, such as Saks Fifth Avenue) they tend to be contextualized in the alternative category for green consumers.

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<sup>53</sup> Scrase (2003) makes a distinction between 'quotidian' and 'elite' craft. The former refers to the everyday items used in local communities and the latter to the artistic high quality products that appeal to the elite consumers and achieve *distinction* (as defined by Bourdieu, 1984).

### **7.3. Capabilities of producers**

As noted in the methodology, this section deals with the contribution that craft development initiatives are seen to have made to the development of the capabilities that underpin the efforts of local producers to make products that meet the demand of global markets. The approach adopted is to take Sen's basic Capability Approach (Sen, 1999), and the further definitions put forward by Nussbaum (1999) to arrive at the basic capabilities. These have then, in turn, been translated into derived capabilities that are essentially a contextualisation of the original basic capabilities. The derived capabilities have been further developed into factors that can be used to examine specific issues.

#### **7.3.1. Senses, imagination, thought**

##### **Creativity and product development**

To see the value in new ideas appears not to be an inborn ability but one that is enabled by the society and culture in which one lives. Not all societies support innovative thinking. If nothing else, the often heavy, autocratic, and tightly hierarchic bureaucracy in developing societies makes it difficult for individuals to build on new ideas. Individualized success is an issue that the local communities may be critical of, and in many places there is a clear culture of discouraging or effectively blocking individuals from achieving more than the others.

To simplify the issue: in the Western world and capitalist economy, new ideas are supported and promoted as a part of market economy; in the Non-Western world other values (such as stable communities, continuation, respect for elders etc) may be appreciated. In Vanuatu, the indigenous form of copy right, called *kastom raet* does not encourage risk taking and the spread of (especially new) ideas.

The developing communities may also reject new ideas if their meaning is unclear or if the new idea is not conveyed in an appropriate fashion (Kupiainen, 2000).

The existing skills base is seemingly an appropriate starting point for craft business. As the existing product categories are usually in need of a facelift, the critical question is linked to how this should be done, so as to not violate the indigenous practices that may have influence on the harmony of the local community (It is of course a good question whether change can happen without impacting the existing harmony?).

Often the existing products, however, are not necessarily indigenous or authentic, and may in fact be very recent modifications driven by external influence. While these modifications may be valuable as manifestations of the local ability to process modernization, their appearance and aesthetics may be such that they do not appeal to global consumers (as was seen in the case of Weya, or in the case of Mozambican tapestries).

Another issue, which is seen to be instrumental in holding back the creativity of local producers, is the lack of contact between the makers and the markets. This essentially boils down to the makers not knowing their target market. This ignorance makes it very difficult to reconfigure or develop products through feedback mechanisms. It practically removes the whole process of client centred incremental innovation, and makes the producers extremely dependent on intermediaries.

The contribution of craft development initiatives can be seen from the perspective of them adding value to the local producers through introducing and enabling the seeing of new ideas and knowledge, in incorporating these ideas into existing products, and finally, in using this new, external knowledge to create new products.

The organisations studied have used Western design professionals to participate in the common task of product and marketing development. Given that local communities and producers are not always open to new ideas, the task is challenging. Also, new ideas are often valued only through the perspective of what is seen to be appropriate for the communities. Introducing new ideas is perhaps not the main aim, but modifying the existing skills to the needs and desires of modern markets implicitly carries with it the introduction of some new ideas. These can be anything from new colour schemes to sizing.

It is somewhat unclear how this introduction of new ideas succeeds; at times difficulties are reported, particularly in the Weya and Dastkar cases. The ATA products demonstrate a consistent effort towards new product development – sometimes we can see how the products have changed during the years. ATA, being the only one of the cases that has penetrated the mainstream trade of commodities, has clearly worked hard to increase market appeal, both in terms of product design and marketing.

Many of the websites mention modifications, or new applications for existing techniques (such as felting) that have been developed, resulting in products with new market potential, particularly when presented in the right context. This indicates that many of the initiatives have addressed incremental product development, and the local producers are able to reconfigure their products using new knowledge. There was not wide evidence of initiatives supporting completely new ranges of products, based on new knowledge, except in the cases of Weya and Golden Eye.

Weya's strategy to take the existing skills base as the starting point, but to introduce new content and new techniques instead of just incremental modifications makes it stand out. As Weya had an artistic approach, in terms of self-expression and creativity, the artworks themselves have a creative element in them, though in the long run, the Weya women could not escape the copycat behaviour.

Golden Eye (and perhaps also Weya) was also exceptional, not only in terms of the totally new product range, but also through the fact that Sethi addressed the problem of Indian craft having become less than it used to be. Similar arguments do not appear in the textual material of the craft projects that usually take the existing skills quite uncritically to indicate what the artisans are capable of. But as can be seen in the Weya documentation, what exists is not necessarily an indication of what the people are capable of, as the present skills base may reflect the adjustment to difficult circumstances (e.g. colonial past, lack of education, poverty) more than the actual level of indigenous talent.

### **7.3.2. Practical reason, affiliation & the environment**

#### **Access to trade knowledge**

In many developing countries, craft is a part of everyday life. Providing utensils for local communities is, however, very different from producing artefacts that are intended to be competitive in the global markets. The artisans need assistance not only in product design and marketing, but also in accessing global markets, for example through the internet. Many artisans have a limited education and lack facilities to operate on a global scale, making them vulnerable and subject to potential exploitation of intermediaries.

From the fieldwork the conclusion was made that craft making is not necessarily considered a valuable practice as such. The artisans with family background in art and craft had firmer commitment to the industry than the newcomers, for whom the practice was just another way to generate income in a situation with few opportunities.

#### **Participation in trade communities**

In developing countries, craft is a typical example of the informal business sector, operating mostly outside governmental support systems. The artisans are part of their own communities and the initiative to enhance their sense of belonging is one of the main rationales used to defend the decentralized, small-scale craft production.

Many of the initiatives follow collaborative and participatory methods (except for the Golden Eye, of which we don't know enough) and enforce mutual learning, in the field of what could perhaps be called appropriate craft techniques.

#### **Control over trade environment**

The need for cash money is often urgent in developing societies and means to generate this are needed, particularly ones that fit to the yearly cycle and, in the case of women, to daily domestic chores. What is considered a decent salary varies greatly, as often the basic needs such as food and shelter are met with small-scale farming and animal husbandry. Often people have well-defined needs for petty cash, such as school fees, and craft making can be a relevant option. The important issue is sustainability in the form of long lasting trade-partnerships.

The relatively high price level of labour intensive craft products creates challenges for their marketing. The products should justify the high price and, as is noted in the case of Pulesea Tekopo and by Randall (2005), the fact that a product has been labour intensive to make and celebrates high craftsmanship, does not necessarily add to its market appeal. If this were to be the case, the artisans would not need external assistance in product development in the first place, though marketing skills might still require support. The products would be expected to stand out in the market on their own merits, with the labour intensiveness and high degree of craftsmanship being the self-selling points. This does not appear to happen.

On the other hand, low volumes may mean a low income, unsteady demand and volatile earnings. Labour intensive techniques are often promoted, though there is no evidence that it would be a marketing asset. In many cases the generated income, while being a good addition to the family income in general, is too meagre to fully sustain the families.

The dependency on external champions is a common problem in craft development initiatives. As Thomas (2006) notes, the organisation can easily enter into decline once the (often external) champion moves on.

The problem appears to be that sometimes the eagerness of the champion to save traditions or to alleviate poverty through craft making are based on personal passions rather than on his scrutiny of the true potential of the industry.

Robyn Stassen writes about the Weya project: "In modern times, white support in Africa was trendy. It manifested in different ways: the protégées were influenced from within or without, yielding very different results in their attitude and art. The broader impetus of this type of imposed support was to teach the people economic viability. Somehow, sometimes the line thins between selflessness and self-serving principles in many of these initiatives"<sup>54</sup>.

In projects aiming at income generation and poverty alleviation, the amount of generated income is clearly the primary criterion they should be evaluated by. But as was seen in the previous chapters, the craft development initiatives do not aim to develop highly competitive products at any cost. Invariably, they are not considering advanced machinery or mass production methods to make the production more effective. For one thing, poverty is just one of the many problems the aid targets are struggling with.

As Motif LTD, a Bangladesh based fair trade company started by British designer Jackie Corlett states: "The women making Motif products are marginalized for reasons more than poverty. We look to employ women experiencing discrimination in other ways too: some are former prostitutes; leprosy or other wasting diseases have affected others; some may have been

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.popmatters.com/books/reviews/m/material-matters.shtml>

divorced or abandoned - each situation scars women with a stigma that reduces their chance of decent employment<sup>55</sup>.

This is also noted by the Thailand based community business Panmai that aims to encourage local women to stay in their villages by supporting their silk production. According to them, the benefits cannot be measured on material terms alone, and the improvement in the quality of life is an important consideration. As human wellbeing is subjective and contextually established, it evidently implies that each and every project has to be socially constructed through participatory approaches.

Sasha, an Indian based network of small producers of craft, tea, spices and body care explicitly emphasizes development as its ultimate value, rather than profits; the second important target being a revival of crafts and giving support to artisans. The aim of assisting the economic viability of producer groups is mentioned, however, and Sasha appears to take business issues seriously, engaging in business development initiatives that are intended to meet the challenges of keeping up with competition from other southern countries. The objective in this is to achieve a better, more regular income for the producers. Sasha is one of the few organizations focusing on national markets<sup>56</sup>.

Even when income generation and poverty alleviation are mentioned as the main aims of the projects, the rhetoric of the organisations emphasizes other priorities. Reviving traditional skills, promoting community well being, building capacity and generating empowerment, are some of the aims that are regularly mentioned among the project objectives.

Empowerment in particular is used regularly as an aim and an achievement. Ganesha, a UK based fair trade craft shop, explicitly commits itself to the active support of the empowerment of local communities, with an additional focus on women. They note that trading (in the fashion that they do) contributes to the empowerment of women, giving them more control and the chance to achieve their full potential while directing their own lives towards a better future<sup>57</sup>.

Empowerment becomes close to Senian notion of development as freedom. It is not the money itself, but whether people are able to use the money in the most suitable way for them. The critical thing is whether empowerment really equips individuals with the ability to control their lives. There is a risk in externally supported development initiatives that empowerment is framed by the assumption of what people are expected to want; it can be difficult for the marginalised people to grasp the scope of their true opportunities. According to Sen, capabilities are tools to control the destinies of individuals.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.ganesha.co.uk/profiles/Motif.htm>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.ganesha.co.uk/profiles/SASHA.html>

<sup>57</sup> [www.ganesha.co.uk](http://www.ganesha.co.uk)

## **7.4. Constraints that limit the capabilities**

This section deals with the identified constraints that prevent local producers from transforming their capabilities (skills, traditions) into functionings (human well-being, good life). As noted in the initial premise of the study, an assumption has been made that profitable export practice would increase the well being of local producers by providing empowerment through improved income and self-respect. The constraints are thus important as they form the key barriers and inhibitors to development.

### **7.4.1. Asymmetric trade arrangements**

The lack of knowledge of global market demands and the missing skills to meet these challenges are serious constraints for local craft producers. As noted previously, the gap between local producers and the global market place is both wide and deep and hence difficult to bridge.

That being said, it should be noted that Non Western craft producers are not alone in the world with their problem of accessing international markets. In industrialized countries, small and medium size enterprises face similar difficulties in their attempts to export goods and services. International activity adds a level of complexity to any economic activity, irrespective of origin, and successful operations demand specific knowledge and capabilities. This is the key reason that has led industrialized countries to create extensive business support services for small firms that internationalize.

What makes it particularly difficult for developing country craft producers is the fact that there is a great mental distance between the developed country customer and the developing country craft producer. As an example, the trend reports and other guidebooks provided by some craft development initiatives may be of little help for artisans that do not share the same economic, social and cultural capital as their overseas customers. Ornamental craft products are particularly problematic in this sense, as they are subject to rapidly changing, fickle trends that often cannot be observed in the developing country context, especially in the social context of the craft producers.

From this perspective, it is important for craft development initiatives to contribute to the bridging of the gap in asymmetric trade knowledge. For this reason, some organisations provide their beneficiaries with supported opportunities to directly access and be exposed to their markets, e.g. through participation in trade fairs. These strategies of transporting individuals to meet the markets can be expensive and have limited effect due to the short exposure.

Another option is to have individuals (e.g. designers) with market knowledge work in the environment of the local producers. This approach has been endorsed by Papanek, for example,

and is able to bring current external knowledge directly to the local producers without being diluted by intermediaries.

A third generic strategy is to create a digital bridge between the producers and the markets. The new information and communication technologies (ICT), especially the Internet, provide tools for the least developed to overcome their isolation and to get their products into the mainstream (UNDP, 1999). Naturally, these resources are still accessed only by a small minority in the developing economies. However, this picture is changing swiftly. Instead of *Information Gaps*, people have started to talk about *Information Bridges* (Kumppani, 1/2002). It is now increasingly acknowledged that web based technology does include potential in solving many of the poor countries disadvantages, particularly when it is made accessible through cost-effective solutions, such as the *simputer*<sup>58</sup>.

As an example, in India, where the illiteracy rate is as high as 40% and only 0.25 % of the population has access to the Internet, the rural peasants boost their business by selling their produce through communal *net kiosks*. There are also indications that the Internet reduces corruption by offering citizens direct access to officials without having to bribe greedy intermediaries.

A general concern exists for looking for ways to bridge the digital divide and bring the benefits of new technology to the poor. As an excellent example of an innovative company, Mohsen Khalil, of the World Bank notes the case of *Novica*<sup>59</sup>, a company using IT to assist the marginalized artisans to access the global market. According to *Novica*, the Internet has made it possible to cut the long supply and value chain of artisan-local distributor-international distributor-retailer to a much shorter artisan-retailer configuration by directly connecting the makers with the markets. *Novica*, partly owned by National Geographic, has an extensive online shop.

The problem with Internet businesses is that while the threshold to become global is increasingly lower, the competition is also accelerating. Furthermore, the advanced technology incorporated in the rapidly evolving IT requires advanced education for the users to be able to use the devices. In global trade the volumes can exceed the comprehension of small producers and responding to orders can become very difficult. While IT certainly has the potential to narrow the gap between the producers and markets, more research is required to examine its present impact and future prospect.

It could also be proposed that the Internet or similar digital means cannot replace first hand knowledge. Perhaps the ideal contribution of a craft development initiative would consist of three joint strategies: expose the artisans personally to the markets, enable long term knowledge

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<sup>58</sup> A low-cost basic computer made for the developing country context

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.novica.com>

transfer through personal support on occasions, and enable a continuous business support, communication and marketing channel through the use of ICT (information and communication technologies). This would enable the local producers to see the need for new knowledge and to have a source for it on a continuous basis. To date, it would appear that no organisation has adopted this triple approach.

#### **7.4.2. Product category lock-ins**

Product category lock-ins form a major constraint, and the study has identified four main issues that create and maintain the current observed lock-ins. The product range is often incoherent, transfers to higher value added product categories are not enabled, the use of technology has not been explored to benefit, and the use of vernacular aesthetics is often not a conscious decision. All of these together create a situation Southwell (1997) originally identified as the Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome (OCS).

##### **Problematic product ranges**

Copycat behaviour and lack of product diversification is often mentioned as one of the main problems in small-scale craft production. This is no doubt linked to the lack of knowledge of the external context, and radical product innovation is clearly difficult to induce in a vacuum of ideas. The global markets demand radical novelty, while the local producers (and most craft development initiatives) are focused on incremental development. In the local context, the pressure towards generating new products is not as acute as in global markets, but in terms of import substitution, affordable novelties could have a potential local demand as well.

Modifications, rather than relying on Western designs, which include new radical innovations in design, have become the prevailing pattern of craft development. Sometimes the modifications are minor, applying to the forms of products, e.g. suggesting standardized pillow sizes or different firing techniques, and sometimes they apply to the style and aesthetics. While the former kind of intervention is relatively straightforward, the latter raises questions. Intervening with the style and suggesting changing in the aesthetics of products runs the risk of imposing external forms.

The organisations are aware of the scope of the challenge of modifying traditions to meet the needs of modern consumers but the belief in low- or non-technology production of non-essential artefacts appears to be strong.

While the hybridization, i.e., modifying of traditional styles to meet the market demand, has been a much-debated topic, an apparent change in attitude has taken place over time. Philips and Steiner (1999) mention a British Colonial Officer T.J. Alldridge, who, based in Sierra Leone in the early 1880s, already regretted the negative impact of *the march of trade*. In recent literature, the attitude towards hybrids has become more relaxed, as all the so-called primitive

cultures are anyway united in their primitiveness and hence *authentic* by definition. This opens up new possibilities for exploring product innovations, which depart from the incremental and drift towards the radical, thus potentially achieving a wider access than current product ranges have.

### **Difficult transfers in product categories**

Clifford's *Art and Culture System* provides a framework to understand the process of contextualisation of artefacts produced by local craft makers (see Figure 2.10). As Clifford points out, Non-Western craft commodities travel regularly to the zone of history and folklore, turning into period pieces with collection value, migrating from the status of tourist art (Clifford, 1998). Sometimes commercial productions of recent origin (such as Haitian primitive paintings) enter into the art-culture circuit, usually however remaining to be associated as historical representations of folklore. There cannot be direct movement from the commodity sector to that of fine art, and even when the artefacts eventually enter into this zone, they cannot escape the *clouds of authentic culture* that shadow them (Clifford, 1998).

For a craft commodity to enter the zone of technological inventions, there has to be an element of creativity and (appropriate) innovation. As Clifford notes, the artefacts have to be "uncommon, sharply distinct from or blatantly cut out of culture" (Clifford, 1988, 226). As such they can enter into the fine art, regardless of their aesthetic or functional properties, such as Duchamp's pissoir or Warhol's soup cans.

Clifford's system is historic and constantly changing, and it does not explain how the transformations occur. It does emphasize the importance of context; the implication being that improving the market position of the craft commodities requires their re-contextualisation from the tourist sector to that of desirable artefacts that people may not need but want. The symbolic qualities of products become crucial. This is the key driver in the search for desirability of products, and justifies less attention to the utilitarian aspects in the artefacts.

The organisations have clearly put a lot of effort (in website design as in product design) into presenting the products as *cool and funky* representations of native imagination, but cannot escape the aura of shabbiness often associated with the low-technology production. Presenting the products in bulk where the difference between one-off masterpieces and bazaar style trinkets does not help.

### **Low and no technology**

As *hand made* has a symbolic dimension as an antidote to the power of technology, the labour intensiveness is perhaps expected from the products. Labour intensiveness is often mentioned as an asset. The appeal of craft products is partly based on the apparent effort required to produce them. In another example, the beadwork of Monkey Biz is admired not only for the funky folk-art aesthetics, but also because of the fact that each bead has been painstakingly attached to the

product. Such products cannot be machine made. In the case of Monkey Biz, the products are signed by the artists, thus contextualising them as one-off art pieces. The products have become rather popular and have been featured in various high profile magazines.

Brenda Schmachmann gives an example of another South Africa-based needlework-business, *Kaross Workers*, where more than 430 rural women get supplementary income making embroideries for tourist and expatriate markets. The designs have been made by an external designer, for a maximum appeal in the tourist markets. The criterion for good work is not creativity but the neatness of the stitches. *Kaross Workers* provides women with a salary that, while a useful addition to the family income, is nevertheless too small to sustain family. In addition, as Schmachmann writes, the women have no role in interacting with the market and defining the work they produce (Schmachmann, 2001).

Another case is the *Self Employed Women's Association* (SEWA), an Indian organisation, promoting traditional craft techniques by supporting female entrepreneurs through micro credits. In this context craft is seen through technical, not functional categories, and framing it in such a way is apparently thought to increase its appeal as a truly authentic and indigenous set of skills<sup>60</sup>.

Examples like the ones above give reasons to believe that product development tends to be framed by the notion of what is considered appropriate for the local producer communities by the organisations that provide external assistance. For example, labour intensive and low technology techniques such as needlework and other low-volume methods of manufacture are favoured, though bound to be economically relatively unproductive. In fact, the labour intensiveness appears to serve as further justification of their inner value: craft is a labour-intensive industry and labour is widely available in poor countries. Mahatma Gandhi noted early on that the poor of the world could only be helped by the production of the masses, not mass production. One can ask, however, whether the appeal of Non-Western labour intensive products is enhanced more by the labour intensiveness or by the fact that the products are inexpensive. The combination of both together has a negative impact on the sustainability of the production, causing a poverty lock-in.

While craft is seen as the antidote for the power of machines it is argued that it cannot be defined as absence of technology. As Dormer writes, most craft activities involve *a technology*: a brush, a palette, and a tool (Dormer, 1997, 7). Dormer defines technology quite aptly as “The integration of machines and information to create process of manufacture or the distribution of knowledge in ways that is increasingly independent of the vagaries, whims and decisions of individual employees or, indeed, employers” (Dormer, 1997, 7).

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<sup>60</sup> [www.sewa.org](http://www.sewa.org)

In the craft context, technology does not necessarily imply an increased use of machinery, but rather refers to the means and knowledge needed to improve the productivity in the appropriate manner for the socio-cultural context of those involved. Dormer defines craft as a process of which the maker is in control, from planning to production. Technology becomes a problem when this control is taken from the artisan (Dormer, 1997). Dormer notes that technology is rooted in craft, but has evolved into a form, which is distinct from its craft origins.

While Dormer clearly indicates that tools and labour saving devices are more than appropriate in the craft context, it appears that appropriate and affordable production enhancing equipment is rarely available to the artisans; the same holding true also of imported (and often also local) materials.

While the innovations in the ICT (information and communication technologies) sector have proven to be useful for the marginalized and poor, other forms of technology have been defined by the legacy of appropriate technology. The Internet may be useful in selling and marketing the products and even for product design, providing a method for obtaining customer feedback. But the technological innovations to facilitate the craft production are still few and far between.

According to Jaitly (1984) imported high technology should be reserved for the use of irrigation, communication and crop preservation. The artisans need local and indigenous answers to their problems. This does not mean that the artisans should be left to their own devices. Instead, a genuine integration of tradition and technology should be sought. Southwell proposes “a pluralistic and creative approach to technology, one, or rather, several of which may involve handmade crafts, batch production, mass production etc. running in parallel and occasionally converging” (Southwell, 1997). As a designer, she believes in a designs ability to transform technology. Finding the right balance of technology in craft is an exercise that requires significant attention from craft development initiatives.

### **Conscious use of vernacular aesthetics**

One might say that vernacular aesthetics is both a curse and a blessing. In tourist markets representations of indigenous art are in high demand (though what is considered as indigenous may vary) but in the export market, their appeal is unclear. There is said to be a growing market for hand made artefacts and exotic accessories, but quite what this assumption is based on is unclear. In the sector of ornamental craft the price appears to be of major importance, and there is no evidence to suggest that vernacular aesthetics alone would add value to products. The sector is hugely competitive and markets are saturated with low cost commodities, sourcing from the sweatshops of South East Asia.

As noted earlier, it is not possible to identify any indicative signifiers for what makes an artefact *African* or *Indian*, though for example Indian frivolous forms, often considered as kitsch by Westerners, can be considered as a reflection of the symbolic richness of India.

The Issey Miyake design (Figure 7.12), labelled as *L'ART BRUT DU TISSAGE ETHNIQUE* on the other hand appears to have gained its inspiration from Africa – an image enforced by the African model. In this case, the ethnicity comes from the fact that the fabric is *rustic*, not neatly finished, and rough (hinting at the probable low-technology – even though the fabric is probably made in France) and has patterns that can be interpreted as *primitive* (simple, strong, graphic).



**Fig. 7.1 “L’art brut du tissage ethnique”. From Issaye Miyake collection.**

Such essentialist conventions are powerful but their impact on trade is unclear. The fact that vernacular forms are in and out of fashion, as was seen in the case of Anokhi, implies that they are seen as styles (or fads), not as results of indigenous problem solving in the deeper sense of the word.

With craft development initiatives, overall the vernacular aesthetics tend to be favoured, though there is a conscious attempt at times to tone down *ethnicity*. Organisations such as Traidcraft pick items that do not underline ethnicity, although there are clear vernacular elements present. The presence of vernacular aesthetics is not always deliberate, but an indication of the pre-industrial production form. Overall, any initiative must find the right balance between vernacular and modern aesthetics.

### **7.4.3. Production: supply, quality and market driven approaches**

The ability to provide steady supplies and consistent quality is a major issue for craft development. The values in many developing countries may be very different from those of the Western world; for example, families and personal relationships are first priorities while work

may be of lesser importance. The situation where orders stay on ice because the producers have other priorities and duties is certainly familiar to many craft development workers.

To keep the supplies steady and the quality sufficient requires supervision and makes demands that may conflict with the local lifestyle, as happened in the case of HBV in Vanuatu. The problems with supply and quality are typical of small scale craft production, where production is not tuned to the high volumes required in the competitive global markets, where quality is not compromised in the way that it is in local markets with less competition.

Technically, many of the organisations promote a market rather than supply driven approaches, but within the existing product categories. Marketing and market orientation are frequently used terms and emphasized in the project rhetoric. In craft, market research is challenging, as there is an extremely volatile demand for hand made artefacts. The markets in some cases have to be created. Even the Golden Eye project put the designers' ideas first and did not carry out marketing studies in order to ascertain what the market required. On the other hand, Western design education can be said to support market orientation, which may have had an impact on the Golden Eye products, high design as they were.

Within the category of Non-Western ornamental craft, one can probably say that the organisations do everything in their power to equip the artisans with the appropriate tools to compete. That noted, this is not always enough to catapult the products to success; global trade has also larger issues that can have an impact.

#### **7.4.4. Distribution: fair trade vs. sweatshop value chains**

The lack of appropriate and accessible distribution and marketing channels is perceived as a significant constraint on the artisans. Local demand may be too limited (due to poverty and lack of purchasing power) and often tourist markets are the only accessible places to sell the products. In larger tourist centres, the established curio shops provide a market for the products, but as was seen in the case of Vanuatu, cheap imports from the Far East can create an unfavourable competitive environment for local producers. In countries where copyrights are not legislated for and enforced, faked reproductions of indigenous art provide the tourists with a low-priced option, exacerbating the marginalization of local producers

Fair trade outlets provide a more fair distribution system, but their market share is still marginal and has proven to be of limited potential in the commodity sector (Randall, 2005). As noted above, the Internet has opened new distribution channels, but it is still not clear what the long term impact will be of the ICT induced alternatives.

Craft is often spoken about in a positive sense as an alternative to the sense of alienation caused by industrial production and machinery; but it can be observed that the working conditions of many artisans (for instance in Bali) do not differ greatly from the sweatshops that mark South-

East Asian production. As craft is usually produced in the informal sector, beyond public control and labour laws, abuses such as child labour may occur. A hand made bamboo bowl, sold at 3 euros in IKEA Finland, raises many questions as to the direction craft making is taking in the global economy. The idea that Dormer (1997) has proposed of craft possessing an autonomy within a field of knowledge does not necessarily take place in a situation where the artisans work for multinational value chains without control over production and/or distribution.

It is clear that one of the major contributions that craft development initiatives can have is linked to alternative distribution routes that enable a more equitable sharing of the benefits that come from craft exports. This is not easy to achieve in practice, and the current highly efficient and developed value chains and distribution systems of multinational retailers heavily stacks the cards against the fair trade movement. Innovative solutions such as the use of ICT can have a major positive impact on alternative distribution efforts, but sustained campaigning is also needed to turn the heads of the customers that finally make the purchase decisions that impact the local producers in far away places.

## **7.5. Summary of the discussion**

*"Those who are enamoured of the spiritualism of Africa and from this enchantment make projections of probable design development in Africa would do well to reflect on the fact that it is possible that this spiritualism is nothing more than homeostatic compensatory reaction to the earlier materialization of Africa" (Selby Mvusi, 1991<sup>61</sup>).*

### **7.5.1. Main findings**

#### **Products**

In terms of poverty alleviation, the success of craft products (and thus of the initiatives that aim to support craft development) can be measured by their sales. As John Ballyn (2002) has noted, the success of the artisan is his survival. Differences in taste imply that no objective criteria can be set for products and therefore it is the sales that form the practical acid test of acceptance<sup>62</sup>. Taste is socially constructed and has a close bearing on the different capitals (particularly cultural and social) that people take part in, as defined by Bourdieu (1986). In contemporary global markets the key factors that appear to determine the market appeal of craft products are linked to the symbolic attractiveness (i.e. the personal and social values of the customer) and intrinsic attractiveness of the product form (e.g. Baxter, 1995).

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<sup>61</sup> Unpublished manuscript

<sup>62</sup> This is a very similar approach to conventional economics, where peoples' preferences are measured through income and other financial measures. As is noted elsewhere in the study, reflecting on Sen, this is not entirely unproblematic.

A general problem with craft development is that the products do not stand out in the intensely competitive and saturated market of decorative, non-essential craft products. A quick visit to almost any shop selling Non-Western items will confirm this (see e.g. images of ATA products, page 187). This may not always be due to the lack of differentiation of individual products as such (many organisations put a lot of effort into achieving differentiation) but also because the products are presented in portfolios of similar artefacts, like in the case of Dastkar (see page 153). Interestingly, this was the conclusion made by the Arts Council England regarding British craft (Arts Council England, 2004). According to the report, a general problem in craft is that while individual pieces can be quite exquisite, the over all image of hand made is somehow *stultifying flat*. Craft lacks the symbolic, aspirational quality, which makes people desire to own it (ibid.).

The report suggests creating higher *peaks* by encouraging the more capable and creative designer-makers *to rise to the top*. Furthermore, the report recommends making a clear distinction between amateurs and professionals, through positioning and branding (Arts Council England, 2004).

This lack of aspirational quality in craft has also noted by Southwell. The tendency of the craft websites to feature selections of craft as homogenous representations of world craft does not give space to the suggested distinction between professionals and amateurs (Southwell, 1997). The Aid to Artisan product selection on page 187 illustrates this.

The supply of craft ornaments is abundant and the high volume of artefacts of varying aesthetical and functional qualities results in the lack of *wow*- effect; thus none of the marketed products are able to achieve a price premium due to product differentiation (see for instance Dastkar product selection p. 153).

In this context, the process of developing products becomes of interest. Products are most often developed through a modification process and incremental innovation (as opposed to radical innovation), which makes it difficult to achieve a *wow*-factor. For instance, the decorative stone hearts on page 176 are developed into other kinds of decorative stone hearts, which might look trendier but are not essentially different from the original ones.

In terms of ethnic markings, the craft development initiatives appear to be in a state of indecision. While traditions as such are often emphasized as starting points of designs, ethnicity appears in a diluted form, often purposefully so (as in the case of Natangura carvings in Vanuatu, p. 138). This obscures product identities and makes them disappear in the plethora of artefacts with similar aesthetics, most of which are sold with a low price as the main attraction. The low prices may also correspond with unsustainable production methods, leading to a vicious circle of fully employed artisans who are locked in a poverty cycle with no means of developing their craft further. This was the observation (made by Rajeev Sethi) that gave rise to the Golden Eye project (as described above, p. 145).

On the other hand, emphasizing the origin of the products is problematic, as it does not necessarily add value (as style is easily copied) unless the use of the origin as an intrinsic element in the design can create a differentiated product. Vernacular aesthetics as such do not appear to add value without product differentiation. The case of Pulesea Tekopo (described in text box 1, page 3) is an example of this. Even products that have accessed mainstream markets are apt to be classified in the alternative category, as could be seen in the case of Pintade (text box 3, p. 171).

Finally, anonymous ethnic/tourist art has been perceived to be a saturated category with low profit margins. The alternative path of developing the *auteurship* in products requires the re-categorization of products as objects of art, and it is unclear whether the craft development initiatives are able to support this on a wide scale (whereby it would have economic significance).

### **Capabilities**

It is noted that craft development initiatives have an impact on artisans struggling to gain access to global markets. That being said, this impact is limited, mostly due to the fact that craft development initiatives take existing skills and low technology as a baseline, and are thus locked in existing practices, resulting in the lack of radical product innovation based on new skills and knowledge.

Novelty is often not supported in producer societies and, due to many cultural and social factors, the artisans appear not to be intrinsically innovation seeking. The introduction of new ideas by craft development initiatives is challenging as local communities may reject change due to marginalisation, fear of the new and a lack of understanding on how external markets operate, among other such motives, as the cases from Mozambique and Vanuatu (described in Chapters 4) demonstrate.

It is noted that developing existing skills is easier than creating completely new ones, but at the same time this will no doubt inhibit radical product innovation. At the same time, there is an increasing unskilled labour force converging on the craft industry, due to the lack of opportunities for income generation in other professions, which implies that the general level of existing skills is decreasing overall. Of this, Vanuatu is a good example, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4.3.

In developing economies, craft making is not necessarily considered a valued profession. Craft producers are not a homogeneous lot but consist of individuals from different cultures and communities. Not all craft producers wish to join forces and work as cooperatives, even though it is widely recognized that social capital is one of the key factors for success. This was the case with the Mozambican artisans, as described above in Chapter 4.2.2 .

There is a dependence on external champions. But the question is: are champions more interested in saving traditions than generating income and creating jobs? As Viktor Papanek suggested, designers have mainly worked in developing countries not to meet the needs of the poor people, but to engage the local producers to make products for Western consumers, providing them with the craft objects they like so much. Others focus on the role of the craft development initiatives as the safe guardians of local traditions, foregoing commercial realities. It would appear that a paradigm shift is underway, one in which these two polarized views are converging into a perception of good fair trade business that is able to also support local traditions.

While a connection to regional heritage is an important tool to avoid alienation, the meaningful cultural identity that e.g. Shapira (1995) talks about, requires a deep understanding of tradition, which many craft development initiatives may not possess. In many developing societies, material culture may not be the best manifestation of cultural diversity and originality, as it has been subject to multiple transformations and reinterpretations during the colonial and post-colonial history. The concerns of preserving traditions has probably taken up too much attention and has become the focal issue, ignoring the fact that poverty kills traditions more than changing life styles (Giddens, 2000). There are significant issues of ideology and power embedded in these questions, which craft development initiatives may fail to take into account.

There appears to be no evidence that supporting traditional techniques would enhance the empowerment of local producers in the long run. On the contrary, there are clear examples of initiatives, which, by locking in the local artisans to traditional ways of doing things, actually lock them into unfavourable social and economic structures.

### **Constraints**

Quality and supply are problematic but can be addressed. Craft development initiatives do address quality issues, but the problem is that the products do not stand out. There also appears to be a lack of mutual understanding of what craft would be as a business, as a concept and what is valuable in the context.

Asymmetric knowledge creates a gap between the markets and the producers. The local producers do not have access to world trends, which makes the craft production volatile as it is subject to constant trend changes. The existing traditional products are seen as unsuitable to global tastes, and local producers are vulnerable to changes of fashion. The need for assistance of the craft development initiatives in trend spotting has been recognized, and is being offered, but keeping up with the changing trends is difficult, and sometimes does not fall into the key priorities of the external organisations.

There are significant issues with the use of technology; or rather the lack of technology used in products. It is noted that, overall, the craft development initiatives do not encourage the use of

(new) technology, though technological improvements may occur, as in the case of Dastkar handlooms. Novel (but nevertheless appropriate) technology application could lead to radical product innovation, bigger volumes, steadier supplies and quality and, ultimately, to *wow* – effect as Western consumers are attracted to technological innovations.

There is a wide gap between markets and producers. Producers cannot control distribution channels, and the fair trade channels that are mainly suggested by craft development initiatives provide only limited sales volume. The increasing volumes of fair trade foods do not appear to translate into similar increases in the craft commodity sector. Also, quality and supply control are much more difficult in the craft sector than in the food sector.

In the alternative channels provided by the initiatives, the products are lost in the wide variety of similar artefacts. Even when channelled through mainstream chains, the products are marginalized as alternatives to mainstream products.

<b>Table. 7.1 Summary table of perceived external contributions to craft development initiatives</b>									
	<b>Case Set 1</b>			<b>Case Set 2</b>			<b>Case Set 3</b>		
	<b>AAP</b>	<b>HBV</b>	<b>Natangu ra</b>	<b>Golden E</b>	<b>Weya</b>	<b>Dastka r</b>	<b>Traidcraf t</b>	<b>Oxfam</b>	<b>ATA</b>
<b>Product attributes *</b>									
Perceivable quality	+	0	+	+++	++	+	++	++	++
Appropriate cost of product	++	0	0	?	++	++	++	++	++
Implications of origin	++	++	+	++	++	+++	+	+	+
Authored products	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	+	++
Global orientation in products	+	0	+	+++	++	+	++	++	++
Distinction (Western perception)	0	0	0	+++	++	+	+	+	+
<b>Creating capabilities **</b>									
Seeing the value of new ideas	++	+	+	+++	++	+	++	++	++
Incorporating new ideas into existing products	++	0	+	+++	++	+	++	++	++
Creating new products	++	0	+	+++	+	+	++	++	++
Embedding tacit trade knowledge	+	0	+	++	++	++	++	++	++
Distributing explicit trade knowledge	+	0	+	++	++	++	++	++	++
Fostering joint learning	++	0	++	?	+++	++	+++	+++	+++
Promoting trade ethics	++	0	++	++	++	++	+++	+++	+++
Developing trade representation	+	0	+	+	?	++	++	++	++
To earn decent wage	0	0	0	?	++	+	?	?	?
To have decent work conditions	++	?	++	?	++	++	++	++	++
To have sustainable work	+	0	+	?	+	+	?	?	?

	Case Set 1			Case Set 2			Case Set 3		
	AAP	HBV	Natangura	Golden E	Weya	Dastkar	Traidcraft	Oxfam	ATA
<b>Constraints that limit capabilities ***</b>									
Craft development bridging gap in asymmetric trade knowledge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(Helping to achieve) An enhanced product range	++	+	++	+++	+++	+	++	++	+++
(Enabling) Transfers in product categories	++	+	+	+++	+++	+	++	+	++
(Enabling) More varied use of technology	+	0	+	++	+	+	+	+	+
(Assisting in striving for a) Conscious use of vernacular aesthetics	++	++	+	++	++	+++	+	+	+
(Helping to achieve an) Ability to provide a steady supply	+	+	++	?	++	?	?	?	?
(Helping to achieve an) Ability to provide a steady quality	+	+	++	?	++	+	?	?	?
(Assisting in) Developing a market driven approaches	+	0	+	+++	+	+	+	+	+
(Promoting) Craft sold through fair trade distribution	+	+++	++	?	++	++	+++	+++	+++
(Enabling) Bypassing sweatshop value chains	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
Notes:				0 None + Somewhat ++ Adequately +++ Extensively ? Cannot be established, as inconclusive or missing data					
<p>* In terms of the Product Attributes, the case sets are not comparable, and cannot be evaluated nominally against each other. The table findings are thus essentially indicative and illustrative only. The key advantage in the research design is linked to having a common set of criteria that structures the enquiry. The results between case sets are not directly comparable, as the methods of enquiry are somewhat different. The inter-case set comparisons do allow for a wide and generic triangulation of the results between the case sets.</p> <p>** In terms of Creating Capabilities, it should be noted that the table joins together the findings obtained from the previous chapters. The key factors are discussed in this summary of the discussion. For the wider discussion on the individual factors please refer to the previous chapters.</p> <p>*** Please note that the research attempts to capture the contribution that is made towards “achieving, enabling, helping, assisting and/or promoting”, as per the key words in parenthesis (shown to clarify the evaluation aims).</p>									

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

This research is based on the initial observation that craft development initiatives appeared not to support the development of the ability of local producers to meet the demands of the global markets as well as they could have been expected to. The key challenge has been identified as the change in the structure and environment of the local and international markets, leading to the marginalization of local producers.

The research questions were defined as: “*What is the contribution of externally supported craft development initiatives towards the capability of local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets?*”, and: “*How could this contribution be enhanced?*”.

Craft development initiatives have been defined as undertakings that aim to support the enhancement of technical and marketing skills of local craft producers. This research focused on projects that are, in one form or another, supported by external parties. The response capability of local craft producers has been understood in this research as the ability to respond effectively to the challenge of globalization.

### **8.1. The initial observations**

These first-hand observations were made in the context of small-scale craft producers in Africa (Mozambique) and the South Pacific (Vanuatu) from 1994 to 2003. The findings, based on participatory observation in four organisations in the two countries, indicated that local producers have issues with both technical and market –related skills and knowledge, and that there exists an inbuilt inability to respond effectively to the challenges imposed by the process of globalization. One of the major issues identified is linked with the complexity of the concept of *craft* and its different meanings. In the context of the initial observations, the design and execution of decorative, non-functional artefacts was found to be a problematic product category, within which issues related to *taste* and *quality* were ambiguous and open to conflicting views. The markets for this sector of products were highly competitive and subject to rapidly changing trends. Additionally, it was observed that externally supported initiatives to develop the ability of local producers to operate in this product category were not particularly effective.

### **8.2. The case projects**

To deepen the understanding of the issues that local producers and external supporting parties may have, a series of case studies of three craft development projects were undertaken. A similar approach was used to examine the projects: Dastkar, Weya, and Golden Eye, developed through the initial observations.

The choice of the cases was driven by a research choice of focusing on a particular area of craft production, defined through Graburn's (1976) taxonomy (see figure 2.6.) as non-essential, exotic artefacts, emerging in the contact zones of Western and Non-Western peoples. There is a global demand for these decorative, so called ethnic products, which are often labour intensive and slow to produce. This group of products is by no means homogenous but contains a wide variety of craft products, with varied aesthetic and functional qualities, often with vernacular aesthetics, and a pre-industrial production mode. The products are labour-intensive, and their profitability is in many cases marginal for the producer. Furthermore, the decorative artefacts are often based on rather stereotypical representations of *native art* and may have a limited impact on the development of indigenous design skills. Much of the craft items sold in global markets today, are mass-produced, under circumstances that are not very different from those of sweatshop factories. This category of decorative craft items is problematic as the internal variation in aesthetics and quality is pronounced, and where changing trends are accelerated, making it very difficult for the artisans to keep up.

Through the case studies, the response capability of local craft producers has been found to be problematic on two levels. In the first instance, the skills required to respond to new challenges have not been fully developed. Secondly, the adopted product strategies appear not to have enabled sufficient value for the producers. As a research premise this added value is assumed to translate into adequate income for a good life for the producers. The craft development initiatives have not been fully able to address both of these issues concurrently.

### **8.3. Further triangulation**

In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the study, a third set of data was considered, and a series of web projects was analyzed using the original research positioning. The findings supported the initial observations and findings from the case studies.

### **8.4. Applying Sen's Capability Approach**

This study has adopted Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA) as the theoretical foundation for the analysis of the case studies. The CA was chosen because of its potential to explain, in a single framework, the capabilities on the level of the individual, and the constraints that inhibit the development of this potential in the collective environment. This framework highlights the concepts of freedom, capability, functionings and constraints.

Using Sen's framework, the analysis of the case projects is on two levels. On the first, skills development addresses the capabilities of the individuals. This is taken to involve the technical issues of designing and executing artefacts in order to match the market demand. In some cases it has been recognized that exceptional products or styles also create markets. Secondly, the

framework addresses the constraints that inhibit the development of capabilities. In this study this is limited to the issues which impact on product design and execution.

Linking this to the research question, Sen's framework is used to examine the case projects for two things. In the first place, whether the craft development initiatives contributed positively to improving the skills of individual craft producers so that there exists a capability within the artisans to design and execute products that meet the market requirements, or are able to influence the market so that new opportunities are created?

Secondly, are the craft development initiatives able to remove (or alleviate the impact of) constraints that inhibit the application of the capability of the artisans to design and execute products that are able to meet market demand?

### **8.5. Key conclusions**

The key conclusion in terms of the contribution of the craft development initiatives to the response capability of local craft producers can be factored into two key main issues:

In the first place the study concludes that, while individual capabilities have been enhanced in the case projects, there is no evidence of significant contribution towards the removal of constraints. This implies that, in the case projects, skills development is only partly effective, and cannot become more effective.

Secondly, it is observed that craft development initiatives have effectively directed craft production in developing countries into an area of low technology and a lack of product innovation, preventing the developing country artisans from fully exploiting their potential to design and produce high value added products. This implies that the craft development initiatives have not only been unable to remove existing constraints, they have in fact developed new structural ones. This supports Southwell's argument, and appears to confirm the existence of what she termed the *Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome*.

Taken together, this implies that, under current practices, craft development initiatives cannot generally fully contribute to the development of the response capability of the local craft producers. Current practice can be enhanced, however, but that requires serious consideration of the product strategies, and a re-think of the premise under which initiatives are undertaken.

Assessing well-meaning initiatives, and implicitly the organisations behind them, in a critical manner (and sometimes arriving at negative conclusions) is needed to open new perspectives for craft development. While traditional craft making has many good and worthwhile characteristics, the research finds that it may not be the best or even sufficiently appropriate tool in capability enhancement that would lead to poverty alleviation and enhanced human well being.

## **8.6. Towards an improved practice**

Both the local producers and organisations involved in craft development would benefit from an improved practice in setting up and implementing initiatives. To this end, three key issues are raised in this section that would add value to future endeavours.

In the first place, it has been observed that products do not stand out, and that the contribution of the craft development initiatives is somewhat limited by the fact that support in product development and marketing is in many cases provided within the existing range of skills of the local producers. Craft making draws increasing numbers of unskilled labour into the industry as the global trade of ornamental items is rising; the problem is that the global market requires high craftsmanship and the ability to provide steady quality and supplies.

Secondly, the craft development initiatives do not encourage radical product development, or the use of new technology. While assistance is provided it tends to be framed by what the local producers are thought to be capable of.

Thirdly, there is a wide gap in knowledge between markets and the producers. The organisations hook the producers to global trade but due to the depth, length and long age of the gap, these attempts are doomed to achieve only very moderate success.

To address these issues, several suggestions emerge from the study.

Wider and more thorough assessment is needed to identify the hidden potential in communities. There is no evidence that the Zulu-people are naturally adept at beadwork, (though such art-forms have been performed traditionally by Zulus), anymore than Finns are naturally apt for making birch bark shoes (though bark weaving is of ancient Finnish origin). The assumptions made on traditions, skill levels, and markets should be holistically reviewed and questioned. The objective would be to create a programme of opportunities that could be achievable, almost akin to a set of capabilities that can be realized in the Senian terminology. The key constraints need to be identified in this context.

It is also suggested that there is a need to carefully review the potential of each culture to recognise and assimilate new knowledge, incorporate it and reconfigure it to suit market needs. The introduction of new knowledge could be done in three ways: having artisans enter into direct contact with the markets (say, through trade fairs), have designers or planners support the producers on a long-term basis (but not necessarily constantly), and develop ICT based marketing and communication tools. It is important to recognize that these three systems should happen concurrently. It is also important to chart the ways in which the introduction of knowledge can be achieved, as acceptance or rejection may depend on factors, which are not obvious to outsiders. The objective would be to bridge the knowledge gap that exists between markets and producers.

New product concepts should be considered, ones that have a potential in external markets and that benefit the local communities as well. While incremental product innovation is the current prevailing strategy, radical innovations could be brought up on the side to address needs that are new or do not even exist yet. These could also be immaterial services or technical solutions to local problems that could have global interest. The objective would be to emerge from the lock-ins in the category of non-essential items.

Finally, the global commercial system needs to change, not only the action of local producers. The advocacy role of the craft development organisations can be significant in making the commercial structures more adequate and level for all players. Developing countries' true potential should be considered and their profiles clarified. The vitality and inventiveness of the local lifestyles should be made known to the Western world through the many immaterial forms in which these cultures manifest themselves, such as traditional healing practices, music, poetry, story telling, religion, and ceremonies.

### ***8.7. Contribution to new knowledge***

The aim of the research has been to develop a critical approach to craft development in the context of developing countries, particularly in terms of product concepts. The ethos of craft has been critically interpreted and analyzed taking into consideration the complex underlying factors. The research has framed the larger, product strategy related questions that should be asked when craft development initiatives are considered, planned and implemented.

The research has applied Sen's capability theory to the framework of craft development. This novel application of Sen's thinking opens up a new perspective for understanding the individual capabilities in relation to social constraints, offering a model that can be used in the future conceptualization, planning and implementation of craft development projects. Sen's Capability Approach, further developed through Nussbaum's detailed list of the basic human capabilities (as described on page 25-26), provided an important set of tools for the understanding and analysis of the inner dynamics of craft development in general, and of design as a method for developing craft in particular. The idea that design could assist in the process of transforming functionings into concrete capabilities and this way lead to increased autonomy and freedoms, brings substance to the discussion of design in the context of craft development.

In relation to the objectives listed in the Introduction, the research has, firstly, provided a set of definitions that bring semantic clarification to the field of craft, development, and design. Without this clarification it is impossible for researchers in this field to compare the effectiveness of alternative development strategies or to provide clear recommendations that are unambiguous. The focus, so far, has been on Western markets instead of the producers, which makes the approach different from that of the majority of studies dealing with craft development initiatives.

Secondly, the research has provided an overview of design and manufacture in craft development initiatives, examining the contribution that these have made to the capability of local craft producers responding to the challenge of globalisation.

Thirdly, the study provides a set of recommendations designed to improve future contributions made by design development initiatives for the purpose of socio-economic development of Least Developed Countries.

This new knowledge is of particular value to organisations wishing to assist development in the Least Developed Countries, specifically poverty alleviation through the development of indigenous craft-related businesses.

### **8.8. Suggestions for future research**

In order to arrive at contextually appropriate product strategies, the existing agenda of social design needs to be analyzed and potentially revised so as to achieve an enhanced impact on human development. While Papanek's legacy still has a strong position on the discourse and while his impact cannot be underestimated, there are other thinkers, perhaps most importantly Richard Buckminster Fuller, whose ideas should be reassessed in relation to the context of this research. Fuller's technology friendly notion of *Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science*, which he defined as "the effective application of the principles of science to the conscious design of our total environment in order to help make the Earth's finite resources meet the needs of all humanity without disrupting the ecological processes of the Planet"<sup>63</sup>, could provide a refreshing framework for assessing the prospect of the marginalised artisans in the global economy. The role of technology in development needs more research and the legacy of appropriate technology should be re-evaluated.

The legacy of Selby Mvusi, the radical pro-techno design thinker from the 60's, needs to be critically assessed. A book about his work is presently being written by Elza Botha, a South-African artist and scholar, who acted as the curator of an extensive exhibition of Mvusi's paintings in the 90's (see also Moles, 1996).

Developing alternative perspectives to the practice of craft development in general is an ongoing challenge, for which much more research is required. For example, the impact of tourism on product development needs to be critically assessed. New collaborative forms of service design, such as creative tourism and eco travelling may provide new perspectives for product development in the souvenir sector for modifying the indigenous skills and techniques to meet the needs of today (e.g. Miettinen, 2007). So far little formal research has been undertaken in this area, particularly from the point of view of the changes and challenges global warming poses to world tourism.

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<sup>63</sup> [www.challenge.ofi.org/glossary](http://www.challenge.ofi.org/glossary)

More research is also required to analyse the possibilities of product differentiation and pricing to increase the competitiveness of craft business, as these may be key drivers towards the increasing mechanization of the production, or the further embedding of technology into both the production and the products.

Channelling the immaterial wisdom of Non-Western cultures into innovative products and services is a challenge that remains unexplored. As Shapira (1995) has pointed out, while the world globalizes, the need to re-interpret and re-construct cultural identities becomes particularly important. This requires that we look beyond the material forms of cultural manifestations:

*"Valuable local sources of inspiration include an incredible variety of bodily ornamentations and fashion styles, of dances and musical instruments and rhythms, of traditional ceremonies accompanying birth, marriage and death, of trade and marketing practices, of agricultural techniques, of culinary creations, of health maintenance ideas and indigenous medical and psychiatric therapies, of child care arrangements, of law and judicial practices, of spiritual ideas and of leisure activities. Ultimately, designers with local roots and contemporary awareness will be most successful in leading us towards forms of universal validity" (Shapira, 1995<sup>64</sup>).*

It is, perhaps, not so much the material forms of local cultures that should be looked at for inspiration and creativity, but the immaterial and spiritual strength of the communities. How these could be transformed into services that meet the demand of today's marketplaces is unexplored territory. The potential of Non-Western cultures appears to be framed by their material culture, the visible objects and items, though in many cases these have become compromised and in the worst cases, corrupted by the inner hierarchy of Western / Non-Western interaction and the impact of poverty.

More research is needed for development of appropriate strategies to break through the *grass ceiling*. In this regard, further study of the potential of applying Sen's thinking should be taken forward. Still in this context, there is a need for in-depth studies of business models designed to support sustainable indigenous entrepreneurship. Research focused on sustainable educational initiatives in the Least Developed Countries would be a theme highly relevant to poverty alleviation. It may be that alternative pedagogical models are required which take into account traditions of storytelling and non-text based methods of communication. The research may ask questions such as '*what are the most appropriate ways of transferring skills to the Least Developed Country communities?*'.

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<sup>64</sup> Unpaginated conference paper

Finally, the intention of this research has been not only to raise awareness but also to discuss, encouraging professionals and academics to undertake more research on this topic. The reality of craft development – at the intersection of craft, design and development – is utterly complex and provoking.

# Glossary

## AAP

Associação dos Artistas do Planalto. A Non-Governmental organisation established in Chimoio, Mozambique in 1994 to support craft development.

## AEN

The Artisan Enterprise Network – an internet-based service initiated in 1999 by the World Bank, that aimed to link artisans to the markets and to each other and provide the continued support needed to succeed in business. The programme is not active anymore. See <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/>

## Art

In this research, art is considered as a culturally dependent phenomenon that has no objective and all-encompassing definition. For (Western) contemporary art the change from appearance to conception has been crucial, as discussed by Joseph Kosuth in his well-known article *Art After Philosophy* in 1969. For Kosuth, art was a discourse, a matter of discussing art (Veiteberg, 2004)<sup>65</sup>. The Western contemporary art is valued as being conceptual; the debate whether craft can be art in this sense is on-going (Clark, 2007). Art is often seen as the highest and therefore the most valued form of human creativity. It is typical for e.g. British craft to reach out to the context of art (Arts Council, 2004). As Clarke (2007) has pointed out, the “art-envy” is still present in the Western craft discourse.

## ATA

Aid to Artisans. An international organisation that supports artisans in developing economies.

## Capabilities

A key concept in Sen’s theory of development. Based on an extended notion of equality where freedom to achieve rather than equal access is seen as the basic human right. According to Nussbaum (2000), there are three types of capabilities. *Basic capabilities*: the necessary base for developing more advanced capabilities. An example of these is education: children can use their innate ability to learn only through the provision of education *Internal capabilities*, such as the use of speech. Under favorable conditions, the capability of speech can turn into a functioning (speech or talk). *Combined capabilities* are internal capabilities provided with the conditions that make the functionings real possibilities and options.

## Capability Approach (CA)

The core of Amartya Sen’s theory that is linked to development and freedom. It looks beyond the material condition and utilities into the substantive freedoms (capabilities) of individuals to choose a life one has reason to value.

## Constraints

Components of CA that prevent individuals from transforming their capabilities into real functionings.

## Craft

The term craft may mean objects, or a certain class of objects a class of objects that covers a range of artefacts and techniques, such as carpentry, metal-work, pottery, weaving etc, with one common feature: they are all objects, made substantially by hand, utilizing hand tools and to some extent, power tools (Metcalf, 1997). It can also mean an institution with ideological connotations as Greenhalgh has suggested (Greenhalgh, 1997). He considers the decorative arts, the vernacular and the politics of work as the key elements of which the phenomenon known as *craft* today consists of. In this research craft is defined mainly as a form of manual labour and as an ideological construction that appears different in different cultures.

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<sup>65</sup> Veiteberg, Jorunn (2004): “Hybrid practice: A craft Intervention in a Contemporary Art Arena”. A paper presented in Challenging Craft. Gray’s School of Art, September 2004.  
[www2.rgu.ac.uk/challengingcraft/ChallengingCraft/papers/jorunnveiteberg/jveitebergabstract.htm](http://www2.rgu.ac.uk/challengingcraft/ChallengingCraft/papers/jorunnveiteberg/jveitebergabstract.htm)

## **Craft development**

In the context of this study, craft development is seen as the promotion of the capability of local craft producers (termed *response capability* in this study) to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets. This is a narrow view that allows for the study to focus on three key issues: craft, development, and design.

## **Craft development initiatives (CDIs)**

Undertakings that aim to contribute to the development of a response capability. They can take the form of programmes, projects, or initiatives within or external to line management structures. They can be supported locally or from external sources, and the degree of involvement of the external parties can range from supplying resources to actively managing the day-to-day running business. Resources can consist of funding or technical assistance, or a mix of both, and in some cases support is given in kind.

## **CUSO**

Canadian University Students Overseas. A Canadian Non-Governmental organisation.

## **Design**

Design is seen by many as a methodology to bring out positive change - development - to Non-Western craft industry. In this research, design is defined as an action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones (Friedman, 2003). In the Senian framework, design can be seen as a method that enables capabilities to become functionings.

## **Development**

Development refers to social or human development, which is based on access to resources and choice regarding one's life. Resource issues are not only linked to goods and services required to meet basic needs, but also to opportunity, employment, education, fair and equal justice, security and health care. Choice refers to individual freedom to make choices about one's situation and future including, but not limited to, marriage, children and work (Sen, 2000; Donaldsson, 2004). This research has adopted Amartya Sen's notion of development as freedom.

## **Distinction**

In this research the term distinction is referred to as a *quality* that makes products stand out, creating a particular interest in the consumer group that mainly buys craft products from fair trade companies: Western middle-class people.

Distinction in this sense is derived from Bourdieu's notion of *distinction*, an essential element to his theory of social stratification. It is closely related to his theory of Capitals (the social, cultural, economic and symbolic resources available for the individual to get respect from the others) and his notion of taste as a socially constructed phenomenon. According to (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986) people attempt to exploit the capitals within their possession make the distinction from others

In line with Bourdieu, it is acknowledged that there are no absolute criteria for *good taste*, as individual preferences are always socially constructed.

## **Ethnic art**

The word Ethnic is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning *race*. Ethnic relates to a certain human group having traits (religious, linguistic etc.) in common. It is also used to refer to characteristics of another culture. In this research, ethnic art is a form of commercial art of ethnic groups that have emerged in the contact zones between Western and Non-Western cultures (Graburn, 1976).

## **Fair trade**

An ideological and political construction, with the basic idea being that conventional trading relations between the South and the North are both unfair and unsustainable. The European Fair Trade Association defines fair trade as a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seek greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers - especially in the South. Fair Trade organisations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.

The strategic intent of Fair Trade is to:

1. “Deliberately to work with marginalized producers and workers in order to help them move from a position of vulnerability to security and economic self-sufficiency.
2. To empower producers and workers as stakeholders in their own organizations.
3. Actively to play a wider role in the global arena to achieve greater equity in international trade”.<sup>66</sup>

This research follows these established definitions of fair trade.

### **Freedom**

The basic concept in Amartya Sen’s notion of freedom is choice. People are free only when they are able to make the choices they want in any given situation of their lives. Sen sees freedom as both the primary end and the principal means of development.

### **Functioning**

A realized capability. A key element of Amartya Sen’s CA.

### **Globalization**

An extremely complex phenomenon, globalisation has many definitions. Overall, it can be seen as a process through which local and regional cultures, economies and societies become increasingly integrated with each other, through enhanced and intensified communication and economic transactions. While economic integration has often been the focus of the discussion on globalization in the past, the current discourse is increasingly focused on multiple combinations of technological, economic, political and socio-cultural elements. In this research globalisation is defined as the on-going social change that manifests itself in the increasing interaction between nations across the continents.

### **HBV**

Handikraf Blong Vanuatu. A craft shop in Port Vila, owned and managed by Vanuatu Village Craft Development Association.

### **ICT**

Information and communication technologies

### **Immersion theory**

Refers to encounters where the development workers gain deeper and more grounded understanding through living and sharing experiences with marginalized people. The objective of any immersion initiative is to create a direct dialogue between the potential beneficiary and the aid worker. The need is based on the observation that this contact is often lacking due to closed agendas and/or heavily planned itineraries of development professionals that do not leave room for open-ended discussions with key stakeholders. Immersions are seen to compensate for the shortcomings of the current management system; but immersion has also been criticized for lack of impact.

### **Indigenous**

The concept indigenous means something that exists naturally in one place as opposed to something that has arrived from elsewhere (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary). It has become perhaps one the most politically correct term to indicate Non-Western people, though as Tuhiwai Smith says, it "is problematic as it appears to collectivize different peoples whose experiences of colonialism have not necessarily been very similar" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2002, 6).

### **IT**

Information technology

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.eftafairtrade.org>

**Kastom**

A term in the Bislama language that originates from the English term Custom, but has acquired a wider meaning referring to indigenous traditions, culture and local socio-political arrangements.

**Least Developing Countries (LDC)**

A group of countries that according to the criteria established by the UN have the lowest per capita income, weakest human resources (such as nutrition, education and literacy) and are the most vulnerable of all the countries in the world.

**NGO**

Non-Governmental Organisation. Independent organisations with little or no links to governments or publicly funded international financial or other donor institutions.

**NID**

National Institute of Design located in Ahmedabad, India. NID is a design school established in 1961 following the consultancy by Charles and Ray Eames in 1953. The Eames' "India report" became a groundbreaking document in enhancing the use of design as a strategy to boost the small industry development and lead in setting up NID as the autonomous Indian institution for education and research in the fields of industrial design and visual communication. In the India report emphasize the potential of local skills and traditions to contribute to development.

**Oxfam Catalogue Syndrome (OCS)**

Refers to the observation that Western development organisations tend to under-estimate the developing country artisans' capabilities and frame them by what they are presumed to be capable of. As a result, development initiatives cause inadvertent and undesirable lock-ins, including promoting unnecessarily low technology, which hinders efficient production systems.

**PAR**

Participatory Action Research. A research method where the researcher takes part in the phenomenon that is being researched and contributes to the positive change. As part of the family of research methods titled action research, the cyclic methods involves planning, observing, taking action, evaluating and reflecting in order to proceed to the next cycle. The actions involve the researcher participating in addressing and resolving identified problems in the context of the initiative at hand. PAR has its roots in social psychology, and builds on the models of Kurt Lewin, developed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has been pointed out (e.g. Chambers, 1997) that the method is intrinsically political in nature, as the researcher is essentially embedded in local power dynamics.

**PNG**

Papua New Guinea.

**PRA**

Participatory Rural Appraisal. An approach that aims to involve rural people in the planning and management of development projects. The method builds on the adult education methods originally developed by Paulo Freire (2002), and promoted by e.g. Chambers (1994), and has the aim to counter the constraints of other types of surveys and problem identification processes and procedures used until then. The method involves rural people identifying their own key problems, setting developmental goals and monitoring progress and achievements.

**Response capability**

In this study, this is considered the capability that exists in local craft producers to respond to the challenges of making products for globalized markets. Globalized markets are understood as internal or external markets that have been affected through the process of globalization.

**SMEs**

Small and medium sized enterprises / businesses, often considered to employ less than 250 employees.

**Social design**

Social design is defined as the other part of the binary pair social design - market design, that are often seen as opposites and mutually exclusive. Social design emerged as a critique to market design and to the close ally of design with corporate interest that it has had, some argue, since the early days of consumerism (Margolin, 2000).

## **Sustainability**

In the context of this study, sustainability is defined narrowly as the continuation of the benefits and positive impacts in the socioeconomic context of host community (Davenport and Low, 2000; Donaldsson, 2004).

## **Third world**

The term Third world was originally used to refer countries that did not belong to the capitalist (NATO) or socialist (Soviet Union) parts of the world, known as the Second World. It has become a synonym of the poorest countries of the world. The term was originally coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952. The categorization of the world into three groups of nations, based on social, political and economic divisions has become outdated over time, and common alternatives such as “the Developing world”, “the South”, or “the Majority world” have been proposed to the “third world”.

## **Tourist Art**

*Ethnic arts* is a concept closely related to *tourist arts*, to an extent that they are often used as synonyms. They both incorporate the Westerners yearning for *unfamiliar contexts* and are used to cover the Art of the Other. According to Walker, First and Third World Countries come together in the craft products made by the poor for affluent foreign tourists, that is the so-called *ethnic, tourist* or *airport arts* (Walker, 1989). A number of other terms, such as *folk art, tribal art, primitive art, vernacular, ethnic, exotic, tribal, tourist* or *even ethnic knick-knack, razzamatazz, ethno kitsch* are also used in this connection. In this research, the term ethnic and tourist refers to art forms that have emerged in the contact zones between Western and Non-Western cultures. With this we don't mean only curios but all forms of art from the Fourth World, following Graburn's seminal work.

## **Tradition**

Tradition comes from the Latin word *traditio*, which means *handing down*. Tradition has come to mean passing down customs, beliefs etc. from one generation to another or customs and beliefs belonging to a certain place or something of long standing. As Rod Ewins (1980) has pointed out, tradition is something with a time-factor involved. It denotes pre-modern - or, in Non-Western context, pre-colonial - mode of production. This research has adopted Ewins's notion of tradition, based on the notion that traditional objects are not things that have merely been made for a long time but things “*which have been for a long time related to aspects of the broader social and cultural life of the people concerned*”, having meaning to the local communities. They are not only produced as commodities for the consumption of others but are connected to the people and their place of origin, making them distinctive and traditional.

## **UNCTAD**

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

## **UNDP**

United Nations Development Programme.

## **Western/ Non-Western**

The use of the paired Western / Non-Western concept is used to illustrate the fact that the world has been divided into two halves, corresponding to the *haves and have-nots*. In other words, the Western, industrialized countries are also understood to correspond to the rich countries of the world, while the Non-Western countries are the set of less affluent countries. A parallel paired concept of countries from the North/South is also often used in the same meaning.

The context of the research is the Least Developed Countries (LDC). LDCs are a group of 49 countries that have been identified by the United Nations as being the *least developed* in terms of their low GDP per capita, their weak human assets and their high degree of economic vulnerability. LDCs form a part of the developing countries group of nations. In this research these countries are referred to as Non-Western.

## **VNCW**

Vanuatu National Council of Women.

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