Weaving the Geographies of Harris Tweed:

An ethnography of the labour, technologies and branding of life on the loom.

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Disclaimer: All weavers featured in this thesis consented to participate in this research on the basis of anonymity. As such, all interviewed weavers have been pseudonymised, but demographic data of the sample can be found in Appendix 3. All other contributors have been attributed to organisation, and anonymised. Any descriptive resemblance implied by pseudonyms are purely coincidental. Any pictures of weavers, loom sheds or others included within this thesis do not in any way suggest or indicate they participated in interviews. Pictures bear no correspondence to the interview data or interview sampling, unless this has been made explicit.

Abstract

Harris Tweed is a cloth defined through its specific geography of production; it is a cloth handwoven by islanders at their homes in the Outer Hebrides. It is this evocative and romantically imagined craft working that is central to its promotion and appeal, and is central to the branded storytelling of the cloth. Consumers connect to, see and 'learn' of who makes it, how and where, in a compelling craft story which frames and roots the cloth to its people, places and craft work practices. Through an ethnographic exploration of life on the loom, this thesis explores the branded origin story of the cloth. Through the voices of those who weave, a hidden polyvocality of work is revealed situated within a complex political and cultural economy too often hidden by the brand; it beholds greater complexity than the brand stories told of it. Using the framework of origination, the thesis enlists the multiple weaving voices of ethnographic fieldwork to voice the hidden stories of the warp and the weft- that of the labour, technologies and branding of Harris Tweed- to explore the tensions and contradictions wrapped up within them. Particular reflection is afforded to the associative and dissociative practices of the presentation of place and craft work within the brand, and the connections and disconnections that exist between the promoted, romantic brand story of Harris Tweed, and the multiple, diverse and problematic stories of the weavers' working lives on the loom.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis. Section 1.1 outlines the context of the research and situates the study within scholarship on origination and provenance. It argues that critical geographical scholarship needs to continue with its cultural-political economy work on commodity fetishism to understand the labour practices, technologies and branding strategies that underpin the production of craft commodities, in this research with reference to Harris Tweed. The research adopts an ethnographic approach to the study of 'origination' (Pike, 2015) of a well-known traditional 'craft' brand, Harris Tweed. In Section 1.2, the aims and objectives of the thesis are established. In Section 1.3, an overview of the thesis is provided.

1.1 Research Context

Consumers are becoming increasingly interested in how, where, from what and by whom their products are made. Consumers are now more conscious in their consumption, more aware of the geographical lives of their products, and more interested in the complex ways in which their consumption is implicated within global supply chains (Euromonitor, 2019). Exposés of the working lives and poor working conditions of distant, relatively unknown and fetishised labourers have created powerful and distasteful images of the realities of global supply chains (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2021, Fitch, 2014). It is now routinely understood that the fashion industry, 'capitalism's favourite child' (Sullivan, 2016, Briggs, 2013, Harvey 1990), has been highly adept at obscuring production spaces and practices. Behind the façade of the cheap prices and the experiential glitz of the consumer experience, are health and safety neglect, poverty wages, and deadly working conditions: the normalised and shockingly high human costs of global supply chains (Cline, 2012). In recent years the attempts by big capital to hide the spaces and conditions of production have been challenged, and consumers are increasingly aware of intolerable working conditions

both ‘far away’ and much closer to home, as evidenced by the exposé of the agglomeration of sweatshops in Leicester and Manchester, supplying ultra-fast fashion brands with commodities produced under conditions of modern day slavery. The relationality and global connections between both producers and consumers in the garment supply chain have been thrown into sharp relief, exacerbated by the global pandemic.

An important geographical and political project has emerged that seeks to connect the geographical lives of commodities to their consumers, to ‘reveal’ and unravel the profound and hidden relationalities, inequities and injustices sewn into fashion’s commodity systems. The hands that fashion our clothes are worlds apart- literally and figuratively- from the bodies, stores, consumers and catwalks that display, represent, sell and buy them. A rich body of geographical scholarship has emerged that spatialises commodities, and critically repositions consumption as an act that implicates purchase within much larger, darker and uglier webs of exploitative relationalities (Crewe, 2008). This work has revealed that consumption is both a relational and a political act (Hartwick, 2000), with a capacity to expose, endorse or malign production methods.

There is growing evidence suggesting that some consumer purchase behaviours are shifting to favour commodities that tell stories of their provenance and reveal of who made the garments, where and how (Fashion Revolution, 2020, Minney, 2016, Fletcher, 2008). *Placing* commodities has long been a strategy to differentiate products in the marketplace by revealing geographical insights into their production. These scraps of partial and highly curated geographical information act as shorthand statements that suggest ethical production standards, labour equity and quality assurance. Importantly, these provenance stories carry with them assumptions about labour practices that influence judgment about them in the marketplace. As the Country of Origin literature attests (see Bilkey and Nes, 1982), not all imaginative geographies of labour are equal- Made in China or Bangladesh does not provide the same assurances as Made in Britain or Made in Italy. Whilst supply chains have no inherent assurance of ethical practice based on their scale or reach (Born & Purcell, 2006), an assumed hierarchy of production geographies has emerged within the consumer psyche that rests upon simplistic assumptions about place, where proximate

and local supply chains are assumed to be ethical, whereas distant, global and complex supply chains are assumed unethical.

As part of this imaginary, a number of other elisions are made – between fast and slow supply chains, mass market versus luxury. Luxury brands in particular are assumed to be ethically superior, in part because of the way they foreground a performance of provenance within their brand stories. In contrast to brands that hide their production and conceal their labourers who are their 'inconvenient truth' (Siegle, 2011), luxury brands 'show and tell' them and glorify craft workers and skill by thrusting them at the centre of their production stories. Luxury products are not simply a commodity, but one enchanted by a narrative of its geography of production; its place of production, its workmanship, and its labour. They tell compelling stories that craft an aura of authenticity through connection and transparency which is seductive and valorising (Beverland, 2009).

Despite this, there is a growing body of literature that challenges these assumptions, and reveals that many of these place-based luxury brands are also entwined in complex and ugly global supply chains (Fashion Revolution, 2020). Recent work on fashion supply chains in Britain has added an additional dimension to the complex geographies of supply chains by revealing that 'Made in Britain' is no guarantor of fair work or decent pay, and can be just as reliant on labour practices based on exploitation, precarity and poor pay as 'distant' global supply chains far away and out of sight (Fabris, 2020, Blanchard, 2017). Far from serving as guarantee of transparency and good labour standards, brand 'connection' is a tactical device that directs consumers to look towards symbolically desirable imaginative geographies that valorise positive place image whilst at the very same time distracting consumers away from more unsavoury supply chain practices that brands disassociate themselves from. Tokatli (2014) describes this phenomenon using place image as a tool to describe a new economic geography of luxury fashion, where place association is no longer bounded by territory, but instead is used more strategically and with greater complexity to add brand value. Pike (2015) uses the term 'origination' to explore and thus provides more insightful ways to understand provenance beyond those of 'following', 'connecting' and 'lifting the veil of production' (see Harvey, 1990, Cook *et al*, 2004). Through his work on origination Pike (2015) expands our understanding of commodity origin to

include not simply where a product is made, but also its different claims to place, as well as its imaginative geographies. Through origination we connect and gain a glimpse – literally and imaginatively- behind the veil of production. Pike's work, and the research reported in this thesis, adds greater nuance to how we engage with ideas of connection and place association and highlights the need to critically reflect on how place is used by brands to valorise commodities.

This thesis argues that craft products 'show' and 'tell' of their production and respond to consumer trends which desire authenticity, good ethics, and sustainability in products distinct from more industrially produced commodities (Luckman & Thomas, 2018). Craft brands actively commodify this desire for provenance, enabling craft to become a by-word for a non-alienating production process that is meaningful, ethical, humanised, expressive, as well as connected (Gauntlett, 2011, Sennett, 2008, Dormer, 1997). Craft storytelling has widespread application. It is used to describe everything from premium beers to luxury bags, and is deployed as a brand storytelling method, used by luxury conglomerates and micro-entrepreneurs alike to imbue products with valuable ideas of production and labour which differentiates products in the marketplace. Evoking 'craft' narratives and imaginaries within brand strategy not only highlights place of production, but also a vision of labour practice and labourer which roots, connects, and intertwines products with a compelling origin story of the people, practices and places of production. Thus, marketing products as 'crafted' allows producers to create and communicate value by prising open a conceptual space in which to appreciate an imagined worker, their skills, and the geographical and cultural context of production. In asserting and communicating provenance, particularly through the construction of slow, placed, and craft-based narratives, a key tactic has emerged, revealed particularly by luxury and 'quality' producers that enables them to accrue added value for their brands (Jackson & Shaw, 2008).

Craft products thus re-energise debates about fetishisation and transparency, by encouraging consumers to 'reconnect' with the production of their commodities. Craft does a great deal of work in the marketplace by constructing a compelling imagined geography of labour- the perceived antithesis to mass production- and speaks to a positive vision of work which is small scaled, romanticised, and laced with assumed progressive agendas. Craft also speaks positively to policy agendas that foreground

skills, upskilling, and rebalancing the economy, where manufacturing, making and production is framed to facilitate business growth (Straw & Warner, 2014, Financial Times, 2013).

Yet despite the popular representation of craft production as being small and romantic, emergent scholarship highlights its transformation into a multi-billion-dollar industry (Jakob, 2013, Crafts Council, 2020, p.5). It is increasingly seen a competitive sector in its own right, and growing. Yet, despite this formalisation, craft continues to have a slippery definition and belies an understated political complexity that largely rests on positive assumptions and imaginations. Empirical scholarship responding to the growth of the sector suggests that it is not unproblematic, and in contrast to its wholesome and progressive imagined work politics, continues to be plagued with issues of work injustice relating to diversity, precarity, and casualisation (Patel, 2020, Bridgstock, 2005, Luckman, 2015).

In the light of this, there is an urgent need to critically interrogate 'craft-work' and to understand how it is practiced, narrated, mobilised, framed and defined (Banks, 2010). Given that craft is growing in line with increasing interest in provenance, there is an acute need to develop a critical and empirically rooted scholarship on both the geographies of craft labour and on how it is sold and branded.

This thesis responds to this research agenda. It is an empirical and conceptual investigation into the origination of a well-known craft product - Harris Tweed- a traditional, hand-woven fabric made in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland. The research is the first geographical ethnographic study of how ideas of place and craft are put to work in the creation of its brand story. Through immersion in the field and by developing relationships with weavers, the thesis critically appraises craft work and explores how the visions of production promoted within the craft story represent, associate, disassociate and show and tell the working realities of the people, places and practices of producing Harris Tweed.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the thesis is to critically reflect on the origination of Harris Tweed and to review the tensions and contradictions that are wrapped up in the stories of the workers, the warp and the weft.

Objectives:

- To critically reflect upon the political, economic and cultural economy of Harris Tweed production, revealing its complexity and tension.
- To generate a critical politics of craft work through a reflection on the experience of labour, technology and branding of Harris Tweed weavers.
- To reveal the hidden stories and the polyvocality of lives spent crafting on the loom.
- To critically explore the process of origination within the branding of Harris Tweed with particular reference to the associative and disassociative practices of the brand.

1.3 Thesis Overview

In order to achieve this, Chapter 2 challenges the definition of craft and the implications of a (re)turn to craft. The chapter critically interrogates current debate by grounding its analysis in a much longer history of scholarly work on craft in the organisation of capitalist production. This chapter argues for the importance of (re)situating craft within a much longer historical context. In doing so, craft is revealed not as static or consistently conceptualised, but something that is elusive and slippery in terms of definition. As a result, this chapter argues that craft as a concept has such traction because it can be readily applied to varying and diverse political projects. Exploring the conceptualisations of craft by three key thinkers - Karl Marx, Adam Smith and Frederick Taylor- craft is demonstrated to be affixed to different and oppositional political visions of work: some which idealises and romanticises craft as pre-capitalist and set against capitalist production; and others which problematise craft as something which needs to be controlled, divided and governed in capitalist production. Through these, craft is not defined on its own terms, but in contrast to the dominant mode of production, and evoked to talk about grander notions of capitalist

transition, industrialisation, work quality, efficiency and production. Despite this, these conceptualisations of craft construct a meta-narrative of industrial progress, in which craft is actively usurped. This is demonstrated through three key shifts in industrial production: the move to mechanisation; the move to efficiency; and the move to disposable workers. The chapter then turns to Fordism and crisis, in which this new model of industrial production is challenged, and the sustainability of the new norms of labour in production are re-appraised. In this discussion, craft production is demonstrated to appear as competitive: it is flexible, agile, and responsive. This narration problematises the meta-narrativisation of industrial production where industrialisation usurps craft, and challenges further our conceptualisation of craft practice. Piore and Sabel's (1984) work on flexible specialisation is used to add critical framing to the discussion by articulating that craft never really went away, but instead evolved and co-existed alongside more dominant models of production. Within this framing, craft remains poorly conceptualised, this time in romantic and idealised terms as the embodiment of the progressive and human labour of flexible specialisation, and again is set against dominant mass production. The chapter argues that scholarly work must move beyond defining craft conceptually, and instead move towards a more critical and empirical framing of its practices on its own terms. This enables critical reflection on how craft practices in the contemporary era connect to, disconnect from, and speak to the many different politics of work it has historically been associated with. Lastly, the chapter contextualises craft as something all at once coherent yet discursively multiple. To do this, it explores the multiple ways in which craft is discursively understood: as traditional skill; as artistic practice; as radical praxis; and as 'connected' consumption. These differing discourses highlight that defining craft is always a process of commanding a narrative, and sculpting these different discursive understandings into a meaningful whole.

Chapter 3 critically reviews the geographies of branding. The chapter first traces the history of branding practice from primitive marks to more complex mediums, to advance an argument that the evolution of branding has seen brands increasingly become disconnected from production. The chapter reviews the key geographical scholarship that has explored how we might begin to 're-connect' commodities to their geographical lives: how might we move beyond commodity fetishism and 'lift the veil' on hidden production (Harvey, 1990)? How can we 'follow the thing' (Cook *et*

al, 2004)? The chapter then explores the long and complex history (and geography) of how commodities are connected to place. Brands, it is argued, are a way to glorify association and valorise particular labour practices, skills, traditions and places of production. This critical review of geographical scholarship provides a rationale for the adoption of the more nuanced conceptual framework of 'origination' (Pike, 2015). It is argued that origination has particular utility in its application to craft work, in part because it provides a methodological and analytic approach to explain the agency of branding actors to create and fix meaning over time and space. The chapter reveals the significance of the concept of origination to understand the branding of Harris Tweed, which is argued to be particularly interesting because of the geographical imagination it evokes; a way of seeing which is historical, Celtic and mythologised. Through these branded stories, the chapter argues that a fantasised fetish is created around the product, one which enchants it by a compelling narrative of the people and places of production. To this end, rural Scottish brands are positioned as archetypal of this narration and representation of people, practices and place. This thesis, however, argues that there is far greater socio-economic and cultural complexity than the brand suggests. Thus, origination is mobilised as a framework that can all at once appraise the representation and framing of place-image, craft imaginary and brand storytelling, whilst also appreciating how this associates and disassociates, connects and disconnects from the multiplicitous people and practices of contemporary craft production that exist outside of it.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology of the thesis, tracing its evolution from pilot study to writing up. In doing so, it provides a rationale for adopting an ethnographic approach to really engage with the workers, their lives and their experiences that tell stories that go far beyond the corporate brand narration of Harris Tweed, and give voice to the multiplicity of the work experiences of Harris Tweed weavers. Of particular significance is the practicalities of 'doing' ethnographic research in the Outer Hebrides, and the active identity work that was required in order to get in, fit in, and gain trust in an environment defined by its socio-cultural complexity. The chapter sets out the organisational complexity of the geographies of labour which the ethnography revealed. Access to research participants was uniquely challenging. The success of this study is that it reveals how an ethnographic method can be deployed to study difficult-to-reach participants and uncover hidden experiences of work. The

study reveals both the importance, and the difficulty, of navigating the messy socio-cultural relations of the islands, and its complex cultural economy, in order to learn from, understand, and reflect upon the multiple economic stories of Harris Tweed weaving. One of the key contributions of the chapter is that it critically reflects on positionality in the field, and the active identity work required to develop and sustain good field relations with the weaving community, as an outsider with no connections or credibility. The process was long and challenging. I explained that I was a Christian, a first-generation university attendee, and was from a working-class family. I played down the fact that I was gay, new to ethnography and emphasised that I wasn't a journalist who was going to swoop in, grab their stories and leave. The careful negotiation of access took time, patience, hard-work and a real commitment to the project. To spend six months in an unknown place, alone, without connections and with an ethnographic task to achieve was challenging. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the politics of writing up, and the iterative sense-making of writing ethnographically, whilst appreciating confidentiality and vulnerabilities. The overarching argument of this chapter establishes that the ethnographic method is particularly appropriate for this study, as it has the power to grapple with, validate, and give voice to the polyvocality of the warp and weft, air problematic experiences of weaving life, and share experiences of the practices of craft on their own terms. But it comes at a personal cost of isolation, loneliness and hard work to forge close connections with strangers who neither knew me nor, probably, trusted me.

Chapter 5 provides a social, cultural and industrial history of Harris Tweed and evaluates its contemporary practices within their historical context. Particular attention is afforded to the ways in which historical moments, people and places, inform, connect to, and disconnect from the contemporary practices of the industry. From this critical history, a brand story emerges. Firstly, Harris Tweed production is rooted in a specific crofting environment, a basic and traditional craft culture of Scottish island subsistence: not performative, not experiential, not glamorous – a low key representation of the brand. The chapter then outlines the traditional making techniques that emerge from the crofting context: a hand-based process of dying, carding, spinning, weaving and warping, using traditional technologies. The chapter then traces the early market-making of the cloth, and its subsequent transformation from croft production into a formalised industry. This transformation saw fundamental

changes in production, including mechanisation and industrialisation, which transformed the production process and political economy of Harris Tweed. As a result, there was diversity in the fabric sold as 'Harris Tweed', underpinned by different practices and geographies of production. The chapter then turns to the definition of Harris Tweed and traces an evolutionary history of legal negotiation and definition through the legal judgements surrounding the legislation of the cloth. As a result, the legal definition of Harris Tweed is revealed to be a materialisation of a much knottier and historically contested political economy of Harris Tweed production. The chapter then reflects on the history of the industry as defined by boom and bust, and provides an account of the recent reinvention of the industry as a 'craft' and 'heritage' brand, in which its history becomes the defining feature of brand storytelling. To this end, the chapter problematises the historical objectivity of brand storytelling to suggest a more complex process at play; one which associates and makes visible certain elements, but hides and disassociates from other competing visions. As such, the history of Harris Tweed is argued a powerful repository of cultural, geographical and economic memory for the brand, but its branded retelling is not as comprehensive, contested, or as iterative as its history suggests. In light of this, it is argued the brand can be more critically appraised, not as historical record, but as a medium of selective re-narration with an authorial capacity to forget, show, hide, and blur fact with fiction in the visions, connections and evocations it associates to and inspires.

Chapter 6 critically evaluates the labour politics of Harris Tweed. The chapter analyses the labour practices of Harris Tweed weavers in order to develop a critical labour politics of craft work. The chapter outlines the dominant representation of Harris Tweed weaving; a romantic story of 'craft as brand'. It then situates craft within the challenging island labour market, and traces the stories of 'becoming' a weaver- reflecting on loom acquisition, training and testing- to more critically interrogate the political and cultural-economic project that underpins the craft brand story. The chapter reflects on, and reveals the socio-cultural and economic complexity of craft work, which is riven with dependence upon social and economic capital, informal and formal marketplaces, and socio-cultural relations to succeed. The chapter questions power and justice within the labour market, and questions self-employment and precarity. To this end, through the voices of weavers, the chapter argues that the dominant representations of weaving promoted by its branding strategies belie the

realities of work. It tells a more critical story of weaving life which is less romantic, but defined by isolated, individualised and precarious working, highly governed by the mills who exercise significant labour market power. This research has revealed how the self-employment practices of the industry are deeply exploitative and challenge the romantic framing of craft work. The accounts explored in this chapter challenge the integrity of the story of craft work that actively frame labour and labourer on terms that are unproblematic and overly romantic.

Chapter 7 focuses on the story of Harris Tweed and the technological practices that underpin it. This chapter moves away from the technological visions of the past (Chapter 5) in order to critically evaluate the technologies that underpin production. It traces the hand-making process outlined in Chapter 5- dying, carding, spinning, and finishing- to reveal the often-hidden realities of mill production, which have been modernised, mechanised and automated from their hand-based technological pasts. The chapter then turns to appraise loom technologies, which reveal two distinct divisions of labour- independent (single-width) weavers, and mill-commissioned (double-width) weavers. The chapter critically interrogates, through its ethnographic approach the everyday realities and practices of weavers. Through a discussion of tinkering and part-procurement the narrative about craft is revealed as fundamentally flawed: far from being a 'traditional' skill absent of technology, craft weaving is defined through skill and experience. The research revealed that contemporary practices of loom life are hiding technological complexity riven with political and economic realities. This is highlighted through a discussion of the tension between reconciling unpredictable machines, with an imperative to be productive and efficient. Through this, it is argued that behind an imaginary of slow and traditional hand work, the working reality is one of speedy production and technological automation. To this end, the chapter reveals a disconnection between the promises and promotions of the brand, which frame technology and production through its ways of seeing, and the everyday practices of the industry. This again poses real threat to the reputation of the industry.

Chapter 8 reflects on the origin story of Harris Tweed. I situate the brand within a discussion of brand (dis)association and (dis) connection. It problematises the conventional approach that equates commodity transparency - of seeing and showing

some of the people, practices and places in production- with knowing all of them. Instead, the chapter reflects upon origination to articulate the multi-layered cultural, spatial, and economic origins and connections that are part of the commodity story. The chapter reflects on how the Harris Tweed brand is framed to galvanise specific moments, representations and associations of production to construct its brand story. The chapter argues that the origin story of Harris Tweed has a governing logic, and promotes a particular associative connection defined through an imaginary of islandness and Celtic identity evoked by 'Land as Brand'. Secondly, the chapter argues there emerges two distinct politics of representation, divided into those who have agency to tell it, and those who do not: actors who 'originate' the story, and those 'told' by it. Through this, clear distinction emerges between promotion and practice, where weavers describe how they actively perform and negotiate the brand to perpetuate the valorisation of their lives. This argument is critically reviewed through two examples: textile tourism and journalism. The chapter argues that there is a division of branded labour more complex than the positive vision of craft work implies with greater complexity in the everyday brand work required to produce (and reproduce) Harris Tweed.

Chapter 9 of the thesis concludes by providing a critical evaluation of existing literature and a reflection on the critical contribution made by this research, empirically, methodologically and conceptually. The original contributions made are in application of origination to reinvigorate discussions of connection and transparency with respect to craft commodities. The thesis is significant in that it raises several questions about consumer activism, suggesting need for further research on the development of a consumer politics of origination, a project that is particularly acute for brands such as Harris Tweed who are invested in telling their brand stories based on production and locality.

Chapter 2:
Defining 'Craft'

2.0 Introduction

Sustainability, locality and craft have all emerged as important signifiers for consumers of product value. Their strategic valorisation represents a new competitive logic of value, away from value for money, towards that of production provenance. Their evocation has become central to competitive advantage. These 'new' terms of competition speak to much older debates on value, industrial organisation, and workplace politics. Of particular interest is the discourse of a 'new' (re)turn of craft, which ignores the longer history of scholarly work on craft and craft work as particular forms of capitalist organisation; not least the debates of post-Fordism and flexible specialisation of the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter seeks to address this, and asserts a new imperative to (re)situate craft within this much longer historical context. This chapter traces how craft has been historically conceptualised in discussions of work and labour. It shows craft to be conceptually inconsistent, and mobilised in different ways to support different and conflicting visions of work politics and production. This chapter argues that because of its definitional slipperiness, craft is so productive. The traction of craft is so great precisely because its conceptualisation is difficult to pin down. It is othered and set against other forms of production. Instead, craft is evoked to allow theorists to talk of much bigger concerns; of production, competition, labour and work. To this end, this chapter productively explores this inconsistency.

In Section 2.1 craft is contextualised within historical debates of production and industrialisation. Through the work of Karl Marx, Adam Smith and Frederick Taylor, craft is revealed as inconsistently conceptualised and affixed to different political visions of work. Despite their differences, each use craft to construct a meta-narrativisation of industrial progress where craft is usurped. In Section 2.2 this shift away from craft is shown to reveal three noteworthy and interlinked transitions in production; from handicrafts to machines, from dependable to disposable workers, and from traditional to efficient production. In Section 2.3 the sustainability of the Fordist production is reviewed. Section 2.4 then problematises the meta-narrativisation of

industrial production as one which 'shifts' away from craft production. Using Piore and Sabel's (1984) thesis, it argues craft never really went 'away', but instead evolved, and manifested competitively and in co-existence to more dominant production models. Section 2.5 argues there is greater need to move beyond simplistic definitions of craft set in contradiction to mass production, but instead empirically explore the politics of its practices on its own terms. Through which, better understanding can be gleaned of how found craft practices speak to, connect to, and disconnect from, the many different politics of work it is claimed by. Finally, Section 2.6 turns to examine the recent craft 'resurgence' and situates craft within its multiple discourses and debates.

2.1 Usurping Craft

The Industrial Revolution ushered transformative industrial change. Out of which new interest arose in conceptualising craft work. Central to the Industrial Revolution was the invention of 'machinofacture', a system of manufacture based less on handicraft and direct labour power, and more on automation, mechanised work and intensive skilled labour (Knox, Agnew, & McCarthy, 2008, p. 7). Through the introduction of machine-based processes, greater production efficiency, rapidity and volume were achieved. This provided manufacturers with the ability to serve ever wider markets and compete beyond their immediate locales. The emergence of early forms of 'machinofacture' also saw an increased need to formalise the labour market and establish new standardised wage norms. A more integrated and organised industrial organisation was necessary, aided by governmental regulation to achieve this.

As labour became more organised, and large machinery superseded labour, competitive advantage became less based on labour *quality*, and more upon organisational scale and efficiency. Locational assets became more important, with proximity to specific natural resources heavily influencing the geography of industrial formation. Particular locales specialised, and became renowned for manufacturing specific commodities (see Oldfield, 1984).

In contrast to the competitive logic established by workshops and homeworking, the Industrial Revolution lessened reliance upon skill and labour. With growing mechanisation and a greater importance laid on scale and production-location, there established a new competitive logic of industrial production. This was important for

two reasons. First, it challenged previous understandings of work. Second, it actively devalued human labour by the new labour practices it gave rise to. Three main theorists aid our understanding in this regard; Karl Marx, Adam Smith and Frederick Taylor. In reviewing how craft is conceptualised within each of these accounts, craft is revealed to be inconsistently conceptualised, and affixed with very different political visions of work.

2.1.1 Marx

Despite frequently using terms such as handicraft, skilled worker, and journeymen, Karl Marx did not explicitly provide a definition of craft practice. Rather, he sought to document and reveal the transformative effects of industrial capitalism on labour. His work explores the changing dynamics of human labour, skill, machinery and value, and through his theorisation of labour power, alienation and work, implicitly theorises craft practice as an ideal type of expressive, un-alienated and pre-capitalist labour practice. Craft is conceived by Marx as a historical production method that capital usurps.

Marx's definition of craft stems from his broader theorisation of industrial production, in which capital seeks profit. Each commodity represents an expression of capital, labour and resources, and production is a material and social process (Corrigan, Ramsay, & Sayer, 1978, p. 2). Value is socially determined, defined as 'use value', and monetary, defined as 'exchange value'. Diverse commodities find commensurability through their exchange values. To make a profitable commodity, its input costs must be lower than its *exchange* value. Given this, the exchange value, and more specifically the exploitation of its profit, relies upon the capitalist purchasing production components (such as labour, materials and machines) and setting them to work at a lower price than their exchange value can achieve.

Under capitalist production, the labourer finds individual meaning and direction through their employed relationship to capital, and the worker sells their labour power to those who own the means of production. Labour shares an intimate relationship with the struggle for profitability, whereby capitalists endeavour to make labour, an inherently variable component, a controllable and dependable resource for value accumulation. In these efforts, capitalists seek to control production; speed, skill and dexterity of the worker. It is under this theorisation of labour that Marx articulates the

degradation of craft work as part and parcel of the historical progression of capital accumulation.

In *Capital*, Marx critically examines work and labour, asserting whilst all animals labour, what makes human labour unique is the capacity to think;

> At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that has already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own which gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will (Marx, 1909)

Craft work is therefore positioned the embodiment of 'human' labour; intelligent action materialised, consisting of conception, imagination and realisation. In a theoretical sense, if a worker possesses capacity, means of production, and has in their mind social use and skill of production, they can produce an object that expresses their own values.

In practice however, capital and resources are unevenly distributed. Instead, workers are impelled into contractual employment so to monetise their labour. Capitalists purchase not an agreed amount of labour, but *potential* labour over an agreed period (Braverman, 1998). This investment is variable and dependent upon the social conditions of production. Through contract, workers surrender their interest in the labour process and become alienated, separated effectively from the skill and knowledge of the individual worker (Marx, 1976). As the means of production are pushed into the control of fewer individuals, the labour process alienates workers who lack a means of production and who surrender their responsibility and control over the labour process to individual capitalists who do.

At the heart of Marx's thesis on labour process is the systemic attempt to stabilise labour power; to reorganise and control it. The goal of capital is to subordinate labour power on its terms. It is the guiding imperative of economic transformation. Marx writes of the gradual transition from craftsperson to a 'lifeless mechanism' (Marx, 2010, p. 75), a transition undertaken in three main phases; from handicraft to workshop, workshop to manufacture and manufacture to large-scale industry.

The shift from *handicraft to workshop production* is best characterised by the spatial reorganisation of craft work, which saw a formalisation and integration of the geographies of individual craftspeople. Whereas under handicraft production, craft workers worked from home or in small workshops, under the workshop system craftspeople found practical benefit being co-present and situated together. Workers found themselves working under a system of co-operation, whereby 'workers were brought together in the same or connected processes, and the means of production were concentrated within the hands of an individual capitalist' (Thompson, 1989, p.43). In this context, production remained heavily reliant upon handicrafts and skilled workmanship, but the directing authority of craft skill was no longer with the artisan. It had transitioned to the capitalist (Marglin, 1974).

The second shift was from *workshop to manufacture*. This saw the extension of capitalist control over the labour process and the cheapening of production costs. Having established a directly controllable workshop system, capitalists yearned to overcome additional barriers to efficiency. The production speed of the workshop system was just one area for improvement, which relied heavily upon the skill and strength of individual workers. To yield greater efficiency, greater surplus value per worker was needed (Thompson, 1989, p. 44). This was realised by coercion and disciplining. Systems of surveillance emerged, and fines were imposed on unproductive or dissenting workers (Freidman, 1977, p. 97). With this, came a sustained assault on organised labour, not least on craft guilds which restricted employment practices, exerted control in workplaces, and safeguarded against the degradation of craft skill. Lastly, manufacturers sought efficiencies through centrally coordinated functional specialisation. This further subordinated the knowledge, judgement and will of the worker (Thompson, 1989, p. 45), adding further separation of the workers' minds, from their own labour power. As Ferguson comments within Capital;

> Manufacturers, accordingly, prosper most where the mind is least consulted [by the worker] and where the workshop…may be considered as an engine, the parts of which are men (Ferguson, in Marx, 1976, p. 483).

This phase of production is best summarised as an active transition away from craft production, a production model poorly controllable, governable and over reliant on handicraft, towards a directly controllable and centrally coordinated production model. This changed the nature of work. Whereas under craft production 'the workman makes use of the tool, in the factory [manufacture], the machine [and by definition the owner of the machine] makes use of him' (Marx, 1867). In this, the total labour power is reimagined and reorganised to function as a 'collective worker', a singular system that efficiently exploits itself for capital accumulation.

The last phase was *large-scale manufacture*, defined distinct from earlier stages by its further adoption of scientific management and mechanical innovation. Such developments further manipulated and cheapened labour, allowing manufacturers to extract additional surplus value. Mechanisation operationalised a new competitive logic. Not only did mechanised work discipline and usurp worker control, but it lowered skill requirements for recruitment; 'one skilled worker was able to do the work of nine craftspeople, with eight unskilled labourers taking their place' (Thompson, 1989, p. 49). Factory machines were not neutral but materialised the political intent to overcome craft skill and worker autonomy. Mechanisation was thus a deeply political embodiment of the desire to exert capitalist control over production.

> In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism which is independent from the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages… by means of its conversion into an automation, the instrument of labour confronts the labourer, during the labour process, in the shape of capital, of dead labour, that dominates and pumps dry, living labour-power. (Marx, 1976, p. 548)

In Marx's account of economic transition, production shifts from a handicraft system, heavily reliant upon worker skill, towards a model of large-scaled industry, both coordinated and controlled. In Marx's linear account, craft is not explicitly defined, but can be assumed to represent a pre-industrial, pre-capitalist mode of production, whereby skilled labourers have capacity to mentally and physically conceive objects, and are able to use their autonomy to direct their materialisation (Figure 2.1).

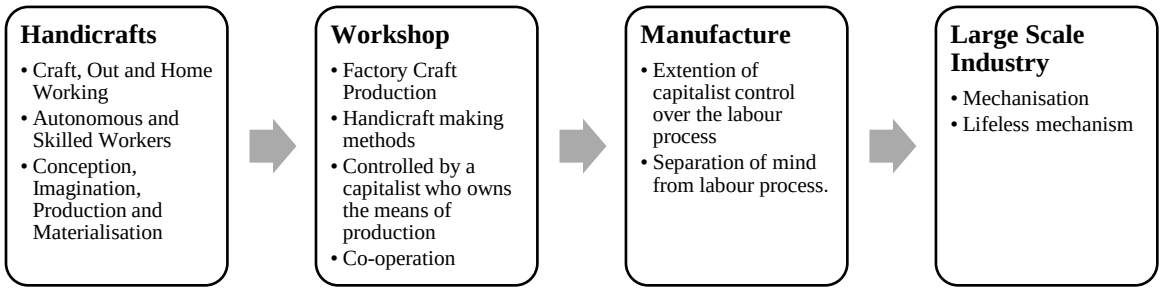


Figure 2.1: A diagram to summarise Marx's thinking. The arrows represent steps at which control, efficiency and profit tighten their grip on production, typifying a transition into a distinctly new epoch of capitalist production. Source: Personal (2021)

Craftspeople are implied to be guided by the imagined use of objects, as well as their ability and means to bring them into being. Craft skill is inferred as having a different logic to capitalists and is represented as a barrier to capital. Ultimately, craft represents an element of skilled labour which is purchased by capitalists, and which must be usurped, controlled and directed by them for profit. As such, capitalist progression can be seen as the move to dominate labour power, render it a uniform, dependable commodity, and to quash autonomous skill and craft practice that threatens control.

2.1.2 Smith

In his seminal text, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith (1776) argues that the productive capacity of a nation rests on its division of labour (Adam Smith Institute, 2017). Utilising the now famed example of the sewing pin factory, Smith spells out a production process which uses a worker to undertake three tasks. They operate two metal moulds, one each for the pin head and body, and then work to assemble each of these to produce a pin. Smith viewed this process as inefficient and advocated for the worker to undertake just one of the work processes. By working collectively, material inputs could remain the same, but in dividing labour more efficiently, output and productivity could increase. According to Butler (2011, p. 10), specialisation through a division of labour yields three advantages;

1. In repeating tasks, workers are able to increase their skill and rapidity.
2. Time is saved not moving between machines, nor mentally switching between tasks.

3. Specialisation allows for dedicated machinery which cuts time and efficiency in production. Workers also invent their own labour-saving devices, allowing for their ingenuity to be further capitalised upon.

This division of labour transforms the production of objects into an elaborate cooperative procedure which efficiently enlists a diverse number of labourers. Smith uses the example of a woollen coat to explain this point;

> The woollen coat, for example, which covers the day-labourer, as coarse and rough as it may appear, is the produce of the joint labour of a great multitude of workmen. The shepherd, the sorter of the wool, the wool-comber or carder, the dyer, the scribbler, the spinner, the weaver, the fuller, the dresser, with many others, must all join their different arts in order to complete even this homely production. (Smith, 1776, p. 22)

Craft therefore emerges as a contradictory concept in the work of Adam Smith. Through commodity production, Smith analyses labour practice, and advocates for a division of labour which allows for greater production efficiency. The craftsperson is seen as the embodiment of production *inefficiency*, with their specialised, multi-skilled and time-honed craft skills. This can be seen by the spinning and weaving mentioned in his example. Each of these productive acts can be divided and reorganised for greater efficiency. Yet importantly, not all exemplified tasks were 'craft' skills. Smith appears less interested in the nature of 'craft' skill, but more interested in the process of sub-dividing the production to most efficiently produce commodities.

Whilst Smith's writings are best known for their advocacy of free markets, they also warn of the repercussions of over-specialisation and the deleterious effects of excessive divisions of labour;

> The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his

> invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become…in every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it. (Smith, 1776)

To this end, Smith establishes a manifesto for labour organisation based upon a specialised division of labour, but also appreciates the suitability of its implementation as something needed to be contextually appraised, and understands the political ramifications of excessive divisions of labour which create meaningless work and cultivates a damaging political economy for labourers.

2.1.3 Taylor

Taylor is credited for synthesising and enacting the abstractions of Smith into a workable framework, providing the disconnected series of efficiency initiatives outlined by Smith, a philosophy and a title - Scientific Management. Taylor (2009) in *The Principles of Scientific Management* establishes two prepositions;

1. Like Marx, Taylor identifies the factory *antagonistic*
2. Like Smith, Taylor accepts antagonism as a 'natural condition' and investigates how capital can be most *efficient* through adapting labour.

In this sense, Taylor responds to a specific question; how best to control alienated labour. Taylorism provides a means to operationalise control, through management dictating to their workers the precise manner in which each task should be performed. Management not only has the right to control labour purchased contractually, but are compelled to most efficiently coordinate labour.

Taking craft practice to be the connection of hand and head (Sennett, 2008), Taylor characterises craft as production by an individual worker who under their own volition, conceives of an idea and exerts practical control over the process. They are an idealised craft subject- someone completely unalienated from their work- connected to the

process, and fully in control of their thinking and making practices. In contrast, Taylor suggests that as labourers sell their labour power to management, they surrender with it the right to control it. In mobilising worked examples of piecework and performance management, Taylor justifies management's degradation of craft practice by conceiving it both as an element of labour control that remains in the hands of management, and as a source of contestation that jeopardises their aims and objectives.

Whilst Taylor's thesis fails to theorise craft explicitly, it does speak of 'traditional knowledge' (Taylor , 2009, p. 32), referring to the tacit and personal skill of each individual worker. In this regard, Taylor explains how the factory is an uneven knowledge environment, whereby the management's own personal skill falls short of the combined knowledge and dexterity of all workers under them. In recognising this, management are tasked with;

> Inducing each workman to use his best endeavours, his hardest work, all his traditional knowledge, his skill, his ingenuity, and his good-will, in a word his initiative, so as to yield the largest possible return for his employer. (Taylor , 2009, p. 32)

As such, the implementation of Taylorism is political; an act of usurping problematic, uncontrollable and unalienable craft skill, rendering production more efficient and controlling labour to yield the most capital return.

In reviewing Marx, Smith and Taylor, we find that craft has a slippery and implied definition, which finds meaning from the political debates it is mobilised to speak to. It is productive, and so widely applied across these debates, precisely because it is difficultly pinned down. Despite this, there are three noteworthy and interlinked transitions; A move from handicrafts to machines, a shift from 'dependable' to 'disposable' workers, and a move from 'traditional' to 'efficient' production.

2.2.1 From Handicrafts to Machines

Under the handicraft system, craftspeople completed the whole making of a commodity. Slower than machine-assisted work, this historically relied upon the skill and dexterity of each craftsperson and produced commodities of inconsistent quality.

Being reliant upon individual skill, it depended upon sustaining co-operative social relations. If relations became antagonistic, the autonomy of the workforce could halt or directly obstruct production. This was seen as a threat to efficient production.

Mechanisation rectified this power imbalance, dividing each task into individual stages defined by the technical capabilities of the machinery. Each labourer exerted functional control over only a small part of production. With mechanisation, the machine, and by definition its owner, as opposed to the labourer, more effectively dictate manufacture, and dissenting workers can be more easily replaced with minimal damage to production. As Marx argues, "in an [industrial] factory, we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage" (1867, p.75). As such, whilst machinery achieved greater efficiencies, scale and speed, it was most transformational in its reconstitution of work, creating with it a fixed and dependable industrial labour-relation which minimised the risks posed by autonomous craft working.

2.2.2 Degrading Craft

With the de-skilling of industrial work, workers became more dispensable. This move to deskill and degrade craft work saw critics of industrialisation centralise an interrogation of worker autonomy and skill in their work. Critics were most concerned by increasing alienation, with workers growingly disconnected from the meaning and value of their work (Braverman, 1998). Craft became more actively juxtaposed against disconnected, industrialised and mechanised labour, imagined instead as their antithesis. Although proponents of industrial manufacturing argued industrialisation increased productivity and eased the physical burden on workers, others more fundamentally disagreed. Gaskell (2010), for example, wrote of the cultural and psychological harm of factory work, and equated the substitution of handwork for machines as a systemic degradation of human worth. Morris (2012 [1889]) best summarises;

> It was essential to the [capitalist] system that the free labourer should no longer be free in his work; he must be furnished with a [capitalist] master having complete control of that work, as a consequence of his owning the materials, tools of labour, and with the universal market

> for the sale of the wares with which he had nothing to do directly, and the very existence of which he was unconscious of. He thus, gradually ceased to be a craftsperson, a man who in order to accomplish his work, must necessarily take an interest in it… Instead, a craftsperson must now become a hand, responsible for nothing but carrying out the orders of his foreman (Morris, 2012 [1889])

2.2.3 Gaining Efficiency

Lastly, industrialisation is a story of ever-growing efficiency. In these accounts, changes in industrial labour are coordinated and intentional, both to improve efficiency, and mitigate against risks of production disruption. Through these measures, manufacturers better assured uniformity in commodity production and delivered more standardised products, and with competition growingly based on production cost, actively cast efficient organisation of production as core to competitiveness. Reorganising and mechanising production and usurping craft practice reaped economic advantages, replacing human hands with industrial machines, increasing profitability, and if the function of manufacture is to make profit, the form labour took followed.

2.3 Fordism and Crisis

As we have seen the Industrial Revolution transformed production, increasing factory manufacture. By the early 1900's, industrial production not only mechanised, but had implemented in it, Taylor's model of scientific management. Exerting and managing effective control over production became the basis for industrial profitability (Dicken, 2007) and became the normalised business methodology adopted to achieve efficiency; encouraging economies of scale and mass consumption delivered by ever more vertical integration. Fordism is the most emblematic example of this competitive logic.

Used to describe both the manufacturing techniques and societal conditions developed by Henry Ford in the USA, Fordism encapsulated four principles; vertical integration,

scientific management, standardised economies of scale, and mass consumption (Faulconbridge, 2009). The longevity and security of this mode of production relied upon many things; standardised mass production, industrial reorganisation and labour coordination. As production grew in scale, efficiency and capacity, companies exploited new organisational strategies based upon intensively sub-dividing labour tasks, more systemically implementing assembly production, and more aggressively capitalising upon scientifically managed labour.

Utilising Taylorist principles, dividing work practices into phases, industrialists made significant efficiency gains. A consequence of this was the further deskilling of work, which moved away from craft-based apprenticeships in preference to particularised training for specific work phases. This minimised training costs and disruption risks associated with craft-working and placed each worker on a machine which most efficiently completed that specialised task. These tasks were centrally managed, with each production phase being vertically integrated with one another through a factory production line, on which commodities moved through factories, around workers, passing from one phase to another. Standardised production became spatially centralised, heavily controlled and reliant upon a minimally skilled, yet technically able labour force (Scott, 1988). In this regard, the nature of skill and work under Fordism deviated little from Taylorism. Fordism operationalised a controllable labour force whose skills were monopolised, systematised and concentrated in the hands of the employer, only to be redistributed again by the boss via instruction (Thompson, 1964).

Despite this sense of continuation, Fordism marked a significant departure from the past in one way; its mass and scaled production was sustained by mass consumption. Of the most transformative measures of Fordism was the substantial increase in wages for industrial work. By essentially doubling the wages of unskilled autoworkers to $5 per day, the Ford Motor Company stimulated one of the greatest revolutions in worker rewards ever known to the industrial world (Mackaman, 2014). This was transformational in two regards; it created a steady and loyal workforce, and it provided their blue-collar workers with enough income to become consumers. By establishing three, eight-hour shifts, Ford's production model achieved shorter working days and around the clock production. This overcame some of the persistent problems within manufacturing; not least high staff turnover and worker exhaustion.

Incentivising workers to forgo union membership, Ford increased worker provision in return, both increasing pay for low-skilled work and shortening the working day. In doing so, for blue collar workers, Ford's compensation package was extremely desirable, and conduced a workforce both dependable and loyal (Worstall, 2012). More importantly, Ford materialised a system which achieved constant levels of production whilst increasing scale and output.

With the five-dollar day came new prosperity. With mass production and private welfare, companies established a new social contract of work. Whilst Taylorist principles side-lined craft skill, Fordist manufacture provided higher pay, and whilst creating monotonous work, yielded cheaper and more efficiently produced commodities. A combination of cheaper goods and higher pay established a consumption model which facilitated production, and a mode of production that facilitated consumption. It allowed for the creation of a consumption norm of the working classes, predicated upon affordability (Agleitta, 1987). Yet, if mass production was the basis for mass consumption, so were higher wages and mass employment. This represented a contradiction. To increase competitiveness, lower production costs were sought; squeezing more surplus value out of labour, getting more for less through redundancy, and lowering pay and reorganising labour (Pietrykowski, 1995). As such, whilst Fordism delivered a new model of competitive mass production, it did so detrimentally to craft skill and worker autonomy. It produced new, monotonous and low-skilled work, but delivered higher pay and widened access to opportunities to consume. Whilst this was favourable for economic growth, and delivered strong production and consumption, the sustainability and resilience of this model awaited stress testing.

In the 1970s growth slowed. Rapid rises in oil prices and raw materials increased production costs, and economies faced persistent inflation, currency instability, and unemployment (Barbrook, 2001). In these conditions, manufacturers reassessed the pragmatism of mass industrial organisation, with mass scale emerging as a double-edged-sword. Whilst scale aided productive efficiency, lowering production costs, it made difficult functional agility and responsiveness in crises.

By the dominant logic of competition, advantage is achieved by operating at greater efficiency than competitors. To achieve this under demanding economic pressures,

manufacturers re-spatialised and re-organised production. Previously, efficiency was achieved through economies of scale; large, highly controlled, vertically integrated sites. Whilst these were effective at engineering workplace politics to place the control over production in the hands of bosses, its economy of high production, pay and consumption proved difficult to sustain. The emergence of 'just-in-time' production (Sayer, 1986), dynamic flexibility (Coriat, 1991) and lean production (Womack *et al*., 1990) all speak to this. Large scale factories became more antagonistic, organised and militant, and willing to leverage collective power over production. Testament to this, Prais (1976) suggests that within the UK, factories of over 2,000 workers were fifty times more vulnerable to strikes than those of less than 100, whilst Murray (1983) writes of how labour militancy, employment 'red tape' and tax burdens all spurred industrialists to usurp them. Complementing this, significant advances in transport interconnectivity and information technology made possible alternatives, challenging vertically integrated production. Production was opening up, becoming more global and foot loose. National legislative pressures and organised labour markets became negatable via production relocation and reorganisation. By segmenting labour across time and space, internationalising and decentralising the division of labour, and occupying new territories, mass manufacturing again transformed in the interests of capital. By severing the link between mass consumption and mass production, manufacturers renegotiated a new regime of accumulation based on production cost.

Sustained by technologies which practically compressed time and space, new models of geographically disparate production became possible. New production locales offered more desirable, exploitable conditions; extremely low labour costs, little regulation and poorly organised labour (Hudson, 1997) which all lowered costs and increased profits. These dynamics re-scripted industrial competition and placed the industrial regions of advanced economies in poor positions to compete. It left them scrambling for their competitive futures.

2.4 The Second Industrial Divide and Flexible Specialisation

These dominant narratives of Fordist industrial progress paint a familiar picture; one where craft is quashed, side-lined, and stamped out, and one where industry offshores, disappears and vacates. Yet, this is too simplistic an analysis. In its wake, old industrial heartlands evolved. Localised firms persisted and found new competitive advantages

operating small-scaled, with shorter production runs, and using artisanal labour to produce craft-made products for more limited markets. They were nimble, agile, and continually reorganised to reflect consumer tastes. Perhaps more importantly, they problematised the meta-narration of industrial progress, which set industry in opposition to craft; far from being uncompetitive, craft persisted and became the basis of a practiced post-Fordist competitiveness.

In these locations a different competitive logic emerges based upon place provenance and the material and locational inheritances of production (Gibson, 2016). Craft work practices flourished, demonstrating small-scaled craft production as particularly competitive because of its flexibility, agility and adaptability. Perhaps most importantly, they debunked the meta-narrative of industrial change being neatly linear and governed by one logic of competitiveness. Instead, they confirmed the possibility of industrial dualism and suggested the coexistence of different forms of industrial competitiveness.

Piore and Sabel (1984) document this, noting emergent flexible and specialised production practices. In which, mass production is articulated as a technological paradigm within national economic development. In much the same way as the Kuhnian model of philosophical progression (Kuhn, 1996), it argues that technology provides dividing junctures which precondition other paradigmatic emergences. The direction of such, relies upon three main elements; money, chance and political will.

In Piore and Sabel's (1984) work, technological possibilities are governed by political power and investment (see Figure 2.2). Decisions of investment require equipment and knowledge, which entrench a particular production model or practice which discourages change (Piore & Sabel, 1984, p.44). Industrial growth rate, and the direction of production practice, rely on economic investments; political acts which support a given production practice (Piore & Sabel, 1984, p. 38). Each 'way of doing' is pitted against each other in competition, but is not necessarily 'better' than others. Rather, the dominant 'way of doing' succeeds because it suits the economic conditions of the moment best. The competitive advantage of the production method sees wider adoption of it, which entrenches it into competitive practice and renders alternative ways of doing less optimal.

In this narrative of industrial progress, there are many technological and competitive possibilities, but are typified by short periods of competitive technological diversification, and long periods of uniformity (Piore & Sabel, 1984, p. 39). Within national settings, government coordinated industrial strategies can provide distinct variations which reflect the socio-cultural and political will of each jurisdiction. Each national industrial strategy has potential to aid distinct variations of industrial technological adoption and contribute to the adopted domination of one way of doing, over others. As such, as Figure 2.2 summarises, Piore and Sabel (1984) argue that production starts out heterogeneously. No producer is willing to share their method; a by-product of competition. Yet, as one method of production emerges most competitively, other competitors adopt it, and its uptake can be driven by multiple concerns, not least efficiency, but also policy.

To this end, industrial history is argued too often a narrative which only accounts for the dominance of a particular mode of production (Figure 2.2; Company 2). Piore and Sabel (1984) attest that this falsely bifurcates actors into winners and losers; a production model which dominates, and others which wither. Instead, they advance need to better conceptualise competitiveness in advanced economies, with greater attention afforded to companies that persist and compete differently to the dominant mode of production (Figure 2.2; Company 3). By bringing these into conversation with the dominant mode of production they reconceptualise craft competition not as a challenger paradigm, but one complementary, parallel and co-existing, with a different competitive logic; flexible specialisation.

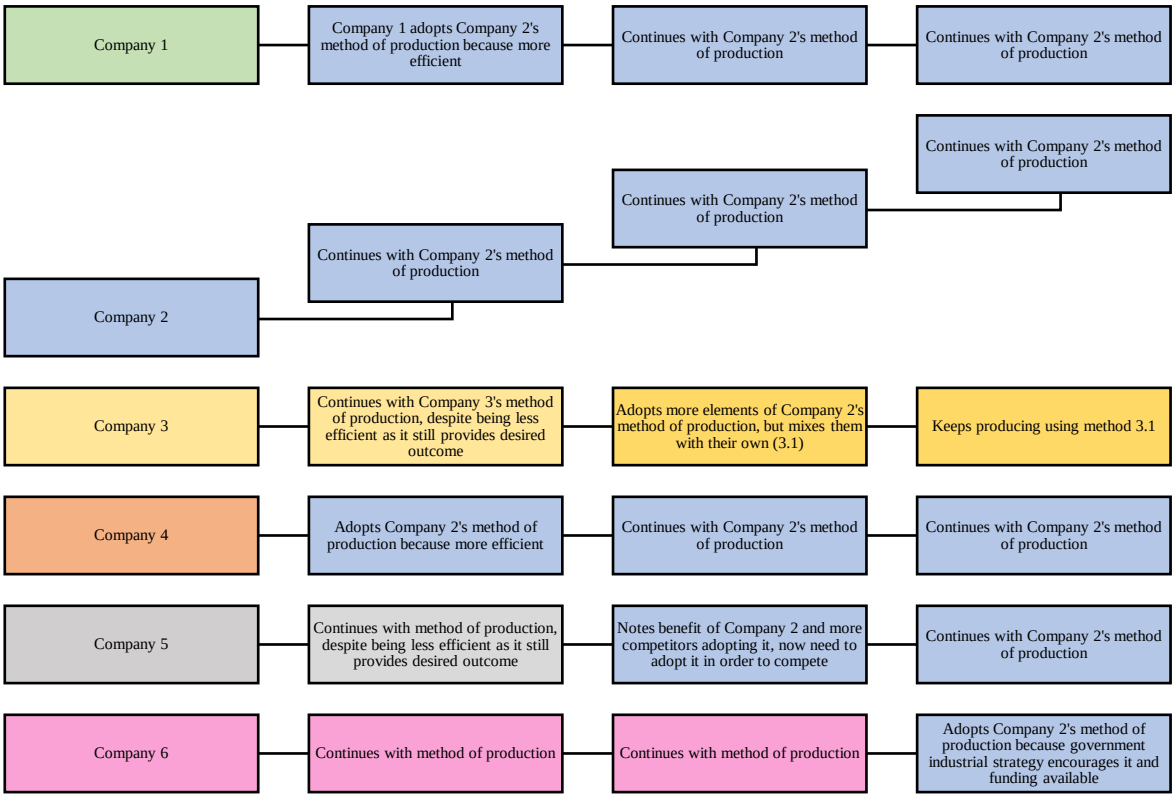


Figure 2.2: A diagram to demonstrate the evolutionary adoption of a technological paradigm. Source: Personal, based on Piore and Sabel (1984)

Flexible specialisation is both an industrial organisation and a competitive strategy, where firms specialise in the production of particular commodities and change at short notice to produce different items. In contrast to mass production, flexible specialisation finds competitive viability through specialised and small-batched production. These firms rely heavily upon highly skilled labour, defined by Brusco and Sabel (1981) as 'artisanal' production. In this, the artisan is imagined as a labourer who provides a complete set of services or products to local markets (e.g. a Tailor). Artisanal production is a production method that heralds back to a time before standardised mass production. This 'new' production economy reveals itself as a (re)turn to a situated, interpersonal and skill-centred production praxis, imagined as 'pre-modern…communal…[and] traditional' (Lash, 1994). With the aid of semi-specialised machines, labourers use their time-honed tacit 'craft' skills to make high

quality, bespoke speciality goods. In supplying luxury goods, experimental commodities, specialised equipment, and standardised products for which demand is too unstable to make dedicated equipment profitable, craft production emerges as a sustainable, flexible and profitable production method (Piore & Sabel, 1984, pp. 206-7).

Whilst artisanal craftsmanship appears a central facet of flexible specialisation, Piore and Sabel (1984) ambiguously define craft. Piore and Sabel argue machines augment a craftsperson's skill, and allows them to embody their tacit knowledge, expanding capacity for productive expression (1984, p19). Craft is politically laden as the idealised, progressive and human labour of flexible specialisation, but not rigidly defined. It is a mode of production that occupies conflicting political visions of labour and work; used to describe Proudhon's vision of a mutualist republic (Ansart, 1970), as well as Powderly's vision of a nation of producer co-operatives and 'Knights of Labour' (Buhle, 1978), for example (see Piore and Sabel, 1984, pp 28-29). As Hadjimidchalis (2006) argues, locales of flexible specialisation have a crude, yet 'obvious appeal' to both neoliberals and left-wing critics. For neoliberals, craft production represents the success of small-scaled, flexible, individualistic and competitive localised capitalism, whilst for left wing radicals, craft represents an ideal, pre-capitalist mode of production, which is often romanticised and utopianised (Banks , 2010).

Whilst Piore and Sabel's (1984) account of craft lacks theoretical richness, it provides a rationale to encourage others to better understand newly emergent forms of competitive production based upon flexibility and craft labour. Piore and Sabel's (1984) work inspired an empirical project unpacking this. One of the most notable examples, is the examination of the Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Mache, Abruzzi and Veneto industrial districts of Italy, collectively known as the Third Italy. Adopting a case study approach, Bercattini (1987) Berlandi (1982) and Brusco (1986) all explore how competition is influenced by place-based, economic, social and political factors embedded within industrial territories and regions. Emulating the 'in the air' sentiment of industrial districts (Marshall, 1920), these characteristics are seen generationally embedded into local industrial practice. The firms have agglomerative structures and normalised inter-firm relations established through extensive networked transactions and a shared heritage. They are small, family-owned and craft-based, and situated

within rural economies, in which entrepreneurial ingenuity, petit bourgeois tradition, tacit artisanal skills and supportive business environments have all contributed to the success of the cluster.

In its regular use as an exemplification, 'The Third Italy' has come to emblemise flexible specialisation, becoming the archetypal case study, evoked as if it is its ideal type. Whilst this was useful in demonstrating the broader shifts towards flexibility, specialisation and locational agglomeration, it became utilised in an overly utilitarian way. If a case study broadly exemplified its character, it too was deemed flexibly specialised. As Bonefield (1987) argues, it collapsed together heterogeneity and led to theory that reinforced a totalising vision, in which the same flexibility and locational agglomeration were seen everywhere.

Camagni and Capello's (1988) work exemplifies a nuanced endeavour, in which differences of industrial practices were painstakingly teased out between Toscana and Veneto. They demonstrate that whilst both cases demonstrate flexibility and specialisation, what contributes to them in each case are different. In eliciting this, close attention was afforded to the politics of each region of the 'Third Italy'. They found that in Toscana, working flexibility was generated by a high division of labour amongst smaller firms, and a higher inter-firm integration that was politically self-supportive and cooperative. In contrast, in Veneto, its business culture was influenced by its Catholic Christian Democracy, and its flexible working practices related to its agricultural labour, and a need for work to fit around agricultural seasons.

The discourse of industrial districts and agglomeration often over-state the presence of a formalised and deliberate industrial system. Many areas deemed flexibly specialised amount to little more than informal, ad hoc and small family-run business networks, just managing to hold on. The use of these frameworks' risks overstating likenesses at the expense of nuanced differences. Whilst flexible specialisation has explanatory power describing broad changes of flexibility and specialisation, it often fails to describe with specificity, the ways in which each example comes to manifests these traits.

Like craft, the 'flexibility' within flexible specialisation, is ambiguously defined. Some have argued flexibility has devolved into a form of fetishism (Pollert, 1988, 1991), whereby we talk of it without the need to articulate what politics and

motivations drive it. Whilst it is clear that there is a move away from the rigidity of mass production (Hirst & Zeitlin, 1990), the use of 'flexibility' has moved discourse in two divergent directions; 'flexibility in employment' and 'flexibility in work practice' (Curry, 1993).

'Flexibility in employment' speaks to the labour market and views flexibility as the corporate shift away from private welfare provision, towards a model of ever more limited corporate responsibility. Flexibility in employment is not limited to product, sector or industry, but rather speaks to the macro-conditions of the economy, in which work practices are increasingly highly flexible and mobile, and where employers demonstrate limited responsibility to workforce welfare. This flexible employment model is synonymous with hire and fire culture and is predominantly realised in conjunction with neoliberal policies that legitimise and increase workforce casualisation. This form of flexibility is tied closely to the pursuit of capital accumulation and attends to the politics of both neoliberalism and the free market. The increased pervasiveness of zero hour contracts, part-time employment and precarious agency work are all examples of this lurch towards casualisation (see Hudson, 2014), and are employment practices that are rightly challenged for their exploitative characteristics (Goodley, 2016, Inman, 2016, Grierson & Davies, 2017).

'Flexibility in work' attends to the functional flexibility each worker has over the production process. In this sense, 'flexibility in work' seeks to challenge the politics of the employers, and is rather more progressive, striving to return greater worker power and autonomy enjoyed by workers under craft production. It more overtly seeks to challenge the assumed normality of oppressive, prescriptive and alienating work particularly found in mass production, and advocates for flexible work practices which deliver expressive, connected and meaningful labour opportunities. In doing so, it is argued that workers can express greater influence over, afford more time to, and invest more skill in, the commodities they make.

Naturally, there is an ever-present tension between the two understandings of flexibility. They attend to oppositional politics, have different motivations, and seek different goals. Scholarship must be attentive to this, in the way flexibility is evoked in descriptions of industrial change. However, caution must also be afforded to the

discursive position flexibility assumes in relation to mass production. It can too easily descend into a debate of misleading binaries (Table 1).

Table 1: A table to show the binaries associated with flexible specialisation and mass production

Mass Production	Flexible Specialisation
Rigid	Flexible
Mechanised	Hand Tools/Traditional Work Practice
Global	Local
Mass	Small
Taylorist/Alienating	Expressive & Meaningful
Exploitative	Enabling/Liberating potential

Source: Personal (2020)

When attempting to describe flexible specialisation, scholars do so in juxtaposition to mass production. Flexible specialisation, like craft, is conceptualised in contrast to mass production, in binary to mass production, rather than conceptualised on its own terms. When mass production is described as mechanised and Taylorist, flexible specialisation is described as artisanal, traditional and meaningful. Similarly, mass production is global and large, whilst flexible specialisation is local and small-scaled. Lastly, flexible specialisation is described as (quite obviously) flexible, whilst mass production is rigid. Whilst these theoretical descriptors are, to varying extents, reflective of an industrial reality, more often they simplify practices rarely so binarily lived; they are much more fluid, messy and interrelated.

2.5 Craft as Discourse

It is because of this politically slippery context that the discourses of the 'resurgence' of craft are particularly interesting. Evading much of the definitional complexity and longer history, in its recent revival 'craft' has somehow transformed into a coherent, cool, growing, and productive economic sector. Shrugging off its dowdy images as '[an] outmoded form of manufacturing…[a] lesser cousin to fine contemporary art…[and] a sequestered domestic leisure activity' (Jakob & Thomas, 2015), craft now enjoys a new popularity.

Some argue this popularity is attributed to consumers desiring products that deliver individuality and uniqueness; 'craft' emerges alongside other production-based descriptors, as a means to signal originality, authenticity and provenance (Crafts Council, 2010). Given this, craft has a specific value in the marketplace, and is strategically mobilised. Used adjectively as a means to differentiate products, craft is used to signal quality and value by rooting products to the people and places that make them (Pike, 2011). In the absence of first-hand experiential knowledge, 'craft' encourages consumers to imagine the geographical life of a product, evoking ideas of its heritage, workmanship, and skill as part of the commodification of the product. As such, craft constructs an imagined geographical life of products, narratively enlacing them with evoked stories of the people and places of production (Pratt, 2009).

Mirroring its slippery history and politics outlined in Section 2.1- 2.4, the popularity and recent resurgence of craft could also be attributed to its open definition, and its ability to be mobilised discursively to speak to many politics all at once. Craft is known coherently despite its difficult definition, and its contemporary discursive multiplicity. To exemplify this, the chapter will now briefly reflect upon four salient craft discourses; Craft as Traditional Skill, Craft as Artistic Practice, Craft as Radical Praxis and Craft as Connected Consumption.

2.5.1. Craft as Traditional Skill

Craft is perhaps most thought of as traditional skill. This discursive imaginary first emerged in response to changes of work practice during the Industrial Revolution. By usurping craft production through mechanisation, worker skill was better rationalised and managed (Adamson, 2010, Babbage, 2010). Whereas craft production entrenched experience-based employment hierarchies, rationalisation reduced need for specialist skill. This had a flattening effect amongst the workforce; experience mattered less and an ability to master simple and repetitive tasks mattered more. This reduced training costs, downgraded the value of working-class skill, and recast workers not as autonomous or independent craftspeople, but as cog-like labourers in a factory machine. Whilst craftspeople made use of their tools, the factory now made use of them (Marx, 2010).

Couched in this way, craft emerges as a less profitable mode of production compared with mechanised production, and mechanisation appears always framed in modernising terms. Despite this modernising tendency, commentators also wrote of its damaging effects on labour; how ridding craft aided manufacturers to make fortunes on the back of drudgery (Ashworth, 2002). In these descriptions, the pursuit for faster and more efficient production was a result of systemic exploitation, of disciplining and alienation (Braverman, 1974) and workers became disconnected from the meaning and value of their work. Whilst these histories are important, they construct a dualism between craft and industrial labour, in which craft is seen oppositional to the 'industrial'. This bifurcation is based upon problematic assumptions.

The first of these can be seen within the discourse of industrial work, which is conceptualised as exploitative, oppressive and alienating (Harvey, 1990, Salzinger, 1997, Hale, 2005) and the embodiment of ultra-capitalistic imperatives in which labour and machines are put to work to deliver standardisation, efficiency and calculate-ability (Ritzer, 2014). Craft work, by implication, is pre-industrial and pre-capitalist, before the speed and efficiency of industrialisation. Resultantly, craftspeople are problematically idealised as workers beyond the stresses of time and money, and who share only meaningful connections with production. This romantic imaginary is rarely borne out in practice and understates the knottier market relations craftspeople navigate to survive and thrive; it is seldom solely 'good' or 'connected' work, or just making for making's sake (Sennett, 2008), but it is much more complex.

The second of these examples is couched in our imaginations of craft, seen as a historical epoch of industrial production. In these accounts, capitalist logic drives industrial transformation. Whilst historicising the degradation of craft skill is important, these accounts afford mechanisation and rationalisation significant explanatory power, and their technological determinism (re)produces 'pre-modern' accounts of craft which views with inevitability mechanised industrial transformation. This paints an overly simplistic picture which overlooks how craft has evolved, emerged from, and collaborated with industrial manufacturing.

Lastly, craftsmanship is defined in juxtaposition to mechanisation. Whilst this comparative work has highlighted the transformative effects of mechanisation on manufacture, it has done so by conflating craftsmanship with traditional 'hand' skill. This does little to elaborate on how craft has emerged in tandem with innovation, and in some cases re-shaped new iterations of technological practice (Wilkinson-Weber & DeNicola, 2016). Overall, the way craft is imagined as an industrial production method and work life is incredibly important for it forms the basis upon which contemporary craft is perceived, and indicates points of reference that are drawn upon through the 'meaning-making' process of craft valuation.

2.5.2 Craft as Artistic Practice

Craft is also viewed as an artistic practice; this view emerged at a time when craft practice was becoming less commonplace in industry. Instead, craft practitioners revitalised the term by redefining it in relation to artistic practice. They re-imagined craft as the technical application of art and defined craft as the making process of artistic expression (Collingwood, 1988). Craft became defined in relation to art, with the theoretical boundary between art and craft repeatedly renegotiated. Driving this continual re-definition was a compulsion of art theorists to hierarchise art and marginally position craft. As such, conceptualising craft centred on differentiating the creativity of art, from the worthiness of craft (Greenhalgh, 1997, Beaven, 2011) and more formally asserting craft practice as a medium of embodied emotion (Danto, 1964). Craft became material, and a valuable cultural artefact in and of itself.

Defining craft in these terms, practitioners re-evaluated the aesthetics and materiality of their work in an attempt to achieve the same status and recognition as artists (Frayling, 2014). Central to this, was the adoption of the subjectivity of the 'designer-maker' and the occupation of craft work in studio and gallery spaces, previously the exclusive domain of art. This physical and nominal re-positioning re-established the discursive imagining of craft, and imbued craft labour with a sense of cultural professionalism, enhancing its prestige.

2.5.3 Craft as Radical Praxis

For others, craft is also viewed as a political methodology rather than something commercialised. For these practitioners, craft is praxis and a political medium which connects and empowers communities, people, places and politics (Gauntlett, 2011). Craftivism (Corbett, 2013), neo-crafting and sub-cultural crafting (Balck & Burish, 2011), all highlight the diverse manifestations of radical, slow and quiet political engagement through craft. Subversive stitching (Parker, 1996), Stitch'n'Bitch feminism (Chansky, 2010), and yarn bombing (Price, 2015), all well exemplify craft as a collective practice, and a material agent to transform everyday spaces with disruptive political potential. By using craft as a methodological and political tool, groups have shown how they reclaim their identity's marginal position, voice their stories, and reconfigure their surroundings into sites of empowerment (Vaccaro, 2014).

Such radical crafting has received lots of academic interest (Moore and Prain, 2009, Mann, 2014). These have been insightful, but there is a propensity to over-state, over-represent and totalise craft as being solely alternative and radical. In doing so, craft research ignores its discursive complexity, exploring only the exceptional and radical whilst underrepresenting in the process, the mundane, the every day, and the wider commercialised manifestations of craft.

2.5.4 Craft as Connected Consumption

Lastly, contemporarily, 'craft' is deployed as a branding technique and product descriptor. In response to an increased consumer awareness of supply chain malpractice, consumers seek goods that emulate their values (Wood, 2008). They desire provenance, ethics and quality, and value connection with the places and people of production. 'Craft', therefore, is a connective tool, that bridges production and consumption by evoking ideas of skilled workmanship, authenticity and ethics at sale, which consumers value (Crafts Council 2010). Discursively positioned alongside other 'slow', 'connected' and 'ethical' consumption practices (Craig & Parkins, 2006), craft has become a tool to construct 'geographical lives' of commodities (Jackson, 1999) and is powerfully used to differentiate products within the marketplace. In this

context, ‘craft’ provides a conceptual space of connection, in which ideas are actively evoked, virtues are signalled, and the cultural associations of the product are scripted.

This brief etymology demonstrates the discursive richness of craft- that craft exists only in multiple forms. Through four key craft discourses, craft is exemplified as multiplicitous, contextual and evolving. With each, new practices emerge. Each re-define craft, adding further discursive layers. ‘Craft’, therefore, is a grab bag of ideas, each representing different conceptualisations of craft, but each feeding into what is discursively understood as ‘craft’ practice (see Figure 2.3).

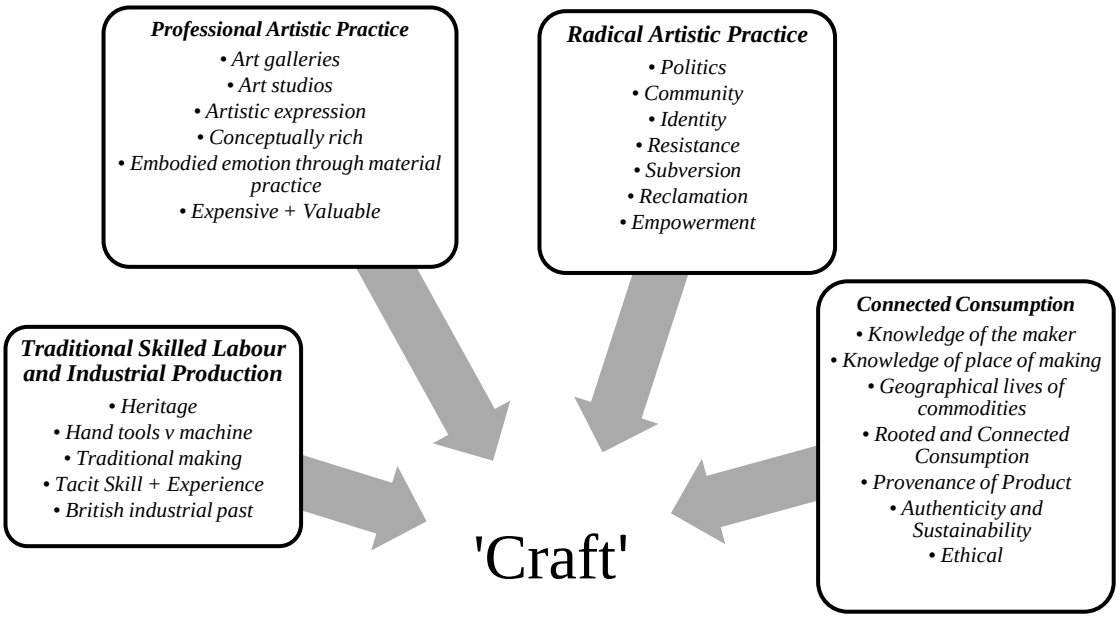


Figure 2.3: A diagram to summarise the four core discursive positions craft occupies. Under each discursive position are key words or ideas that supplement contemporary conceptualisations of craft. Source: Personal (2020)

Contemporary craft is therefore discursively rich and difficult to define. It is not a stable term, but rather is an evolving set of practices and positions (Greenhalgh, 2002). It resembles a notional point, upon which different discourses rest. Defining ‘craft’ is a process of commanding these narratives, sculpting these discourses into a meaningful whole.

2.6 Conclusion

Overall this chapter has explored the ways craft production has been defined, negotiated and imagined over time; historically and contemporarily. For Marx, craft is idealised as a pre-capitalist productive labour. For Smith and Taylor, craft is inefficient work and something to be controlled and governed. Whilst each theorist beholds differing politics, each place emphasis in their argument on the historicised transition *away* from craft production, and conceptualise craft as something set against mass production, either as an idealised (Marx, 1909, 1976), or problematic (Smith 1776, Taylor, 2009) labour relation. Piore and Sabel's (1984) work on flexible specialisation provides argument against the meta-narrative transition away from craft. For them, craft persists, but they similarly evoke craft in idealised terms; it is the romantic and progressive human labourer of flexible specialisation which finds definition in contrast to the dominant mode of production. As such, craft is a project that is difficult to pin down. Its definitional slipperiness is shown as productive in that it can be mobilised to speak and be applied to different political concerns and debates.

Whilst craft practice, artisanal labour and skilled work have remained salient themes throughout industrial history, accounts of it are often poorly conceptualised, and attend to differing political concerns and debates. In mobilising different worker subjectivities ('craftsman', 'skilled labourer' and 'artisan') this chapter has discussed how different theorists utilise 'craft' to attend to different political concerns and strive for different political objectives. The chapter has also outlined four key conceptions of craft; industrial skill, artistic practice, radical praxis and connected consumption. Similarly to its historical theorisations, these more contemporary discourses of craft are also shown to varyingly frame it to speak to different politics, etymologies, and conceptualisations of its practice. As such, I argue that whilst craft has a slippery definition, it is precisely the conceptual inconsistency of it that is insightful and productive. Craft should not be assumed stable, consistent, or coherent, but rather an inherently political term that helps to speak to specific political narrations of work, labour, production and practice. To this end, craft is impossibly definable in of itself, but rather given meaning by the politics of the actors who evoke it. This suggests need to explore the underlying politics and industrial contexts of craft practice, and better understand the connections and disconnections found between its political narration, and its practices, histories, framing, mobilisation and evocation.

Chapter 3
Branding: A Literature Review

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review of the geographies of branding. Section 3.1 historically traces the way branding practices have evolved over time from marks to mediums, advancing an argument that the evolution of branding practice has strategically disconnected itself from production. Section 3.2 explores two main theories for understanding this disconnection- 'lifting the veil' (Harvey, 1990), and 'following' (Cook *et al.,* 2004) discussing their merits and limitations. Section 3.3 returns to a discussion of branding practice so as to situate 'placed' brand strategies. In this, various attempts to galvanise place for brand equity are explored in a way which establishes the need to add nuance to our connective metaphors. Section 3.4 situates craft brands within this context, as an archetypal illustration of the (re)connective turn in the commodification of brands. Section 3.5 then returns to the limitations of our conceptualisation of connection and disconnection through branding, to establish the need for articulating greater connective complexity. A framework of origination (Pike, 2015) is argued to be of most value. Lastly, Section 3.6 provides a rationale for applying the framework of origination to 'Scottish' craft brands, in order to contribute to a gap in the literatures of Scottish branding and unpick with greater specificity the connections and disconnections of their brand storytelling conventions, with the practices of craft that underscore them.

3.1 A History of Branding from Marks to Mediums

Contemporary brands are complex and diverse. Hence, attempts to define them are caught within conflicting frameworks and multiple histories which give different origins (Lury, 2004, p.15). At its most essential however, branding is a process of impressing ideas onto entities (OED, 2017). Etymologically rooted in the Germanic word '*brandt*'- to burn- most attribute its earliest application in farming; the process of demarking livestock to signify property ownership (Encyclopedia Britannica,

2016). Historically evidenced as early as in 2000 BCE, ‘branding’, burning marks onto property, provided not only an important practical role demarcating property, but also visual references through which consumers determined product quality. This was particularly acute amongst professional animal breeders keen to differentiate and indicate higher standards of quality within localised competitive markets. In this, ‘brands’ constituted important, albeit primitive valuation tools which shaped sale. Purveyors with strong local reputations would find their products sought after, whilst those with bad reputations were avoided (Clifton, 2009). Early ‘brand’ marks helped consumers visually differentiate between products, and thus helped vendors of good reputation communicate quality.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, branding was a more widely recognisable practice. Maker marks and hand inscriptions on commodities evidence this becoming more commonplace. These early ‘brand’ practices demonstrate efforts to make visible through small personalised marks, the personal productive connections producers shared with production, and worked to communicate these as proxies for quality to the consumers who purchased them; their products underpinning workmanship, labour and skill, as well as the workshop and geographical origins of production (Pike, 2015, p. 4) . These facets of production became the basis of early product identities born out of the productive relations between producer and product. These early attempts to communicate and frame commodities with their differentiatable attributes of production, allowed early brand marks to begin to signal and establish claims to product supremacy and quality, central to competitive advantage, and was based on the communication of the productive relations of the product (Tregear, 2003).

These early brand conventions, communicating the production provenance of commodities, became a core feature of early artisanal and crafts market competition. From Roman pottery marks to papermaking watermarks, silver and gold-smithing hallmarks, to ceramic incised marks (Mollerup, 1997), craft-based demarcation distinguished, identified, and provided social identity such as ownership, production, or origin to consumers. Commentators view this as important, and attribute labelling, demarcation and brand cultivation as central to establishing long-term livelihood strategies for early craftspeople (Sennett, 2008). Craftworkers, often sole-operators, traded largely upon the differentiable quality reputation of their skills, and that of their

workshop. Thus, branding became an important source of competitive advantage so to "distinguish[their] name/symbol…to make identifiable their vended goods and services [so] to stand their services apart from those offered from their [competitors]" (Aaker, 1991, p. 110). Thus, from their earliest artisanal application, brands were communicative. Within highly localised markets, branding differentiated products through their reputation of quality and reliability of production (Room, 1998).

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was transforming industrial practices across Europe and the United States of America. Manufacturing upscaled, became vertically integrated, workers became more divided by their labour process, and mechanisation spurred standardisation and economies of scale (Braverman, 1998). Workers became less individually involved with the entirety of production, products were less dependent upon individualised craftmanship, and production became speedier and massified (see Chapter 2**).** It is from the second half of the nineteenth century that brand marks and logos became increasingly used to distinguish industrial, manufactured products from one another (Lury, 2004, p.15). It is in this context that brands became part of a growing set of industrial conventions used to communicate commodity quality and assurance.

This visibility of branding as a force in this organisation of production, can be seen most clearly as emergent in the second half of the nineteenth century within industrialised countries, and increases haphazardly over the following one hundred and fifty years. McClintock (1995) attributes this to the stretching of markets over national and international space, the growth of networks of circulation and distribution, and the growth of aggressive competition between mass manufacturers wanting to grow into new markets. Using wrapped soap as an example, McClintock (1995) describes the growth of branding part of a fundamental transformation in the economy; whereby *generic* items, such as soap, formerly indistinguishable from one another, come to be marketed through brands and corporate logos as *distinctive* consumer products.

This moment is an important turning point. Whilst early brandmarks impressed identities onto commodities linked to production, it is at this point branding becomes more strategically integrated into sustaining mass consumption, and with this, an

industrial methodology used to dislodge local consumer preferences and facilitate sale beyond localised face-to-face markets. Branding aided and helped sustain emergently growing market relations and as market relations stretched, lengthened and complexified, growing mass manufacturers saw branding a functional tool to communicate, establish product worth and quality over time and space, and overcome distrust and unfamiliarity in new locations, all whilst communicating rationales for purchase (Lindermann, 2010, Wengrow, 2008, p.21).

It is at this moment that manufacturers more extensively mobilised non-tangible assets to construct compelling corporate identities. From the 1880s onwards, logos and brands became increasingly more common. Replacing local shopkeepers measuring bulk foods, a new vocabulary of brand narratives and names emerged; from Uncle Ben, to Coca-Cola, to Quaker Oats (Klein, 2000, p. 6). With this, branding pushed beyond the material realities of commodities, such as seen with maker-marks, and included other stories, narratives, images and mascots; becoming ever more fictitious and imaginary (Jackson, Russell, & Ward, 2011). Through these narratives, products beheld a new familiarity and personality, and spoke directly to the consumer through product presentation and packaging. This not only dis-intermediated the role of the retailer, but also re-intermediated products through brand narratives to instil them with the desired properties of the manufacturer, around which the same reputations of quality could be established across time and space in bigger and non-proximate markets (Lury, 2004, p.16).

From this moment, brands were defined much more as a ‘type or kind of good or service from a particular company, sold under a particular name, often referred to a ‘brand name’, and encapsulate a particular design, identity and/or image’ (Pike, 2015, p. 4), and were widely considered sites of impression making, cultural landscapes in their own right; repositories of signs, symbolisms and meanings of distinction and value (Pike, 2015, p. 2). Brand practitioners no longer *solely* showcased product functionality through the brand, but did so whilst evoking also feelings, emotions, values and qualities. In enrolling intangible attributes, and through careful brand association, commodities were imbued with desirable symbolic ideals, designs, images and identities which generated desire (Olins, 2003, p. 14).

By the mid-twentieth century, this function of branding and marketing became all the more acute within business practice, moving away from 'selling' or converting product into cash, into marketing, the idea of satisfying the needs of the consumer by means of the product, and other techniques associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming the commodity (Lury, 2004, p.18). The result was a greater emphasis on behavioural analysis and consumer research (Cochoy, 1998), and a growing authority of marketers in driving and legitimising product development, differentiation and classification. As Lury (2004), utilising Callon *et al's* (2002) work advances, it is during this time that branding fundamentally reshaped market organisation and placed emphasis on differentiation and competition beyond that of simply price. Commercial success became more reliant upon the management of the multi-dimensionality of the product; the brand, the service and the packaging. With this, the functional properties of commodities alone were inadequate for the performative function of marketing, and instead patterns of 'customers' needs were more explicitly worked. Products were classified and understood through new categories, such as convenience, speciality, luxury, and understandings of their sale and target market were linked more dominantly to these market framings, and to the consumer's needs, perceptions and practices construed by the knowledge of marketers (Lury, 2004, p.20). It was through the development and strategy of this multidimensionality of branding, that branders yielded commercial success, grew market share, and delivered competitive advantage (de Chernatony, 2010, de Chernatony & McDonald, 1998).

By the second half of the twentieth century, the consensus on 'selling' to consumers had shifted. The relationship between the producer and consumer was no longer viewed in terms of stimulus-response, but rather valuable exchange enhanced and executed through the brand. Branding expertise saw greater focus on understanding the wants and desires of customers and crafting valuable consumer experiences that complemented these. This saw the rise and growth of branding consultancies and business functions designed specifically for the maintenance and execution of brand experience (Moor, 2008). Lash and Urry (1994) make particular reference to this in the context of the United Kingdom during the 1980s and 1990s, in which 'creative advertising' saw brands dig into lifestyle and attitudinal research, and constructed imaginary lifestyles in which emotional and aesthetic values of products were

elaborated and enmeshed (Nixon, 1997). In this, greater reliance was placed on branded 'sounds and shapes, which tapped into the feelings of consumers, rather than logical propositions' (Mort, 1996, p.96, Tomlinson, 1990). It is this effective percolation of branding into every facet of our daily lives, that has allowed brands to become a central feature of contemporary economic life (Lury, 2004, p.22). So much so that much of our daily lives are mediated through them. Brands are so much more than names or logos but are powerful evocative mediums which organise sets of multi-dimensional relations valuable for the context of sale.

In tracing the historical evolution of branding practice from maker mark to medium, we see three main tendencies emerge. The first is the growing complexity of branding practice, which at first was makeshift but grew in sophistication into a whole host of professionalised practices, knowledges and strategies for selling products. The second is the growing centrality of branding in constituting, constructing and maintaining specific market relations over time and space. In this, brands mediate commodity relations, shape understandings and sustain specific relations between producers and consumers. Lastly, and perhaps more fundamentally, branding can be seen to detach itself from considerations of production: contemporary branding develops brand identity and image more commonly around imaginative and symbolic qualities and frames.

3.2 Value, Quality and Trademarks

Questions of value and meaning have been at the heart of scholarship of branding; how is value made, who has agency to make it, and where is the value extracted and galvanised? For the purposes of this discussion, I will reflect upon three interventions: Bowbrick's (1992) discussion of quality and grading (1992), Lury's (2004) work on brands as market mechanisms, and Willmott's (2010) work on brand securitisation and value extraction. I will then turn to briefly reflect on how laws and trademarks intersect with brands in relation to value valorisation.

Bowbrick (1992) provides the first attempt to systematically conceptualise value and quality within branding. He does so by drawing distinction between quality, brand and grade. Writing in rejection of value as singular, objective or exclusively quantitative (price), Bowbrick (1992) begins with an understanding of value which is multiple,

qualitative and defined as anything of 'value'. To this end, value is wholly subjective, determined relationally to the object and the actor evaluating it. For instance, a consumer may value the product because it meets their personal satisfactions, whilst a producer may value the same product because it has low product cost. Both are valid claims of value, but are defined through different terms of reference, different attributes of quality, by different actors, who share different relationships and rationales of evaluation.

Bowbrick (1992) describes brands as devices which convey information or persuade the consumer about claims of quality and reliability. They are mediums which 'convey information on, or persuade the consumer about the quality, reliability, social status, value for money, or safety of a purchase' (Bowbrick, 1992, p.29). This information is framed by branders to appeal to qualities valued by consumers. Bowbrick (1992) also defines brands through typed exemplifications; umbrella brands, manufacturing brands, retailing brands and so on, and constructs a hierarchy of brand practices found within corporate strategy; umbrella, main brand, sub-brands, and product lines. In this sense, he also defines brands by what function they serve within the marketplace, and by whom.

Bowbrick (1992) argues grades underpin brands. All products have grades whether they are branded or not, because no production process produces totally homogenous outputs. Grading is the process of differentiation amongst products of heterogenous quality, where discernible differences of quality inform practices of their sorting and segmentation for market. These include quality control[1] and classification[2] (Bowbrick, 1992, p.33). Branding is argued to exist almost always in conjunction with grading and always underpinned by grading processes. A manufacturer's claims to distinct qualities are communicated by a brand which makes this differentiation visible and is underpinned by a grading system with practices of quality differentiation which ensure all products adhere to the parameters of these qualities. By way of example, if it is claimed by a brand its clothes are long lasting, it is assumed underpinning their making are grades, limits and tests which determine and show the clothes deliver long lasting quality.

[1] Where products are accepted or rejected against a set standard
[2] Where products are adjudged against specified grades and subjective assessment according to defined characteristics and then sorted into differentiable classes (as they do fruit).

The insight of this work is in its conceptualisation of quality determination; an act partly based at consumption where consumers inspect their purchases and judge its quality against their own subjective assessments of value, such as visually inspecting fruit before purchase, but it is also dependent upon knowledge of 'hidden' practices that happen before the point of sale, such as if the fruit is organic. It is in this gap that the brand sits as a market based communicative device. Bowbrick (1992) argues brands and the grades which underpin them materialise claims of quality and serve as trustful devices for consumers, which represent a perceived graded quality and assurance. While Bowbrick (1992) highlights consumer agency in the appraisal of product quality as something couched in a consumers own subjective desires and assessments of value, he also affirms the brand as an interface used by branders to shape quality evaluation. Brands are used to communicate, frame and turn 'hidden' dynamics of quality such as grading and production practices, into open attributes of quality differentiation.

Interestingly however, Bowbrick (1992) claims that for most products, their value and satisfaction come from the *belief* the product has gone through a verified grading system, rather than the grading system itself contributing to discernibly different products. As he writes, few people can tell whether the bubbles '[of champagne are] added to the wine during or after fermentation' (pp. 223-4). Rather, Bowbrick (1992, p.141) argues that consumers place their trust in brands because of the presence of an *assumed* grading system of differentiation, which is assumed to monitor and police quality standards and provide repercussion for failure. Given this, Bowbrick (1992) depicts brands as trustful entities used by branders to call forth notions of value for the consumer to purchase, whilst also depicting consumers as imaginative and who make assumptions based on branded information (pp. 214-215). More importantly, Bowbrick does not close down the possibility brands are authored to misleading represent and signal qualities which do not bear out in underpinning grading practices.

Lury's (2004) *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy* provides another theoretical framework, which positions branding similarly as a tool of value determination in exchange. She argues concurrent to restructuring within the global economy and its general trend into immateriality, there has also been a rise in a new economic organising principle; the brand. The global economy has found a new object to simplify its complexity. Lury (2004) suggests brands have become a device for the

calibration of the global marketplace. Reflecting upon in the first instance money and price as market mechanisms which establishes the sameness (or difference) of goods in quantitative terms, Lury draws upon Simmel's (Simmel, [1907] 1990) conception of money to demonstrate how it privileges the quantitative mode of abstraction and evaluation in the marketplace. Money is argued to provide a modern science of value which reduces qualitative determinations to quantitative ones and renders equivalent value interchangeable.

Brands are presented as an alternative device; a specific 'modality or market cultural form…[which] mediates the supply and demand of products through organisation, co-ordination and integration of the use of information' (Lury, 2004, p.3). Through the medium of the brand, branding instils qualitative attributes of differentiation- packaging, promotion, product quality, place of production- which re-introduce quality into the means of exchange. Brands are argued an additional rationality that organises the economy; they are an alternative or supplement to the rational order of price and open up how it is the economy is organised, introducing a 'qualitative intensivity into the extensive but limited rationality of a conventional market economy of price' (Lury 2004, p.5). To this end, the brand emerges as a bulwark against a total priced race to the bottom in the global economy.

Lastly, Willmott (2010) provides a rationale to develop a more joined-up analysis of the brand in contemporary value reproduction. He rejects frameworks which hold different moments of the political economy as having time-space distinctiveness (see Thompson and Smith, 2009), and reflects upon the significance of branding as a source of equity within the full circuit of capital. Starting in a similar fashion to Bowbrick (1992) defining value in multiple forms, Willmott (2010) adopts a post-Marxian perspective where the economic is political; politics frames and drives the iteration of the economy, and value is socially constructed and a result of political struggles which vary from one social formation to another (Arvidsson, 2009, p. 16)

Using examples of YouTube and Facebook, the value of these brands are cast multiple and layered; neoclassic theorists would cite its utility to visitors, classical theorists would cite its exploitation of waged labour, and post-Marxian's would cite a sphere of circulation in which user-consumers provide content. Particularly noting in these examples how intangible brand 'assets' are increasingly the basis of financialisation

and valorisation, Willmott (2010) asserts need to draw attention to other areas of life beyond 'production', where value is increasingly and strategically valorised.

For Willmott (2010), special attention is placed on co-production which occurs within the sphere of circulation. In his account, value can only be fully understood when we hold in simultaneous view brand-building connected to the surpluses generated by the labour of user-consumers, as well as in the sphere of 'production', and the producers of branded products and services who are defined sign producers (see Wernick, 1991). In Willmott's (2010) work, brands are increasingly important for company valuation, and are financialised, securitised and tradeable assets. They represent cash flows because of their currency, cultural appeal and meaning, which are traded upon. Recognising this, he evokes 'brandization' to describe the process of finance and marketing converging and governing corporate strategy, restructuring economic organisation and brand strategy to deliver shareholder value, as much as to appeal to their consumers (Lindermann, 2004, O'Neil, 2001).

In Willmott's (2010) assessment, brands are increasingly used to drive shareholder value and guide investment decisions. Brandization is used to raise funds and produce cash flows from their continued resonant cultural meaning and value, which are repackaged into securities for sale and traded amongst investors to raise capital (see Pike and Pollard, 2010). To this end, Willmott (2010) reveals brandization to be a distinctive and emergent mode of capital accumulation, in which the brand equity of user-consumers is appropriated and leveraged for investors in a distinct model of value extraction and valorisation away from the traditional sphere of 'production'.

In each of these conceptualisations, brands are not simply material logos, but represent a dynamic organisation and system of relations between people, practices, values, meaning and products in which brands are used by actors to frame, narrate, author, produce, circulate, and regulate relations of value. The framing of the market by the interface of the brand contributes to the emergence of a non-linear process of production; where value is 'produced', made, and valorised throughout the whole circuit of capital; not just at a privileged point. The brand is a functional interface of value valorisation. This is based upon linking and evoking often intangible qualitative and cultural ideals to a product, which informs practices, ideas, associations of differentiation; the bases of value valorisation. However, this strategy is entirely

contingent, and associated with the dependable production of notions of valuable meaning that are entirely constructed by instances of use with cultural, economic and geographical dimensions (Pike, 2015)

What is revealed conceptually through these interventions, thus, is a tension between the intangibility of brands, and the valorisation of this intangibility to generate a mode of capital accumulation. As part of this, the law is an important structure, which constitutes, aids and legitimates brands into forms of property; the basis upon which rights are established to extract value. The most obvious example of this is a trademark.

Lury's (2004) definition of a trademark highlights three main components; firstly, there must be *the sign*, for which the trademark registers and creates into a legal object. According to the Trade Mark Act (1994) this can include logos, designs, letters, numerals and shapes. Secondly, the mark must be capable of graphic representation, distinctive in definition and defined with sufficient precision to outline the parameters of its distinctiveness. Lastly, the mark must in practice, be capable of being distinctive and have characteristics which are recognisable by consumers in the marketplace. A trademark provides legal recognition and protection to these, and underpins the monopoly use of the mark in relation to a particular class of goods (Lury, 2004, p.101). A trademark has threefold purpose[3]; to protect the owner from unfair competition, to protect the consumer from confusion, and to protect the reputation or goodwill attributed to the use of trademark (known as passing off).

Through its constitution in law as a trademark, brands-as-objects become forms of property. Property law is a means by which a thing is relationally given value; it establishes relations, claims, rights, powers and privileges, to the value of a brand produced through its 'dynamic persons, subjects, objects or materials' (Panesar, 2001, p. 72). More importantly, it confers rights to exclude based upon these constituted claims. This provokes an interesting question; how can one exclude the right to value largely intangible? The law does this by distinguishing between chose[4] in possession (tangible) and chose in action (intangible). *Chose in possession* is where rights of ownership are asserted through tangible possession. C*hose in action* such as a

[3] At least within systems of common law
[4] Chose is a legal term for 'thing'

trademark are where rights of ownership can only be protected by acting against the wrongdoer in litigation. The law, and specifically trademarks, solidify the constitution of 'brands' by organising and governing the parameters of specific productive relations, and their distinctive and valuable interactivity. They confer exclusive ownership of these through the constitution of a brand object. Through which, monopoly can be asserted, and against which, infringement can be protected.

This has become a valuable tool within the armoury of companies who increasingly deploy trade mark law expansively, well beyond infringement which causes likely confusion of attribution, or where use of a mark is used without consent, to also include defence against the creation of associations which may dilute the integrity of the protected mark (Lury, 2004). The assertion of monopoly rights to the value created through the relations which underpin brand-as-objects have been used to prevent infringement. In some cases, such as in the case study of this thesis, they have also provided protection against claims of imitation by stipulating the distinctiveness of the trademarked *sign* is its territorially bounded production, In doing, it spatially limits its competition. This secures the continued monopolistic value extraction strategy users of the trademark rely upon, and can also provide the fixity, ownership, and legal basis for commercial and territorial development (Pike, 2015).

In this sense, the law serves an important competitive function for the successful value valorisation of brands (Miskell, 2010). So much so, registered trademarks are attributed essential brand assets and characteristics (da Silva Lopes & Duguid, 2010). They provide legal fixity to brand value, and through their constitution of a brand into an object of property, and in their regulation and adjudication, they fundamentally shape the landscape of competition (Higgins, 2010). Trademarks protect ownership but can also lead to monopolistic behaviours which divert entrepreneurial activity into extracting and protecting rents. This concern is even more acute as trademark and brand owners more actively valorise brand equity by seeking to extend the reach of their brand and their trademark protection by advancing new concepts within litigation which legitimises further scope to their monopoly rents and place further limits on the parameters of competition (see Lury, 2004).

3.3 Unveiling and Following

Given the growing centrality of branding in economic life, it is perhaps unsurprising they have been the subject of academic enquiry. For the purposes of this discussion, this section will reflect upon two main approaches for studying brands- unveiling and following.

For critical scholars, branding is conceived part of the production/consumption relation of capitalism. Harvey (2010) using Marxist theory, argues that commodity production is underpinned by two main functions- production and consumption- and is guided by a logic of profit which endeavours to competitively produce commodities by alienating time, labour and space. These commodities are then consumed, bought and purchased for an exchange value that reaps profit. Using this conceptualisation of production and consumption, the cultivation of meaningful and valuable brand image can be seen as part of consumer 'buy in' legitimising consumption to realise higher exchange values (Till & Heckler, 2009, 2008). In this, branding is cast central to valuation and exploitation of profit in that it actively frames commodities at consumption with compelling justifications for the exchange values they command. Through its narrative, evocation, and association, brands imbue commodities with symbolism and meaning- rational, emotional, utilitarian and fictious- which help realise higher exchange values. Marx invoked *commodity fetishism* to describe this; the way the social character of commodities is seen somehow natural and intrinsically attributable to the thing itself. Commodities appear without history, as if in an independent reality apart from the producers who fashion them (Watts, 2013). In this, the brand is the realm of consumption, fetishistic, and the site in which the social character and phantom objectivity of the commodity is crafted; where it is naturalised and where it is detached from the productive relations underpinning them.

Branding here is described as distraction; a fetish that dupes the consumer. This undervalues the sophistication of consumer meaning making and valuation and implies consumers always accept brand suppositions. In practice, brand value is much more complex. Brands are read, negotiated and challenged, and through their reading become valued and valuable. It is through the market, that they enlist, associate and connect to socio-cultural value, and in so doing become meaningful. They enlist

consumer agency to do this and consumers navigate brands reflexively exercising judgement, valuation and validation framed by their own personal experiences and values (Moor, 2007). In this way, brands rely not just on the labour of their commodity producers, but also the cognitive labour of their consumers, in a way which challenges discrete bifurcation of production and consumption. Frameworks such as the 'prosumer' and 'prosumption' (Ritzer, 2015, Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010) attest to this, providing reminder that commodities may be made in factories, but brands are created in minds (Wheeler, 2003). Brands are associative entities which occupy 'shares of the mind' as much as shares of market and spend (Ries & Trout, 1981). They are 'cognitive-cultural capitalism' in action (Scott, 2007, p. 1466).

It is this interplay, between the labour of 'producers' and 'consumers' which is particularly interesting, and which demonstrates both production and consumption equally 'productive'. Brand success depends upon consumer agency and meaning-making beyond complete controllability. Brands are not always uncritically accepted, but are powerful cultural and economic mediums which are produced to frame, guide and script the readings of commodities. The creation of a logo or intended brand association, in no way guarantees the positive intent it has, and meanings are routinely misread, appropriated, critically received, and rejected (Brandalism, 2020, Rogers & Flemming, 2019, BBC, 2019, Hackman, 2015, Bothwell, 2005). It is this uncertainty of consumer brand-reading that marketeers work hard to stabilise, and to produce and reproduce coherent brand meaning and value consistently over time. They invest time and resource imbuing commodities with desirable associations, so consumers produce the 'right' and most valuable brand reading and experience. This script-like associative practice is known as building 'brand equity' (Aaker, 1991); a deliberative process by marketeers to construct brands through strategic symbolic association. This strategic practice works specifically around brand scripting, enrolment, and engagement, in an attempt to craft closer and more meaningful brand affiliations (Kapferer, 2012). This is much more than strategic association (Moor, 2011) but is also the suppression and disassociation of more negative codifications which detract value or result in reputational damage hampering brand equity (Ibert *et al.,* 2019, Crewe, 2017).

To do this, branders materialise through the brand identities into virtual and material brand-scapes and mediums. These are not limited to just adverts and labels, but also

include experiential branding (Moor, 2003), the creation of brand communities and community events (Ridgway-Cross, 2015), in-store art (Crewe, 2015), store design, architecture and curation (Crewe & Martin, 2016, Crewe, 2010), as well as through websites and social media (Crewe, 2013, Kim, Nam & Stimpert, 2004, Tapscott & McQueen, 1995). These display the sophistication of contemporary brand strategy, and attest to how brand spaces are central to the construction, communication and galvanisation of brand equity. It is the interplay between creation and curation, on the one hand, and consumer agency on the other, which exemplifies brands as productive sites where 'the becoming of subjects, and the becoming of [corporate] value coincide' (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 93). Branders rely on the mental work of consumers making the right connections, so to exploit added value (Douglas & Isherwood, 1978). It is the double exploitation of consumers; who work to create the value they pay the premium for (Zwick, Bonsu, & Darmody, 2008). Couched in these discourses of valuation, branding takes on an important function for capital accumulation. Whilst commodity production is compelled by a logic of cost efficiency, branding concurrently works to realise higher exchange values at consumption. With this, the evolutionary tendency of branding to detach production from product is viewed intentional, part of the curation of positive brand equity, which obscures the damaging realities of production; the exploitation of labour. Whilst production organises, alienates, degrades and exploits labour, time and space, branding hides this and instead highlights other symbolic and desirable ideals for brand equity. It distracts. It detaches.

It has been the endeavour of political economists to reveal this tension and the complicity of the brand in facilitating and privileging symbolic framed connections over productive realities. Within this literature, scholars (re)politicise the framing of products to go beyond that of the commodity fetish, (re)connecting to the true site of economic value; the underpinning labour hidden behind the veil of production (Harvey, 1990). A politics of connection is the basis of their political praxis (Johns & Vural, 2000, Ross, 1997), which is rooted in the commodity fetish and works to 'lift the veil' of production and 'reveal' the exploited people, processes and places of production hidden out of view from the brand (Hartwick, 1998). This reconnective project challenges and resists brands by disrupting their scripted and curated mediums detached from production, to tell its hidden stories. Through occupation, performance and protest, these reconnective practices have been particularly adopted by activists,

whose work disrupts the stores, online sites and adverts of brands, so to brandalise the process of building brand equity by interjecting politicised counternarratives, signs and symbols which contest and connect to these production realities (Lechaux, 2010, Grote, 2002, Hartwick, 2000). In so doing, they problematise the phantom objectivity of the fetishised brand, displaying the hidden socio-economic relations of production. When placed in that tension, they critically reframe, politicise and reposition the commodities.

Fashion scholars have been particularly effective at this reconnective work, recasting clothing and brands as relational and political. The efficacy of this could be attributed to the way fashion spans extremes; interweaving poverty pay and labour exploitation with the glitz and glamour of fashion capitals and catwalks. Traversing every imaginable scale, from the global to the bodily, fashion threads together starkly contradictory life worlds and experiences. Given this, much political fashion scholarship with sensitivities to economic practices attend to the secretive lives of fashion commodities (Watts, 2013), and account the realities of fashion supply chains hidden behind brands. This work develops a relational approach to reveal the social, economic and cultural worlds that underpin garments, yet which are regularly detached from their promotion. This has formed the basis of political praxis amongst fashion scholars and activists, who have worked to document and highlight labour malpractices, poverty pay, and discrimination which lurk behind brand labels (Hoskins, 2021, Siegle, 2011). It is this reconnective work to production which has been successful in re-politicising fashion supply chains and has worked to add criticality to the political economy fashion sustains, risks and rewards. In reconnecting, revealing and reorienting our view back to production, scholars unravel the contradictions and tensions embedded within them.

Alongside this tradition of 'lifting the veil', emerges a more distinct tradition of commodity scholarship; 'following'. Pioneered by Cook *et al.* (2004) studying papaya fruit, 'following' contends with the politics of academics lifting the veil. Reflecting on his fieldwork experience, Cook *et al.* (2004) speaks of the impossibility of revealing the entirety of the commodity chain. Attempts to 'reveal' real connections only privileges certain ones, underplaying others. They deny the multiplicitous nature of commodity connections.

To explain this, Cook *et al.* (2004) speaks of the jarring experiences felt documenting and representing *multiple* people, places and lifeworlds in commodity scholarship. The brand forms just one commodity connection and frame, as does production. But rather than eschewing either brand as misleading or production as real, Cook *et al.* presents both as one of multiple connections possibly made. In doing so, instead of privileging one connection as 'truth' as commodity fetish scholars do with production, Cook *et al.* (2004) contextualises and crosscuts multiple and diverse connections; all of which are 'real'. Cook *et al.* (2004) explores this through papaya, showcasing it through multiple vignettes; from colonialism to cargo and the consumer, labour relations, to the World Trade Organisation. In doing so, Cook *et al.* (2004) reveals the 'thing' not as a commodity chain fully known, but an entity part of a dense and unbounded network of associations beyond the experience and understanding of any one actor within it. This framework treats not just 'economic' connections as real, but also social, cultural and historical connections also. In this, it troubles Harvey's (1990) call to simply 'lift the veil' and 'reveal' economic reality, that of production, to represent a more holistic and iterative 'knowing' of commodities, one which only reveals itself when we follow them, and position them within their messy and lived socio-cultural and economic contexts.

In this regard, the most useful contribution of commodity followers is their conceptualisation of the commodity system being messy. It is complicated and with complexity which far surpasses the ability of even the best clear-sighted analyst lifting the veil to reveal them. Far from getting rid of the fetish, commodity followers get with and work with it, to understand how it frames commodity relations. It sits with the idea that commodity chains are almost impossible to limit and study 'as a whole'. Rather, it is in their bittiness and contradictions that they work. The commodity system is effective precisely because of the partiality of people's knowledges within them (Cook *et al.,* 2011). It is only when the multiple stories and insights are placed side by side, that they can be viewed concurrently, and through their relational reframing reveal contradictions and tensions. Thus, this project provokes moral and ethical questions for consumers who are demonstrated unknowingly in their relationality complicit in sustaining exploitative relationships with producers, retailers and consumers, 'most of whom [they'll] never [meet]' (Cook *et al.,* 2017). It is through

the jarring of the concurrent stories being place side by side by ‘followers’ that a political impetus for change emerges. The brand is not seen something necessary to eschew like for commodity fetish scholars, but it is understood as a key and dominant framing device for consumers. As such, it is used by followers against which other ‘fuller stories’ compare and contrast. The brand is recognised as a powerful site which governs how we ‘know’ and ‘understand’ the complexity of the commodity system and telling fuller stories relationally to it troubles and disrupts it. Brands here are not unproblematic, nor are they cast as singular truth, but they are revealed part of the multiple practices which take place within the commodity system. In this sense, following attends with criticality to the disconnections and connections of the commodity system, but does so without reinforcing the privilege of the economic realm of ‘production’ as being the only important way of seeing and framing the realities of the commodity.

3.4 Place *in* Brands

Over the last fifty years, fashion has undergone a global shift (Dicken, 2007). It has become more price sensitive, internationalised and offshored to locations of competitive advantage, and exploits ever more complex geographies of labour (Comfort, 2012, Bruce & Daly, 2006). Hudson (1997) describes this shift as the strategic exploitation of the spatial variations of labour and labour protections. Murray (1983) writes of how these shifts typify capital overcoming mass unionisation to find new spatial fixes for cheap mass production. This broad-brush analysis paints a vivid, highly spatialised picture; one where distant and complex supply chains appear inherently more untrustworthy, exploitative, and ethically dubious.

These assertions appear substantiated in crisis, when in catastrophic moments of factory collapses or industrial disasters, laid in rubble are the labels that sustain them. These images shatter the well-versed brands which exclude production and reveal their hidden connection. Out of view, out of the consumer’s minds are the systemic and exploitative working practices, poverty wages, and environmental degradation that are the high human costs of fashion (Cline, 2012). Growing popular press coverage has increased consumer awareness of these darker fashion realities (Kasperkevic, 2016, Butler, 2016, Reuters, 2016, Duhigg & Barboza, 2012, Hopkins, 2008). As a result,

consumer trends indicate the growth of 'new consumerist' values which recentre transparency, authenticity and sustainability (Hoang, 2016), and show readiness in spurning faceless and placeless products in preference to those which better account for provenance (Wood, 2008). As a result, companies are increasingly making available information of their sourcing practices and production locations, which have become proxies and metrics for consumer-brand valuation. There has been a re-connective turn, in which some brands have 'reconnected' to place, embroiling and enlisting them within their branding strategies.

Placing fashion products through brands has a long tradition. Brands have sought to provide 'placed identities for placeless times' (Robins, 1991, p. 38) In buying them, consumers are able 'acquire a sense of place and a slice of locally grounded identity' (Goodrum, 2005, p. 37), which in global times is considered part of a reactionary search for stability, roots, and a sense of identity (Allen, 1995; Lash & Urry, 1994). In branding, this is most widely manifest through the evocation of the nation, a unit seen to behold distinct fashion identities and traditions. To do this, studies have focused on products which manifest as particularly iconic of places and have studied the representations of place within them (Evans, 2020, Roach, 2016, Davis, 2014, Holt, 2006). In this discourse, the brands of 'national' products are studied as cultural representations, and their critique adopts historical and cultural approaches to explore the tensions that emerge when brands construct, and represent complex imagined communities which are culturally malleable and with complex meaning (Verdery, 1993). Here, primary scrutiny is placed on the narratives, visualities, symbolic activations and cultural iconographies that are used to represent the nation, and how they are enlisted to promote a product. In this regard, the brand and its authorship are the primary sites of enquiry, and studies explore how ideas of place are imaginatively, semiotically and symbolically constructed, curated and represented to entwine products with profitable placed identities. In this discourse, place is *not production*, but is conceived as brand representation in consumption, and studying place is therefore viewed similarly to studying the branding of other imaginative ideals such as emotions.

Yet in the context of consumer distrust of global supply chains, there is a more specific tendency within brand strategy which not only performs a placed identity, but does so

specifically though narrations of production provenance; telling consumers of the geographical lives of the product through the brand so as to account for the practices of production. This is much more than treating place as an imaginative ideal but is a brand strategy which exploits the value of actively recounting and re-connecting products to their places of production. This branding practice of labelling products 'made' or 'being from' particular locations has long been studied, in what is known as the 'Country of Origin' (COO) literatures. This specifically explores how place imagination effects product evaluation and brand equity (Bilkey & Nes, 1982). Rooted in the tradition of consumer research, the COO effect empirically demonstrates how some countries have more positive effects over others (Yasin, Noor & Mohamad, 2007, Ahmed & d'Astou, 1995), and demonstrates how consumers use country identity often as proxies for quality, style and taste (Bass & Wilkie, 1973). Whilst this brand practice enlists the place of production by embroiling them into the brand, the focus here remains on the consumer, and the effect the strategic evocation of place shapes their valuation. This tradition of scholarship is rooted in consumer and product research and documents the effect of the product origin on consumer perceptions of valuation, and COO brand strategies are considered part of successful global brand competition (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993).

Whilst the COO effect has been empirically useful in documenting place effect on consumer brand valuation, it is also problematic and reductive in how it conceives the production geographies of commodities. Here, Country of Origin emerges as a singular place (Made in Britain, for example). Researchers using it find unproblematic attributing products to a singular 'Country of Origin', and thus in doing bely the complexity and internationally-entwined nature of most geographies of production; not only are most commodities produced through systems of tiered manufacture which often cross borders, but also most have component parts from numerous countries too. This complicates the practicalities of establishing a singular origin. Rather, its strength is its analysis of consumer discourse, which shows places and origins to be perceived as powerful and with meaning sticky, slow to change and difficult to dislodge (Molotch, 2002). Thus, COO is best understood not as a critical framework, but a body of evidence documenting the effects of a branding practice which plays to consumer place perceptions; a technique used to compete within a global marketplace.

Alongside this empirical literature emerges a more distinct tradition of studying specific *conventions* of place branding couched in a politics of re-localisation and alternative consumption. In this, placed products are positioned antithetically to global commodities, and are explicitly couched within their discourses of alternative, local or ethical politics. The assumed alterity of their politics is attributed to their different configurations of production and supply chain. This literature is most advanced within food scholarship which empirically explores local commodity provisioning, in which product rootedness and locality are defining facets of taste and quality. Specific locations, production processes and making traditions are shown to differentiate products and instil in them discernibly different qualities and politics to their global competitors (Moran, 2010, 2001, Cidell & Alberts, 2006). In these instances, the provenance and location of production becomes its unique selling point; it is better, because it is made in a particular place, by a particular person and particular method. Given this, calling forth and performing particular product names, places of production and making methods become political; they are spatialised branded conventions of alternative production systems which become the basis upon which to command higher exchange values (Watts, Ilbery, & Maye, 2005). In these instances, scholars have taken particular interest in how specific and valuable evocations of place are struggled over by producers, and become defined through the marketplace, legal frameworks, geographical indicators, and methods of appellation (Giovannucci, Darham & Pirog, 2020, Rippon, 2014, Tregear *et al*., 2007, Whatmore & Thorne, 1997). These are shown to define, delimit, and govern competition through spatial specifications of production practice and politics.

Lastly, others have documented how brands communicate different provisioning practices and politics through the connective views of production; their pictures, packaging, and point of sale. From these, brands are shown to differentiate their products, practices and politics, through the conventions and storytelling of the brand (Morris & Kirwan, 2011, Kirwan, 2006, Cook, Crang & Thrope, 1998). Significantly, this body of literature typically frames placed connection as a defining feature of 'alternative' or 'local' production and use branded production (re)connection to position themselves within the marketplace against globalised and 'fetishised' products (Kapferer, 2002). Their connection and placed branding frames products as an alternative to these.



Figure 3.1: A montage of well-known fashion brands which strategically enlist place evocation in their logos. Source: (Burberry, 2018, Prada, 2021, Dior, 2021)

Increasingly however, the enlisting of place of production into brands is more complex than simply labelling product origin and does not always equate to a different alternative politics. Tokatli (2012, 2013) explores this in her work on luxury fashion brand strategies which centralised place image. Reflecting on fashion firms such as Gucci and Dior, Tokatli (2012) notes the 'obviously geographical' nature of fashion branding (Figure 3.1). Here, connection and evocation to places of origin works to generate both monopoly rents and premium reputation. Place asserts product supremacy by tapping into their credible connections to locations with valuable socialised wealth and cultural capital (Scott, 1996); places with distinct making traditions and production heritages. Yet noting Reinach's (2009, 2005) work on 'Italian' brands which maintain a valuable essence of Italian-ness whilst offshoring their manufacturing, Tokatli (2014, 2013, 2012, 2008) demonstrates a tension present within these 'geographical' provenance brands, which on the one hand signal rootedness to particular places, but on the other manufacture in different locations. Brand (re)connection appears more complex and strategic, in which brand place *evocation* and *representation* of a particular production location does not preclude companies also *operating* supply chains more complex and international. Analysing this tension requires a framework more complex than is articulated through discourses which bifurcate 'fetishised' and 'de-fetishised' on the basis of knowing and seeing production through the brand.

The brand is seen both to marshal and reconcile this tension. A good empirical example is that of Zara, a 'Spanish' brand which outsources it labour to Eastern Europe

(Tokatli, 2008). Here, products are strategically branded 'Made in Europe'. The success of this appellation strategy lies in how the brand frames its production geographies for strategic advantages. 'Made in Europe' capitalises upon the positive and dominant symbolic impressions of European fashion- Italian heritage, Parisian chic, German quality- in a way which avoids the negative connections of specifically naming the COO of its cheaper sourcing locations (Tanner & Zuvela, 2009). Whilst exploiting cheaper labour, this framing of production works to secure brand equity; by it, their European consumers assume production is local and in their country, allowing the brand to exploit the positive and assumed associative effects of this, whilst consumers in emerging markets view their products with European premium reputation (Ghemawat & Nueno, 2006). Zara is shown to secure brand equity by the management, strategic framing and geopolitical narration of its branded place of production. Their branding practice reconciles, associates, highlights and disassociates the competing geographies of commodity production into a coherent brand narrative in accordance to brand equity (Tokatli, 2008).

Far from signalling alternative production, place evocation is strategic, and can be seen a method for brands to 'extract every drop of profit, monopoly rent, and wealth out of the capitalist system' (Tokatli, 2014). These brands reveal a distinct spatialised value extraction strategy based upon the management, representation and connection to specific placed imaginaries of production. Whilst commodities traverse multiple geographies through their making, each geography is seen by consumers, and thus branders, to have different symbolic capacities and effects; some are 'value-adding' and others 'value-reducing' (Ermann, 2011), and so their representational management and framing in the brand is important, and have capacities to both build and destabilise brand equity. Thus, the evocation and place image of production, and the framing and representation of it through the brand, demonstrates a strategic commodification of the most valuable narration of the production geographies of the commodity; one which through it manages consumer connections by highlighting and glorifying the good 'value adding' people, places and practices, whilst eschewing the more negative aspects of the geographies of the commodity. The brand never shows and tells place in its entirety- it is perhaps impossible to- but rather it connects to and represents multiple places of production by calling forth *particular* narratives and

imagery of it, which like all brands are constructed, fragmentary, and packaged up, in a way that enhances brand equity (Benjamin, 1985).

3.5 Craft as an Archetypal 'Placed' Brand

As consumers yearn for product transparency, craft is experiencing a renaissance (Jakob & Thomas, 2015). Craft resonates with consumers because it reconnects production; it shows and tells of its provenance so to qualify its 'craft' status. Through brand storytelling, it presents a vision of production which seemingly shows and accounts for where, how, and by whom products are made. This 'showing and telling' speaks directly to these longer ideas of commodity connection.

In what is positioned as a response to consumer distrust of distant and complex supply chains, purchasing craft products is widely perceived the antithesis of purchasing 'global' products. Their conventions of rootedness and locality speak directly to the other aforementioned discourses of 'alternative' commodities. Yet despite this framing within consumer discourse, scholarship is beginning to challenge this. Consumer discourses of craft are seen to unhelpfully simplify the complexity of the socio-economic relations that underpin craft production. Far from the simplistic marks of early artisanal trade, craft brands are much more complex. Craft is both knotty to define and is claimed by a whole host of market actors; from luxury conglomerates, to designer brands, factories to ateliers, all of whom enlist craft as the basis of their storytelling and performance of provenance. In communicating their distinct 'craft' character, brands create desirable, placed and peopled visualities and aesthetics almost indistinguishable from each other. Practically, this renders it much harder to differentiate the differences of scale, production and placed connection at work. Instead, the complexity and differences among them meld into a homogenous narrative and imaginary which romanticises the image of craft production; one of busy hands, active minds, and bespoke tools of small-scale production. Based upon this discursive imaginary, consumers make a number of assumptions; that craft is more ethical, sustainable, local, and better for workers (see Chapter 2). Despite this, more recent investigations into transparency and labour exploitation paint a different picture. Fashion Revolution (2017) suggest that luxury brands who centralise provenance and production locations in their branding are some of the worst offenders

of production opacity. O'Connor (2018) also has demonstrated that 'Made in Britain' producers who enlist British craftmanship in their branding are equally wrapped up in the same exploitative working practices and poverty pay as their international competitors. In sum, geographically placed craft brands provide no assurances of quality and appear to echo many of the same conventions of strategic connection seen within other brands.

Yet given that craft brands must demonstrate their reconnection to their places *and* people of production to qualify their craft status, they are particularly interesting brands, which may not only have tendencies to be authored to showcase particular geographical connections over others, but also may have the same propensity to do this in their scripting of craft work. In the same way certain places in provenance brands come to speak for and author the multiple geographies that are wrapped up in the commodity, the same visualities, narratives and stories of craft brands may also do the same for work practices; they may be a profitable account of a socio-spatial biography of the commodity which comes to be presented as representative of all the work practices it embroils; a selective and more profitable narration and imaginary of them. With this possibility, narrations of craft brands may also push out of view and out of frame troubling craft work practices and experiences, framing instead favourable ones to speak for all of them. In this sense, craft consumers may particularly feel that they have lifted the veil and connected to people and places of craft supply chains because of the discursive framing which claims to speak of the work practices they contain, but ultimately they do by connecting to curated and selective narratives of it; one that represents a double commodity fetish (see Coombe, 1998, Cook & Crang, 1996 for examples). Consumers may feel they know and understand more of the supply chain, yet in reality their 'knowing' extends only to the moment and practice being shown; a selectively framed and creatively represented geographical imagination of the commodity, primed for consumption.

In these instances, if we wish to explore with nuance the realities and experiences of production, we need to complicate the superficial non sequiturs equating *understanding* craft commodity chains with 'connecting' or 'seeing' some of the people and places within them. It impels us to ask more fundamental questions around what consumers see, why they are able to see them, what they are connecting to, and

ultimately what *they are not*. Should we also wish to recommit ourselves to appraising craft commodities even partly on the basis of their supply chain practices, we must begin to take seriously the *multiple* geographies of production and branding and the political and economic tensions that exist reconciling these into one brand narrative, doing so through a conceptual framework which is attentive to how placed and peopled connections are revealed, authored, represented, associated, disassociated and framed strategically for brand equity.

3.6 From Commodity Fetish to Origination

As the multiple people and places of production are strategically enlisted in how they are shown and told in brands, there is need to seek a more nuanced conceptual framing to analyse them. One more generous approach that demonstrates the important logics that underpin branding is provided by Pike (2015) who foregrounds the importance of 'origination' .

Pike's (2015) theory of 'origination' addresses the disconnections and connections to the people, places and practices of branded commodities, giving language for the selectivity of branders in enlisting them into brand narratives. It is an attempt to theorise 'how, why, by whom, where, and in what ways geographical associations are deployed selectively by brands and branding actors to create and fix meanings and values in branded goods' (2015, p. 87).

This theory is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it appreciates brands and commodities are inescapably geographical: they are made in places, move from places, are created and consumed in places. They have geographical lives beholding multiple valid claims to different places, people and moments that exist unbounded, practiced outside of the brand. Secondly, it appreciates that brands are authored to make particular claims of value through their mobilisation and evocation of particular geographies and actors within their spatial circuit to construct meaningful and valuable associations for the product. This framing and delimiting of placed connections are central to the construction of brand meaning and value. As such, brands are key sites which communicate, bound, and govern commodity connections for brand value, and are sites of tension in which unframed, messy socio-economic relations are made clear,

coherent, and are framed for consumption. Thirdly, origination works with an expansive definition of place, not limited to territorially mapped points on a commodity chain, but also includes associations, connections, memories, histories, and imaginations places inspire too. As such, it appreciates the cultural power and complexity of place construction and image in brands and affirms the growing centrality of geographical imaginations for brand value. Lastly, it conceives branding as both a political-economic and cultural narration, in which brands are not neutral spaces, but governed by logics and tendencies. In this sense, it brings together geographies of political and cultural economy in a way that stimulates debate and further thinking (Pike, 2017). Brands are culturally produced by brand builders for brand equity, reworking and negotiating the multiple and diverse places of the commodity to competitively frame these for sale. Through this, certain connections are legitimised, governed, worked, navigated, reconciled, associated with and disassociated with, to produce the origin 'brand story'. The brand comes to materialise this politics of place at work; one where brand actors actively exercise political judgements within market situations which actively represent places and peoples, and which shape the possible consumer connections made through them. Cast in this way, the socio-economic 'realities' shown in the brand are also products of this process. However real or transparent they may feel, origination gives a language to understand how these cultural and social accounts are never complete, in their entirety, but are mediated and curated and products of worldmaking, storytelling, and active association and disassociation governed by market logics which puts place representation to work.

For the study of craft brand practices, the conceptual framework of origination has particular usefulness; not only in the potential nuance it brings to the study of how it embroils places into brand stories, but also how they enlist craft producers and practices too. In the same way that the multiple geographies of commodities are reconciled and worked by branders in the construction of the connectivity of placed brands, branders may also do this for its narratives of craft work; strategically showing *some* of practices and experiences as representative of all of them. In crafting a branded connection to the moment of craft production, branders may have the same propensity to highlight, omit or silence certain connections over others. Thus origination provides potential to study the way craft brands not only mediate and

curate the multiple placed connections into brands, but also how they construct and promote a narrativisation and representation of the particular moment of craft work, out of multiple and unbounded accounts of people and practices.

Perhaps more importantly, in its application to craft placed brands, origination could help think through branded simplifications of placed production and work which goes beyond the limited binaries of 'truth' or 'fetish', 'connected' or 'veiled', to appreciate the potential diversity and multiplicity wrapped up within placed craft work practices. In so doing, it opens potential for scholarship to explore which narratives of craft work are promoted, highlighted and glorified within the brand, doing so without closing down the possibility that other experiences also exist in practice. It allows room to ask to what extent these branded and framed stories are representative of the multiple, living, and unbounded experiences of craft working, and allows scholarship to further scrutinise the agency and power of brand authorship, of who contributes to it and how, to understand the tensions and contradictions wrapped up between the narrativisation and romanticising of work 'as brand', compared with the multiple work practices, unbounded as lived.

If applied to craft work, the framework of origination is useful in a number of ways, not least in the suppositions it can preface study with. Firstly, like the geographies of a brand, craft work, workers and practices could also be assumed from the outset as diverse and multiple, couched within places and moments of cultural, social and economic complexity. It is within this socio-cultural and economic complexity that craft workers experience their livelihoods; unbounded, multiplicitously, and outside of the brand which narrates and frames them.

Secondly, it casts craft brands like any other, as produced and authored by brand builders; agents with power to leverage and selectively rework the multiple placed craft realities within the socio-spatial biography of the product. This power to narrate, curate and frame craft work and place within the brand is unevenly shared by the actors and places the commodity traverses. Given this, craft brand stories are cast as culturally and economically political, and actively frame and represent for market a selective melange of these unbounded socio-economic and cultural relations in a way governed by the exchange value their reworkings, not the logic of de-fetishising or

revealing complete production reality. The visions evoked through the brand tell the most compelling, and economically valuable socio-cultural story; but it is by no means complete in its entirety nor unmediated truth. It is actively worked and produced.

Ultimately origination provides a methodological and analytic approach for researchers to explain the agency of actors attempting to create and fix meaning over time and space through brands. It connects the political and cultural economy approaches through socio-spatial biographies, adding complexity and diversity, whilst also appreciating the need to understand the systematic logics, tendencies, and rationales that govern and guide the framing and constructions of place and work within the brand. This includes and is not limited to product differentiation, profit, capital accumulation etc. It casts place not as something reducible in branding, but something that along with practices within the full circuit of circulation and regulation, is actively appropriated, represented and authored through the brand.

3.7 A Rationale for Applying Origination to 'Scottish' Craft Brands

It is in this vein that 'Scottish' products make particularly interesting case studies. As with most national identities, Scottishness sits in an uneasy tension; all at once discursively difficult to define, yet distinct. Particularly acute is the way Scottish identity is narrowly conceived in popular discourses through stereotyped commodities and sites; a land of kilts, 'tartan, Glencoe…whisky and Edinburgh Castle' (McCrone, Morris, & Kiely, 1995, p. 5). When asking the public of the distinctiveness of Scottishness, compared with Britishness, this focus on materially is salient;

> [Scottishness is] 'Haggis, Tartan, Irn-Bru, Whisky, mountains, wild open landscapes, lovely cities, rich histories, and some of the best pubs in the world! (BBC, 2002)

These artefacts become abstracted short-hands for Scottish national identity; outward signs and symbols of placed 'Scottish' ideals (Miller, 2002, p. 397). They articulate a narrative of authenticity which reinforces within the cultural psyche, a codification and signification of particular things and places, as embodiments of this authentic and distinct Scottishness (MacCannell, 1974). Of particular salience in these narrations is

Scottishness as a rolling news story; history in the making (Lorimer, 2001), which manifest compellingly all at once coherent, yet multiple, historical, yet contemporary, mythologised yet real.

Table 2: A table to summarise the identified features of 'Scottishness' highlighted by Visit Scotland's Consumer Research Department.

Core Attributes	Emotional Benefits
• Landscape • History and Culture • People	• Awe • Escapism • Spirit • Connection

Source: (*VisitScotland*, 2016)

Consumer research indicates that evoking 'Scottishness' has particular resonance in the marketplace and is associated to core attributes and emotions (Table 2). It speaks to an evocative and desirable provenance, one wrapped up with distinct claims of qualities and values which translates into better sales. For example, Moilanen and Rainisto (2009, p. 58) demonstrate how calling forth a branded Scottishness specifically enhances the sale of smoked salmon, noting a pack of Scottish 'smoked salmon with a Scottish logo, [sells] faster in a shop in New York, Paris or Tokyo, than one from say, Norway'. This tradition of studying Scotland through COO in brands observes how products- discursively considered as icons of Scottish identity such as smoked salmon- adopt brand conventions of banal nationalism to exploit the value and assurances of quality that long and credible histories of production imply (Stein, 2017) Thus, 'Scottish' products speak archetypically to the much longer scholarly tradition of place-brand storytelling which guides product quality assumptions through place image (Crewe, 2017, Smith-Maguire *et al*., 2017, Morris & Young, 2000, Ilbery & Maye, 2005).

Yet specifically in the popular discourses of Scottishness, there remains a distinct tendency of representation, in which Scottish identity is almost always presented

homogenously through a distinct Celtic imaginary; a specific, regional and historical Highland identity that embroils particular and distinct vignettes and artefacts such as tartan and tweed, in a process of place mythologisation; a narrative which speaks for and defines commodified Scottishness. The discursive dominance of this is demonstrated in how fabrics such as tartan and tweed have become 'the fabric[s] of [the Scottish] nation, [and] an icon of Scottish history and identity (Young & Martin, 2017, p. 13). When Scottish products are mentioned, it is almost universally assumed that tartan or tweed are the subjects of discussion (Thorburn, 2013, p. 29), and even when they are not, they are often used as visual identities to signal Scottishness in other products (Riach, 2010, p. 116) (see Figure 3.2 and 3.3). This enlisting of Scottish fabric as a visual identity has been the subject of enquiry of cultural and fashion theorist and historians, who render more complex the histories and cultural imaginaries of this mainstream and commodified representation of Scottishness (Young & Martin, 2017). This work demonstrates the hidden complexity of these material objects, in a way which reveals their commodified national narratives as entrenched in selectively represented, classed, romanticised and fetishised storytelling (McCrone, Morris, & Kiely, 1995). At the heart of this scholarship has been the study of nationalism in cultural representation, and telling fuller and more nuanced cultural stories than those of the dominant consumer discourses (Brown, 2010, p.96).



Figure 3.2: A photographic montage of brands that use tartan print as part of their corporate visual identity. Source: Left: (Amazon, 2018)**,** Centre: (Plush, 2016), Left: (Stahly Quality Foods, 2018)



Figure 3.3: A Harris Tweed headrest on Loganair, 'Scotland's Airline'. Source: (Harris Tweed Authority, 2017)

Perhaps more striking is the way these brands articulate their Scottishness through their history. So much so, McCrone *et al*. (1995, p. 4) writes 'it seems, at times, as if Scotland only exists as heritage'. In this, Scottish identity has rested upon the glorification of the Celtic Highlands, and on Gaelic imaginaries, to promote a distinct imaginative geography; one tartanised (Brown, 2010) and troped in its Scottishness to clearly contrast against Anglo-Saxon Englishness (Chapman, 1992; Chapman, 1978). As such, the iconography which has reached international resonance typically consists of othering images of regional and peripheral Scotland, framed through tartan, Highland mountain scenery and William Wallace (Cooke & McLean, 2001). By actively selecting and promoting national narratives that glorify Highlander, Celtic and Gaelic identities, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland have become 'ready-made' sources of a compelling, exotic and othered national identity, for which all Scots use to articulate and sell their own Scottishness (McCrone, Morris, & Kiely, 1995, p. 56).

Branding by enchanting products with a rooted and placed 'Scottishness' is therefore wrapped up within the politics of this way of seeing- Scottish-as-Celtic- and becomes complicit in a promotion and narration of place which mythologises the complexity of places, peoples, cultures, and identities. Lorimer (1999, p. 518) writes how the Highlands and Islands are always represented as a place out of history, oscillating between folkloric, mythical and ancient, yet crucially never 'present'. For Scottish craft brands most of which are both historical and rural (Mackay, 1976), this cultural representation is particularly acute. In their promotion of provenance, they too

mobilise fact with fiction, fable with folklore, and myth with memory, to craft their origin stories. They embroil historical accounts, with personal experiences, provide insight into hidden histories we know little of, and breathe life into local legend and myth, creating an overwhelming 'historical' dominating image of Scottish craft work. In doing so, they craft a fantasy and fetish around the product, and of the people and places they come from.

Despite the diverse range of work looking at both the branding of 'Scottish' products through the lens of COO, and the representations of Scottishness within popular culture, there remains need to unpack the effects of this specific way of seeing in brands; the way we view Scottish craft products, and in particular craft work, people and places in 'peripheral' rural areas too often defined and represented only through their historical and Celtic imaginary. In adopting the framework of origination, scholarship can not only account for this form of place representation which on the whole is historical and mythologising, but also work to attend to what ways this historical framing connects to, disconnects from, authors or overlooks the other contemporary craft production practices and placed connections of these Scottish craft brands, and how they are managed, reconciled, associated to and disconnected from, strategically, in connective brand narratives.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has critically evaluated existing bodies of literature on the geographies of branding. Firstly, the chapter traced the historical evolution of branding. It argued that whilst branding emerged as a mark to distinguish commodity production from consumption, over time dominant branding practices have detached commodities from their production geographies. In this context, geographical scholarship has been particularly interested in the connective and dis-connective properties of the brand, in relation to its commodity production. 'De-fetishising' and 'following' methodologies have been the most dominant geographical approaches, which address in different ways the politics of commodity reconnection. Both question the brand and attempt to production, and both bring production into simultaneous view with other commodity relations, to reveal their relational (dis)unity. The chapter introduces the geographies of brands, and argues that craft brands provide particularly good examples and adopt

distinctly geographical and spatial strategies of brand equity, and embroil place associations, images and imaginations in ever more complex ways, and in ways which demand more nuanced frameworks of connection, association and disassociation to articulate their placed dynamics. Origination is positioned as the best theoretical framework to grapple with the multiple, competing geographies of brands, not least because of its productive combination of elements of both political and cultural economy approaches (Pike, 2015). Of particular interest here is the ways origination appraises branding both as cultural, but also strategically representational, economically produced practices. In this sense, it allows the appraisal not just of the multiple and unframed connections that commodities share, but also the strategic associations and disassociations it makes through the brand and the logic of brand equity governing this process. The chapter argues that origination has significant power for studying craft brands; which both 'reconnect' to the places of production, but also the craft workers and production underpinning them. In applying origination to this particular case study, craft brands can be shown not only mediate and curate their multiple placed connections, but also construct and promote a political narrativisation and representation of craft work in keeping with brand equity; just one of multiple and unbounded accounts of people and practices that exist unframed, outside of it. This opens up interesting questions of the politics of both craft consumption and production. Lastly, the chapter turned to Scottish branding discourses to contextualise the ways in which this piece of research applies broader theoretical lenses to the study of Scottish craft brands. Rural Scottish craft brands are seen to be couched within a specific mythologised and political way of seeing; Scottish-as-Celtic. In which, the materiality of iconic brands and objects- such as tartan and Harris Tweed- construct and affirm this narration. But underpinning these representations is much greater socio-economic and cultural complexity, found in life and production as practiced. Origination is positioned as a framework which can help re-orientate our enquiry within this context; which can all at once appraise the representation and framing of place-image, craft imaginary and brand storytelling, whilst also understand how this associates and disassociates, connects and disconnects from the multiplicitous people and practices of contemporary craft production that exist outside of it.

Chapter 4
Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology of the thesis. The chapter firstly provides a rationale for the selection of the case study. Then, the chapter traces the evolution of its design from the pilot study to the writing up of the research. In doing so, it provides a rationale for telling 'fuller' stories of craft livelihoods through the adoption of an ethnographic methodology. It also provides a reflection on the practicalities of 'doing' ethnography, in relation to access and rapport, and affords particular attention to the role of positionality and identity work in shaping the research, getting in, fitting in, and gain trust in the field. Lastly, the chapter discusses the risks and opportunities of sharing ethnographic stories, providing a reflexive account of the vulnerabilities and sensitivities of the project and participants, and provides justification for the approach adopted.

4.1 Rationale of Case Study Selection

The rationale for selecting Harris Tweed as a case study was primarily guided by the conceptual frames and practical considerations of the research. Firstly, I sought an industry which produced *and* branded its own product. Secondly, I sought a self-described ‘craft’ brand which centralised ‘craft’ making within its promotion. Thirdly, I sought a geographically de-limited case study bound by a distinct physical geography; against which I could compare branded evocations of place and work. Fourthly, given the centrality of labour to craft branding, I sought a brand with multiple points of access to its labour, and avoided case studies with single arbiters of access. Instead, I preferred cases where craft labourers were bound through association, authority, employer, guild, or other form of collective. Lastly, I sought craft labourers making the *same* item, in the *same* manner (as opposed to labourers independent from each other, making and branding different products). This was assumed to control the variability of the product and craft practice, which provided

greater analytical focus on the similarities and differences between work practice, and the stories of them.

To this end, Harris Tweed satisfied all of these considerations. It is an industry which has transformed itself into a branded cloth (see Young and Martin, 2019, Harper and McDougall, 2015). It is promotionally described as a craft industry (see Platman, 2019, Crewe, 2019) and holds it World Craft Council and Heritage Craft Association accreditations. It is geographically specific, defined and delimited by its legislation and trademark (see Chapter 5), and it is comprised of multiple actors, which was initially assumed to make access easier.

However, frankly the case study could have been one of many craft clusters that still exist within the United Kingdom. Its long industrial heritage, its contemporary reinvention and reorganisation, and its active commodification of industrial provenance do not make this case study unique. Yet, it was the unique characteristics of Harris Tweed which made the case study appealing, its territorially bound nature, its geographically specific legislation and trademark, and its delimited geography of production. In this sense, the industry both represents general trends noted within craft clusters more broadly, but also represents perhaps an extreme example. Thus, this research develops an empirically grounded assessment of the unique tensions and contradictions bound up in branding Harris Tweed, but in doing provides an exemplar approach to pose broader questions of this process for other placed and peopled craft brands.

Beyond these considerations, however, the selection of Harris Tweed also speaks to the evolutionary nature of the analytical focus of the research. Originally, the research design committed to 'following', journeying along a supply chain from production to consumption, in this case to examine craft work. Early research planning placed importance on selecting a case study with multiple points of sale which would make this approach feasible. In this regard, Harris Tweed was particularly interesting, for it has multiple pathways to a variety of markets and actors including luxury tailors, high street retailers and crafters (see Chapter 5). Early desk-based research also placed emphasis on exploring craft as a slow and transparent form of production, for which a body of literature exists positioning Harris Tweed as an archetypal example (see Crewe, 2017). However, many of these accounts develop an assessment of Harris

Tweed based exclusively on secondary sources, and remain uncritical to the potential disconnections and tensions that exist between its branded narratives, and the lives and experiences of those who weave.

To this end, early case study selection was guided by the potential contribution a following methodology could have on exploring these themes, and responded directly to existing literatures of the case study. However, as with many deductive and ethnographic projects, as the revelations of this thesis unravelled, the analytical focus reacted, and shifted away from the arena of sale, towards the specific political, cultural and economic relations of labour, technology and branding, themes which emerged important and salient in the field.

4.2 Pilot Study

In December 2017, I embarked on a scoping visit to the Outer Hebrides. Having not visited the islands prior, I sought to gain familiarity with the islands, staying for a week. Of greatest priority was finding and connecting with key individuals and organisations who I had identified through desk research. Staying in Stornoway, the largest principal town and administrative capital of the Outer Hebrides, I went on to explore the islands.

My first day consisted of orientation, driving and exploring. I greeted a scene which matched poorly with the imaginative geography I was familiar with from desk research. I expected a small, parochial, quaint and remote island, yet what I found was different. The winter sky was cold and grey, giving Stornoway little of the charm of its postcards (Figure 4.1). The islands were much larger, their communities sprawled much further, and they were linked largely by the island's network of single-track highways which stretched across expansive and dramatic landscapes. The weather was harsh, blustery, and bracing, conditions that put off even the hardiest of tourists, and the streets were quiet, disturbed only by the few locals pottering about.



Figure 4.1: Picture of Stornoway harbour during the pilot study. Source: Personal Photography (2017)

I first visited the tourist information centre, a small building positioned in the harbour of Stornoway. The centre was empty of visitors but packed with local products and tweed for sale. I enquired of the recommended sites to see and was met with both warmth and curiosity of my out-of-season visit. In conversation, I explained my research, and expressed desire to learn more of the island's world-famous cloth. Reaching for a pre-printed list, I was supplied with a contact sheet of Harris Tweed weavers and a map upon which tweed was advertised and key island features were hand-inscribed. From these, an impromptu itinerary was drafted, with informal interview-visits arranged with two weavers and two retailers. These were surprisingly easy to arrange, especially given the last-minute nature of my requests, and averaged an hour. They each provided brief insights which helped gauge the mood of the industry and provided signposts to various points of interest for future visits. I also visited exhibition spaces and museums that served to showcase the islands' cottage weaving industry. Specifically, I visited Museum nan Eilean- 'the island's museum'- and reviewed it Harris Tweed Archiving project. This was a recently completed industry-funded project, cataloguing historical adverts, minutes and ledgers.

My itinerary provided me with useful insights for fieldwork and allowed me to gain a strong contextual grounding, but the itinerary was not neutral. It shaped my experience and left me reflecting on its role in research. Of particular note was a frustrating disconnect between the data I gathered at each itinerary point, and my lived experiences gained in between them. At each, I met with the key actors of the industry who told and sold me the tales of Harris Tweed. Their accounts were similar, often identical, and read almost directly from the promoted brand narratives. This scripting of authentic parochial making had a troublingly inauthentic feel, and one that captured

poorly wider island life. It was this sense of inauthenticity, slippage and disconnection that became formative for my research design.

Frustrated, I came away thinking of my encounters as curated and partial with my itinerary shaping the experience. After I traversed, in theme park-like fashion, from each of the itinerary's recommended sites, I began to think if I had missed others, and if I was visiting only a textile trail of hosts who *wanted* visitors and visibility. Was my pilot study flawed because of this selection bias? Did it only scratch the surface? What I was sure of, was how these sites poorly captured other everyday realities existing 'in between'. Whilst I visited crofter-weavers living out the stereotype presented by the brand, other realities remained hidden from it; the pebble-dashed council homes, the job centre, the food bank and the Tesco delivery vans. Taking data from interviews alone seemed to partially record island life and mischaracterise the Hebridean experience solely through these compelling, one-dimensional caricatures, ignoring the lives of islanders that existed outside of them. It risked consigning lives and sites outside of the itinerary to irrelevancy.

Given this disconnect between life as promoted and experienced, particularly within branded encounters and wider island life, I sought a methodology that could explore this, grapple with multiplicity and richness, and centralise scrutiny of which stories were told by the brand, and which were not. The pilot study suggested at play a politics of place representation; one that appeared to glorify a narrative of treadle, loom and croft, and actively disassociate itself from the less easily romanticised parts of island life; those that contest, threaten and destabilise this profitable story. In this sense, within the brand, not all of island life is created equal. The pilot study suggested that two processes were at work; on the one hand, the brand creates and curates a quirky, historical, and provincial mythology and presents it as a living and everyday tradition of Harris Tweed, whilst on the other the brand forgets and irons out of its narrative other everyday experiences that threaten this tale. Ultimately, I needed a methodology that captured, and told diverse and multiple stories; not just the one loudly told.

4.3 Exploring Experiences: Labour Ethnography

I sought to develop a more robust methodology which would yield richer data and capture the messy and iterative practices of fieldwork. In particular, I wanted space to

critically reflect upon the multiplicity of stories of the cloth, exploring the connections and disconnections of these in the brand, and capturing the different voices, silences and the multiple everyday experiences all wrapped up in the cloth (Angrosino, 2007)**.** In this vein, I adopted what Smith (2007) describes as a critically engaged ethnography of employment- an immersive approach studying work practices, places and lifestyles.

In January 2018, I moved to the Outer Hebrides for six months, and lived alongside the workers and weavers of the Harris Tweed industry. With this, I committed to push beyond the caricatured brand experience of the 'textile trail' to critically interrogate the brand narrative, and situate it relationally part of a much richer, diversely experienced and more complex story to the one told. In this sense, I was less interested in finding a discursive definition of craft framed by the cultural baggage of my own understanding of it, but was more interested in unpacking and documenting its diversity in practice and association. I wanted to explore with greater nuance, the multiple explanations, experiences, narratives and work practices that exist wrapped up in the cloth- visible, invisible, told or silenced- and explore them on their terms, and through the voices of the participants who shared them.

The project explored the polyvocality of Harris Tweed by uncovering the multiplicity of experiences wrapped up in the cloth. Yet telling diverse stories relies upon accessing them. Of knowing where to look and getting in. For Harris Tweed, this is difficult, because there is a structural specificity to the labour force. Weavers weave in their homes and loom sheds across the islands, out of sight of the public (See Appendix 1). The production is uniquely situated, embedded by law on the islands, entrenching work practices within a specific spatial relation. Its geographical embeddedness and its hand and homeworking safeguards its craft status. Harris Tweed is defined as a woollen cloth, handwoven by islanders at their homes, finished, and made of pure virgin wool, dyed and spun in the Outer Hebrides (HM Government, 1993, Harris Tweed Act, 1993). This prescribed geography of labour presented me with unusual challenges of access, in which unlike workplace ethnographies of offices or factories, lacked a centralised singular site to access. Instead, weaving was multi-sited, dispersed, and within the privacy of weavers' homes, and as such I had to gain access to a complex network of labourers, organisations and actors, mostly hidden out of view.

4.4 Navigating Organisational Complexity

The Harris Tweed industry is made up of three key actors which help bring the cloth to market; the Harris Tweed Authority, the mills[5], and the weavers.

4.4.1 The Harris Tweed Authority

The Harris Tweed Authority[6] (HTA) is the legal body which protects and defends the reputation and integrity of Harris Tweed. The Authority works to authenticate the cloth, certifying its legal compliance. As part of this, the HTA provides an organising structure of assurance. It administers weaving numbers, in effect a licensing tool similar akin to other regulated, self-employed labour markets (such as taxi driving), assuring all weavers weave to an agreed standard. It administers a system of personally accountable legal declarations, made by weavers per weave, to declare their own legal compliance. They monitor and record production outputs, promote the industry, and have general oversight over it, convening strategic meetings of weavers' representatives, board members and mills. Their primary task, however, is ensuring only tweed marked with the orb, is Harris Tweed (Figure 4.2), genuine and in accordance with the act.



Figure 4.2: A picture showing the stamping process, in which you can see impressed on the tweed, the recognisable Harris Tweed orb. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

[5] At the time of the ethnography, there were three operational mills on the island: Harris Tweed Hebrides, Carloway Mill and the Mackenzie Mill.
[6] Referred to as The Harris Tweed Authority, the HTA, and the Authority, interchangeably.

To do this, it employs a team of inspectors who undertake unannounced visits to weavers and who quality assess and stamp tweed at the mills with the certifying orb. In stamping, the cloth ‘becomes’ Harris Tweed. The orb trademark is an authentication appellation entrusted to the HTA who charge a levy per stamped metre on weavers to sustain their work. They do not produce cloth themselves, but they work to promote Harris Tweed as a 'brand' and produce promotional content to enhance its brand equity. This is done largely through ‘telling the story’ of the cloth, mobilising its quality reputation and history in a compelling brand narrative. The HTA provide interviews and information to journalists and buyers. It produces point of sale visuals and literature and it coordinates and curates branded events and experiences, such as trade show stands, and brand room exhibits (Figure 4.3). Lastly, it produces engaging and interactive social media content and educational resources. Collectively, these construct, materialise and promote a compelling branded story.

Aside from these activities, the HTA spends a sizable amount of time as the friendly public face of the industry. Their team is small but serves as the first point of contact for tweed enquiries, regularly answering enquiries on anything from button replacements and fabric care advice, to the specifics of their World Craft Council status.



Figure 4.3: Two photographs of the HTA at a trade show in London, 2017. Source: Personal Photography (2017)

4.4.2 Weavers and Mills

Under a piece-working arrangement, weavers weave in their homes as 'self-employed' workers and fall into two categories; weavers who produce for the mills, and independent producers.

Weavers who weave for mills do so as subcontracted labourers. The mills work to secure sales of cloth for each season, producing yarn in accordance with orders. They coordinate their orders, delivering yarn with patterns to weavers who weave to contract. Being self-employed labourers, weaver use looms which are owned, financed and maintained by themselves, and weave and return the cloth to the mills for washing, darning and finishing. It is then inspected and stamped by an HTA inspector, upon which the mill pays the HTA stamping levy. The weavers are paid by the mill for their work, and the mills dispatch the cloth to their clients around the world.

Under this arrangement, the mills are central to the production of the cloth. They are a coordinating intermediary for the marketplace; securing orders, designing patterns, making, providing and delivering the yarn, and then finishing and distributing the cloth to the consumer. The weaver provides only the weaving labour on a subcontracting basis, turning yarns and patterns *owned* and *produced* by the mill, into returnable cloth ready for stamping and finishing. Crucially, weavers do not own the cloth they produce, nor the materials delivered to them, but weave as skilled homeworkers on a piece rate basis (per tweed, or per metre), whilst the mills produce and warp the yarn, orchestrate and distribute the weaving work, retrieve the cloth, finish and darn the tweed, and sell the cloth. Working to scale, the mills fulfil large global orders, and have production scaled to the industry-standard double-width (two metres). This is woven on large, modern, double-width looms, known as a Griffiths loom[7], by a weaving workforce who make up the majority of weavers (80% approx.).

Independent producers enjoy a different relationship to both market and mill. They *buy their* yarn produced from the mills and warp it themselves. With it, they design a tweed and weave it. Under this system, they own their tweed, for they purchase its yarn and design its pattern. They arrange with the mill a paid finishing service, and it

[7] 'Griffith' looms are looms produced by Griffith Textile Machines. The name of the company who manufacturers them is used as a colloquial shorthanded name to differentiate from the single-width loom.

is similarly inspected and stamped by an HTA inspector. However, the independent weaver pays the inspection levy. They then sell their cloth directly to consumers.

The independent producers have control over most of the phases of production; they buy and warp the yarn, design and weave the cloth, and sell the cloth to the consumer. The mills provide services that the weaver cannot practically undertake such as finishing and washing which require large machinery. Because of the time demands and the intensity of these multiple production functions, independent producers work on smaller scales, fulfilling bespoke orders. They also work on older and smaller single-width looms- Hattersley looms- and produce single metre widths of cloth. Whilst they make up a healthy and vibrant community amongst the weaving population (20% approx.), they make up a minority of Harris Tweed weavers (see Appendix 2)

4.5 Access

The geographically dispersed and variable nature of the labour relations of study presented unique challenges to access. In this regard, this study contributes a worked example of how an ethnographic method can be deployed in research contexts to study hard to reach jobs with limited access (Badger & Woodcock, 2019). Weaving work mirrors many of dynamics outlined within 'hard to reach' labour ethnographies- self-employment, precarity, centrally coordinated work contracting etc. - of which most contemporary studies explore geographically dispersed platform and gig economy workers (Bloodworth, 2018, Waters & Woodcock, 2017). This geographical composition presents foundational challenges to ethnographic approaches; not least shaping which stories and experiences are shared, and not. In this sense this study shares many of the practical challenges contemporarily discussed within workplace ethnographies using worker voices to put 'labour back in the picture' (see Notes from Below, 2020, Viewpoint, 2020). Reflecting the complexity of this, significant time was spent reflecting on the access strategy of the study.

As independent producers sell directly to consumers, they are public facing and visible. This made finding and meeting with independent producers a relatively easy task. Their visibility was further enhanced by their feature in public directories found in tourist information centres and on the HTA website, which include email addresses,

telephone numbers and home addresses. As a result of their visibility, independent producers are most regularly visited by researchers, consumers, and journalists, who mostly welcome and accommodate them. This, not least, was because in doing so they might secure sales, publicise their work, and grow their brand exposure.

For weavers that weave for mills, the picture was different. Their market relation was completely orchestrated by the mills. They have no public facing role or involvement with the sale of their produced cloth, but rather sell their labour to the mill. In this sense, the majority of mill weavers are largely hidden away out of sight. This makes gaining access to them extremely difficult, and heavily mediated by the mills who contract to them. This adds complexity. Given the difficulty of access, approaching a mediating employer can help sampling. However, in gaining access through a contracting actor, this embeds uncomfortable power dynamics within the research design. Participants may be less critical, given their participation is known by their employing contractor, and it might breach anonymity and give rise to risks of retributive repercussions from their contracting 'employer'. This risk is particularly acute given the self-employed status of weavers. These difficulties are compounded by the pay structure of mill weavers; a piece-rate and paid by the metre system. Under this regime, any task which is not directly related to weaving is unproductive. Hosting and being interviewed would eat into this productive time. Their pay structure incentivises working efficiency, maximising the work per labour time expended. In contrast to independent producers who gain from visitors, mill weavers are hindered by them, for they distract from their primary task of producing and returning mill-commissioned cloth.

Lastly, access difficulty was further exacerbated by a general reluctance and mistrust of prying eyes from outsiders. Given the high levels of interest in Harris Tweed weaving, the research site was shared with many visitors; tourists, journalists and other researchers (Kneafsey, 2000, Chapman, 1987). As such, weavers faced real research fatigue, regularly being approached for interviews and stories. This fostered negative perceptions of visitors and an expectation they would be an inconvenience to their work. Many more shared frustration of outsiders 'spinning' their stories (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 63), cultivating scepticism and mistrust. It is within this context and the complexity of Harris Tweed's labour relations which presented barriers to

accessing and telling multiple weaving stories. To this end, this study necessitated a demanding methodology.

Perhaps the most challenging aspects of the research was its duration and immersion, and the uncertainty of the research process. Ethnographic research is chiefly governed by access to the phenomena of study. This relies upon a duration of time needed to secure access and construct trustful relationships with participants. Given the organisational complexity of the industry, a great deal of time was consumed being seen and getting known; a process necessary for participants to feel comfortable engaging with this research. The stresses of this uncertainty in an outcome driven time-sensitive research environment cannot be downplayed. It was particularly challenging. Despite an extensive operation of public visibility- attending events, being featured in the local newspaper, and being included within industry-focussed mail-outs- it was not until my *third month* (of the six-month ethnography) that research participants started to come forward. Whilst the study's reach and extent of coverage is an asset in hindsight, the uncertainty of participant engagement in the field, in real time, weighed heavily upon my fieldwork. Is this going to work? Is my strategy useful? Will I spend six months in the field, and return with nothing? To this end, my research practice, as it unfolded in the early stages, spoke directly to this challenging sense of muddle and lack of purposeful direction faced by most ethnographers in the field (Rock, 2007).

Thus, the research resembled little of the heroic image of the clear-sighted ethnographer; one with immediate insight, understanding, and purpose (Bryman, 1988), but rather demonstrated a more iterative and deductive practice. It meant remaining ever open to the possibilities of insights gained through everyday chance encounters and being open to every connection being plausible routes to research participants. In this regard, all my everyday experiences, and all of my conscious and unconscious social interactions played into the possible success or failure of this research. Unpicking and delimiting 'research activity' from my everyday life was an impossible task. This porous boundary added great personal intensity in the field, where all my experiences bled into 'research', and every encounter became laced with an impulsion to be ever positive, for the sake of its influence and effect on the ongoing research project.

This added to the already high stakes of the project, where the wrong comment or the wrong opinion posed real threat to field relations and risked ongoing access. As the research evolved, this high-stake environment only intensified, as participants began to share their stories and divulge problematic dynamics of the industry. I found myself positioned within a much more complex political economy, navigating the practical challenges of being overt in my intent and my research, whilst also remaining mindful of the uneven power dynamics and the vested interests amongst those who governed (and could close off) access to my participants and their disclosures. To this end, my primary priority was to always uphold the assurance of confidentiality of my participants and ensure their attributable insights would not be shared other than for the purposes of my research. This constructed an intense, personally challenging research context, where I felt always 'on', always monitored, and my actions and thoughts in the field always judged; something emotionally and personally exhausting.

It is for this reason I conducted the research in English, despite Scots Gaelic being the 'first language of the islands' (Visit OH, 2021). Options to offer Scottish Gaelic would have entailed an interpreter perhaps increasing my sample further but would have been a service which would open the research to an unknown, poorly assured actor who might be known to the participants or known to someone with influence over the participants. This risk was too great, and one poorly mitigatable, which would have shaped the research and the frankness of my participants' answers, as well as potentially threatening their anonymity and my ongoing access. The decision to not use a translator was made in trade-off, acknowledging that many weavers are bilingual and use English daily, but recognised also older weavers tended to prefer Gaelic in conversation and might self-exclude. The personal intensity of the perceived surveillance and fragile conditional access of the field site was only compounded by living on my own, away from friends and family, as well as living in a condition of 'intellectual solitude' (Rock, 2007, p. 33), where I could not divulge research discussions, not even to process some of the difficult stories shared, for fear of repercussion against myself, my research, my access, or the research participants.

Given these considerations, it was important to uphold impartiality, critical distance and ensure participant anonymity. As such, the sampling process avoided as much as possible, the mills and the Harris Tweed Authority, and instead undertook the more complex task of individually identifying and negotiating access to each of the

participating weavers and their loom sheds. This relied upon actively building trust, being present in the community, and pacifying suspicions of me and my interest in them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 68). This process was lengthy, consumed many months, and involved being seen, getting known, and fitting in (Flowerdew & Martin, 1997) as well as significant impression management.

4.6 Positionality in the Field

The Outer Hebrides provides a culturally interesting field site. Described as a 'strange state of abstraction from the world (Garrity, 2011), the islands are couched within a serene narrative; one slower, traditional and more parochial, and distinct from mainland Scotland. Part of its uniqueness can be attributed to the defining role rurality has on community life, defined over generations by its seasonal rhythms. Out of these rural livelihoods have grown distinct folklores, music and myths, now marketed as proud artefacts of the islands' Gaelic heritage.

The Western Isles are also famed for the prominence of religion, and how it has defined, shaped and governed life over many years. Testament to this, the Outer Hebrides has the lowest percentage of people in Scotland self-identifying as having no religion and the highest percentage of those as 'Other Christian' (Table 3)

Table 3: Demographics of Self-Identification

	Outer Hebrides	**National Average**
No Religion	**18.1%**	**36.7%**
Other Christian	**19.1%**	**5.5%**

Source: (National Records of Scotland , 2011)

Of particular note is the historical influence of evangelical and reformed Presbyterianism in Lewis and Harris, and their long tradition of ecclesiastical schism and sabbatarianism. This has earnt the islands the reputation of being 'the last bastion' of fundamentalist Calvinism and conservative Presbyterianism in the United Kingdom (Lonely Planet, 2017, Cramb, 2006), and whilst the contemporary influence of croft

and church wane, both have served to construct a strong sense of communal identity, out of which thick and complex community ties persist.

Outer Hebridean life is defined by its close-knit community and by the traditions and customs of rural work and croft life that have over generations, provided shared identity-forming experiences. Out of these, a strong sense of identity has forged; and one that as an English, gay, PhD researcher from an industrial East Midlands town, was one I thought to be outside of. Given this, I found it necessary to reflect upon my positionality, to account for how my own identity influenced the research process. Ethnographic work is always reliant upon the careful and successful management of subjectivity (Atkinson, 1997 p. 65). This project was no exception. I found myself strategically 'playing up' facets of my identity so to best negotiate access and suit the environment I was in, and 'play down' other more contentious and problematic identities. This practice echoes ethnographic scholarship that routinely mobilises the strategy of 'managing personal front' to get established in the field (Goffman, 1955).

This impression management speaks to the complexity of negotiating access within ethnographic research and highlights how ethnographers reject the pretence of objectivity and embroil themselves within their studies. In doing so, demand is placed on accounting for the intersubjective nature of the research to unpack sociability and intention within its design. It prises open the processes of making sense of a research setting, finding neutral ground, overcoming hostility, and establishing oneself within a research context as 'normal, regular and decent' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This relied on active identity work to maintain good field relations and draw quality data (Kneafsey, 2000, Bennett, 2000). Three salient aspects of my identity were 'played up'; being Christian, being a first-generation university attendee, and being from a working-class family. These will be considered in turn.

4.6.1 Christian

The desk research identified the religiosity of the islands to be one of its defining characteristics. Church congregations were identified as key spaces of island community. Being raised Catholic, and a practicing Anglican, I continued my own religious observance in the field, worshipping at St Peter's Episcopal Church. This was by island standards, a small congregation, made up largely by 'incomers' who had moved to the islands, and to a lesser degree native islanders. My time spent with this

congregation made this project so successful. The congregation was made up largely of congregants with first-hand experience moving to the islands. Many, who like me, had to establish themselves knowing few others, and because of this, many related to the difficulties of settling in as an 'outsider' and learning of island life. More than this however, they were a welcoming and accepting community, who wanted to help, befriend and support me and my research, and provided invaluable succour in times of need.

Alongside the spiritual support, this community also aided the research with personal connection, which shaped my island experience. The most significant of these, was my connection to the Davis family, and to Dr Neil Davis, a well-liked doctor. He introduced me to his son, Rev Thomas Davis, a Free Church minister, who had relocated from his family home in Vatisker, to his manse in Carloway. I rented Rev Thomas' vacated property for the duration of the field study. Renting from a minister in a religious community came with unintended benefits. I was welcomed to Free Church worship and made to feel comfortable as a visitor without obligation to share beliefs. Having made initial contact attending a different denomination, I was not greeted with evangelism, but a desire to show the islands alternative worship traditions. I did not need to commit to regular attendance, nor fear causing offence not doing so, but my connections established a privilege to access different worshiping communities. Although not my primary intention, it was through these that I was able to establish my own networks of friendship, kinship and communal membership (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), and a more intimate community knowledge. This also enhanced my sampling and gave me shared references and relatable claims of friends, faith and family, which gave rise to different stories and more illuminating interviews (Hoffman, 1980).

Whilst obviously not all weavers are religious, those that were saw faith communities as important validating intermediates and saw church as an institutional gatekeeper. They imbued research encounters with mutual understanding, trust and rapport. Where interviews were organised instead by personal recommendation of friends or community figures, these were similarly laced with trust, but forged instead by *their* validating judgement of my research. Testament to this, many 'sussed me out' with friends prior, in informal exchanges to learn of my work and intent. Both church and kin connections were important communal assurance mechanisms which dispelled

distrust of my work. In both cases, I leveraged my own connections to my advantage, which helped display legitimacy in the community. Ultimately, only through narrating my own story of life, faith and work, and entangling myself within the thick communal ties of the Outer Hebrides, was I able to enhance sampling and ease access. By 'playing up' my Christianity, I was able to inadvertently utilise important trust infrastructures to gain access to insider status in the field.

4.6.2 The 'Right' Kind of Visitor

The islands are a popular tourist destination. Part of its touristic offer is the Harris Tweed story, and a chance to see weavers at work. My reasons being in the field- to study the craft culture, lifestyle and working lives of weavers- is for many a draw to visit (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1988). As such, I shared the research site with weavers, islanders, visitors and tourists, in what well resembled the blurred lines between tourism and ethnography. This brought problems of being perceived a tourist and being associated with the negative connotations of this.

Many saw tourists as ignorant of island culture, and similarly perceived outsiders more generally. This was garnered from interactions with visiting tourists who would ask; Do you have electricity or the internet? Have you ever left the island? Do you have cash machines or drive cars? Whilst mostly laughable, these common questions served as regular reminders that islanders lived culturally and socially distant lives from their visitors, and that most visitors believed an exoticised fiction of island life far removed from their everyday realities.

Tourism is inevitably ephemeral. It lacks the need to cultivate meaningful relationships with visitors in which to educate, inform and share lived experiences, because they soon depart. Rather, they are often more superficial and transactional. As a result, I was keen to avoid being labelled a tourist, precisely because I sought insight through deep and rich personal ethnographic exchanges. In an effort to evade being labelled the 'wrong' kind of visitor, I took seriously the politics of time and the temporal contingency of research in constructing the research moment (Ward & Jones, 1999), and planned my arrival in the field to be mid-winter, so to coincide with the off-peak tourist season.

Moving in January 2018, I was able to frame my relocation for work; clearly differentiating myself from a holidaying visitor. With the weather its harshest and bleakest, my arrival stimulated early conversations, and impressed islanders by its demonstration of hardiness and commitment to the place. More importantly, it signalled a keenness to understand and live alongside the gritty 'realities' of their lives, and a willingness to go beyond the picture-perfect postcard of the tourist season. In doing so, I received a warm reception and warded off the more negative baggage of being perceived a tourist with nosey questions.

The industry is also regularly visited by journalists, who like me, visited weavers to learn of their stories. Yet these encounters were often negative, with participants speaking of past experiences where journalists spun and twisted their words and failed to keep in touch after interview. Many expressed frustration at lazy journalists, who scripted and imposed phrases to tell misleading tales, and who took creative license to their stories and phrases. Weavers thought of these visitors as the wrong kind of visitors, who rather than respecting them and voicing their lives and insights, exoticised and exaggerated them to portray them as remote, wild and quirky characters. Given this, my choice of ethnographic methodology lived out my commitment to tell their lived experiences authentically by rooting myself in their community for a prolonged period. To do this, I differentiated myself from the 'wrong' kind of visitor and established myself as someone interested in respecting their insights as valuable contributions to be shared.

4.6.3 Not a 'Typical' University Researcher

I also negotiated the label of the university researcher; a title for which ethnographers are negatively associated akin to being spies, tax inspectors and other undesirable characters armed with their notebooks and judgements (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 63). This presented two key challenges.

Firstly, I had to appreciate the cultural baggage of university, which for some incensed disconnection, alienation and mistrust. This was particularly acute amongst older weavers, with whom university was seen far removed and shrouded in an aura of exclusivity. For younger weavers, university was more attainable, but was viewed 'academic', and therefore different to their 'vocational' careers. Despite demographic

differences however, university was widely seen ‘for others’, not ‘for them’, as well as a key driver for younger islanders moving away, off-island, to the mainland.

Secondly, I had to pacify negative perceptions of university. For some, research was seen a questionable enterprise, for which discursive ideas of higher education were framed largely by popular perceptions of it; it puts learners in debt, it runs ‘Mickey Mouse’ degrees, it poorly equips students with practical skills or real-life purpose. These informally-made but highly critical comments, were sometimes entrenched by weavers’ marginalising experiences of academic learning and were wrapped up in classed based understandings of university life. These informed their value judgement of me, at first the embodiment of their imaginative geography of academia, and of an exclusive and classed institution which only values ‘academic’ knowledge, not their own.

Whilst some weavers had been to university, most had not, and were reliant upon popular and misleading perceptions of it. These converged on the idea researchers have ‘all the gear and no idea’; letters of distinction, but little understanding of the real world *they* lived in. This reinforced the trope of research being the pursuit solely of the ‘white, male, middle-aged and middle-classed’ researcher (Philo, 1992). In this Scottish context, this perception also embodied the negative associations of ‘Englishness’. I epitomised the imagined cultural distance between weavers and university, and my work was seen at best a source of curiosity for my interest, and worst, a bemusing middle-class endeavour (Cloke & Little, 1997a, p. 3). My PhD thus, came to define my reception, and carried with it a perception of being ‘uppity, elitist and looking to find fault’ (Flores, 2015), something that little resembled my academic journey and positionality.

My own background was very different. Brought up in a working-class family in an industrial town in the Midlands, like most people, I was comprehensively educated. I was the first in my family to attend university and did so on a widening participation scheme. I belong to a family of vocational workers: my father, a lorry driver; my mother, a receptionist, and; my brother, a shoe factory operative. As such, I was raised in a home which placed value on education as self-improvement, esteemed honest graft, and placed equal value on working with hands and with heads. I also came from a community who shared social distance to university life, and with whom academia

is viewed privileged, distanced, and an irrelevant luxury. Therefore, I was familiar with the perceptions of my research participants. It was in negotiating access that I found myself leveraging my background, in an effort to related and dispel the myths of my work. I signalled likeness, and constructed research conversations in the spirit of sharing life stories rather than extracting data, sharing my stories, and gaining access to theirs.

Yet in doing so, I occupied a strange position which revealed the contextual transience of researcher privilege; I was unfamiliar, being someone unknown and from a university environment, but also familiar, in my story and background. Whilst at university, my upbringing and widening participation status are hallmarks of socio-economic disadvantage, in the field it became a useful advantage, able to shrug off the 'controlling image' of a middle-classed academic (see Collins, 2000).

This had significant effect on how I negotiated insider/outsider status in the field. Within higher education, students of my background are a minority. I am an outsider. Yet in the field, within a community similar to that of my upbringing –*because* of my university experience, I was also an outsider, but of a different kind. My 'disadvantaged' upbringing in university settings, aided my relatability in the field, and provided similarity which eased rapport building in a way a middle-class upbringing could not. The very facets of my disadvantage at university, were field resources of hidden privilege (Flores, 2015) which I played up and leaned into. In doing so, it highlights the temporary and context-dependent nature of research privilege, and the ethnographic blurred lined between lived experiences and research (Fine, 1998).

4.6.4 Playing Down and Closeting Up

There were also characteristics I played down, and which became sources of liability and risk when establishing rapport, trust and access. As an openly gay man in a Presbyterian community, I perceived a possible risk of discrimination. Early desk research caused real anxiety. At the time of the fieldwork, local church doctrine indicated many were wary of LGBT issues; some local Church of Scotland congregations were splintering away from the Church of Scotland over a change in position to ordain gay ministers, whilst other denominations were well known for socially conservative theology. More generally, the Western Isles was closely

associated with anti-LGBT media stories; with local authority registrars refusing to support and conduct civil partnerships on their introduction (Cohen, 2005), and locals supporting B&B owners for refusing to accommodate holidaying same-sex couples (Hebrides News, 2011).

Given the prominence of these stories, I chose not to talk openly about my sexuality, filtering so to best negotiate impression management for the ethnography (Angrosino, 2007). Whilst I wanted to remain open to my participants, I consciously screened myself so to respect what I perceived to be the social conventions of the community of study (Angrosino, 2007, p.33, Bennett, 2000). Given the Protestantism of the island, I also filtered my Catholic upbringing, preferring instead the 'Christian' descriptor. In both instances however, I played down controversial facets of my identity, and actively impression managed, so to best negotiate field relations.

Self-censoring in this way was personally difficult, but more problematically rested upon guiding assumptions that are worth briefly reflecting upon; not least of my presumption that these particular elements of my identity would be of issue or interest. Indeed, my fieldwork provided cause for these assumptions to be challenged. It was around the time of research that a local art centre held a well-attended LGBT art and discussion series. The Outer Hebrides also held its first LGBT Pride event, and Stornoway saw open its first mosque and the growth of its Roman Catholic congregation. Whilst there were small protests by some religious groups, they were minority voices insignificant to the outpouring of community support, welcome and generosity.

For my research, it suggested that the stories of island life were too often laden with outdated and misleading generalisations which assumed a monolithic island culture. These moments in the field, however, served as reflective junctures which reminded me of the importance to challenge this, and capture the lived complexity within rural communities (Cloke & Little, 1997a). It reaffirmed how the Outer Hebrides, like every rural community, has always been much more diverse, divided and fragmented, than their writings have ever portrayed them (Cloke & Little, 1997b, Milbourne, 1997).

4.7 Sharing Stories

To document the stories of the industry, I adopted a triangulated methodology using semi-structured interviewing, observation, and post-research scrapbooking.

Semi-structured interviews are often used for documenting and exploring personal stories. Unlike structured interviews, which predetermine the questions and priorities prior to the encounter, semi-structured interviews (in their obvious flexible structure) retain an openness and flexibility in their scope (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). They are conversational, avoiding the feel of interrogation, but more importantly allow participants to reveal and explore their own stories, in response to questioning, yielding richer insights beyond simple 'yes or no' responses (Longhurst, 2003). Allowing participants room to tell their own stories, in their own words, was particularly important, which were gently probed through follow up questioning (Cook & Crang, 1995, p. 36). In doing so, the interviews unpacked and followed themes which avoided 'fracturing' interviewee recollection (Valentine, 1997), and were flexible enough to allow participants to author their stories on their terms, enhancing the richness of the research insights (Graham, 1984).

The interviews sought to explore weaving lives in their fullest. To ensure consistency, a question guide was drawn up, but practice emphasised ample time for individualised memories and stories (Dunn, 2000). All interviews covered broadly similar themes, including 'becoming' and 'being' a weaver, and explored the conditions and experiences of work, and their hopes for the future. These discussions included reflections on career journeys as self-employed workers, their training, qualifications and skills, as well as relations with mills and the HTA. Most interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours.

The interviews were conducted in weavers' homes and loom sheds. This was important, as they were held on their own territory, in spaces they felt most comfortable with (Longhurst, 2003, pp. 124-5). This importantly enhanced the research exchange, putting participants at ease and enabling more candid and relaxed conversation (Denzin, 1970). A 'cake and cuppa' strategy was adopted. In the spirit of reciprocity, I wished to provide participants with a small token of gratitude for participation. In providing biscuits or cake, the exchanges were scripted, so to almost always occur over hot refreshments. In materially scripting these interviews, they

enabled a more convivial interview practice which felt less interrogative. In sharing drink and cake, the interviews were conversational, with many sharing their enjoyment, akin to chatting with a friend. Through 'yarning' over a cuppa, the interview practice differentiated itself from the 'bad' encounters of journalists and fostered the ethos of research co-production.

The cuppa-and-cake strategy had practical benefits. Firstly, it demonstrated appreciation of time and involvement, instilling a sense of reciprocity for the research encounters. Secondly, in their preparation and serving, refreshments provided useful time for building rapport, breaking the ice, and gaining familiarity before the formalities of interview recording, and lastly, in drinking, eating and offering further drinks and food, small informal pauses punctuated the interview, keeping participants comfortable for longer, reducing the feeling the interview was dragging on, and resulted in longer interview exchanges. The rapport built through these, were then traded upon, with participants more eager to recommend and refer when having confidence in the process. This enhanced the sample size (Appendix 3).

At the heart of this methodology is therefore a desire to engage with storytelling; of the brand, of the weavers, and of the industry. Storytelling has long been a strategy associated with labour ethnography, not least in examining power relations and organisational process by articulating 'common sense' knowledges (Thrift , 1986). Semi-structured interviewing validates these. But by reflecting upon and navigating different and conflicting stories, story*telling* also stresses reflection upon the contested nature of knowledge and reminds us of pluralistic and conflicting interests and worldviews.

Seymour and Revill (2000) suggest how storytelling can also highlight the audience-dependent character of academic work, but in a way which avoids overly privileging the structural linearity of conventional narrative- say of the brand, or of one groups account. In this sense telling different stories beholds counter-hegemonic power (Massey, 1994). As a strategy, it relishes and affords room for polyvocality but suggests a reflexive self-consciousness in the act of telling, writing and worldmaking through stories. As such, storytelling speaks to the evocative power of fictions and of mobilising stories but does so without precluding possibility for others to exist. It instructs reminder of appraising authorial intent and impels researchers to return to the

‘story’ as literal fiction; something product of something subjectively co-produced, of the moment, and time dependent, but also something consciously ‘made’ (Gregory, 1989, p. 88).

4.8 Thinking through Storytelling

Citing de Certeau (1984), Seymour and Revill (2000) explain the spatiality inherent to storytelling, through which researchers categorise, describe and make sense of experiences and divide flowing experiences into coherent stories. In this, individual perspectives gathered during research provide islands of experiences, and research stories provide bridges which connect and determine their relation. For this research, a promoted story of Harris Tweed is loudly told, making bridges- referenced connections- to specific experiences so to construct its brand story. This project, therefore, wanted to collate experiences and stories through interviews, and then demonstrate in their diversity that undergirding the branded story exists multiple experiences of weaving work. In this sense, the bridging act of the story becomes the site of interrogation, so to demonstrate how it can preclude, omit, hide, and make invisible certain stories through the spatialities, connections and disconnections it cultivates and facilitates through its textual, visual, and videographic ‘bridges’. To help reflection upon this process, I sought to capture island experiences happening in-between the ‘islands of experiences’ in interviews. To do this, I scrapbooked field photographs and materials and comparatively reflected upon them alongside my interview data.

This approach echoes a long tradition of visual interrogation within the discipline of Geography, which is uniquely positioned reliant upon visualities and visual images to reflect upon and construct knowledge (Rose, 2002). Geography is a distinctly visual discipline (Smith, 2000) which often relies upon visual images to help describe, demonstrate and give impressions. Through them, geographers are positioned as mediators between experiences ‘in the field’ and the stories told of it. What is made visible through the stories we tell, behold truth-telling qualities (Rose, 2003, p. 216), bringing new experiences and worldviews to light and scrutiny. Work exploring the effect of photography particularly demonstrates this, in how images provide legitimacy to alternative narrations of places and support lived experiences which are

not hegemonic. They highlight how visual methodologies can challenge, dispute and re-narrate dominant narrations of people and places; a quality particularly appropriate for this research.

To reflect upon this, I gathered materials from the field, compiling them into an informal scrapbook, and reviewed them post-fieldwork (Figure 4.4). In the most part these collated materials were freely available, such as promotional materials, point of sale literatures, as well as magazines. I also regularly took photographs on my iPhone, as a way to informally record, ad hoc, my time on the islands. There was little systemic organisation to its compilation but was seen more an iterative tool of evidencing experiences upon which I would reflect as if snapshots of my six-month ethnography.

The methodological possibilities of scrapbooking have been largely neglected within the social sciences. However, as Walling-Wefelmeyer (2020) asserts, scrapbooks provide great potential as practical tools to process and make sense(s) of the everyday and ephemeral by highlighting through their scraps, the contingency and partiality of research. This project's use of scrapbooking departs from the convention using *found* scrapbooks - documents scrapbooked by research subjects similar to archived diaries used as sources for analysis- to instead deploy scrapbooking as method *for the researcher*, so to stimulate ideas, autoethnographically think through lived experiences and memory, and elicit themes in concerts with the grounding of experiences from interview data (Philips, 2016, Morawski & Irwin, 2011). In doing so, scrapbooking problematises the easy readings of people and experiences, offering scraps from everyday life as multi-faceted orientation points from the field. In this sense it undermines narrative continuity, linearity and integrity to position representation and stories as constructed, contingent and in progress (Tamas, 2014), as well as in this case re-authored by the lived experiences of the weavers, rather than the brand.

In unpacking fieldwork in this way, I tried to consciously avoid closing down narrations and visualities of the field and remained available to observe- and re-examine- the unexpected (Bosk, 1979, p. 14) whilst remaining open to opportunities and connections when they arose (Buchanan, Boddy , & McCalman, 1988) . This created space for competing visualities to concurrently exist and reminded me post-

fieldwork of the multiplicity and complexity I reconciled when re-telling my fieldwork experiences.

Doing fieldwork is rarely neat; it is intense, confronting and personal, and rarely linear or smooth (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). It is an iterative process, where researchers navigate the field and piece together information that unfurls before them. Visual and ethnographic methodologies are always messy (Pink, 2007, Rose, 2002), but they are also risky. Ethnographers traverse porous boundaries, between being seen insider and outsider, and between being the 'acceptable incompetent' and the 'cultural competent' (Atkinson, 2008, Lofland, 1971) and their blunders, accidents and mistakes change relations, outcomes and experiences. As such, fieldwork is a product of accident and uncertainty, more so than any neatly expressed plan may suggest (Atkinson, 2008). Yet research often presents itself, in written form, neatly linear, and written retrospectively in way that simplifies the complexity and context-dependent nature of the research process.

The scrapbook became a tool to more explicitly reflect upon this. At the heart of this project was a desire to ‘bridge’ the islands of experiences wrapped up in the cloth, in a way that appropriately reflected *their* authors; the views and stories of the people of the industry. The scrapbook became a tool which helped me reflect on the saliences and silences of these stories in the materials I managed to gather and became a site in which to store photographs of my own experience. Upon analysing the interview data and establishing their themes of salience, I then returned to the scrapbook and personal photography to find materials which validated these stories, and which reflected the experience of my time in the field. In this sense it materially documented and made manifest the bridge building I undertook between the ‘islands of experiences’ gained in interview. It became a tool to demonstrate and visually validate the sometimes-hidden stories of the industry, and it became a space to think through the absences and presences of promotions and how they (dis)connected from stories of industry practice.



Figure 4.4: An example of scrapbook pages. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

For the context of this study, this comparative work was important for it demonstrated in action the collation, navigation and arbitration of multiple stories of weaving and craft work. In doing so, it demonstrated the polyvocality of storytelling, and it spoke directly to unpicking of the multiple geographies of branding (see Chapter 3), the multiple discourses of craft (see Chapter 2), and the messiness of ethnographic research at work, whilst also destabilising the truth-telling tendencies of the dominant discourses of Harris Tweed.

To this end, the research is grounded in the voices of the industry interviewed -41 weavers, and 13 associated tweed professionals (see Appendix 3)- and supplemented by the ethnographic scrapbook. Each interview was transcribed using NVivo and analysed adopting a thematic coding approach; an iterative and ongoing modification of each theme so to refine for sharper focus (Strauss, 1987). This coding technique affords space for multiple re-reads of each transcript, iteratively collapsing sub-codes to establish three main overarching themes- labour, loom and brand- around which the multiple relevant sub-themes coalesced. The material and photographic scrapbook remained systemically unanalysed beyond hand-written annotations, but became a thinking strategy and repository I returned to in writing, to either determine the interviewed authors' voiced representation in the promotional materials gathered, or to find images which related to the voices in interviews which established and validated experiences of the untold stories being shared.

4.9 Writing 'Ethnographically': Rapport, Confidentiality and Vulnerabilities

After an immersive study, exiting the field was difficult. I found it hard to untangle myself from the thick personal ties I had forged, with the voices and stories of my participants weighing heavily upon me when writing. Was I telling their stories well? Was I doing them justice? And was I telling the right story which authentically told of their experiences and mine. I was particularly challenged by reconciling a need to share findings, including negative stories of work malpractice, against the duty of care and good faith entrusted in me by participants. Having worked hard to build trusting relations, I questioned if participants would have been as trusting or forthcoming had they known the story eventually crafted in the thesis be the one I would tell. This, and the intimacy of my field relations inbuilt uneasiness in my writing practice, in which the stories of the field confronted the theory and concepts of the discipline (Davis, 2008 [1974]).

Marcus (2008) writes specifically of the difficulty of this entanglement in a reflection on rapport in research. In this he stresses need to extend notions of rapport beyond 'being trusted' to incorporate the multiple ways trust extends into ethnographic writing (Marcus, 2008, p.249). Appreciating the shifting conditions, relations, and

reflexivity's of researcher and researched, Marcus (2008) helps broaden trust as practice within ethnographic research so to stretch it beyond the participant encounter as data source, and include the participant as a reflective reader and recipient of the work, who will eventually read and judge their stories' use. Given this, each participant was given opportunity to request their transcript, to change it post-script and to withdraw at any time, and the industry- the HTA- will receive a precis of the work, with the hope to share and appraise the research post-thesis submission.

However, ethnographic research can reveal uncomfortable truths, and can in their story-sharing, counter hegemonic and profitable accounts. Sharing stories is therefore not without risk. If ethnographic storytelling is valued for how it reveals and validates new life worlds and experiences, in their exposure and bringing to light, they also challenge. Thus, for labour ethnographies, however important their new stories are, they also contend and conflict with the dominant understanding of work which, in this instance, is one glorified, promoted and communally profited from.

The story told in this thesis reflects the social relations I witnessed and experienced and grapples with the successes and challenges of Harris Tweed. These stories confront with honesty, the realities of the industry, and reflect stories which are uncomfortable to air. However, the industry showed openness to explore these stories, in both not limiting the scope of the research, and accepting the possibility I might find them during fieldwork. In this vein, I chose to prioritise the uncovering of the salient issues of the weavers- of which systemic precarity, fluctuating pay, difficult self-employment conditions, and automation were all central. These realities have been brought to light, and hoped will help confront them so to change them.

In doing so, I am reminded of the privilege of the researcher, who writes stories without sharing the risk of their telling. Yet in this instance also, research presents weavers with opportunity. For many weavers, disclosing malpractice is a difficult task, and one which creates fear of lack of work, disciplining, or community ostracisation. My work avoided this personal risk and through both my authorial voice and documentation of their experiences, became an anonymous outlet for their issues. In this sense, my research became an opportunity to share stories and talk openly about challenge, whilst avoiding the risk of personal repercussion. In this sense, this research serves ethnographically to validate these lived experiences, give understanding and

voice to the underrepresented, and through the insight of workers, tackles head on the unjust socio-economic relations of their work (Atkinson, 2008, p. 227).

Yet despite being seen as an opportunity, my participants still behold vulnerabilities. They exist within a small, rural close-knit community. Because of this, despite my attempts to anonymise contributions, I cannot provide failproof guarantees of absolute anonymity. Whilst I have endeavoured to protect my participants undertaking the good practices of anonymity, no precautions are fool proof (Burgess, 1984, p. 206) and even when I practice confidentiality, I acknowledge the risk of failing what Tolich (2004) describes as 'internal confidentiality'; where the participants of the research remain identifiable to other participants. This is an inescapable reality of ethnographic work in small and intimate research contexts, and highlights the impossible, multi-layered vulnerabilities of my participants.

In this sense, despite my intentions to avoid risk, ethnographic fieldwork and writing are always risky. Whilst every effort has been made to minimise the risk to participants, sharing new stories brings with them risk of new responses beyond my control. Being such a high profile and geographically specific study, I am acutely aware of the potential reputational damage that sharing new stories could have. As recent exposes attest, making public manufacturing malpractices seem to galvanise public interest, prominently occupying news agendas and having large economic impacts (Bland & Campbell, 2020, Heighton-Ginns & Prescott, 2019). This is particularly acute for manufacturers in the UK, where perhaps malpractice and exploitation are all the more shocking in a context with assumed legal protection and minimum wages (Labour Behind the Label, 2020). This potential for having unknown and untoward ramifications post-script, is incredibly uncomfortable, not least in the knowledge that the voices of the study could be untowardly impacted by their own stories. However, in not sharing them, this research would be complicit in avoiding the difficult realities of the industry and would fail the trust placed in it to share these stories so to change them. It is for these reasons that this research will be provided as feedback to the industry, to help them identify and make active steps to improve. Regardless of this, this thesis sits in uneasy tension; all at once being an opportunity for industry voices to air their stories of malpractice with the hope they improve their livelihoods, but do so aware that both my representation of them, and the uncontrollable impact of them, brings with it great personal risk.

It is within this context that here is my story, of theirs.

Chapter 5
A History of Harris Tweed

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a social, cultural and industrial history of Harris Tweed. The chapter will explore how the contemporary practices of production are situated within their historical context. Particular attention is afforded to the way historical moments, people and places, inform, connect to and disconnect from the contemporary practices of the industry. It is out of this history that the brand story emerges. This chapter works to reveal the knottier, evolutionary and historically dynamic political economy which undergirds Harris Tweed, and argues need for a more complex conceptual frame to grapple with and understand the complexity of the brand's strategic historical and geographical evocation.

5.1 Croft Craft

The Outer Hebrides are a chain of islands situated off of the west coast of Scotland (Figure 5.1). Harris and Lewis, the largest of the islands, are home to the island's largest population, and contribute for the majority of Outer Hebridean economic wealth and social life[8]. The island's economy is particularly noteworthy for its dependence on the land, which over generations has defined island livelihoods.

The Outer Hebridean landscape is dramatic, comprised of Achean Gneiss, moorlands, peatlands, mountainous ravines and freshwater lochs (Thompson, 1969, p. 14). Despite its beauty, the landscape is unforgiving. Positioned at the bearing point of the Atlantic fetch, its fierce westerly rains and winds make the landscape demanding. These unpredictable conditions instil a harshness that defines many island rural livelihoods.

[8] The total population of the Outer Hebrides (26,370), approximately 20,000 live within Harris and Lewis. Smaller populations exist within South Uist and North Uist (1,800, and 1,300 respectively) Benbecula and Barra. (Scotland Info , 2017)



Figure 5.1: A map of the Outer Hebrides. Source: (Walk Highlands, 2017)

For many decades the people of the Outer Hebrides survived working the land through a traditional form of land tenure called crofting (Hunter, 1976). Crofting continues to have an important and unique role in contemporary island life (VisitOuterHebrides, 2018). Small, and on average five acres in size, crofts have shaped, and continue to shape, the environment, landscape and rural identity of Scottish islands (Ennew, 1982). Upon them, many crofters strive for subsistence[9][10]. Crofters typify a uniquely Scottish agrarian livelihood interconnected to land stewardship and the environment (Lennon, 2018). Despite its imagined romance, crofting is difficult. Harsh environments and risky returns mean few crofts are self-sufficient, with weather unpredictability and seasonality resulting in precarious economic rewards (Ennew, 1982). As a result, crofters often rely on off-croft secondary employment (Gray, 1955).

Historically crofters lived diverse rural livelihoods; fishing, farming and keeping livestock such as sheep (Minutes, 1895). Crofters would use this wool, spinning and weaving it to make blankets and outerwear (McDougall, 2011). Out of this, woven

[9] According to the Scottish Crofting Association, a crofter is defined a person who occupies and works a small landholding known as a croft. Whilst most are rent-paying tenants of the land, in some cases crofters are owner-occupiers, having purchased their croft land. Should the crofter fail to reside on or near the croft, they are required to take a tenant to actively work the land. (Scottish Crofting Federation, 2018)

[10] Subsistence is a key part of the legislation- Crofters (Scotland) Act (1886),

tweed of a basic twill[11] became a popular and practical craft product made for personal use (Figure 5.2).

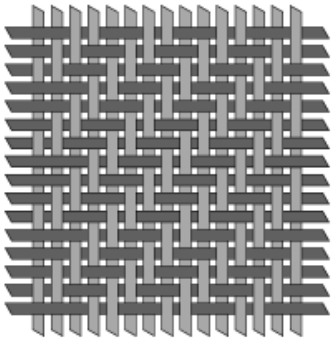


Figure 5.2: An image of a twill weave structure[12]. Source: (BBC, 2014)

Typical of many Scottish crafts, tweed weaving emerged out of practices of rural croft subsistence. Because of this, it shares a 'direct connection with [the] working [of] the land, fishing the sea…[as well as] with community, subsistence and…place. (Butler, 2000, p.1, Caird, 1951). Early tweed weaving was domestic in character and mainly woven within croft houses by women. Simple, and comprised largely of undyed black and white yarn, these early tweeds were used for outerwear and worn by crofters when working the land outside. Given this, early tweeds were popularly referred to as 'shepherds checks'; in homage to their use (Turner, 1964).

Skilled weavers would also sell and trade woven cloth with their fellow islanders, and through which generated useful secondary croft incomes. This was particularly useful during the winter months, when fishing and farming became more difficult (MacKay, 1976). These early weaving practices and trade represent the earliest iteration of 'Harris' tweed. As these weaves became more widespread, new designs were born, mirroring that of tartan with design-based symbolism (MacDonald, 2000). With this, colours, structures and wools became signifiers of class and economic difference[13] (Thompson, 1969, p. 21) which in their use served to materialise island community

[11] Using a definition of 'tweed' stipulated by Anderson (2017, p. 7) as 'woollen cloths from Scotland in the twill weave'

[12] This weave is characterised by the weft (yarn going across the width of the fabric) and the warp (yarn going down the length of the loom) being offset, so to give a diagonal patterned fabric. It's noted for its strength and durability.

[13] Singular coloured cloths would be considered servant wear, two-coloured cloth would be for rent-paying farmers, three for officers, five for clan chiefs, six for *Ollamhs* (Gaelic scholars and poets), and seven for royalty. In ancient Gaelic society for example, laws stipulated the colouring of woven cloth, restricting given weave hues and structures to specific social strata. In the nineteenth century for example, drab woven checks beheld classed meaning, and were indicative of the areas peasantry, churls and beggars. In contrast, green and scarlet hues were indicative of more noble, 'gentle blood' (see Thompson, 1969, p21-22).

hierarchies and statuses, and spoke to Hebridean mythologies, histories and identities (Ennew, 1980).

5.1.1 Early Making

Early making speaks to the landscape of the Outer Hebrides, to the extent the cloth is born of the land (Harris Tweed Authority , 2018). Traditionally woven of Cheviot or Blackface wool reared on the islands, the sheep would be hand-sheared, alongside other croft activities in June. These fleece would then be washed in the croft house as part of the domestic chores of the women, who prepared the wool for mordanting[14] by washing the fleece in warm soapy rainwater to remove its natural greases (Mayhew, 2015). Once clean, the fleece was then dried outside, often across heathers, before using traditional mordants such as *faul* and *maistir* which prepared the fleece for dying.

Table 4: Colour, with local flora used to achieve it, used in early 'recipes'

Colour	Flora Name- *Gaelic (English)*
Blue	*Glas-lus or Guirmean* (Woad), *Bilberry, Elder, and Broom with Alum*
Yellow	*Lus-bhuidhe mor* (Dyer's rocket), *Bealaidh* (Broom), *Liath-lus* (Mugwort), *Croch* (Saffron Crocus)
Red	*Crotal* (Stone Parmelia), *Leannartach* (Tormentil), *Ruamh* (Lady's Bedstraw), *Garbhag-an-t-sleibhe* (Fir Club Moss), as well as Rue-root and Madder Root.
Black	*Seileasdar* (Yellow Flag Iris), *Luscuchulainn* (Meadowsweet), *Fearna* (Alder-tree bark), *Copag* (Dock) and *Darach* (Acorns)
Dark Green	*Fraoch* (Ling Heather), *Am Bearnan-bride* (Teasel), Iris Leaf, Broom, and Furze Bark.
Magenta	*Bearnan-bride* (Dandelion)

Source: Adapted from (Thompson, 1969)

The fleece was then hand-dyed using natural dyestuffs of the local flora and fauna (Table 4). This gave it its signature earthy colouration of the croft environment. This dyeing process is an uncertain artistic practice. It is limited by the seasonal availability

[14] Mordanting is the preparation of wool prior to dying. This can be done by adding a dye fixative to wool, but in early practices refers to a preparatory stage of washing and conditioning the wool to remove the natural greases which prevent dye fixing. This helps the dye to fix.

of the dyes and the expertise of the dyer, in collating, harvesting, and storing the dyestuffs. This knowledge was tactility attained and honed over generations with few formal recipes. Instead, it relied upon rough approximations and experienced judgements; the 'feeling for [the] handfuls…[and] the pinches' of dyestuffs used for each colour (Vogler, 2006, p. 21). The fleeces were then rested and dried in the open air, often on the fences and domestic washing lines of the croft.

The wool was then carded, which disentangled and intermixed the wool ready for spinning. This was done manually with cards; two flat boards with wire teeth (Figure 5.3). They were placed together and rubbed to and fro, which softened and blended the fleece to equal density. This was a time-consuming manual process, often completed by the women within a domestic sphere, but on occasion also took place at community events, such as at *ceilidhs*, where Gaelic songs and tales were also performed (Thompson, 1969, Vogler, 2006).



Figure 5.3: Image of hand cards with wool in the teeth. Source: (Rutter, 2015)

Wool was then manually spun, using a spindle and whorl, up until the eighteenth century when the muckle spinning wheel was introduced to island communities (Kean-Kim, 2015, p. 55, Thompson, 1969, p. 42). This sped up the spinning process, which saved time and increased potential yarn production. The yarns were then hand-warped around wall stakes hung within croft homes. This stretched the yarn to the correct length for weaving. Lastly, the yarns were then arranged ready for weaving, as per the intended structure and pattern of the weave; the most common of which was a basic two-thread tweed (Thompson, 1969, p.44).

Weaving technologies were traditionally basic, with the earliest cloth woven on a '*Bearst Bheag'*. This was a small and horizontally framed wooden loom, locally made, and had a hand-thrown shuttle carved of sheep shin. This was operated largely by women who wove domestically and had heald shafts activated by four treadles connected to chords. By the 1890s, the *Bearst Bheag* was gradually retired, in preference to the *Beart Mhor*, a larger cord-mechanically operated loom. The cord operation enabled the shuttle to fly over larger weaves. It had a sleyboard and a box at either end, and the shuttle was thrown by pickers impelled by the weaver-controlled cords. The 'flying' shuttle, coordinated by its hand-pulled system, had wheels affixed to its underside. This aided its propulsion across larger wefts. By 1911, there were over 250 of these larger looms in operation (Blackhouse, 2020). These larger looms enhanced productivity, with an experienced weaver working continuously on average weaving a web [15]of tweed a week (Pirnie, 1981, Hunter, 2001). It was during this period of increased productivity, that female weavers were gradually replaced by men. Whilst some have attributed this to the more physically demanding work of operating larger looms (Kean-Kim, 2015), others have attributed this to the gradual reimagination of weaving work; from a domesticated chore, to a productive income-generating livelihood strategy. Despite this repositioning, looms remained in the home.



Figure 5.4: Waulking Women. Source: (House of Scotland, 2018)

[15] Informal references to a standard length of tweed used in Pirnie (1981)

Lastly, after weaving, cloth was waulked[16], so to soften and tighten the weave structure, so to finish the cloth. Early traditions of this had social, spiritual and practical dynamics. Crofting women would sit around a *cleith* (wattle)[17] and place their cloth for waulking. It was washed in warm soapy water, and then moved, struck, and folded, in tension by their hands and feet (Figure 5.4). A *bean-luathaidh* (waulking-woman) would lead this, a *bean-dhuan* (woman of songs and lilts) would provide rhythm through Gaelic singing, and a *bean-dhlighe* (woman of ceremony) would lead prayers of consecration for both the cloth and its intended wearer (BBC, 2016).

5.2 From Croft to Clothier: Early Market Making

From its beginnings as a subsistence croft cloth, Harris Tweed evolved into a commodity. Central to its commodification was the role of early market makers: the high society of the islands. Hunter (1976, p. 25) attributes the birth of the industry to 1844, when upon noticing the woven cloth of local crofters, the 6th Earl of Dunmore[18] placed an order of tweed in Murray tartan, to be worn by his Harris retainers; the gillies and groundskeepers of his estate. As visiting gentry saw this uniform, they too commissioned cloth for their staff (Hunter, 1976, p.28). This story of the Dunmore estate has become Harris Tweed folklore.

Despite this, recent analysis has challenged this story, and has questioned the glorification of the Earl of Dunmore. Anderson (2017) using historical documents, positions this an unlikely story, especially given the limited opportunity he had between his acquisition of the estate and his death. Anderson (2017) advances a different thesis[19], in which between 1839 and 1851, Lady Dunmore[20], with her

[16] Waulking is a hand-technique of finishing tweed by soaking it, and then beating it. This is needed as tweed comes off the loom stiff and rough, and the weave is loose. Waulking thickens the wool, and softens it. Today, this process of finishing is automated.
[17] A grooved work surface
[18] Alexander Murray (1804-1845), who inherited the Isle of Harris and Earldom from his father in 1836.
[19] Historical narratives provide conflicting versions of the Dunmore's involvement with the industry, varying in both the identification of key actors and the extent to which their actions affected the birth of the industry. The establishment of Lady Dunmore's Embroidery School in 1849 demonstrate her active involvement with weaving, and afford greater validity to claims she took a more instrumental role.
[20] Catherine Murray (1814-1886). Following the death of the 6th Earl of Dunmore (1845), she inherited 150,000 acres of the Dunmore estate in Harris.

connections to cosmopolitan merchants in London, Edinburgh and Stirlingshire, worked and generated consumer demand, and developed an early market for the sale of Harris Tweed.

Regardless of account, the early transformation of the cloth from subsistence craft into an industry, can be attributed to the influence of high society members[21]; upper-middle class wealthy landowning families who exploited their commercial connections to generate a market. Responding to the hardships and poverty of the island folk, in philanthropic endeavour they leveraged their awareness of luxury retail to cultivate a demand for their tenants craft product. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, such philanthropy was popular amongst gentry and aristocracy, who formed industrial associations nationwide to support industrial formation. The foundation of the Scottish Home Industries Association (1889)[22], the Highland Home Industry and Arts Association (1890), and the Crofters Agency (1896) [23], are all examples of this, and emerge from the moralistic discourses of industrialism at the time; one of fair pricing for fair work, self-respect, working class thrift, and good land-stewardship.

With wider awareness of Harris Tweed, came growing demand. To meet this, hand methods alone were difficult. Whilst the cloth's craft hand-making was central to its appeal, it became inefficient and lacked the dependability of production necessary to meet orders and demand, preventing effective industrial growth. There needed reconciliation between cottage production and efficiency. The growth in demand particularly pressured the natural yielding limitations of crofts, which were outstripped by the volume necessary from demand. This presented fundamental challenges to production.

The first challenge was of production capacity; where consumer demand outstripped the productive resources and capacities of the croft. In the industrial transformation of Harris Tweed weaving, weaving became employment, instilling into weaving new

[21] Lady Gordon Cathcart (South Uist, Benbecula and Barra) established trade links between her land tenants and Messrs Parfitt of Jermyn Street, London (Thompson, 1969, p.60). Mrs Thomas, wife of Captain R. N Thomas, sold tweed from her home in Edinburgh and established a small store in Berners Street, London (1895)

[22] Scottish Home Industries Association (1889) was established under the patronage of HRH Princess Louise, and presided over by the Countess of Roseberry (Thompson, 1969).

[23] Scottish Home Industries Association (1889) was established under the patronage of HRH Princess Louise, and presided over by the Countess of Roseberry (Thompson, 1969).

esteem as a profitable and employed source of skilled work. As demand grew, so did the potential income generation made through weaving, with greater pay yielded with greater volume of woven cloth. This incentivised greater production, at a rate unachievable with just the productive capacity of the croft alone, and it challenged the effectiveness of the small-scaled and hand-based preparatory and sourcing practices to meet this growing demand.

Sheep, for example, were typically sheared in June, as per the rhythms of the croft. This made wool fleece seasonally limited and undependably accessible throughout the year. Looking to the mainland, and to the industrialising regional economies of the Borders, the industry sought to overcome this problem. Growing hosiery and knitwear industries were driving up demand of high-quality wool, which by 1800 had quadrupled and had doubled sheep numbers. This, coupled with improvements to sheep husbandry, meant greater volumes of fleece were available. This created an accessible and year-round dependable fleece market (Gulvin , 1984, pp. 26-7).

The production processes of carding and spinning were also reviewed to increase productive efficiency. This was greatly influenced by the mechanisation and the growth in factory working on the mainland. The prevailing logics of automation and scaled production were fundamentally held in tension to the industry's 'craft' production. This inspired a debate of industrial practice which appraised the value of the cultural imagination and appeal of Harris Tweed production. Hebridean weavers recognised the uniqueness of their cloth, differentiated through its craft work and hand production. It capitalised upon their proud Celtic identity, defined by Thompson (1969, p. 66) as the cloth's 'Celtic twilight'. Harris Tweed materialised to the customer the identity of the islands; an imagination of the traditional blackhouses, peat fires, shores and moors, and its cottage craft hand-production. Craft practice was at the time appreciated as central to production, and therefore governed the style and implementation of industrial mechanisation: not to eradicate all the inefficiencies of the hand, but facilitate the bottlenecks of production to best serve the craft production of weaving. To do this, the most time consuming and tiring production elements were mechanised; the carding and spinning.

In 1900, the first carding mill was erected by Sir Samuel Scott[24], near Tarbert, Harris. Water powered, the mill intended to help crofter-weavers freely participate in the market for their tweed, providing them with accessible and dependable carding services (Hebridean Connections, 2017). This particularly spoke to the gendered division of croft and craft labour, which saw the mill replace the arduous hand-carding of the women of the croft (MacLeod, 1993). The mill was a philanthropic effort, which reinvested profits to local public purposes (Thompson, 1969, p.81). In 1903, a second mill opened on the Patent Slip, and in 1904, a third erected in Deiraclete (*Diricleit*). Each raised the volume of carded wool, increasing capacity for cloth production, but in their positioning begun to geographically entrench 'unfair' competition amongst weavers; with the geography of each having different accessibilities for each weaver, which contributed to unequitable sunk costs associated to each weavers' travel to access them.

By 1918, the Lewis Estate was acquired by Lord Leverhulme[25], who also later in 1919 acquired from Sir Samuel Scott, North Harris, and from the Earl of Dunmore, South Harris. In doing so, Leverhulme became the biggest private landowner in Britain, and through ownership united these separate estates. His shared ownership instilled a shared vision of prosperity for the island, which whilst still proudly distinct, regionalised, and different in their making ecologies, gave them the perception of an integrated and coordinated entity. By 1923, Leverhulme opened a mill in South Harris, at a time when the fishing industry was collapsing. In search of income, many crofter-fishermen became crofter-weavers. This was particularly acute amongst Lewisian crofters, for whom fishing was the mainstay of their incomes. This trend was less pronounced in Harris, given crofting was more diversified. This labour composition was important, and fundamentally shaped the attitude towards the adoption of technology by each.

For Harris weavers, loom technology was slowly adopted and remained basic and more traditional for longer. This was attributed to the diversified nature of crofting which was less dependent on weaving for generating croft income. In contrast, loom

[24] 6th Baronet, he came of age in 1894, inheriting his family's wealth, including the North Harris estate. He was also a Member of Parliament for Marylebone West for the Conservative Party
[25] William Lever (1851-1925) 1st Viscount Leverhulme; industrialist, philanthropist and colonialist.

technology was more readily adopted in Lewis because of their dependency on weaving for an income stream. Given this, two distinct making ecologies emerged, where in Harris, the industry remained basic and traditional, but in Lewis weaving became more industrially formalised more quickly, working on Hattersley treadle looms and using mill wool imports for weaving. With this, wool merchants became more important for Lewisian weavers and formalised practiced interlinkages with mainland wool suppliers. In sum, these distinct work compositions and technological attitudes to loom adoption and wool importing, contributed the regional unevenness of the early industry.

Under the stewardship of Leverhulme, mill carded wool and spun yarn substantially increased, both from on-island and mainland milling. Mainland finishing was also encouraged, which collectively transformed weaving practice. By 1920, mainland mill-spun yarn to island mill-spun yarn was around fifty percent (Thompson, 1969, p.95). The combined effect of the fishing industry collapsing and the growth in technological innovation and wool imports resulted in many Lewisian weavers abandoning hand-made production. Mechanisation lowered tweed production costs, and increased productivity, and saw Lewisian weavers outpace those of the second making ecology in Harris by achieving greater competitiveness and industrial growth.

The early industry grew unevenly in competitiveness and maturity, and it lacked standardisation. There existed diverse production methods and diverse component parts which produced cloth sold under the same name; ‘Harris’ tweed. ‘Harris’ tweed appeared in the marketplace, both as a descriptor of origin, and an indicator of a specific weaving practice. The unevenness of industrial mechanisation, and the growing diversity of its production methods and component parts, contributed to a crisis of definition. Some weavers wove ‘true’ to island traditions; hand spinning, hand-dying, hand-weaving, and finishing their weaves in the Outer Hebrides. Others used local mills to card their crofted wool, who then hand-dyed, wove and hand finished their cloth. Others used synthetic dyes, and others still who imported wool from the mainland which was mill-spun, mill-dyed, and mill-carded, but which they wove at their homes. This lacked consistency, and saw growing diversity in the naming of the cloth; Lewis Tweed, Lewis Homespun, Lewis and Harris Tweed, Real Harris and Lewis Homespun, Ceemo Tweed, Genuine Harris Handwoven, Harris Style

Tweeds, Real Harris Tweeds, and Harris Type Tweeds, to name but a few. These fell into seven broad categories (as quoted in Thompson, 1969, p.99);

1. Tweed hand-spun, hand-woven and hand-finished in the Outer Hebrides
2. The tweed which became known as fifty-fifty tweed, with only the weft as being home spun.
3. Island commissioned mill-spun tweed which was hand-finished in the Islands
4. Mainland-commissioned mill-spun tweed which was hand finished in the Islands
5. Tweed hand-woven from both island and mainland yarns and hand-finished in the islands
6. Tweed hand-woven from both island and mainland yarns and finished in a mill on the mainland
7. Tweed power-loomed in the Borders, in Yorkshire and elsewhere, sold under the name of Harris or Imitation Harris Tweed.

There was diversity in the cloth sold as 'Harris' tweed. Whilst most cloth was made according to category 1, 2, or 3, there were also poor imitations, using production practices which risked undermining the quality reputation of the place of production and the method, which all of the industry exploited. It risked the socialised asset of the name 'Harris' tweed. As such, the industry sought to establish a convention to define and specify the constitution of the cloth, as well as to develop a method of authenticating and regulating its production to this agreed standard.

5.3 Defining, Refining and Standardising Harris Tweed

Developing a model to define, authenticate, standardise and regulate industry is always difficult, especially for industries as regionally variable as Harris Tweed. It relied upon the active negotiation between and compromise of multiple stakeholders, which for Harris Tweed, exposed rifts and factions between regions, weavers, and weaving styles.

On 9th December 1909, the Harris Tweed Association was incorporated; a committee comprised of two representatives from the Crofters Agency, two of the Scottish Home Industries Association, as well as two merchants of exclusively hand-spun tweed.

These members self-identified as the 'Association for the Protection of the Harris Tweed Industry' (Thompson, 1969, p. 104), and served to uphold hand-spun principles and traditional weaving. It was committed to the interests of traditional manufacturers, merchants and dealers, and promoted hand-crafted Harris Tweed through publishing, advertising and industrial monitoring. More significantly, it committed to legally challenging false uses of trademarks and cloth descriptions.

The Harris Tweed Association registered a Harris Tweed trademark in 1910, incorporating an orb, surmounted by a Maltese Cross (HM Government, 1993). This trademarked symbology originated from the arms of the Dunmore earldom, materialising the historical links of the industry, and was issued upon satisfaction of tweed being:

> hand spun, hand woven, dyed and finished by hand, in the Islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist, Barra and their several purtenances, all known as the Outer Hebrides (1909).

Its early issue was accompanied with a geographical declaration of its making, stipulating the specific production locale of the cloth ('Made in Harris', 'Made in Lewis', 'Made in Barra' or 'Made in Uist') in doing acknowledging and making possible the differentiation of different making heritages and regional variations in quality.

Having sole ownership of the Orb, the Harris Tweed Association had sole right over its issue, and began stamping in 1911[26]. Under the guise of neutrality, the governance and issue of this authenticating stamp practiced a political narration of the cloth. In stamping only tweeds made of hand-spun yarn, it put into its validation and governance practices a need to adhere to a defined and specific craft production. Whilst claiming to speak for the whole industry, the Harris Tweed Association privileged a practiced definition of the cloth. Contemporary historians such as Hunter (2001) describe the Harris Tweed Association in terms of craft conservativism and conservationism. It did not work to represent the diversity of the industry, but through its 1909 definition enforced a 'vain attempt to turn the clock back' on weaving

[26] The issuing of the trademark is known as 'stamping' as the Orb is impressed or 'stamped' onto the cloth.

innovation and practice (Hunter, 2001 p.72). This was inherently political. In enforcing the 1909 definition, the Association ignored the dependency on some in the industry upon mill-spun yarn, which left Lewisian weavers particularly impacted.

The authentication authority of the Harris Tweed Association, and the use of its definition, threatened some livelihoods and incited collective organisation and resistance. The Harris Tweed Association recognised this threat of legal challenge and conceded, changing their stamping practices to permit mill-spun tweed. In compromising, they also demanded proper assurance from mills that independent producers would be given fair yardage when stamped[27] . In addition to this, wording was also added which stipulated that hand-weaving must be undertaken 'at their own homes'. This sought to prevent factories, so protecting its cottage reputation. By 1933, the Harris Tweed Association agreed that mill-spun yarn was admissible, provided it was spun in the Outer Hebrides, and by 1934 an amended definition was released (Thompson, 1969, p.114, *emphasis added*):

> Harris Tweed means a Tweed made from pure virgin wool, produced in Scotland, spun, dyed and finished in the Outer Hebrides and *handwoven by the Islanders at their homes* in the Islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist, Barra and their several purtenances and all known as the Outer Hebrides

The regulations governing the wording of the label stated (Martin, 1934[28], *emphasis added*):

> Wherever the Harris Tweed Trade Mark is used, there shall be added in legible characters to the Harris Tweed Trade Mark, the words 'Made in Harris', or 'Made in Lewis', or 'Made in Uist' or 'Made in Barra' as the case may be, *and for the purpose of distinction there shall*

[27] Mills finish the tweeds. They were then stamped by the Harris Tweed Association inspectors. For independent weavers, they had to return the tweeds to the mills to be finished and stamped. Mills would schedule this process (finishing and stamping) to be available for independent weavers, fit around the stamping and finishing of their own produced tweed. Fair 'yardage' refers to the fair apportion of finishing and stamping time given to independent weavers by the mill to use their facilities for this process. Fair yardage is not quantified or prescribed, and so considered a value judgement..

[28] W.H. Martin to Registrar, Patent Office, Trade Marks Branch, 4.6. 1934. HRA/D190/1 (ff).

also be added the word 'handspun' in the case of tweeds made entirely from handspun yarn.

When this definition came into effect, Orb-stamped tweed increased from 95,141 yards in 1934, to 1,485,246 yards in 1935 (HTA, 1935). This growth highlights the important function legal stipulations play in both forming and shaping industrial growth, and how it governed craft labour through it. This legislative negotiation of the parameters of craft practice are best demonstrated through two key judgements; The Embargo Case, and the Orb Judgement.

5.3.1 The Embargo Case (1938-1942)

The first legal test of the 1934 Harris Tweed definition came with 'The Embargo Case', heard in the courts between 1938 to 1942 (Hunter, 2001). In this, the permissibility of mill-spun yarn imported from the mainland was mooted. In 1938, small independent producers enjoyed a minority market share and represented just five percent of all stamped cloth per annum (Thompson, 1969). In most of these instances, small independent producers bought and wove from a mixture of island-spun and mainland-spun yarn. Regardless of yarn origin, many of these producers sold their cloth as 'Harris' tweed. This flouted the 1934 definition, and undercut tweed made of island-spun yarn. This had a deflationary effect on wages and drove down cloth production costs and retail prices. This decline in wages galvanised the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), whose membership monopolised the islands tweed labour market. In 1938, using its cross-industry membership- including millers, spinners, warpers, dyers, dock workers, and to a lesser extent weavers- the union announced the commencement of an embargo, whereby unionised dockworkers refused to handle packages of imported mainland yarn.

A case was bought against the most prolific of the mainland yarn importers, Crofter Hand Woven Harris Tweed Co Ltd, which endeavoured to settle the legal acceptability of using 'Harris Tweed' in the company name. The case was heard in both the Scottish Court of Session and the House of Lords[29]. The central point was not the legality of

[29] *Crofter Hand Woven Harris Tweed Co. Ltd. V. John Veitch and Another, [1942] Session Cases (House of Lords.) No.1, at 4. Also Crofter Hand Woven Harris Tweed Co. Ltd. V. John Veitch and Another, 1942, Appeal Court, 435, at 437.*

using mainland yarn, but rather the company capitalising upon its geographical claim. Whilst the incorporation of the Harris Tweed Association left no ambiguity over the proprietorial rights of the Orb, it did not hold exclusivity to the use of the words 'Harris tweed'. (Hunter, 2001, p. 139). Whilst the Association had legal claim to the definition upon which the authenticating mark depended, it did not own the rights over the associational or geographical claims that products were allowed to make. This clarity over the definition was made clear in the judgement of Lord Simon, which stipulated (1942);

> Cloth made out of mainland yarn could not carry the 'Stamp' [issued by the Harris Tweed Association], though it could be sold as 'Harris Tweed', having been woven on the island

His judgement marked an important milestone for the geographical dimension of its product description. Cloth made from mainland yarn could not carry the stamp issued by the Harris Tweed Association, as it would contravene the trademarked definition, but whilst the Harris Tweed Association had rights to authenticate and promote its trademarked Orb, it had no exclusive rights over the use of 'Harris' within tweed product descriptions.

From the Lord Simon judgement (1942), the industry grew, and Harris Tweed was only stamped on the basis of his clarification.

5.3.2 The 'Orb-Mark' Judgement

It was not until 1960 that the legality of place claims within Harris Tweed were revisited (Blakeney, 2001, Abel, 1961). This litigation was important for three reasons. Firstly, it established 'collective goodwill'; a concept whereby groups of producers have collective goodwill invested in the description of a product they all make. Secondly, it acknowledged that consumers invest particular understandings of product quality on the basis of its geographical claims and descriptions. Thirdly, it established precedent for specifying and protecting branded geographical terminologies which confer assumptions of quality. In so doing, it prevented regional identities being used as generic marketing terms (Hunter, 2001, p.256).

The emerging legislation laid grounds for a specific legal challenge in 1960 which questioned 'passing off' practices within the Harris Tweed industry. In what became known as the 'Harris Tweed Case', a number of Orb producers who produced 'stamped' cloth, raised challenge against another group of producers[30] based in mainland Scotland, who sold 'Harris' tweed which lacked any connection to the Outer Hebrides.

In this case, the legality of allowing mainland manufacturers to describe their cloth as 'Harris' tweed was mooted. As part of this, the importance of placed-based production was examined. The ruling was significant in two main regards. Firstly, it established that specific placed-production branding strategies are important. This was made clear by Lord Hunter, presiding, in his judgement (1964)[31];

> In Scotland…[is a] portmanteau phrase… (which) might convey the picture of the Long Island, stretching romantically from the Butt of Lewis to Barra Head, rather than the more mundane enchantments of Paisley or Galashiels, or even Oban, Pitlochry or Aberdeen

Secondly, manufacturers only have cause to use these if they satisfy valid claims to these specific geographical locations. By this judgement, Lord Hunter afforded particular attention to the spatial specificity of the Harris Tweed industry, and the importance of its distinct geographical placing from the regional identities of other well-known Scottish regions. In this, its craft and cottage-industry reputation were established as the core feature of its claims of quality. As such, Lord Hunter wished for these specificities to be protected and become grounds upon which the industry grew.

As Lord Hunter continued (quoted from the Harris Tweed Case, 1964[32], p.566-567, in Hunter, 2001, p.264);

[30] *Hepworths Ltd., Independent Harris Tweed Producers Ltd., Argyllshire Weavers Ltd., A. & J. Macnaughton Ltd. And Scottish Crofter Weavers Ltd*
[31] *Argyllshire Weavers Ltd. And Others v. Macaulay (A.) (Tweeds) Ltd. And Others, [1964] RPC No. 16, 477*
[32] *Argyllshire Weavers Ltd. And Others v. Macaulay (A.) (Tweeds) Ltd. And Others, [1964] RPC No. 16, 477*

> …the reputation which Harris Tweed enjoys, and has enjoyed with the purchasing public, is based on the fact that it is not only a product of the Outer Hebrides, but also the product of a cottage or home industry. This part of the reputation of the material now survives largely on the strength of the hand-weaving process, but I am satisfied from the evidence that in the mind of the purchasing public, and indeed also in the mind of the trade, it is an important factor and an important selling point that the main surviving hand-process should be carried out, not under factory conditions, but at the home, at the cottage, at the 'croft'…The conception of a home or cottage product has always, in my opinion, been a very important selling point of the genuine article… the fact remains that one reason why producers and sellers of the cloth, including the pursuers [the mainland weavers] are so anxious to make use of the name is its reputation as a home or cottage product. It is felt, and in my opinion rightly felt, by those who purchase Harris Tweed, that they are assisting the inhabitants of remote islands to supplement the bare living which they are able to wrest from the soil, or the sea, by engaging in their own time in weaving, not necessarily actually inside their home, but in its reasonably close vicinity

The ruling asserted that the locality and local making traditions of the Outer Hebrides, formed, and continued to form, an integral part of the quality reputation of the weaving and the cloth (Thompson, 1969, p.136). This judgement crafted stringent guidelines for the permissible spatiality of the industry, the allowable methodology of its making, and the guidelines upon which the industry was allowed to subsequently grow.

5.4 Boom and Bust

Following these legal cases, the industry entered a period of boom and bust. By 1966 the industry was in good health. It produced over seven and half million yards of cloth (Hunter, 2001, p.279). Yet, by 1975, backdropped by a global contraction of the woollen industry, the industry declined. There were multiple reasons for this. Firstly, the industry faced growing global competition, particularly by lower-end market competitors (Anderson, 2017, p. 30). This gave rise to downward price pressures and lowered the cost expectations of consumers. Secondly, the Multi-Fibre Agreement of 1973 (MFA) was enacted. This was an international regulatory framework which established quotas, curtailed access to developing markets, and set limits on the quantities of textiles and clothing possibly exported from one country to the next. This was a protectionist measure which prevented fully liberalised competition between developed and developing countries (Dicken, 2007). Yet, it excluded woollen goods, fuelling fierce price-based competition. By competing with international producers in lower-waged economies, UK manufacturers more aggressively sought efficiency. By the end of the decade, it was estimated 1.5 million textile and clothing jobs had been lost: relocated, offshored, or automated (Market Studies International, 1982). Further to this, fashion was also changing, away from heavy woollen goods, and in favour of more casual, lighter garments made of synthetic and cotton fibres.

Collectively, this had a damning effect on the island's labour market. Being so reliant upon weaving for work, its decline resulted in the highest unemployment rate in the United Kingdom, at 22 per cent (The Daily Telegraph, 1976). Subsequent years were characterised by fluctuations in consumer demand and employment best characterised as boom and bust. Between 1980 and 1985, for example, production rose by almost a million yards per year, and whilst the industry only had weaving capacity for 640 weavers, extreme growth in demand grew the labour force to 750 weavers (Hunter, 2001, p.327). By 1984 production reached 5.3 million yards, and by 1987 contributed £20 million to the island economy (Hunter, 2001, p. 324). Yet, just three years later in 1990, the production had once again declined, with output barely surmounting 1.5 million yards (Anderson, 2017, p.158).

These extreme fluctuations brought about new production realities for the industry. The industry became more interconnected with the to-ing and fro-ing of international competition, regulation and fashion flux, and it normalised boom and bust industrial practices. Perhaps more significantly however, it revealed a tension of craft production relating to growth and agility. In times of boom, the craft industry struggled to raise its production quickly enough to deliver upon its demand, because training weavers takes time and resources much greater than the whims of demand afford it, and in times of contraction, the lack of work failed to sustain the livelihoods created under the times of expansion. It was increasingly precarious and its boom and bust model was seen to jeopardise the sustainability of the industry. By 1991, cloth yardage was at its lowest on record, and became seen an emblem of a dying industry (Martin, 1990). The industrial picture was bleak; eighty percent of the market had disappeared over the previous five years, weaving equipment was outdated in comparison to the innovations of competitors, product was still inconsistent, and over 60 percent of the workforce were over 50 years old. Younger recruits were neither training nor entering employment as weavers, and fluctuations within consumer demand gave weaving work a precarious reputation. Yet despite these challenges, the Harris Tweed Association was poorly positioned to respond. Funded by stamping fees, as stamping declined, so did its coffers. This resulted in it being poorly equipped to coordinate a strategic response (Hunter, 2001, p.339). The industry needed to improve its competitiveness and sustainability and surmount structural and organisational problems with loom technology, training and retention, without the funds to do so.

As its first priority, the Harris Tweed Association convened a working group comprised of the Weavers' Union, producers and millers, Lews Castle College[33],*Comhairle nan Eilean Siar*[34] , as well as Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Western Isle Enterprise (Anderson, 2017, p. 159). A strategy of technological upgrading and labour force upskilling was approved, as well as agreement on the need to produce softer, lighter cloth for broader consumer appeal. To achieve this, the industry began a programme of subsidisation and adoption of a new pedal-driven, double-width loom (Martin, 1990, pp. 1-2). Funding from the European Union (EU) was also accessed to re-train some 250 weavers (Anderson,

[33] the local Further Education facility in the Western Isles
[34] the local council

2017, p. 159), whilst £200,000 jointly funded by the EU, *the Comhairle*, HIE and Skills Development Scotland was raised to implement a skills and training programme which would accredit local weaving knowledge through qualifications (Padovani, 2017).

Complementing this programme of upskilling and upgrading was a resolve to more proactively promote Harris Tweed. The first attempt at this was the Harris Tweed Promotional Council (HTPC), founded in 1993. The Council sought to establish new and viable markets. The HTPC was comprised of 'major' producers, representatives from local- and *rival*- mills and businesses (Hunter, 2002, p.348), but by 1994 'personal disputes' between committee members saw members using the Council to further their own business aims (Armstrong, et al., 1994, p. 21). These caused it to disband in the same year.

Following this, a renewed enthusiasm was placed on registering and renewing the authenticity of Harris Tweed's trademark protections, establishing itself as a strong line of defence for competition. In 1990, the UK Government began consulting on proposals to overhaul its trademarking system, and integrating it within its intellectual property legislation laid out by the European Community (EC). To enforce this, particularly over many jurisdictions, a public law body with statutory functions was needed. National legislation was sought to dissolve the Harris Tweed Association, and transmute its assets and responsibilities to a statutory authority. The legislation enshrined into law a stipulated working definition for Harris Tweed, further safeguarding its industrial standards. In doing so, Harris Tweed was defined a local asset, a resource and a 'collective property of the community of the Western Isles' (HTA, 1990). In 1993, the Harris Tweed Act (1993) received royal assent, establishing the Harris Tweed Authority (HTA), charging it to 'promote and maintain the authenticity, standard and reputation of Harris Tweed' (HM Government, 1993). The Harris Tweed Act (1993) is therefore important. Not only does it recognise and centrally underscore the geography of production to the quality of the cloth, but also it materialises the coordinated and negotiated restructuring response of the industry. Embroiling public and private actors, the act demonstrates how the industry was able to establish new governance structures, and work with legislators and public bodies to access funding and new legal protections which improved industrial competitiveness.

5.5 Recent Industrial History (1994-2020)

In 2006, a new period of restructuring took place, when Brian Haggas, a Yorkshire-mill entrepreneur, bought KM Group[35]. Employing over 100 mill workers, 150 weavers and producing 95% of Harris Tweed, the KM Group was a significant industry stakeholder (Scott, 2006). As part of this overhaul, Haggas decided to rationalise production, streamlining 8,000 tweed patterns down to just four (Yorkshire Post , 2009), cutting 36 mill jobs (BBC, 2009). Focussing on the market for tweed jackets, Haggas claimed diverse patterns 'debased [Harris Tweed's] coinage' and damaged its value (BBC, 2007) and thought simplification of choice would aid production efficiency. Despite this, the industry failed to improve. By 2009, mill production no longer operated year-round and just 496,500 yards were stamped, the smallest output ever recorded (Anderson, 2017, p.160).

With this, many locals became aggrieved by the restructuring strategy, of which the application of mass market principals was attributed to its failure. Perceived by some to be threatening the survival of the industry, Mr Haggas was persuaded to sell his idle mill to Ian Taylor, an executive within the oil industry, to establish Harris Tweed Hebrides (HTH) in 2007. Spending £2.5 million re-equipping the mill, HTH repositioned Harris Tweed as a bespoke manufacturing offer, and reinstated over six hundred pattern variants. Central to their offer was the value of small-scaled, personalised making; an offer which allowed the firm to steadily grow and by 2012 Harris Tweed Hebrides accounted for 85% of Harris Tweed production (The Economist, 2013). By 2012, Harris Tweed reached its highest level of production in almost fifteen years with 1.1 million metres of tweed produced by the three surviving mills, which although piecemeal compared with its height of production, was the highest since 1993 (Young & Martin, 2012, p. 123)

[35] KM Group was at the time, the largest producer of Harris Tweed, producing 97% of the cloth. Registered in 1996, it was a registered business for 12 years until 2008 when it was dissolved. It incorporated Kenneth Mackenzie Limited, The Harris Tweed Trading Company, Kenneth Macleod (Shawbost) Limited.

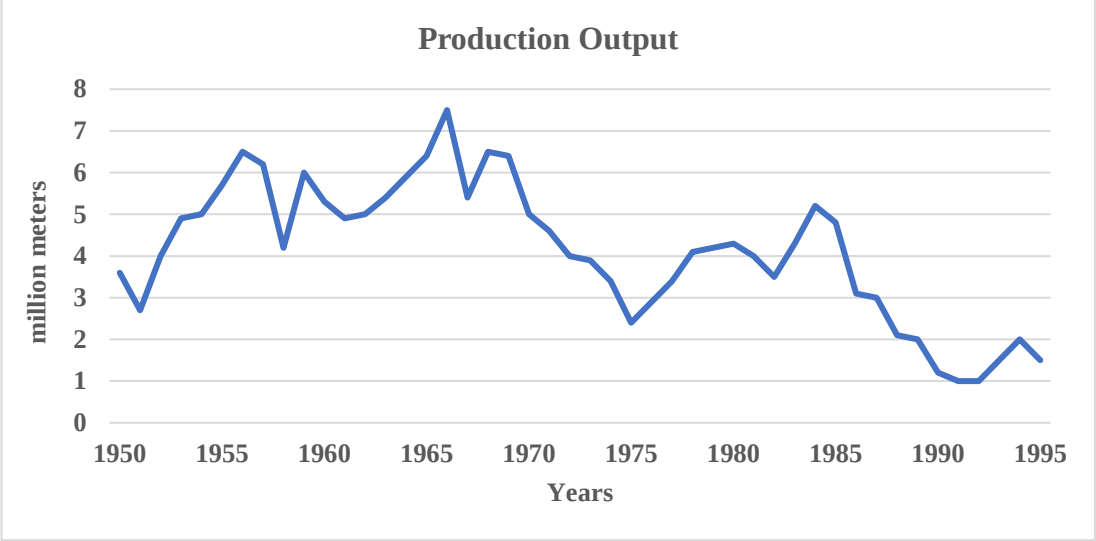


Figure 5.5: Historical Production of Harris Tweed (1950-1995) stamped, in million metres. Source: Based on Hunter (2001, p. 16)

Thereafter, the trademarked cloth has greatly diversified and internationalised, now exported to over 60 countries and supplied to many of the world's most recognised designers, fashion houses and luxury brands (UKFT, 2021). Such international renown has extended to being featuring in collections by Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld, Vivienne Westwood, Nigel Cabourn and Margaret Howell. This has transformed its cultural appeal beyond its twee 'Miss Marple' image, into something approaching high fashion with integrity (HM Government, 2016). As such it receives great consumer interest, for being noble, traditional and historically rooted (Carrell, 2012). Its consumer appeal is also widening, helped by high street and online retailers such as Topshop and ASOS, who have launched affordable product lines at more accessible price points (Carell, 2012, ASOS, 2017), whilst larger international brands such as Nike (Cramb, 2004), Converse (Fischer, 2012) and Clarks (Szulc, 2012) have also released collaborative capsule ranges. These have all broadened the market of the cloth.

Whilst the unique organisational composition of the industry makes consistently recorded industrial data difficult to find, Harris Tweed Hebrides, the main 'producer' of Harris Tweed and the largest of the three island mills provides an illustrative yardstick for the health of the industry's recent fortunes. In 2013, HTH employed seventy-five staff between its production and administration, and used between 120 and 130 of the islands' then 140 self-employed weavers (Anderson, 2017). Whilst still

variable, the commercial health of the mill as expressed in profit per financial year remains consistently strong and serves as a valuable proxy for the mill's overall productive output (Table 5).

Table 5: Financial account data from the annual reports of Harris Tweed Hebrides

	31.12.14 (£)	**31.12.15 (£)**	**31.12.16 (£)**	**31.12.17 (£)**	**31.12.18 (£)**	**31.12.19 (£)**
Turnover	9,570,042	10,910,875	10,537,377	9,378,606	8,405,939	8,343,298
Gross Profit	2,656,363	3,655,092	3,854,593	3,213,986	3,078,014	2,935,322
Operating Profit	1,144,900	2,237,205	2,434,538	1,800,759	1,534,533	1,243,389
Profit for Financial Year	886,389	1,768,852	1,946,314	1,423,161	1,244,518	1,007,431

Source: Harris Tweed Hebrides (2019, 2017, 2015)

Most of the cloth woven for HTH is exported, with Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Korea and the USA being its key and most established international markets. This is indicative of the broader trend of internationalisation of the cloth. Between 2010 and 2013, HTH experienced major growth in the British market, seeing a five- or six-fold increase in sales; so much so, in 2013 the UK market accounted for 22 percent of their output (Anderson, 2017). Given their market dominance within the Harris Tweed industry, analysis of the company's turnover by geographical market, by both value (in £) and a percentage of total turnover, provide indicative data on the internationalising market growth of the cloth (Table 6 and 7).

Table 6: Annual recorded data from Harris Tweed Hebrides on geographical market, as a proportion of total turnover

Turnover of HTH by Geographical Market (£)

Country	**31.12.14**	**31.12.15**	**31.12.16**	**31.12.17**	**31.12.18**	**31.12.19**
United Kingdom	4,820,968	4,688,257	3,947,548	4,645,137	4,556,805	4,591,726
Europe	1,366,459	1,191,529	1,566,675	1,810,673	1,445,004	1,610,511
Asia	3,023,485	4,722,856	4,585,377	2,703,047	2,188,489	1,713,512

North America	348,143	237,596	411,669	211,289	213,684	404,752
Other	10,987	70,637	26,108	8,460	1,957	22,788
Total Worldwide	9,570,042	10,910,875	10,537,377	9,378,606	8,405,939	8,343,298

Source: Harris Tweed Hebrides (2019, 2017, 2015)

Table 7: Annual recorded data of Harris Tweed Hebrides on geographical market, as a percentage of total annual turnover.

Turnover of HTH by Geographical Market (% of Total Annual Turnover)

Country	**31.12.14**	**31.12.15**	**31.12.16**	**31.12.17**	**31.12.18**	**31.12.19**
United Kingdom	50.38	42.97	37.46	49.53	54.21	55.04
Europe	14.28	10.92	14.87	19.31	17.19	19.3
Asia	31.59	43.29	43.52	28.82	26.04	20.54
North America	3.64	2.18	3.9	2.25	2.54	4.85
Other	0.11	0.64	0.25	0.09	0.02	0.27

Source: Harris Tweed Hebrides (2019, 2017, 2015)

Between 2014 and 2019, the mean percentage of turnover attributable to non-UK markets for HTH represented 51.74% (min. 44.96% and max 62.54%), with European and Asian markets consistently performing well. However, as Brian Wilson, the non-executive Chairman of HTH has suggested, whilst the recent success of HTH can be attributed to the strategic pursuit of major export markets, the exchange rate moving against UK production in these locales, particularly in Asia and the Japanese market, provides real insight into the industry's vulnerability to the quickly shifting global economy and the ongoing need of HTH (and by definition, the industry more broadly) to seek further diversification within these markets and sectors for stability (Anderson, 2017).

The commercial narratives surrounding the contemporary Harris Tweed industry corroborate this picture; it has revived, resurged and with new life (Rogers, 2014). Whilst no longer operating to the same production capacity as recorded at its height in the 1960s (Figure 5.5), the industry annually still produces between 1-1.5 million meters of cloth and supports the work of between 150-220 weavers and 160 jobs in

the wider economy (HTA, 2021). Yet despite professions of continued industrial prosperity, its sustained reliance upon the handmade processes of self-employed weavers presents practical challenges appraising overall productivity, profits and the equity of value spread across the industry beyond mill financial accounts and press releases from the Harris Tweed Authority. The industry's reliance upon self-employed weavers who are each owner-operators of their own micro-business make attempts at systemic reviews of productive capacities difficult, and whilst data is recorded by the Harris Tweed Authority on stamped cloth apportioned by weaver number, this information is not publicly available. To this extent, much of the production and productivity data is black-boxed.



Figure 5.6: The Harris Tweed Orb. Source: HTA, 2020

In conjunction with producing product that sells and purveyors of the cloth diversifying its market, the industry also retains its contemporary competitive edge through its proactive defence by the Harris Tweed Authority, of Harris Tweed's name, definition, Orb and trademark. Being an industry protected by its own act of parliament, the Harris Tweed Act (1993), Harris Tweed must be 'handwoven by islanders at their homes in the Outer Hebrides, finished in the Outer Hebrides, and made of pure virgin wool dyed and spun in the Outer Hebrides'. The iconic Orb symbol (Figure 5.6) which marks the adjudicated satisfaction of its legal requirements by a verified stamper, is a registered Certification Mark similar to a trademark which confers exclusive monopoly rights to the Harris Tweed Authority to claims to the mark and name of Harris Tweed, as well as legal rights to protect them. The Orb Certification Mark is the intellectual property of the Harris Tweed Authority and must

not be copied or infringed in any way, and the HTA can pursue individuals and businesses who infringe on these rights (HTA, 2020). Today, its trademark is protected in over 30 countries and underpins the concurrent internationalising strategies of the industries producers. Such protectionism when applied to craft industries who wish to maintain small, traditional manufacturing is argued not only beneficial but essential to fair competition and growth, and whilst no guarantee of success, it critically spatialises and delimits the geographies of competition for producers to those only co-present on the islands of the Outer Hebrides (Williams, 2021). Trademark litigation has served as a bulwark against fierce competition, particularly from copycat firms in Asia (see Macdonald, 2020), and retailers who falsely claim their products are made of Harris Tweed (see Faulkner, 2012). To do this, the Harris Tweed Authority enlist law firm Burness Paull for its litigation, and monitoring partners such as SnapDragon Monitoring who check e-commerce, social media and auction sites for sales of counterfeit tweed (Merrit, 2018, BBC, 2017).

This recent history highlights three points of significance. Firstly, Harris Tweed emerges more explicitly as a *consumer* product; with a brand, an identity, a trademark, and a story. Secondly, it reveals how the strategy of efficiency, standardisation and massification failed to improve the fortunes of the industry and demonstrated the precarity of local craft making in global markets. In this sense it demonstrates a logic of the industry which inverts the economics of value and price and appeals more to a luxury consumption pattern which responds to desires of product knowledge, provenance, diversity, and aesthetics (Crewe, 2017). Thirdly, it demonstrates a tension between accessibility and exclusivity. Whilst its success relies upon broadening its customer appeal, it also produces a craft product- limited in its speed of production- and trades on its cultural cachet of exclusivity. As such, the cultural brand 'Harris Tweed' holds and reconciles competing ideas, often in contradiction and tension.

5.6 Re-Narrating History as Product

Today Harris Tweed is considered a heritage brand, famed for its history and provenance. The Harris Tweed Authority promote this positioning, producing point of sale, promotional material, and attend trade shows. Emphasising its quality, they call forth evocations of its past. Playing to the romance of island life, it speaks to visions

of heather-covered hills and fragrant glens (Harper & McDougall, 2012, p. 80), and romanticises a nostalgia in its long standing and traditional island craft. More importantly, it manifests weaving as if a tradition almost unchanged and untouched by modernity; it survived mass production (Ennew, 1982). In this, the dominant imagery is of caricatured island life; of black and white pictures of blackhouse cottages, moors and traditional looms. These have powerful evocative capacities which remain central branded motifs. In their traditional essence, they legitimise the brand impression of 'craft', which is implied and framed always cottage and historical (Figure 5.7)

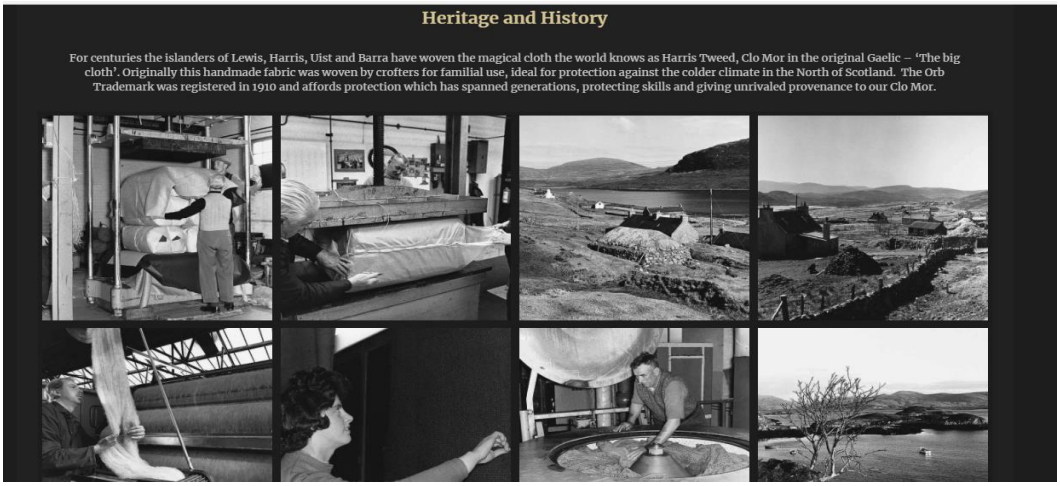


Figure 5.7: A screenshot taken on 12.11.2017, of the Harris Tweed Authority's website. Source: (HTA, 2017)

Yet whilst on the surface the brand objectively re-tells its history, this is a process more complex. It makes visible certain stories, histories and memories, but makes others invisible. In this sense, however historical the brand looks, its retelling is all together new, and is constructed contemporarily to behold valuable brand identity to be sold. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the mechanised mill components are largely absent, and so too are the larger looms. It is a narrative of presences and absences. This was something highlighted by Ennew (1982), who identified missing practices that escape the cultural memory of the cloth. In this, she demonstrates weaving practices within hidden spaces through her documentation of weaving colonies in Stornoway of the 1980s (Figure 5.8). These become slippages between the promotional messaging, and the production practices that undergird them.



Figure 5.8: Photography of weaving sheds/colonies on a Stornoway council-housing estate. Source: Credit: Keith Tribe in Ennew (1982, p.177)

By this, the brand messaging mediates the history of the cloth into something marketised and commodifiable, embracing its evocative histories, but evading the hidden stories it would rather not reveal. In this, its retelling is important, and its history serves as a powerful repository of cultural, geographical and economic memory. Importantly, it is not authoritative or comprehensive, but selective, curated and fiction, in that it is made and carefully written. Its history is written like a woven intricate pattern; one of nature, people, places, craft processes and cultural meanings. It is geographical, historical, evocative and connective; a living tapestry of connections (Whatmore & Thorne, 1997, p. 288), and in its retelling, the many stories, lives and biographies of the cloth unravel (Marcus, 1998).

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussion reflected upon the historical and industrial past of Harris Tweed. In which, the traditional craft production process is situated and described; from shearing to waulking as a crofting activity. The discussion then reflected upon its evolution into a commodity cloth; highlighting particular moments and individuals who shaped this. Of particular interest was the way individuals, organisations and legislative changes impacted industrial growth and maturation, as well as how technological innovation and labour markets influenced this. Far from seamlessly flowing, its history, presented here, is one of disruption, decline and debate. This was particularly described through the legislative changes of the cloth, which not only

reveal the dynamism of its definition, but also the political conflicts the definition overwrites; one that privileges certain actors at key junctions, who with various powers, shape the ongoing evolution of the industry. In doing so, the chapter then turns to the brand; a site of contemporary storytelling and, in the context of this history, presents its inherent tensions. In light of this messy history, the brand can be more critically appraised; not one of historical record, but of selective re-narration; and with capacity to remember and forget, show and hide, and blur fact with fiction in the visions, connections and evocations it inspires. Through which the chapter makes an empirical contribution by revealing the knottier, evolutionary and historically dynamic political economy which undergirds Harris Tweed, and suggests need for a more complex conceptual frame to grapple with and understand the complexity of the branding's strategic historical and geographical evocation.

Chapter 6
Labour

6.0 Introduction

Harris Tweed is defined by its distinct craft labour. This chapter draws upon ethnographic interviews to establish a critical labour politics of work in the industry. In Section 6.1, the dominant imaginary of Harris Tweed weaving is discussed, a compelling and romanticised story of 'craft as brand'. The chapter then moves on to develop more complex accounts of 'craft as work' rooted in the cultural and political economy craft finds itself in. In Section 6.2, the romantic narrative of the cloth is then challenged. By tracing the journey of 'becoming' a weaver, craft work is situated within a context of political, economic and cultural relationality which challenges the romantic and apolitical imaginary of craft work. Section 6.3 then reflects on these dynamics, and of the power relations riven through the labour market. Through reflecting on the precarity, self-employment and pay of weaving work, the chapter advances a new, problematic and hidden narrative of Harris Tweed weaving that is ripe for reform.

6.1 From Craft as Brand to Craft as Work

For consumers, part of the allure of the cloth comes from the romance of its weavers - traditional hand craft workers of the Outer Hebrides. This imaginary speaks to a unique view of cottage craft work and life, heralding back to time immemorial. The central feature in the promotion of the cloth frames its weaving as an untouched and unchanged working practice, entrenched within the cultural, social and historical fabric of the islands. Its labour practices are similarly regarded as historical, unchanged, suspended in time: a living island tradition.

Central to this is the dominant vignette of the humble crofter-weaver, who defines the materiality of the cloth. Typically male and old, they are characterised through their distinct 'islandness', their peripherality, welcoming conviviality, and traditional parochialism. This motif promotes a representation of life and labour defined through rural artisanal craftmanship, rooted within a long credible island history and heritage.

Unfailingly these representations are presented as three distinct visual narratives of labour, land and loom (Figure 6.1 and 6.2).

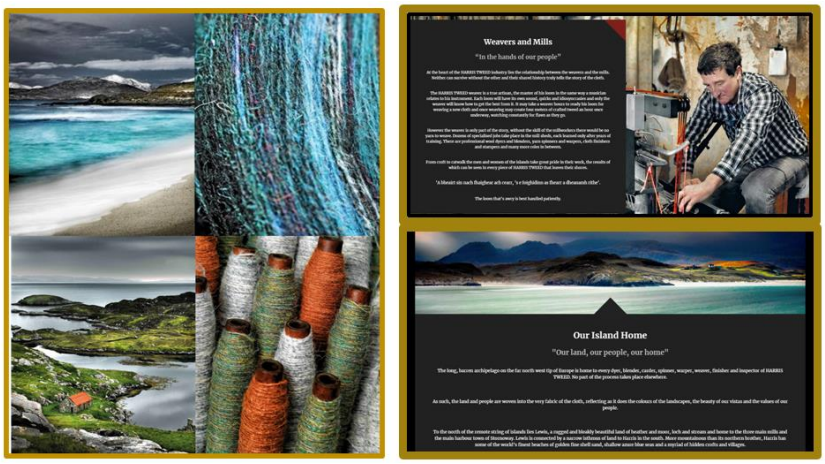


Figure 6.1: Images used to promote Harris Tweed, using the photography of Ian Lawson's [36] photojournalistic project on the cloth's land and labour. Source: (HTA, 2019)



Figure 6.2: Lawson images featured within the HTA offices. Source: Lawson (2015)

[36] Lawson undertook a 10-year project collaboration with the HTA photo-documenting the Western Isles. The project captured the people and landscapes of the cloth, culminating in a book and exhibitions in Stornoway and Penrith (BBC, 2016).

Whilst compelling, these representations are one-dimensional and a caricature of weaving life- simple and traditional, the stereotyped imaginary of Scottish islandness being 'Scottish-as-Celtic'. This is perhaps particularly so, given the evocation of the Crofter-Weaver; a strategic motif which situates craft work within the context of a specific Scottish rural landscape, and a specific traditional livelihood strategy; croft and crofting (Thompson, 2009) (see Chapter 5).

This imagined crofting landscape- subsistent, traditional and absent of modernity (Ennew, 1980, pp. 13-14)- shapes our perception of weaving work. It 'others' weaving through the landscape's historical imaginary, and warps our understanding of the work involved in the production of the cloth by wrapping it up in a romantic and quaintly imagined crofting ideal. In so doing, it becomes framed not as 'work' akin to other forms of labour, but as a socio-cultural practice and a relic of traditional island identity and heritage. The evocation of the croft is particularly compelling in how it situates craft as nestled within an imaginative romantic scene, typically visually represented in brand narratives part of the island's Celtic traditionalism; in a blackhouse warmed by peat fire (Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3: Promotional images used by Kenneth Mackenzie Mill. Source: (Kenneth Mackenzie, 2021)

This imaginative geography of work presents a totalising vision of island life and craft work, one that is wild, remote, and removed from modern life and labour. It shapes

our perception - however erroneously- of the manner and context in which craft labour is performed: romantically, quaintly and unproblematically. Through this narrativisation, weaving work is de-politicised, and made as a spectacle for the consumer to view. This pushes craft beyond more political considerations of work, and unproblematically corroborates some accounts of craft theory which frame craft only in terms of its meaningful and connected working and artistic endeavour (See Chapter 2). It becomes the only discourse of craft visible, and is its dominant and controlling image.

This romanticisation of practice was articulated by some weavers, who discussed the personal satisfaction and therapeutic reward of weaving.

> "It is very therapeutic! And very satisfying…my best analogy to people who have never woven, is that it is like mowing the lawn. You have the mess in front of you, and beauty behind you. So it is very visual. I can sit down, and I can weave one bobbin of thread, and I have got three inches of new fabric. I am one of these people who is very driven by seeing the results of what you do." (Charles, M, SW)

These narratives of passionate working often worthily define craft as an artistic practice; an expression of their theoretically informed artistic development. This resonated most strongly with the subjectivity of the so-called 'designer-maker' (Luckman & Andrew, 2018), often with formal artistic training and an intellectual nuance to justify and describe their work as in keeping with traditions of design. This framing specially speaks to the dominant discourse of a craftsperson who through their practice navigates tension between their 'head' and 'hand' knowledges (Sennett, 2008). In these, craft work is an ongoing act of realisation, cultivation and aspiration to live out certain values set within their own personal biographies.

> "I've always enjoyed working with my hands. When growing up, you had in your head that if you had a brain, you should go to university. Looking back on it, I don't regret going, I'm glad I went, but *I do enjoy working with my hands more* than I do working with my brain

(*laughs*). *I like being hands-on with things*" (Tracey, F, DW, emphasis added)

"I did a City and Guilds in Fashion… and I went to [art college]- and there was a lovely calm oasis in the weaving studios…And I thought 'that's what I'm going to do, I'm going to be a weaver…. *I love tweed.* When I was a teenager, my nickname was 'Miss Marple' (*laughs*) because I loved tweed and I used to make myself tweed skirts and things, when I was just 14 15 you know. So *I always fancied weaving my own cloth… it was sort of, dream coming true learning how to weave"* (Catherine, F, DW/SW, emphasis added)

"[Working] will have some integrity and be permanent" (Julie, F, SW)

The sensory and artistic reward of their work defined their labour; it was more than 'just work', but spoke to bigger ideals of connection and meaning, an artistic and intellectual practice wrapped up in a moral philosophy of work fulfilment, design, and craft as art.

These framings speak directly to the dominant discourses of craft work, which position craft labour as distinctive from other forms of work because of its passion-fuelled and fulfilling labour. Contextualised by the rise of so-called 'bullshit jobs' where work is alienated, deskilled and disconnected to meaning (Graeber, 2018), this narrative is particularly compelling. This romantic storytelling of craftsmanship defines craft as 'good' work and practiced for the love of craft alone (Sennett, 2008), with the visualised handwork of weavers becoming the outward expression of this ethic of passionate and rewarding work.

Yet these discursive and intellectually rooted craft definitions are devoid of economic sensibility. In their romantic and intellectual narrativisations, beyond their general antithetical positioning against alienated work, they are devoid of any real engagement to the political economy that craft exits within, including the context of craft work, how it is practiced, its marketplace(s), and how it creates profits and navigates

commercial demands just like any other industry. In failing to do this, it sustains a narrative which enchants craft work, workers and their commodities and fails to acknowledge the darker geographies of labour at play.

This research questioned how representative this narrative is and how it connected to (or jarred with) the weaver's experiences of their working lives. The research revealed that weavers found these stereotypical brand narratives unhelpful, and preferred instead to root weaving within their everyday experiences of it, not as art or intellectualism, but as work, their means of making a living. This was most often revealed through their career biographies, which revealed how weaving was generally a means of finding and securing employment. In these stories, weaving was cast as a work opportunity in a difficult job market with a dearth of real alternatives. These narratives challenged many perceptions of weaving and weaver, not least that weavers were motivated only by the meaningfulness of their work, or that most were art-school graduating 'designer-makers'. Instead, they were revealed to be largely practically minded, hardworking, blue-collar workers.

> "I left school, and I actually *did electronics*, so a completely different avenue to what I 'm doing just now. I did a HNC in Electronics, which eventually led me to a *sea-going* career…obviously being an islander and that, most of the guys here, well that is where they end up, going to sea… But I decided that I didn't fancy that…*I started driving lorries*…Then I fancied a change…So I thought that the Harris Tweed industry-that's something we're all passionate about on the island, and it would be a good one to get into." (Josh, M, DW, emphasis added)

> *"I actually worked in that fish farm*, for six days shovelling 40 tons of ice a day…all the jobs you have to graft at. They are proper grafting. And there is not a lot of office jobs here!" (Brad, M, DW, emphasis added)

These biographies situated weaving within labour-intensive working lives -trawler fishing, engineering and lorry driving - mirroring the island's main employment

sectors: primary industries, the public sector, tourism and construction (HIE, 2011). Far from being romantic or worry-free, craft was placed within much longer-lived work experiences of the labour market, embedded within a hardworking landscape where living and labouring were hard 'graft'.

In 2006, an economic and social baseline study conducted for the Department of Trade and Industry documented the composition of the Outer Hebridean labour market (Mackay Consultants, 2006). It noted in 2003 the public sector (29%) was the largest employer. Tourism (17%) and construction (11%) were also significant, whilst textiles accounted for 3.2% of employment; 320 full time equivalents. Since, the public sector has consistently been a significant employer on the islands (Table 8), becoming proportionally the largest employer of any Scottish local area. Self-employment is also pronounced (see Table 9), representing on average 11.4% (2015-2020) of the job market, compared with the 8.4% for Scotland, and 10.5% for Great Britain.

Table 8: Employment by job type, expressed as percentage of the total employee jobs in *Na h-Eileanan Siar*

	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Mining and Quarrying	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Manufacturing	7	6.4	6.4	6.4	7.3
Electricity, Gas, Steam, Air Conditioning	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5
Financial Services	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Water Waste, Sewage, Waste Management	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.4
Construction	7	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4
Wholesale and Repair Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	12.5	11.4	13.6	11.4	11.4
Real Estate	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.8
Transport and Storage	6	4.5	4.5	5.5	4.5
Accommodation and Food Services	10	8.2	7.3	7.3	11.4
Information and Communication	2.5	3.2	2.7	2	1.8
Professional, Scientific, Technical Activities	4	3.6	3.2	3.6	3.6
Administration and Support Services	2.5	2.7	2.7	4.1	3.2
Public Administration, Defence, Compulsory Social Service Activities	10	9.1	11.4	11.4	11.4
Education	10	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1
Human Health and Social Work	22.5	20.5	20.5	18.2	18.2

Source: (ONS, 2019)

Table 9: Employment and self-employment expressed as a percentage between 2015-2020, compared against the average for Scotland and Great Britain.

(2015-2020 Average)	*Na h-Eileanan Siar* (%)	Scotland (%)	Great Britain (%)
Employee	67.6	65.1	64.0
Self-Employed	11.4	8.4	10.5

Source: (ONS, 2020)

In 2020, analysis by Highland and Islands Enterprise reaffirmed this picture (HEI, 2020). The public sector continues to play a significant role (Human Health and Social Care, 14%, Public Admin and Defence, 7.8%, and Education, 6.3%), and agriculture, forestry and fishing (31.3%), manufacturing and construction (10%), wholesale and retail (8.3), and accommodation and food services (7.8%) all provide valuable sources of employment. Within this, 84.7% of private registered businesses are micro businesses (0-9 employees), and SMEs account for 76.7% of private sector employment, higher than is the case regionally or nationally, at 67.6% and 50.6% respectively (HIE, 2020).

The Outer Hebridean labour market also poorly pays. Gross weekly earnings by place of residence for example, are consistently lower than the averages for Scotland and for Great Britain (Table 10). Between 2010 and 2020, the mean gross weekly earning by place of residence was just £484 in the Outer Hebrides, £47 less than the average for Scotland and £54 less than the average for Great Britain (ONS, 2021). Hourly pay figures for full time workers also perform comparatively poorly; £12.30 (averaged over 2010-20), £1.19 less than the Scottish average, and £1.30 less than the average for Great Britain (Table 11).

Table 10: Gross weekly earnings by place of residence for *Na h-Eileanan Siar*, compared with the average for Scotland and Great Britain, between 2010-2020. Figures are rounded to the nearest £.

Year	*Na H-Eileannan Siar (£)*	Scotland (£)	Great Britain (£)
2010	460	487	502
2011	436	487	500
2012	440	498	508
2013	509	508	518
2014	462	519	521
2015	496	527	529
2016	482	536	541
2017	480	547	552
2018	477	563	571
2019	519	578	588
2020	562	595	587

Source: ONS (2021)

Table 11: Hourly pay excluding overtime of all full-time workers in *Na h-Eileanan Siar*, against the average for Scotland and Great Britain between 2010-2020

Year	*Na H-Eileannan Siar (£)*	Scotland (£)	Great Britain (£)
2010	11.12	12.14	12.56
2011	11.09	12.30	12.62
2012	11.46	12.53	12.80
2013	12.56	12.85	13.03
2014	11.42	13.04	13.15
2015	12.52	13.38	13.33
2016	12.32	13.51	13.65
2017	12.53	13.84	13.99
2018	12.41	14.30	14.35
2019	13.27	14.88	14.90
2020	14.60	15.63	15.18

Source: (ONS, 2021)

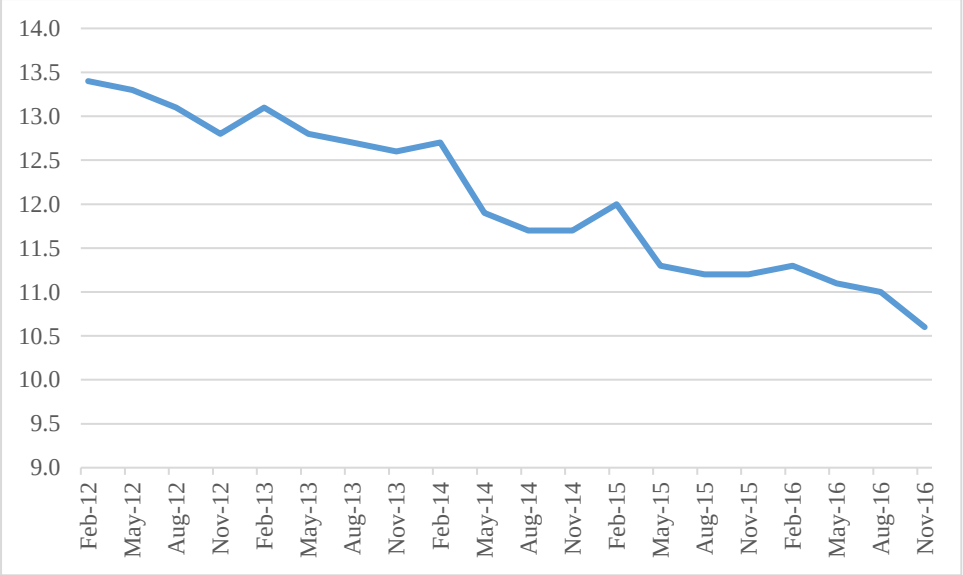
Coupled with relative low pay, the islands experience seasonal patterns of unemployment, and high regional employment figures mask pockets of highly precarious and seasonal work (Skills Development Scotland, 2011). Whilst

unemployment in the Outer Hebrides is lower than the national average [37] (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2018), long-term analysis shows seasonal island unemployment which peaks in winter months (Figure 6.4). This seasonal variability is seen across the Highland and Islands region but is more pronounced within the Outer Hebrides due to its heightened economic fragility and exposure to seasonal work patterns associated to its key sectors (Fraser , 2013). Testament to this, many Hebridean rural livelihoods are tethered to these seasonal rhythms; of peat cutting, lambing, harvesting, fishing, and planting, which all have their own calendars of varying labour intensities. Whilst not attempting to uncritically reinforce a stereotype of island economies which lack employment and decline (Baldacchino, 2010), seasonality shapes the temporality of island employment and normalises temporary and precarious work.

It is no surprise considering this, that underemployment is particularly prevalent; the Outer Hebrides has the highest rate of underemployment in the region of the Highlands and Islands (Skills Development Scotland, 2014). Whilst the employment rate of the Outer Hebrides (83.1%) is higher than both regional (77.5%) and national (73.8%) averages (HIE, 2020), regional underemployment is increasing (HIE, 2020). Whilst there is little evidence quantifying the magnitude of underemployment, Highland and Island Enterprise's submission to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee of the Scottish Government (2020) identifies the region as having acute vulnerabilities to underemployment, which are attributed to its large self-employed labour market. Self-employed workers are cited to work within the islands' key sectors, including construction, craft, care services, and agriculture which were significant to the islands' economy, but are also sectors poorly renumerated and with intermittent demand. This was cited to increase the regions vulnerability to more pronounced multi-occupational patterns of employment and produce working lives sustained by combinations of multiple part time, seasonal and casual work, which flexes at the whims of demand.

Figure 6.4: Unemployment (defined as job seeking benefit claimant) in *Na h-Eileanan Siar* as expressed as a percentage of the working population (2012-2016)

[37] 2017 – 3.1% Outer Hebrides, and 4.5% Scotland (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2018)



Source: (ONS, 2012)

This working context shapes how locals position weaving work within an everyday discourse of employment. Weaving is lived, worked and experienced in very different ways to the fantasy and mythology of its promotion. As such, it is viewed by the workers themselves as akin to other sources of island employment, such as trawlerman, engineers and lorry drivers, with similar pay, conditions, work security, quality and experience. The loom was not as alluring for the weavers as for their customers and tourist visitors. It was a job they could do but which carried little prestige. Weaving was widely discouraged as a career choice for young people, at least as their first career, and was viewed generally unappealing, enmeshed within negative early memories of the industry.

> **"**Here, the culture…and I could be wrong because this is purely my view, but… everything was negative. To speak Gaelic was negative. To be a weaver was negative. It wasn't enough. It wasn't valued enough. When I started weaving, and I would go to school, and get the kids and stuff. The mums would say you are weaving? What do you want to do that for? It is like, well it's the most amazing thing that I have been given [opportunity] to do! This is my ultimate. [And they would say] 'Oh no, I used to remember, having to [go] in those 'drafty sheds' and winding the pirns! It was awful." (Emma, F, SW)

> "Some people love the IDEA of it. Other people, local people, some might think it is backward I suppose. 'A weaver?!', you know (*laughs*)" (Lucas, M, DW)

> "Well my father was a weaver. That if anything would have put me off because I saw him sweating away in a pokey wee shed. And I thought why would I want to do that? (*laughs*) … all I [saw] was a guy toiling from early in the morning; he'd be in the shed before I got up, and he'd still be there when I went to sleep… it was the noise, in a cramped little shed! But when I saw it from the perspective, well I'd grown up like, and I thought that isn't such a bad thing." (Chris, M, DW)

The lived experience of weaving work resembled little of the romance of its promotion. Born out of lived experiences of the industry- helping with repetitive tasks, cleaning the loom and winding pirns and bobbins as children - weavers revealed strong memories of their early work and its conditions. The weaving sheds were cold and drafty and they recalled the long hours of their parent's employment. This shaped their perception of the industry prior to joining it, and confirmed that, for them, it was hard labour – challenging, operating at the margins of the clock and the seasons and to be avoided where possible. It was rarely an aspirational career choice. A majority of weavers interviewed during this ethnography embarked on other careers prior to settling on weaving: they worked at sea, spending long periods away, as drivers, working on the road in solitude, in tourism, growing frustrated at the short seasons and limited progress, and in construction and agriculture, outside in the elements rain or shine. Through these other work experiences, weaving was positively re-appraised.

> **"**[In my previous job] I had to leave the house early in the morning, 7 in the morning! My father was weaving in a shed down the road. I'd be going out in the wind and the rain, whatever the weather was here…but he was inside, all day, doesn't matter what the weather was. I thought- well I could do that. So I did!" (Harry, M, DW)

> "It would have been 10 years in my first garage, and it was four or five in the next garage. And then *I had had enough*…my father in law… he has been a weaver all his life... [and I thought] I would actually like to get to get into that myself." (Dan. M, DW)

> **"**So going from sea to being a lorry driver. That is what I did, and did that for the last 20 years. Then *I fancied a change*. I had a first cousin who was a weaver, and I kind of thought, this would be a good number, this. I looked into it, and getting a loom." (Josh, M, DW, emphasis added)

> **"**[My father] would go, he wanted the loom shed at the bottom of the garden, and I thought, you know, he comes home for, he nipped in for his lunch, he nips in for a cup of tea, he can nip in the house whenever he wants, and it was really quite a relaxed scenario… It was [when] I started thinking fondly about that [the loom] - hey there is another way to do this like! You know! I want a job where I don't have, well see working offshore; you have to jump through a whole lot of hoops. It is health and safety to the extreme! It is helicopters, its forms, it's like, forms for this, and forms for that. And I thought, I don't really care. It's not me. It is just not me! And I thought yeah! Weaving like- my father had the right idea you know!" (Chris, M, DW)

Weaving enabled participants to work under relatively good conditions compared to the other opportunities offered by island life. It enabled them to work from home, work inside, and be self-employed on what they perceived were their terms. It gave weavers an option to pursue a working lifestyle that was more attuned to their priorities, in the context to the few alternatives offered by a very challenging labour market.

This reappraisal through discussing alternative forms of work emerged as an important feature of how the weavers appraised and valued their work. It revealed how many

weavers determine the value of their weaving work in relative, not intrinsic terms, and evaluate and judge their working experiences in comparison to considerations of the broader labour market. These insights compel us to go further than simply labelling 'craft as brand' to understand this work and require that we develop an understanding of 'craft as work'. Lastly, this ethnographic research serves to remind us of the diverse – and often invisible - experiences of weaving work, experiences that are more multiple and complex than their singular and romantic narratives afford them.

6.2 'Becoming' a Weaver

Tracing the stories of 'becoming' a weaver is just one way to begin to understand how we might critically interrogate the political and cultural-economic project that underpins the 'craft as brand' narrative; tracing the journey from registering as self-employed to gaining a weaver number (Figure 6.5).

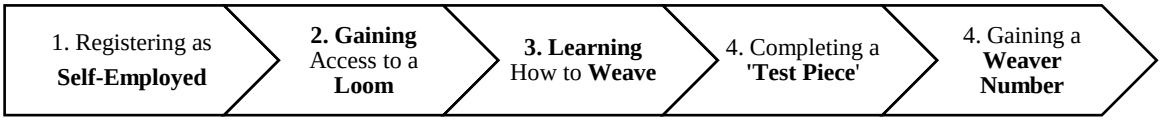


Figure 6.5: A flow diagram summarising a typical journey 'becoming' a weaver. Source: Personal (2020)

Weavers are classed as self-employed workers in accordance with the Harris Tweed Act (1993), and weave at their homes in the Outer Hebrides (World Crafts Council, 2019). They are responsible for their own tax and national insurance and must acquire their own loom to learn and earn a living. This present two key challenges for weavers: locating and financing their loom.

6.2.1 Loom Acquisition

Poor loom availability has long impacted the productivity and potential growth of the industry (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2015). Over the past fifteen years, the Harris Tweed Authority (HTA) has played a coordinating role in improving this, establishing the Harris Tweed Investment Fund (HTIF) and other initiatives to alleviate loom scarcity. Despite this, weavers continued to find loom acquisition difficult.

> "I had no idea just how difficult it was to get into the industry. My thoughts when I was young is that everyone has a loom and it was dead easy to get [one] …[but] I spent ages and ages phoning everybody I could think of. I must have phoned half the island looking for looms, or looms that were coming up, or just something" (Sue, F, DW)

> "Well luckily the people I was doing the training with were buying up all the looms! And one of them said, I've heard of one local to you, phone them before we do! So I got it!" (Grace, F, DW)

> "Say you wanted a loom today, you might have to wait months, you know! Maybe you're lucky, and there's one advertised tomorrow, or today- but it's just pot luck!" (Noah, M, DW))

> "I was trying for long enough to get hold of a loom…it took me two years, but I was able to purchase it in the end." (Jack, M, DW)

Loom acquisition was uncertain and time-consuming, and involved leveraging contacts and connections to gain tip offs, feels and hunches on where to look for available looms. Despite efforts to systemise loom access, acquisition remained largely haphazard and informal. From the ethnographic research it was clear that there were three access routes to loom acquisition: purchase, community finance, and mill rental. These will be considered in turn.

The most popular means of loom acquisition was purchase, either from the manufacturer or second-hand. A minority of the weavers I worked with bought from the manufacturer, Griffiths Textile Machines (herein Griffiths)[38], a specialist manufacturer of technical textile machinery. Their rapier looms, sold as 'the work-horse of the Harris Tweed industry' are solely designed and developed by the

[38] Based in Tyne and Wear, England and founded in 1984, this machinery company produces a variety of textile machines, including those used for 3D and carpet weaving. Whilst these technological innovations have seen GFM reposition within the marketplace, it still retains is rapier loom speciality, used predominantly by the Harris Tweed industry, as well as weaving colleges and technical textile producers (Griffith Textile Machinery Limited, 2019) .

company, and are considered as the world's only rapier hand loom. Purchasing direct from the manufacture presented two challenges relating to loom expense and work-readiness. Firstly, weavers saw loom prices as a significant barrier to entry, and whilst quoted prices varied, new looms were quoted well upwards of £20,000 (The Scotsman, 2015). In addition, weavers incurred additional expenses relating to delay for loom manufacture and carriage. Weavers also described the need to 'break in' and set up new looms, which caused further delay. Some of these issues arose from the inexperience of new weavers, but most of the issues were attributed to getting the positioning of the loom just right, and tweaking the mechanics for optimal working.

> "I bought mine brand new…obviously with it being brand new there were a lot of problems- it has never woven cloth!...You have to set it up, and that's why when you get your test piece. A lot of weavers buy second hand looms, already with a cloth in it. It perhaps needs a few bits of tinkering with it. Mine was fresh off the shelf, brand new, and never had a cloth in it, so the first few months, there were a lot of... frustrating times ... shall we say (laughs)." (Josh, M, DW)

Thus, purchasing new from Griffiths involved making tactical trade-offs: it was expensive, but was the most direct pathway of loom acquisition, negating lengthy waiting and searching. The new loom was complete and with new parts, but its manufacture, delivery and set up incurred hidden delay and costs.

Given this, most purchased second-hand through an on-island informal marketplace. This was preferred for its affordability, speedier delivery, and work-ready looms. To participate in this marketplace, weavers had to leverage their social capital. There were no centralised arbiters between seller and buyer beyond informal referrals and notices: buyers had to learn who was selling and read the market so as to pitch payment offers for their purchase. Weavers tapped into their social resources for this, using communal knowledge of employment and resource availability to locate and buy their looms. Those with good local and industry connection were particularly advantaged.

> **Harry (M, DW)**: well my sister [who works at the mill] helped me out (laughs).

> **Kieran**: Oh yes, you have friends in high places (laughs)
> **Harry (M, DW)**: well that is the way the world goes round (laughs).

Whilst benefitting local and well-connected weavers, this dependence on socio-cultural capital disadvantaged others, most notably those who had moved to the island, or lacked industry connections. The informality of this marketplace differently privileged (and disadvantaged) new entrants, socially gatekeeping the means of production.

Once located, weavers scrambled to purchase looms. Loom scarcity contributed to what most weavers described as a seller's market, and retold of their competitive bidding for the few available looms. This process was wrought with uncertainty and negotiation.

> "Trying to get hold of one second hand is really really hard... when it came up for sale, I went over to look at it. I made my offer and put my name in… down in the book. He was good enough, the guy, to phone me back that week. It was the night before the date was due. He said someone has matched my offer. So, I put another offer over the phone. He phoned me back the following night, to say that it's mine. It was going up and up and up and up! I knew it. In the time I got this one… about a fortnight to get the premises done here, another loom had come up for sale, and it was another 2 grand more expensive again! That one went [too]!" (Jack, M, DW)

Second-hand loom prices widely varied. Whilst always cheaper than buying new, prices were still significant-many thousands of pounds- and were priced through an ever-changing informal pricing system which fluctuated according to loom earning potential, consumer demand and loom scarcity. Highest loom prices coincided with peak demand, greatest earning potential and loom scarcity.

> "Nobody wanted it. So they just took it apart and put it in a skip!..but it was really at the time of the massive

> slump in the industry, where the single-widths were made redundant, and it was just the double- so they really were worthless." (Louise, F, DW)
>
> "I thought this industry might take off. It hadn't really, but it was just starting to pick up then, so I thought I'm going to take a chance on this. I don't care; I haven't much to lose! And the looms were going cheap, because nobody believed, or at least a lot of folk weren't, well a few months before, I probably could've got one for nothing." (Chris, M, DW)
>
> "…I know that in the boom period, a couple of years ago, a lot of them had paid £12,000 for second-hand looms, and £18,000 for brand new ones!" (Paula, F, DW)

This ever-changing price-mechanism saw weavers attempt to game the system, buying into the industry at the right moment, correctly reading the marketplace so to yield a good deal and profit. This was personally risky, and if misjudged left weavers out of pocket with something worthless, and redundant. Buying second-hand looms negated the expense and set up of buying new, but navigated an informal market with volatile pricing. This was not only riskier, but also increased the reliance upon a weavers social-cultural capital to best exploit it.

Looms were also available through community rental schemes, bought collectively through industry bodies and community trusts as part of initiatives to support employment and regional development. These were rented on peppercorn rates.

> "I received emails from [the renting trust], saying that there was an understanding that you'd be supplied with [a loom][, and it would be free of charge and stuff, and they were charging £5 a year, as a token sort of thing! I was over the moon with that. £5 a year is great. They were saying that this was sort of un-workable now… they wanted to charge us £15 a month after that. But we

> were all like, no! And thankfully, it went really sort of quiet. They said that they understand it went quiet, so we won't start charging you." (Brad, M, DW)

Community Development Trusts (CDTs) were seen important administrative units which accessed support funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for community development. CDTs managed local initiatives and ran community enterprises. Loom financing projects were often related to these as profit disbursement schemes. Many weavers cited their community – their CDT- as an invaluable asset for loom access.

> "…then the opportunity came up in the village...The wind turbine…is owned by [the community], a community trust, and the idea is that they invest the income from it in the community, and it provides work and other stuff in the community. So they had spoken to the HTA, and it was decided that they would see if there was interest in getting three double-width looms, brand new double-width looms, and provide the training through a mentorship programme." (Tracey, F, DW)

CDTs supported the social, education, cultural and environmental wellbeing of their residents by using their incomes and that of their enterprises to reinvest in support initiatives (TCD Ltd, 2018). As part of this, trusts such as Tolsta and Muaitheabhal, established loom purchasing schemes (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2015). Working in collaboration with the Association of Harris Tweed Weavers (AoHTW), CDTs purchased looms from Griffiths, and loaned them to new weavers living within their administrative areas. Managed by the AoHTW for a fee, these community initiatives reduced weaving start-up costs for locals, as once they had secured premises for the looms (in their area), they could apply for a tenancy (Muaitheabhal Trust Weavers Project, 2014).

The largest loom purchasing initiative was the Harris Tweed Development Fund. Established in 2002 with ERDF and Comhairle funding, this partnership between HTA, HIE, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and AoHTW cemented in 2015 (Table

12), when six looms were purchased as industry resources and made available for rental, in accordance with the production demand of the industry. Griffiths provided delivery and maintenance, CDTs and HTA identified and recruited trainees, and the Comhairle, HIE and SDS established an accredited training and mentorship scheme; The Harris Tweed Training and Development Programme.

Table 12: Summarised project costs outlined within the Harris Tweed Loom Purchase Project Report (2015)

Costs	**£**	**Project Funding**	**£**
GTM Limited- 6 Looms at £17,915	107,490	**HIE**	88,190
Carriage	3,000	**Harris Tweed Investment Fund**	25,000
GTM Aftercare	2,700		
	£113,190		£113,190

Source: Harris Tweed Loom Purchase Project Report (2015)

Community loom rental schemes were therefore administered through key institutional gatekeepers, and because of their funding, carried eligibility requirements and prescriptions for training and qualifications. These schemes were perhaps the most confusing for weavers to explain beyond their own rental obligation - not least because of the way the funding is administered. Weavers tended to speak about them in more general terms.

> "…it was a community initiative between the community groups and the council, and the HTA who were all collaborating. And there was money, I think it was European money that came in" (Sue, F, DW)

Community financing was best understood as a system of top-down institutional collectivity, where weavers shared little direct involvement beyond their loom tenancies. In this, the collectivity of the 'community' scheme was the actions of community stakeholders- of institutions and public bodies of the industry- rather than a bottom-up scheme of collectivised weavers.

Lastly, mills procured their own looms and rented them on peppercorn rates. With production capacity limited by the industry's loom scarcity (Comhairle nan Eilean

Siar, 2015), mills could be seen to do this self-interestedly, and provided much needed resource and capital to alleviate growth snags attributed largely to the difficulty weavers faced financing their own looms.

6.2.2 Training and Testing

Once a loom had been acquired, weavers began their training. There are three routes through this: taught instruction, mentorship, and apprenticeship.

Taught instruction is classroom-based and instructor-led, and inducted candidates in basic weaving and loom mechanics. Some weavers were also given mill tours as part of this, but this was unusual. Courses were fondly remembered by interviewees and were seen as effective for gaining basic competencies, but were less successful in equipping weavers with sufficient knowledge to deal confidently with the loom independently post-instruction. As a result, many weavers commented on how difficult it was to translate the classroom-based training into the reality of weaving. This widespread view is particularly well reflected in how the weavers spent time discussing their formal training experiences

> "… I've folders up there with the theory… about how to do things, but to actually get the practical experience, of doing it, you can't capture it. You read the thing, and sitting there, thinking errr? It is only when you are actually doing it hands on, that it works much better with the hands on…Sitting with the folder, looking at it is thinking, I haven't a clue." (Tracey, F, DW)

These handbooks reveal the inefficiency of translating tacit craft into instructive steps via formal training (Figure 6.6). The teaching was seen to be confusingly technical in language, bore little relation to weaver's existing experience and tacitly learnt practices, and revealed how weaving is not a classroom-based training programme but is rather more about the centrality of tacitly honed, practiced, and socially exchanged knowledge.

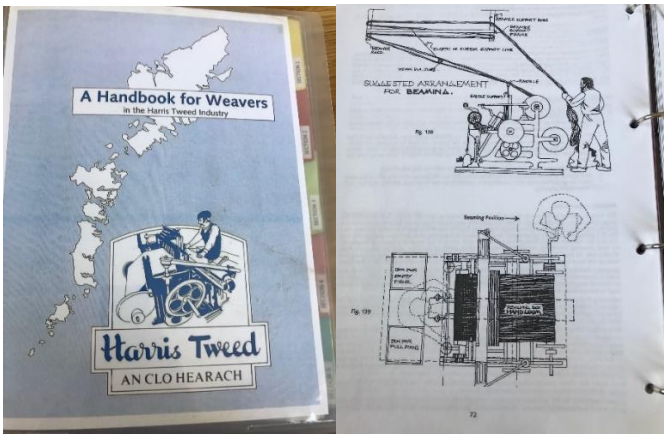


Figure 6.6: Pictures of 'A Handbook for Weavers in the Harris Tweed Industry'. Source: Personal Photography

These difficulties resulted in weavers needing to cultivate informal networks to provide advice and support beyond formal training. This disadvantaged those without existing connections and reinforced the importance of social networks. Skill development is a social process and posed particular problems for weavers who lack networks, but need help. They want to appear competent to their peers and competitors and found it difficult and challenging to seek help from others.

These difficult social and cultural issues were argued to have been less problematic historically. Older weavers described their close-knit weaving community, who enjoyed ample work opportunities and a more social and communal experience. These early experiences fostered a greater openness and collegiality. It also enabled an informal mentoring process; whereby experienced weavers could mentor those new to the industry. Despite their dispersed working, weavers remembered a working culture with a clear sense of community experience and shared learning:

> "When my father was weaving, there were a lot of weavers. Hundreds! Well it has come down now, to about 160/170. It is around that…the industry has changed. When my father was weaving behind the house, there was like a field, for want of a better word, and there was about 17 weavers in that plot! And that is a lot of weavers. And all the sheds were lined up, and they were in and out of each other's sheds. Just for socialising, chit-chat, or if you had a problem with a loom,

there was bound to be somebody who experienced it." (Chris, M, DW)

More recently, increasing work scarcity and fewer weavers has resulted in greater insularity and fewer opportunities for peer support. Weavers are spatially (and socially) distant, making this open-door support more difficult. For new weavers this made social learning more challenging. New weavers were left to deal with their own problems post-instruction, and had to try to develop informal networks of support. The extent of these were reliant upon the social connections of the individual weaver. The variability of these social connections saw weavers reflect in very different ways about their experiences: some reflected on their great community support, but others felt more alone and isolated.

> "I don't generally know an awful lot of weavers, but the weavers I do know would help you at the drop of a hat." (Sue, F, DW)

> "We are still going in and out of each other's sheds. But people who have come here to do this specifically, they don't actually want any contact… well because that's their 'business' and I think they feel that if you were, or if they were in contact with you, you are going to steal. But that is not how WE work. This sounds so bad, but it is just like, our natural, because we've just been born and brought up here, we're all weavers… and we've all known each other. If you've a problem with your loom, you're going to phone one of them." (Jess, F, SW/DW))

This reliance upon the sociality of the craft community to share knowledge and experience post-instruction is particularly interesting. Whilst some of the stories I heard suggested that weavers deftly worked their community connections to ensure they received the right support, others who were less immersed in the social community of the island found the experience exclusionary and isolating. Jess' particular references to 'we' and 'they' when describing colleagues provides a stark reminder that for some, stories attesting to the inclusivity of their craft community work effectively. For others it was clearly an experience of exclusion, and particularly

so if their ongoing learning is dependent upon these connections. The blend of social, cultural and financial capital plays out in really significant ways in this industry. For some, this unease to ask for support or to be seen as incompetent gave rise to peculiar conversations that were very telling:

> "… I was really fortunate, because the guy down the road, he went to train up…He is my postman! So, on the first week, well first year, I would send myself letters every day, so he would be in every day, so I could ask him (laughs)…I would mail myself letters so he would come in every day, so I could ask 'what do you think of this' and 'what do you think of that'. But I know I would have struggled without him." (Chris, M, DW)

This self-perceived need to perform to avoid embarrassment and to avoid directly asking for help suggested to me a real possibility that following their formal training, many suffered in silence. In-course training without ongoing development entrenched a model of success overly reliant upon connections and social capital which were unevenly shared. This is particularly so in a context of tacit skill development for isolated workers. Given these shortcomings, training delivery was moving towards mentorships and apprenticeships which better catered for the ongoing learning and skill development of craft production.

On-the-job mentorship was the preferred route of training for the most recently qualified weavers. They were mentored at their homes on their own looms. Weavers had to find and agree the payment of their mentor, informally agreeing undisclosed rates, although when funding was available, as per a CDT initiative, the location and payment of training were usually prescribed. Weavers were taught varyingly in style and method until the mentor assessed them competent enough to be tested. This training method was most beneficial due to its inbuilt sociality, which actively convened a model of relational community building with mentors usually serving as informal support figures, ongoingly in times of need post-instruction.

Apprenticeships were also undertaken by a minority of weavers, mostly in conjunction with collective loom purchasing initiatives and as a means to provide formal accreditation in addition to structured mentor-led programmes culminating in

recognised SVQ Level 2 qualifications. These were convened through the partnership work of the Comhairle, HTA, HIE and SDS (We Love Stornoway, 2017, Stornoway Gazette, 2017).

Appraising these learning pathways through my work with weavers suggests that weaving is best taught through social interaction-based models of ongoing support and skills exchange, best seen in mentorship and apprenticeships. Weaving was considered a life-honed skill which best flourished in environments of shared experiences, through models of instruction which convened sociality. This inbuilt within the industry's competitive and disparately located labour market, a structured collegiality between student and mentor which ensured all had at least one trusted connection to ask for support and advice throughout their careers.

Lastly, once weavers are competent and have the required skill base, they approached the mill for their 'test piece'- a tweed issue and pattern woven to adjudicate work quality. They weaved this unsupervised and returned for inspection. Those who failed were retrained and retested while those who passed applied for their HTA Weaver Number. Once issued, weavers were bona-fide self-employed Harris Tweed weavers and were able to weave and tend for weaving work.

6.3 Power and (Self) Employment Relations

These weaving pathways reveal craft work to be much more economically and socio-culturally complex than first thought, riven with dependence on social and economic capital, informal and formal marketplaces, and socio-cultural relations to succeed. This is more complex than the dominant representation of the humble and individual crofter-weaver, implicating multiple stakeholders in a more complex political and cultural economy than just weavers. The industry involves HTA, AoHTW, the Comhairle, CDTs, the HIE, mentors, and mills, all with socio-cultural relations, rules and implicit ways of doing to succeed. These dynamics instilled noteworthy power relations, perceived by most weavers to favour the mills, allowing them to influence, govern and coordinate industrial practices.

In the context of loom scarcity, mill loom rental schemes were seen during my interview work as an informal method through which mills exerted influence over

weavers. Whilst these schemes helped to bolster loom numbers, they created an environment where some became reliant on the same mill for work, and for their access to the loom to complete it, and saw weavers actively leverage their personal, cultural and economic capital, to position themselves as 'ideal' candidates and workers, to be granted this tenancy.

> "[My father-in-law] told me to approach the mills to see if they had any looms to rent, and to tell them that you have premises, which is important, and that you're on the training scheme. Tell them that you're getting on very well with this…The week I went in, they didn't have any looms, but the guy tipped me off that there was one coming in the following week that was getting taken back. So I went in the following week, and sure enough there was a loom there. I approached the boss and I told him that if you have any looms to rent, I know there are loads of people asking, but I'm ready, I've a premises, I'm on the training scheme, and my tutor is my father-in-law, which he knew anyway because [he knows] all the weavers….what they did then was phoned my father-in-law to ask how I was getting on…he phoned me back in the afternoon and said the loom is yours." (Phil, M, DW)

Mill tenancies enacted an informal arbitration of suitability which discriminated favour to those weavers most 'ideal' to the mill; those well trained, well resourced, and vouched for. Whilst this was largely functional, it normalised a system of discrimination of new entrants favouring those best connected and resourced. Governed by key mill figures, applicants were informally judged on their ability to 'perform work' based on their operational readiness, agreeability and ability of the mill to provide them with work. The system thrived on its informality: it is impossible to challenge decisions about suitability, expertise, or experience given the absence of formal regulation, governance or process. This degree of opacity would be unacceptable in a majority of sectors of work.

The mills also administered test pieces, further embedding specific power dynamics

> "You do a test piece- weaving a 15m piece, and that goes back to the man at the mill who examined it. If they said your piece was ok, and your weaving was fine, you would get a weavers number, which the HTA issue, which is you registered to get tweeds with the HTA." (Harry, M, DW)

> **Sam (M, SW/DW):** I had to do some test pieces. What happened was the test pieces are by the mill. The mill sends out the test piece, you weave it. Once the mill authenticates it and say it is OK quality, then the HTA look at it and issue you a temporary weaver number.
> **Kieran**: like a provisional driving licence almost?
> **Sam (M, SW/DW):** Then you have to do six pieces, which were then checked over and fully inspected to make sure of the quality.
> **Kieran:** and they are six beams?
> **Sam (M, SW/DW):** Yes. Six, 50 metre pieces.

The mill is placed centrally within the adjudication process of the workforce it will eventually enlist. During my interview work it was clear that this model presented significant possibilities for discrimination.

> "The mill provide you with a beam, … you are judged on 10m. We were told it would take a couple of weeks, so at the time, [we were undertaking part-time work], just to try and bring some money in. so [they] gave up that job, and we thought we had a couple of weeks, we put some savings behind it and get this done. They (the mills) made him do four lots, that's four lots instead of one, because they kept finding little faults, because the general feeling was they shouldn't have the loom. So we ended up with three months of no wages coming in.

> Every time we put a beam in 'oh no there is a fault', but they wouldn't tell you what the fault was. The only way you got round it in the end, was going in, and insisting [they] stand there, when it was checked. Then surprisingly, there wasn't a fault!" (Vanessa, F, SW/DW)

This experience confirms the subjectivity of the process. It lacks transparency allowing discrimination to thrive. It provides a reminder that the conventional definitions of craft are rarely apolitical. The narrative can be corruptible, and biased, and is difficult to challenge, especially when a majority of the community have no option but to accept its practices as fair.

This posed questions of market governance. Weavers[39] are self-employed, and tender for mill work. Mills profit from customer orders, and their operational practices are governed by this profit model. Their ability to facilitate greater weaver numbers either through their access to looms, or more test pieces, may thus problematically prioritise meeting *their* customer orders, over and above the longevity of livelihoods provided to weavers by their work.

> "The word out on the street was this industry is infinitely buoyant and there is any amount of work. All these people were buying looms! … So, the mills are saying great as they are self-interested and needed weavers. They were encouraging, giving out test pieces willy-nilly." (HTA Spokesperson 1).

What is clearly revealed here is that in spite of its social framing, the governing practices of the mills enable them to control production, inclusion and their workforce requirements. These power structures problematise the contractual relations of mill and weaver: weavers are self-employed, but informally governed by structures where mills have coordinating roles. This made it difficult to distinguish between 'self' employment and employment. Part of this problem lies in the everyday discourses of

[39] Mill-commissioned weavers*

their mutual reliance: the promotional material describes the mills and weavers as the 'heart' of the industry, 'neither [able to] survive without the other' (HTA, 2019).

> "[We] both need each other. And it works pretty well. I have seen trouble with the loom, and [someone down the mill has] helped me out, and I don't even weave for [them]! That is special." (Marcus, M, DW)

> "At the end of the day, the two can't work without each other." (Josh, M, DW)

Weaving work is difficulty matched to the external promotion of self-employment: a worker who is self-contained, self-directed, and self-reliant. There was an inherent interrelational working practice and culture between mill and weaver; with some viewing this relationship as mutual, and others viewing it inequitable, despite its rhetorically mutual imaginary.

> "…they need us and we need them. But what's annoying is when it comes down to it, on the money side of things- things might still be going...getting slack. But they still have to pay everybody over there. We don't have a tweed…and we don't get a penny" (Jack, M, DW)

> "The HTA, Mills and Weavers- and without each other, we're absolutely nothing; we're symbiotic and in some ways quite parasitic of each other, but we need each other. No one is more important than the other" (HTA Spokesperson 1)

Jack's experiences of pay and benefits jars with the claims of the promotional materials framing mill and weaver interdependence as something always mutual, whilst HTA Spokesperson 1 describes interdependence euphemistically, in some regards symbiotic and in others parasitic. These assessments of mutuality were important in self-conceiving the ethicality of the labour relations of the industry.

This external story of the empowerment of self-employment was consistently reflected upon by weavers. It helped them to assess their interdependence on the mill and define their terms of work. Far from providing greater control, their self-employment and functional interdependence were routinely defined through their uncontrollability, where weavers were wrapped within a challenging organisational structure that challenged the romantic narratives promoted of their weaving lives.

> "they [the mills] are the ones that call the shots, but I don't feel like it. I don't feel like they've got you on a leash and they can do what they want. I have never felt that. I've found them to be very understanding… maybe that is not everybody's experience, but I never have felt like I have been taken advantage of." (Tracey, F, DW)

> "The weavers are very very monopolised and disadvantaged. But we love our job….but the pay and everything else is not good." (Sam, M, SW/DW)

> "You could be trod on!" (Stuart, M, DW)

These voices reveal the hidden tensions and anxieties of their employment, which speak to more fundamental questions of their labour: of their freedom of choice, work autonomy, pay and conditions, all of which were revealed during my ethnographic work as being under the control of the mills.

The cliché of 'being your own boss' was something many weavers returned to, describing it as a work perk. Yet, their described practices, their limited choice of mill, and working autonomy, challenged this claim. Central to this was the industrial organisation of the industry, which limited the practical business relations weavers could choose from. In an industry defined by fluctuation, when choosing mill partners, weavers prioritised mills most reliable for their weaving work.

Harris Tweed Hebrides (HTH) was the largest of the three mills. Its management was effective at raising large capital investments, and investing in high quality facilities and product innovation. The mill had diverse product ranges, patterns, weights and

weaves, and a diverse consumer base, and was most proactive at selling product. It was best well known for its work reliability, tendering year-round across the island.

> "I think HTH ironed that out somewhat- with some of the markets, going for bags, and shoes… accessories. People can have a nice woollen accessory, in the summertime, as well as in the winter! Whereas clothing, generally, you are only going to take out your warmer woollen jacket in the colder months of the year... generally, you are weaving like crazy in the spring, for that cloth to be ready to be manufactured into clothing, for the winter markets." (Sue, F, DW)

> "It's not just jackets and clothing…it's so much more… since HTH took over, they've really done a good job of advertising the tweed…getting it out there…It's really taken off." (Josh, M, DW)

Carloway Mill was the smallest, producing traditional tweeds, finishes and palettes, and was widely considered the least financially dependable and technologically advanced. Whilst the mill employees were viewed exceptional, the mill delivered work to a small area, and had high variability in its work issue.

Kenneth Mackenzie Limited (KML) was smaller than HTH and more dependable than Carloway. However, its management, and standardisation of pattern, colour and issue and limited market was widely viewed as damaging to the industry. This politics of work was generally negatively viewed by weavers.

> "… it just takes a few people to make a daft decision, like Brian Haggas, only making jackets, and the industry falls apart!" (Louise, F, SW/DW)

> "Brian Haggas came onto the scene…he had huge big ideas…[but] didn't understand Harris Tweed at all….he knew how to sell jackets, but he bought the whole Harris Tweed industry basically…he didn't know what he was buying" (Derek, M, DW)

Mill ‘choices’ were between different services, prices, market strategies and organisational cultures. Whilst some preferred smaller mills on account for their friendless of working relations, most prioritised constancy of work. Given this, their ‘choice’ was limited; they avoided the smaller mills in preference for HTH. Thus, HTH accounted for almost 65% of all Harris Tweed manufacture and was widely perceived the most economically secure and dependable.

> “I’m working for the [HTH]. Why did I choose them? I think…I can see that [HTH] have been the ones that have bought it back to life. They’ve put so much work in and have really been seen to be working. I think that’s the only thing. I could weave for any of the mills, you know? You’re not contracted to them. But if [HTH] are supplying the work, I’m quite happy to carry on with them.” (Dan, M, DW)

> “I weave for [HTH] mill, they’re the most prolific mill, and they’re the most reliable….” (Luke, M, DW)

> “[Carloway Mill] had a wee bit of a reputation for a time for not being too well managed, and that was one of the issues I rated. Could you go end up going three months without a tweed? and then you might not end up getting paid for it for another month or two…That was the main reason why I ended up working for HTH.**”** (Sue, F, DW)

Weavers adjudged mills on their size, reputation and historical record as proxies for their regularity of work, and hedged speculatively on who to work with based on these. Memories of industrial decline, lacking work, and hardships were salient for weavers, which saw them internalise precarity and unpredictability of work as things to be expected. This normalised ‘making hay when the sun was shining’, knowing prosperity was inevitably temporary.

> “If you came up here as an unemployed person on benefits, you'd be hard pushed to survive off the randomness of your weaving…you could be quiet, but

> then do as much as you can as possible when it is available...You have to be good at budgeting to take it when it is good, and let it go when it is not." (Charles, M, DW)
>
> "It has been down to one tweed a week, which is…You're on bread and water (laughs). At the times when it is busy, [sustaining that] is going to be difficult to do." (Dan, M, DW)

In decline, work becomes scarce. During difficult economic times it is the job of the Mill Issuer to apportion work, determining who weaves, who gets paid, and who goes without. Within an island community in which everybody knows everybody, this is highly personal. The mill owners have to implement practical business decisions knowing their outcomes affect their neighbours, families and friends. This is highly political, and issuers of work use their social capital to inform and justify their apportioning. This allegedly instilled 'fairness' into a situation of work scarcity always destined to be unfair.

> "You've got your map...you start at the top, every Monday, and you work your way round… trying to cover everybody, but that person maybe has three kids [and] only wants one tweed every fortnight…This guy here can manage five a week…this guy here has broken his leg, so will be off for six weeks etc. You've got 120 people and their life stories in your head… Are they on the island? Are they sick? … Has their loom broken down? This guy…can't do more than 5 colours, so I can't give him that tartan… It's a nightmare of a job you have to know EVERYONE… [and] so-and-so is on the mainland for a week- the guy won't tell you because he is worried that if he says…I won't give him any more ever!...It's hard. You're thinking, I've two beams to give out, and three weavers- who do I?...that guy's wife has a full time job, so I know they won't be destitute if he

> doesn't get it, but that guy there is maybe doing this... so it is a really really difficult job to do…So you're just trying to play it all the time, to make sure these things are ready and back in the mill in time- because you don't want to risk losing future orders...” (Kathryn, F, DW)

Those who were left dormant particularly questioned this informal and subjective work selection. Many spoke fondly of other methods of work apportioning, such as a distribution centre, historically independent of the mills, who received orders and distributed work evenly amongst the weavers. This system worked because of cross-industry standardisation, higher production volumes and greater operational mills- something which the contemporary industry’s diversification and differentiation made impractical.

> “You’re not contracted to them. But if [one mill is] supplying the work, I’m quite happy to carry on with them. … I believe there are one or two who work for both mills. [But] You see they use different set ups. So I've actually got a spare pair of boards, and I could change quite quickly for the other mills…it is far easier to do it for one [mill], if you are getting enough from them!” (Dan, M, DW)

> “Well [there was a Distribution Centre] a long time ago. That’s when Clansman mill had 95% of the industry and everyone was producing the same thing. The ends and the warps at Mackenzie, to what HTH are different- a substantial difference- and even the different things HTH do, they can be…19 shots, 20 shots and 22 shots, all of which involves changing…and you imagine, if you happen to be in a position where you get things where everything is different, every time you get a tweed, that is your tough luck!” (Derek, M, DW)

Sole contracting was common practice, intensifying weaver dependence on their mills. This was viewed functionally and organisationally more straightforward. Mills also preferred this arrangement, having their own weaving pool which they coordinated to fulfil their own orders to their standards. This dependence gave mills practical power, not least because weavers became reliant upon their mill's issuer for reliable work.

In productive times, weavers were uncomfortable changing mills for fear of displaying their disloyalty to their Issuer, and during slumps, could not change, given decline was cross-industry and work was universally scarce. This lacking functional freedom of choice, compounded by fluctuation, entrenched weaver dependence, and gave rise to the normalisation of work being precarious, ad-hoc and hand-to-mouth, with no real choice of alternative.

> "Basically, when they're busy, [the mills] throw them high, but as I say, I'm glad I'm not fully dependent on that now, because it's not a comfortable way of living with a family. Not knowing if they're coming with tweeds for you this week…when you've got a mortgage and everything, you know, it was getting pretty heavy… you're basically at the mill's mercy… That's the end of the story. You can't do anything… And most of the weavers are hand to mouth. It is the mills that are feeding that hand to mouth. As soon as they got wind [you were doing something different]…well the tweeds would dry up!" (Lucas, M, DW)

> "You might be empty for 10 to 14 days. You multiply that by a few months, and that's a serious dent in the wages…you're totally dependent upon the mill." (Stuart, M, DW)

This precarity challenges the idyllic imaginary of weaving life. It was a source of great anxiety which challenged the largely apolitical and romantic dominant framing of weaving work amongst my interviewees. As self-employed workers, weavers were free to take holiday, but knew doing so could impact the mill, damaging their working

relations. Weavers could work with any mill, but knew doing so might display disloyalty or unreliability to their existing issuer. They were free to complain, but knew doing so risked future work being apportioned to someone else. In sum, they had freedoms but no practical guarantee to exercise them without fear of retribution.

> "…the mills always owned the weavers like that, and always have treated them like slaves. They always have. It's no different to how it used to be…You're totally at their mercy. You step out of line and you won't get any tweeds…You can't put shoes on your kids' feet, you know?" (Luke, M, DW)

> "I know of other [weavers] that spoke out against things, and then they just never saw another tweed" (Lucas, M, DW)

> "… the internal politics came in; they were like if you're weaving for us, and you go off and weave for them, cheerio. Because then 'we' don't know if we give you a tweed to do and want it back next week, you might have five tweeds from that mill...Which also gives them an awful lot of power over the weavers" (Sue, F, DW)

> "you can't complain about [bad yarn], because you won't get a beam next week!" (Vanessa, F, SW/DW))

> "Well [the mills] don't give a crap…If you don't like the terms and conditions- well there are no terms and conditions - there are no papers [signed] or bits of paper or anything….If you want to go on holiday for a week, [you] usually lose three weeks work, because when the deliveries are...they work on their time, around you" (Tom, M, DW)

> "if you look after the mills, the mills will look after you." (Josh, M, DW)

With little evidence of paper trails or terms and conditions, this informality prevented real resistance, and instead entrenched a 'you scratch my back, I scratch yours' system of good faith. Weavers would accept demanding additional terms in anticipation of favour for future work. This, in effect, rewarded self-exploitation. Weavers accepted tight deadlines, 'urgent' tweeds, and extremely long hours to satisfy last-minute demands.

> "When [the mills] are busy they'll want you to work- maybe not Sunday, but every hour of the day just to get the tweed back. They don't care about you, you know…. they'll mark 'urgent' on the tweeds" (Noah. M, DW)

> "Sometimes there [are] emergency orders! And he will have a list of weavers that are on the emergency weaver list. I'm not on it, because I'm not prepared to weave a tweed 24 hours a day [or] weave through the night to get an order done. They've plenty of people that'll do that for them!" (Sue, F, DW)

This left some weavers feeling with little choice; knowing if they did not others would be prioritised. Being your own boss was therefore complicated- more titular than in practice- and the latent threat of worklessness from the mills disciplined weavers to comply. This model of competitive work allocation to isolated workers entrenched and exacerbated the individualism of the labour market, and cast fellow weavers locked into it, as competitors competing for their allocation. This thwarted potential collective resistance.

The AoHTW[40], the weaving trade union of sorts, lacked industry-wide membership, and whilst largely viewed well-meaning, was also thought ineffective. Many saw their closeness to mill management as problematic, viewed to hamper more radical and more critical calls for work improvement, whilst others mistrusted its leadership, questioning their decision making, and its membership fees and credibility in negotiations.

[40] The Association of Harris Tweed Weavers (AoHTW)

> "Some weavers were very, well they won't pay into it, or won't go to meetings." (Phil, M, DW)

> "They go round to the mills, to try and get the weaver a pay rise once a year, things like that. But it is a thankless task really" (Harry, M, DW)

> "…there is an Association, which it doesn't get the support of all of the weavers anyway. Not even half." (Dan, M, DW)

> "[The Weavers Association] mostly does nothing…if the weaver, or weavers go and start to make a noise to the mill, all the mill has to do is not give them any tweeds. So how can an Association, filled with weavers, negotiate with the mills if they say we would like a pay rise?" (Sam, M, SW/DW)

Yet despite lacking organised collectivity, weavers expressed collective issues, particularly regarding their pay and conditions. Despite historic pay increases, the pay mechanism of weavers- that of a standardised piece rate per volume - was viewed problematic. In good times, it allowed weavers to weave more and earn more, but should weavers encounter loom problems and weave more slowly, they could earn poorly, in some cases allegedly below minimum wage.

> "When it is going good, it is great, and it is up to yourself how much you earn. You just have to push yourself a wee bit more." (Stuart, M, DW)

This piece-rate system standardised payment per meterage on a method of production anything but regularised. Leaving aside the irregularity of work issue, weaving was uncertain. Working a loom for a set amount of time does not guarantee set output. Looms fail, parts brake, and yarns snap. This can be mitigated by stockpiling parts and good loom maintenance, but their risks are never eliminated. This forced downtime problematises the payment model; one which can result in making loss or less than minimum wage.

> "We get paid, well just over £3 a metre, per double width we're weaving. So even if we're weaving... well if the loom is going ok, you can bash out four, five, to six metres on the older looms, and the new looms you can get up to seven to eight meters, an hour…but if things aren't going OK, you could spend 10 hours just doing one metre, just trying to fix the loom! You're operating at quite a loss sometimes." (Sam, M, SW/DW)

> "You get paid by the metre…when I'm weaving here and everything is running the way it should be, I reckon I'd weave approximately 4 and 5 metres an hour…Sometimes you've problems with the yarn-breakages with the yarn. Of course, every time you stop, your wages stop." (Mark, M, DW)

> "…every time you've to get off the seat and start tying things back together and repairing things and making things work properly, you're not earning….you could be earning 13 to 15 pounds per hour, but of course your actual income on some tweeds is 6 or 7 pounds an hour because so many things go wrong..." (Luke, M, DW)

> "You can never guess what you're going to earn at the end of the week, at the end of the month, at the end of anything, because you don't know what work you're going to get and you don't know what condition the yarn is going to be in…you've just gotta go with the flow" (Kathryn, F, DW)

Weavers are paid for the preparatory stages - tying in and draught changes- and their piece rate incentivised speedy output; the better the faster weave per metre. However, regardless of loom down time or costs associated with faults and errors, the pay-per-metre remained the same. This pressurised weaving to be ever productive, in spite of the inevitability of loom downtime. As downtime was universal, some viewed this fair and meritocratic, rewarding the hardest working weavers, whilst others found it unfair.

> "It's feast or famine. For the last two years, I've earnt £10,000 a year and I've done every tweed I can possibly do." (Luke, M, DW)

> "You have to work very very hard to make a living wage. And if things go wrong- you're on your own…it's not a huge amount. You don't get what you deserve… The weaver doesn't get what he deserves" (Marcus, M, DW)

In addition to this pay model, weavers are responsible for their pensions, holiday and sick pay, a source of aggrievement. This was a particular point of reflection when weavers were assessing the ethics of their working relations, and the practice of 'self' employment which was largely integrated with the employment of the mill.

> "I've been self-employed since I was 17- that's quite a long time…This is REALLY not self-employment. They call you that so they don't have to pay you any sick pay and holiday pay, but this isn't self-employment. This is all the negative without the positive!" (Vanessa, F, SW/DW)

> "I'm self-employed for tax purposes, but I really work for the mill. And if the mill doesn't give me work … I can't be a weaver unless I get work from the mill." (Noah, M, DW)

> "…we pay our own taxes and things like that, but we're completely and utterly reliant on the mill for our livelihood. We can't just go and contact a customer, and produce our own yarn, and do our own warping, or anything like that. We're just this bank of people that the mill use for that stage in their production process" (Kathryn, F, DW)

> "when you are self-employed, you can do what you like…if they don't give you a tweed, well you're UN-employed." (Aidan, M, SW)

> "… basically they're your sole supplier…if they don't have work for you, you don't have work…But you're technically self-employed, so you don't have holiday pay or sick pay, or anything like that, but you get paid for the work you do and that's it… there are no benefits like that and of course you're liable for your own tax and national insurance. So basically, you are a business… but you're really limited with your supplier…you should be able to get as much supply as you want, but they tend to fall out with you if you go to somebody else, and then you don't get tweeds off of anybody." (Sue, F, DW)

Their functional mill integration blurred the boundaries of the weaver's terms of employment: the promise of self-employment, of being your own boss, choosing suppliers, negotiating terms, and enjoying control over work life belies the reality many face. This was acutely evident during slumps when weavers were unable to claim unemployment support, despite lacking work from their sole supplier, because they were self-employed.

> "… you couldn't sign on, on the dole money! It was classed as you're self-employed, so you couldn't get a single penny. They were really struggling because there was a lot of tough times." (Grace, F, DW)

> "…because the only ones that REALLY take the knock are the weavers... weavers do appear to be the bottom of the pile." (Vanessa, F, SW/DW)

These grievances are all the more tense when, in brand narratives, weavers and mills are cast as equal partners, but in practice weavers depend upon mills on terms without any of the similar benefits of their mill counterparts. Weavers self-perceived themselves helping the mill succeed, but not equally sharing in that success.

> "There is a lot of animosity about…the people down the mill get holidays, and bonus and the weavers they don't get any bonus or holiday. And if it wasn't woven, *they* wouldn't get a bonus!" (Aidan, M, SW)

> "[At HTH] it was £1400 bonus at Christmas, and have their Summer holiday. The weaver is doing as much work as them *for them*, and we weren't getting nothing." (Lucas, M, DW)

> "The mills look at the mills making a profit. But we look at them making a profit as a by-product of us making money as well. But it is a by-product of us, and an *aspiration* for them!" (Derek, M, DW, emphasis added)

This struggle to make a profit depicted weaving work as decidedly precarious. Many had to resort to supplementary incomes for stability. Whilst secondary incomes are nothing new for weavers with crofting and fishing being known examples, these combining careers were. Far from the rural romance of croft or sea, supplementary incomes were more mundane; bus drivers, firefighters, funeral directors and postal workers. Whilst this employment was not always motivated by money, secondary incomes inbuilt greater resilience into weaving finances, especially in times of industrial decline.

These precarious working lives shared striking parallels to the supposedly 'new' precarity of labour emerging within critical geographies of work. Self-employed and in isolation, weavers relied upon a coordinating intermediary for work, which was precarious, unevenly distributed, problematically paid and dependent upon a singular contractor. Their individualised labour market salved resistance and collectivity, and disciplined workers largely through the latent threat of retributive work distribution. This shares clear likeness with other industry examples whose similar 'zero-hour', precarious, and ad-hoc (self)employment has been recently legally challenged. This posed a perceived threat to the industry.

> "..the mills [need to be] be very cautious around a potential class action from the weavers for historic

> holiday pay, PAYE and all of these things….the sort of Uber Case, and now Pimlico and Deliveroo and all of these guys… the analogies are extremely similar. And I think if I was a meddlesome weaver, and there are a few, who are sitting listening to Radio 2 all day …they are an intelligent, intelligent bunch of men and women, and a lot of them are seeing the connections. A few of them are aggrieved with how they are being treated. I worry for the mills, that they haven't taken that message seriously." (HTA Spokesperson 1)

For an industry reliant upon its promotion as traditional and wholesome, these discontenting voices pose real threat. Should they find ability to collectively articulate their grievances, the impact could be transformative, and as the Uber and Deliveroo cases attest, could serve as an impetus for legal challenge and change. But as the mills continue, in the minds of some weavers, to place self-interest over their collective health and of the industry this hope for a better working settlement remains just that: a hope and a dream.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter began with the popular consumer imaginary of Harris Tweed; handmade by traditional island folk quaintly weaving on their crofts. It is a romantic image of life and labour, compelling to its consumers and central to the promotional storytelling of the cloth. Through the weaving voices of their working lives, this chapter challenges this imaginary. Through rooting weaving in the perspectives and experiences of its labourers, a more politically, culturally and economically complex story emerges, riven with power imbalances and inequities. Central to this are the power relations of the labour relations weavers navigate- a story too often hidden from view. In which, the practical integration of weavers into mill production demonstrates industrial practices which problematise weaving (self) employment.

Specifically, these weaving voices often contend with the dominant imaginaries of craft weaving- its popular discourses and branded 'realities'- to tell a more critical story. In which, weaving life is less romantic; a tale of isolated, individualised and

precarious working, governed largely by the actions of the mills. Through a discussion of pay, work distribution and loom acquisition, mills are shown to exercise great functional labour market power, which problematises the self-employment practices of weavers; who lack choice, autonomy, and practical ability to exercise the freedoms of self-employment free from fear of retribution. These accounts speak to experiences of the political and cultural economies of the industry, which undermine the integrity of the branded story; that of unproblematic romantic connected work. Growing awareness of these problems poses a real threat to the reputation of the brand, but provides hope that in doing, and through their articulation, the industry might work to improve weaving terms and conditions.

Chapter 7
Technology

7.0 Introduction

Harris Tweed is a story founded upon hand-crafted artisanal weaving, as much as on the materiality of the cloth. It is a tale woven from stories of manual labour and manual tools, of treadle looms, hand-darning, picking, and its stamp-sealed promise of quality. The use of hand-based working differentiates it from mass manufacture and production is showcased through human craft. This chapter focuses on the technologies that underpin the production of Harris Tweed. This chapter focuses specifically on contemporary technological practices. Section 7.1 reflects on my ethnographic encounters with the mills and reveals that they belie dominant narratives and are less about tradition, craft, quaintness and tradition, and very much more about large scale, mechanised and industrialised production. Section 7.2 focuses specifically on the loom, and reveals two distinct divisions of labour and working experience. Section 7.3 reflects on the practices of tinkering and part procurement, as well as the tensions that exist when attempting to make a modest income working on unpredictable looms. Section 7.4 reflects on the pressures of weaving speed and efficiency alongside the need for quality authentication and assurance.

7.1 Technological Present

Harris Tweed is no longer an entirely hand-made cloth produced by home-working crofters. It is a fabric with great heritage and history, but one that has evolved and been transformed. Today, much of the production of Harris Tweed is barely recognisable from its hand-processed past (see Chapter 5), and reveals new technologies and forms of mechanisation that have enabled new fabric patterns, weights and finishes. Whilst the process of manipulating wool to cloth remains broadly the same, the technologies used to do so have transformed. They are more advanced, larger in scale, more technologically intensive, and are no longer entirely undertaken by hand. Instead a range of processes, including dying, carding, spinning and finishing [waulking] are largely mechanised and automated.

The mechanical and technological transformation of the production of Harris Tweed begins in the mill ‘sheds’ (HTA, 2020). The mills are, contrary to popular imagination, large, noisy and imposing. One is in an industrial estate and the other two are alongside residential areas. All three are similar to the size of industrial units, and consist of multiple buildings which house large industrial milling machinery variable in capability and modernity (Figure 7.1, 7.2, 7.3).



Figure 7.1: Photograph of the largest mill on the island, Harris Tweed Hebrides. Source: Personal Photography (2018)



Figure 7.2: A photo of the loading bay of KML in the industrial estate in which it is based. Source: Personal Photography (2018)



Figure 7.3: A photograph of the Carloway Mill with a batch of delivered wool. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

Scottish virgin wool arrives by the batch load, via a lorry at the mill (Figure 7.4). These would be placed into metal barrels and would be washed prior to dyeing. The washed wool would then be placed into industrial drums and dyed using synthetic dyestuffs. After this, the coloured wool bales, known as cakes, would then be dried using large industrial dryers (Figure 7.5). The dried wool would then enter a drying drum, via an extraction flue, in which various proportions of different coloured wool would be mixed in accordance to the 'recipe' of the tweed (Figure 7.6). This would then be carded, using heavy carding machinery comprised of rollers which mechanically spin and blend (Figure 7.7). The wool is then twisted, dried, and split into stands (Figure 7.8) which are then fed into the spinning machines ready for spinning. Lastly, spun yarn is 'coned' – placed onto cones- which are then stored by colour in the mills yarn stores for weaving (Figure 7.9)



Figure 7.4: Photography of Mill Processing. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

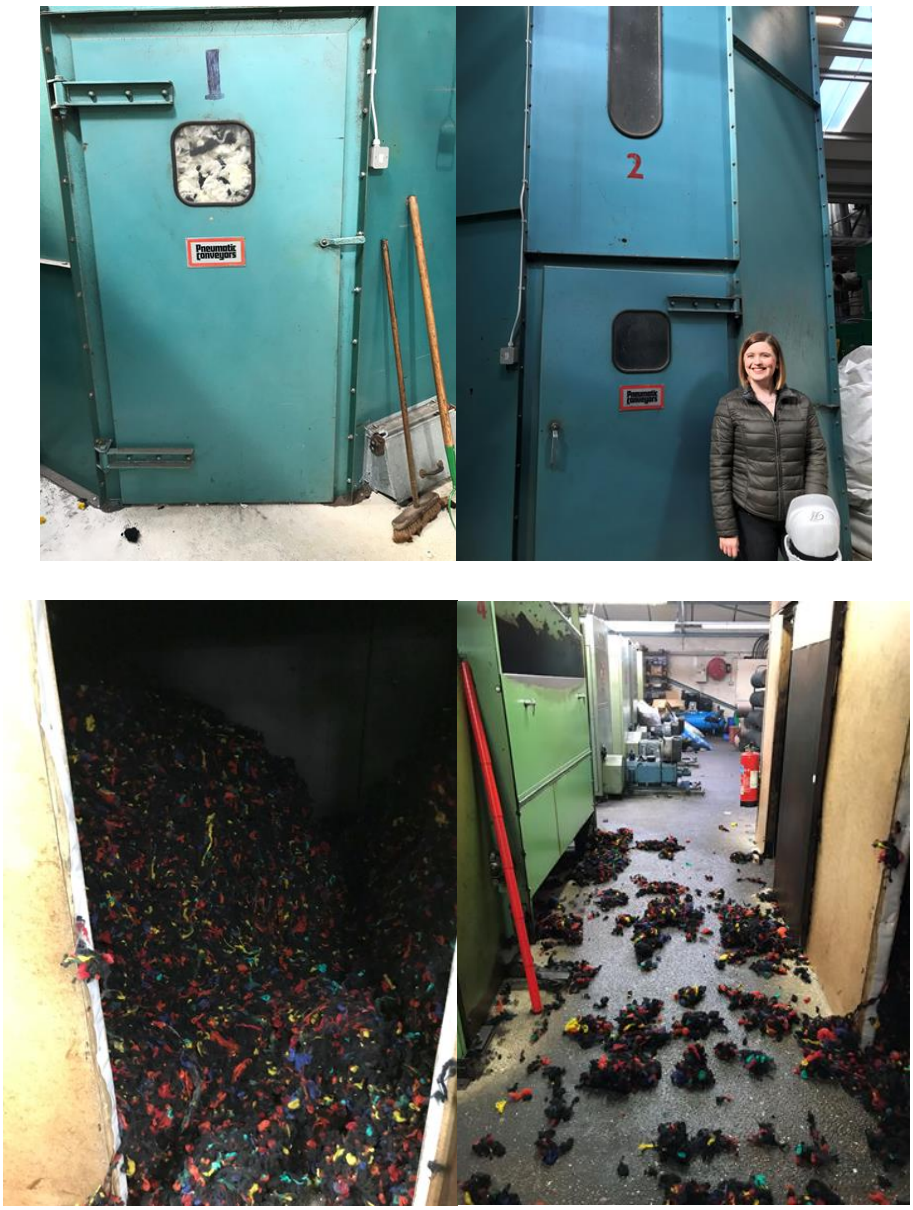


Figure 7.5: Photography of Mill Processing. Source: Prersonal Photography (2018)





Figure 7.6: Photography of Mill Processing. Source: Personal Photography (2018)



Figure 7.7: Photography of Mill Processing. Source: Personal Photography (2018)



Figure 7.8: Photography of Mill Processing. Source**:** Personal Photography (2018)





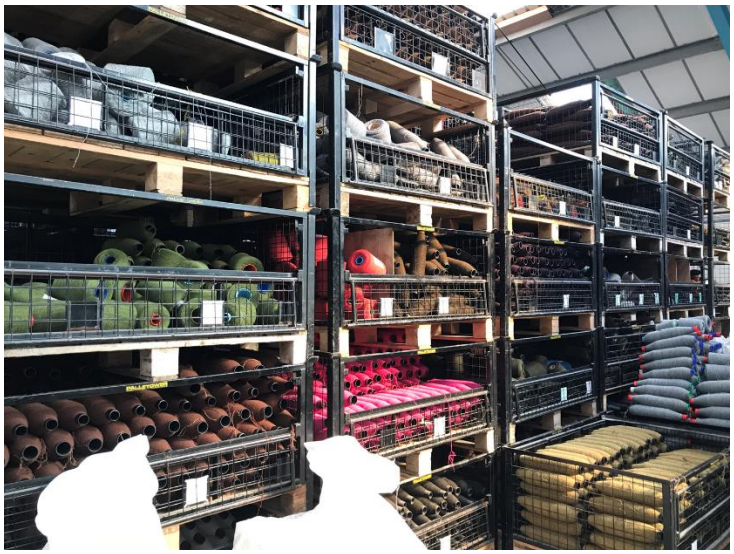




Figure 7.9: Photography of Mill Processing. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

Mill tours were spaces of technological and spatial integration that were much more advanced than anticipated. Mills showcased machines and the individual knowledges and skills of their workers, and explained their operations in terms of expertise at specific functions. The organisation of the site sought to integrate the workflow and the machines such that each production process – from wool to yarn - followed a predictable pattern. That being said, even the most efficient mills described their production as inefficient when compared to industry standards. As a representative from Harris Tweed Hebrides (HTH) explained:

> "So it was at that point, at 2006, or 2008…at that point, our Chief Executive, [redacted], got together with [redacted], our Chairman, and [redacted], our main shareholder. And [redacted] [had] been doing the groundwork on the island, talking to colleagues he knew in the industry. He is a former Chief Executive at the HTA, and a former weaver trainer and a former weaver himself! So he certainly knows the industry very well. He had got together with key people from other production mills, and at the moment we still have in our business, [redacted], on production side, we have [redacted] on Finishing, and we have [redacted] [redacted] in Production and Sales. *We got together a strong*

> *production team.* [redacted] kindly provided the biggest share of funding, to allow HTH to get established. We purchased what at the time was a derelict mill; the mill you see here in Shawbost. It hadn't been trading for about 2 years before we moved back in. And there was no finishing department. So, in 2007 we took ownership, and 2008 was the first year we really sold Harris Tweed into the market. We were at a 'zero' start in 2008. So, 2009 was the worst year of output, and the other two mills that are still with us and are still trading; their output had got so low, we were just starting to find orders, and get our production up and running… *Our mill wasn't made in a visitor friendly [way]…or even production friendly (laughs). If you were building it now, you'd maybe have everything lined up in the right order, but we don't* (laughs)." (HTH Spokesperson, emphasis added)

Despite this general lack of spatial organisation which mills argued could be improved, their operations still delivered certainty, calculability and dependability of production practice, as well as a regularised rhythm of production. This was governed largely by the operating load capacities of the machines, which required dependable and formalised input processes for dependable outputs. Mills that best configured their operations efficiently were best able to secure large customer orders.

> "We're producing design for cloth, and we're taking that to the global marketplace, and we're trying to secure what we would class in the industry as volume orders. But in reality, out there in the commercial world of fabrics, it's still a tiny, tiny volume; little orders." (HTH Spokesperson)

This buyer driven model of manufacture reinforced the need for mills to have calculatable and dependable production. Buyers purchased agreed tweed patterns, volumes and colours through contracts that were signed prior to weaving. Far from

leaving room for the quirks of unpredictable craft method, buyers wanted exacting and professional standards, and mills worked hard to demonstrate dependability in their machined operations.

> "At [the buyers] request- [we] went to [redacted]- they were blown away by the kit and machinery- this is the best of Italian- a bloody fortune must have been spent on this place. When we got into the car...outside...and in the mill with [their production team], and they were so impressed and interested, but we got into the car…they went- just 'no soul'. No soul. It is soulless. I mean it has the best machinery, we would kill for this kit, but no. No soul. We then went to [redacted]. They were blown away by it- they loved it...they were so blown away by a young designer [redacted]… and got into the car, and they were gushingly blown away by what they had seen in [redacted]. I mean…a couple didn't have good English … so there was a lot of gesticulating…and they went like this *motions explosion and makes sound of boom*. It was amazing, but it needed to be blown up, in terms of the fabric of the building and stuff. Then they went to [redacted] and you know, they found their partner there." (HTA Spokesperson 1)

Buyers were seen as impossibly demanding. They craved the human and uniquely crafted nature of the cloth, but demanded that it be produced with calculability, reliability and dependability, in keeping with their tight deadlines and high industry standards. They fell in love with the romance and history of the technologies and production of the cloth and its imaginary, but demanded that it was produced to the technological standards expected of a modern industry.

In contrast to mill cloth buyers, the end consumer imaginaries of mill work are more traditional, based on a belief that workers operated machines by hand. This representation of mill work is routinely evoked in publicity materials (Figure 7.10 and 7.11), in which workers are close to both cloth and machine. They are machine

masters. However, it became apparent during tours that workers tended not to directly manipulate the raw material: the machines did. Instead, they undertook more functional tasks of machine maintenance. They were machine minders who attended to their mechanics, and who loaded and unloaded materials, and moved them along the production line and ensured optimal production.

This technological reality was captured during my field photography, which predominately evidenced machines at work without workers (Figure 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9). The images sit in contrast to the promoted visions that centralise the mill worker, and focus on manual interventions by hand (Figure 7.10 and 7.11). Mill work is defined through machines, but they are erased in the dominant promotion of the work, which instead foreground images of workers and cloth.

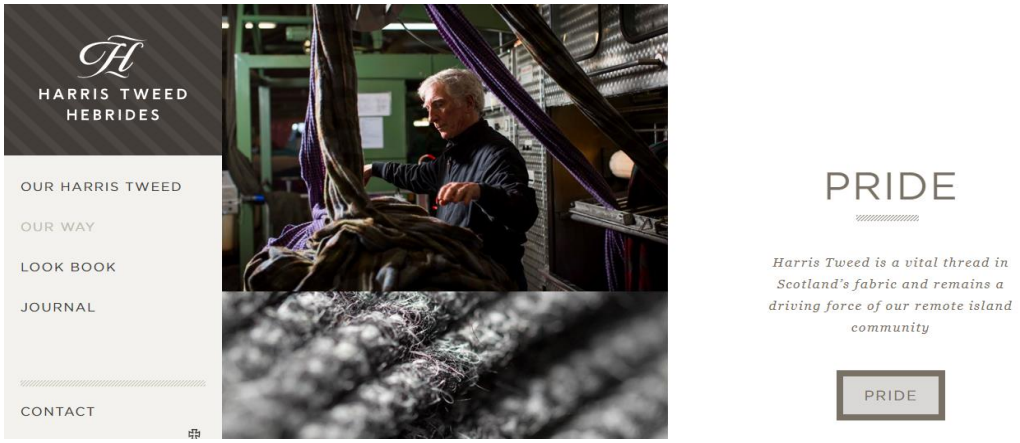


Figure 7.10: Harris Tweed Hebrides, featuring imagery of a worker and the mill at work. Source: (Harris Tweed Hebrides, 2020)

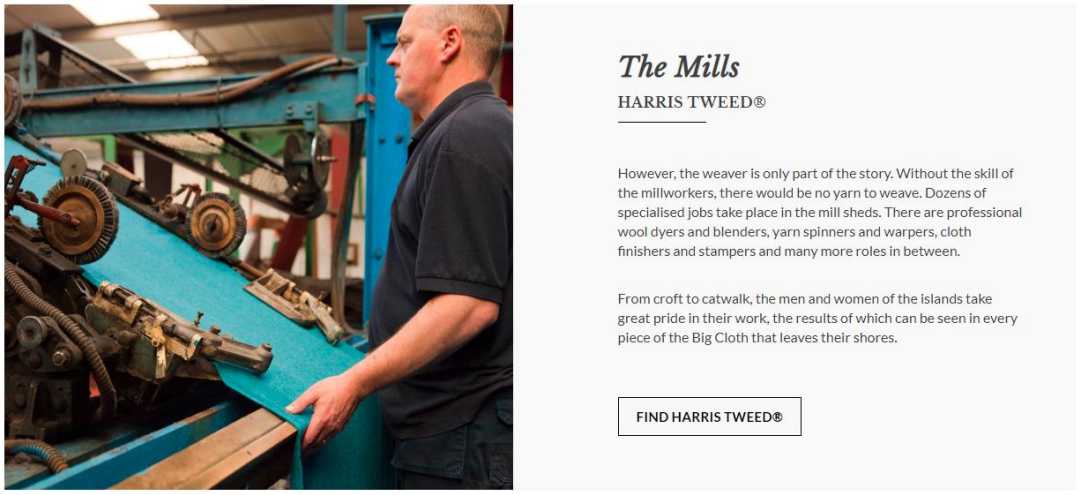


Figure 7.11: A screenshot from the Harris Tweed Authority, depicting and describing the work of the mills. Source: (HTA , 2020)

It is in this context that the inclusion of mill workers in mill promotion commands great power. Their work is foregrounded in the publicly promoted vision of mill work and technological practice. They subtly warp consumer understanding of it- intentionally or not- and skew the realities that underpin the spaces, technologies and work practices that occur in 'the mill'. This is not to say that the technologies and work practices that do exist need to be hidden. They were positive places, perceived by their employees as enjoyable places to work. Many described their employment as being part of a 'community' defined by openness and friendship, and mills were investors in people and important island employers.

> "Well working in this mill, we're all very happy together…Well department, upon department, you passed through them; everybody knows each other. It's a very family-friendly atmosphere." (HTH Mill Worker 3)

> "I was spinning first of all…I really enjoyed it. … It is nice to work with actual tweed, instead of the yarn, but either one; both were amazing. It was really good… I want to stay in here, and carry on learning, in here….*I have learnt a few of the machines*, and it would be nice

to at least have a rough idea of everything." (HTH Mill Worker 1)

This narrative of machines- of what they did, how they worked, and where they came from- was important, and constructed an everyday discourse of mill operations. It was a narrative told to me across all three mills, and emerged as an everyday storytelling convention of mill work. This story was framed by a mixture of functional explanation of how the machine works in relation to production, as well as where the machine was sourced from. The geography of the machinery became important displays of expertise (Figure 7.12); a machine from Bradford, Huddersfield, Italy. In doing so, these machines enlaced the tour with geographical stories of their own provenance, which were enlisted in order to assert the manufacturing excellence of each mill. In doing so, mills told a story to visitors not of quaint humble production, but of efficient production quality and excellence, in which they sourced the best machines, invested in the best skills, and produced the best products



Figure 7.12: Machines from mill tours. These were cited as points of interest by my guide. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

7.2 Looms

Similar to the story of modernisation, mechanisation and automation of mills, loom technologies have evolved beyond their early traditions of *Bearst Bheag* and *Beart Mhor* production (Figure 7.13). Faced with growing competition from producers using newer methods and technologies, newer looms were adopted to better compete with them. Today the industry relies on two loom models, the Domestic Hattersley loom- of which there are two variants (Mark 1 and Mark 2) – and the Bonas Griffiths loom.



Figure 7.13: Historical photography of the *Bearst Bheag (left) and Beart Mhor (right*) Source: Thompson (1969) in Kean-Kim (2015)

The Domestic Hattersley Mark 1 and Mark 2 (herein Hattersley looms) superseded the *Bearst Bheag* and *Beart Mhor*. Introduced in 1919, The Mark 1 was an innovation which enhanced weaving production. It was faster and more capable of complex weaves. Its introduction was particularly important as agricultural subsidies were being removed. This resulted in the dissolution of many of the island's agrarian export markets[41]. In this context, the adoption of new loom technology enhanced industry productivity and provided important employment in amongst a challenging island political economy (Hunter, 2001, pp. 84-85).

The treadle[42] power of the Hattersley loom allowed weavers to produce speedier and at greater volume, at least when compared with what was achievable by previous hand-chord models. Their 36 inches of reed space and single shuttle enabled standardisation of cloth-width; a single width, approximately 90cm/36inches. The materiality and structure of the loom technology created this industry standard. The Hattersley Mark 1 provided the mainstay of the industry for a number of decades. Yet between 1970 and 1975, production of Harris Tweed fell by some two and half million yards (-50%). This spoke to external pressures of the marketplace, and contraction within global garment and textile manufacturing. Resultantly, Harris Tweed output dropped, and

[41] The Russian Revolution removed the traditional export markets of Russia and Eastern Europe, for herring- a mainstay of the islands fishing economy.
[42] A lever-worked, foot pedalled means of imparting motion to a machine.

small family businesses consolidated into larger conglomerates. The industry's decline saw depopulation, unemployment and a deterioration in the island economy. (Hunter, 2001, p.288). It is in this context, that the industry restructured and innovated, and introduced two new loom technologies.

The first was the Hattersley Mark 2 loom. Delivered in 1980, the loom was updated and equipped with more efficient fixtures. Whilst still producing single-width cloth, the Mark 2 had a larger revolving shuttle box for larger weft pirns, it had a bottom shaft newly supported by self-aligning bearings, and had tappets mounted on the counter shaft. These modifications made the Mark 2 more efficient and speedier by comparison (Blackhouse, 2020). Yet by the late 1980s/1990s, the industry continued to contract. This led to further decline and amalgamation. By 1991,the total stampage of cloth dipped to its lowest on record - 1.38 million meters (HTA, 1991) - and contributed to an industrial domino effect; a decline in stampage, a decline the income of the Harris Tweed Association, and a reduced ability to promote and protect the cloth which contributed to further decline (Hunter, 2001).

Consumers demanded larger, lighter and more versatile cloth unachievable by the Hattersley's capabilities (Hunter, 2001, p.339). By the 1990s, some argued for the introduction of a larger and more capable 'double-width' loom; The Bonas Griffiths loom (herein Griffiths/Double-Width). Larger than the Hattersley, it produced double-width cloth approximately 180cm/72 inches in length. It was pedal powered, akin to a bike with chain, and was cleaner, quieter and more technologically sophisticated, and produced more rapid, standardised output. Their introduction was not uncontroversial.

> "[the mills and HTA] were introducing this new double-width loom. This would have been in the [1990s]. We had no work, and [there] were courses going, to then learn for 6 months- we're all on the dole and they're offering £125 a week for six weeks, you know! We were up for *anything*. Everyone! Lots of people. I did the course. Maybe there was only 150 weavers then- but

> everyone trained, because the money was so good" (Noah, M, DW, emphasis added)
>
> "Well what happened was, when the double-width come out first of all…it had a cutter in the middle, so it was weaving two single-widths… [My friend] was one of the first lot to buy the double-width, and he wouldn't weave for them because he'd worked out that the last one- the mill was getting it for nothing. What you were paid, in relation- you know he had the Hattersley- right? He was weaving with the Hattersley, and he was told if you set up the new loom, you would get beams of cloth. That was fine, he put the Hattersley to one side- semi-dismantled it, and assembled the double-width. …he told them he will only weave if it is double width, and he won't do the side by side, because it was through what other people were being paid, that he realised he was being conned as far as he was concerned. He was being conned…. [the mill] said, if you won't weave side by side, you won't get any." (Stuart, M, DW)

Loom technologies were adopted on an individual basis, in keeping with the self-employed business model of weavers who are responsible for their own loom purchase, but each weaver assessed loom technology on their promise and risks of future work. For Noah, this was positively appraised. He was unemployed, and it represented to him hope of future work made more appealing with incentivisation. For Stuart's friend however, it was negative. It represented a politics of work which paid less per woven metre, and which he resisted but was knottily caught up within technological integration which made this difficult. In this sense, technological adoption (or not) was laced with a politics of work which justified and rationalised it.

Living histories of experienced technological change are particularly important. They remind us that technological change is rarely as smooth or sweeping as its histories are written. These disunited experiences of loom innovation suggest that caution must be exercised when imagining a complete technological displacement over time.

Rather, they attest to more incremental technological developments - some adopting, some not, some resisting, some not, and the industry messily evolving. Technological adoption and the visibility of its practice are therefore always contextual. Each loom represented a politics of weaving work, and the lacking universal adoption across the industry demonstrated that there is no universal politics amongst weavers. Rather, it exposed a defining split down loom-lines, between those who 'wished to retain the traditional method of single-width weaving, and those who recognised the need to adapt' to market pressures and technologically innovate through the double-width loom, to best yield to them (Hunter, 2001, p.338). Today, this split defines the division of labour, and involves different practices, patterns of work, and technologies. A minority weave on single-width Hattersley looms, and the majority of weave on double-width Griffiths looms (Appendix 2).

7.3 Loom Divisions of Labour

Hattersley weavers produce single-width weaves and are known as 'Independent' weavers. They are extensively involved in the production of the cloth; designing their own tweeds, weaving their cloth, and selling to their own customers, using the mills for their yarn and finishing (Figure 7.14).

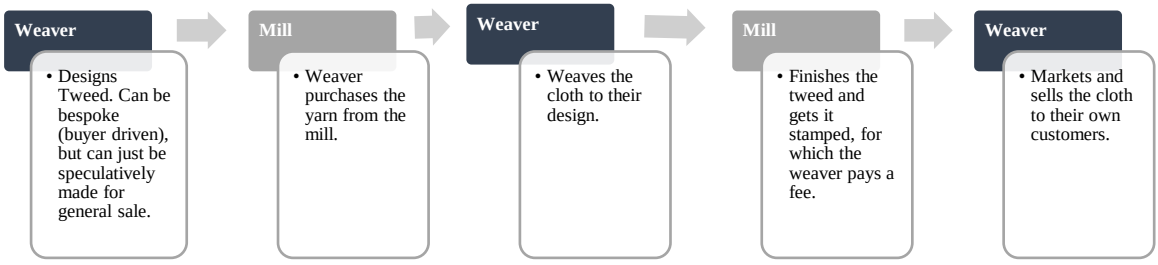


Figure 7.14: Flowchart of an independent/single-width weaver to display their integration with the mill. Source: Personal (2021)

Griffiths weavers are 'mill'-commissioned double-width weavers who are more integrated with the commercial activity of the mill (Figure 7.15). Mills provide them with their patterns, designs, and yarn, in return for them providing the weaving labour on their loom. Double-width weaving is best seen a subcontracted service part of a customer-driven business model of the mill.

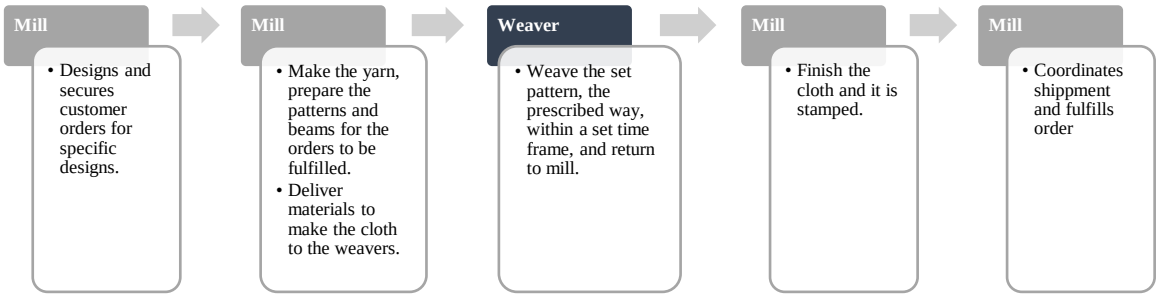


Figure 7.15: Flowchart of mill/double-width weavers to display their integration with the mill. Source: Personal (2021).



Figure 7.16: Photographs of Hattersley Looms (Mark One, Left, and Mark Two, Right. Source: Personal Photography (2019)

Looms defined the working lives and practices of weavers. For Hattersley weavers (Figure 7.16), looms revealed a tactility and intimacy to their practice. Weaving was sensory and dependent upon tacit cues, concentration and focus, and was a bodily and mental task.

> "You have to *watch* - even the smallest smallest things. And think, what the hell happened there. That box didn't turn [for example]. Hold on. You stop. You think. You go and have a *look see*. You look at x amount of things. Then the next time you see that has fallen out. If

> something is clinched together, to stay in your things, after a while it moves off! It just comes out…I know the sound of the box when it turns. It is a *makes noise*. And I can say, that isn't right, something has happened, before it gets worse!" (Aidan, M, SW, emphasis added)

> "Well on a Hattersley, you just have, well hands on, and you can see edge to edge. And anything, knots, flaws, you can see, and you can darn them out" (Ronald, M, SW)

> "… if you're weaving for the mills, darners check it…[dw] is kind of too big, to watch properly. Whereas that, and you will see any single-width weaver, *constantly checking* and you will see their hands are *constantly rubbing* it- you can feel any imperfections. You can *feel* if there is a wee knot or whatever. So you're immediately more involved in it, because you are *constantly touching it, feeling it, rubbing your hands on it, and you are watching* for the shuttles running out, so you don't want to be losing them, and *you are just involved*. You can't sit there and daydream, or watch TV. You have to be focussed on it. I like that. I like being involved in it" (Laura, F, SW)

The more basic capability of the Hattersley looms demand attentiveness, with bodily evocations of feeling, watching, touching and being in tune with the loom creating a narrative of synergistic working between loom and weaver. It demanded mental concentration and bodily inter-connectedness.



Figure 7.17: Photography of a Griffiths Loom, on display in the Brand Room of the HTA. Source: Personal Photography (2018).

Double-width weavers by contrast described work as bodily but mentally disconnected. Their weaving was defined through their mechanical knowledge of their loom (Figure 7.17), and their competency self-adjudged by its productiveness. Most discussion was of their preparatory practices and reflected on loom maintenance. Day-to-day weaving was monotonously described, with loom and rapier fault alarms allowing weavers to disconnect mentally from the work and complete other tasks whilst weaving.

> "If you weave on a Griffiths loom, to be perfectly honest, you could have quite an *intelligent monkey* to do that... you sit there and pedal" (Vanessa, F, SW/DW, emphasis added)
>
> "I'm at the stage with my loom, that I'm just going through the motions… Now it is just like any job- you just go into auto-response. *Auto-pilot.* You know exactly what's wrong, and how many times exactly you've got to pedal and pull back!" (Brad, M, DW, emphasis added)
>
> "I have Sky TV in there, in the loom shed, and there's the radio as well…It is good to have the radio on through the day, but it is good to have the telly on too. But the

> telly can be a bit of a distraction too, because you are watching the telly, and if it misses a shot, the alarm goes off." (Phil, M, DW)

Double-width weaving was described as working on 'auto-pilot' – mindless pedalling- that suggests a real disconnection in weaving work, where weavers were generally disinterested, disconnected, and distracted watching television, listening to the radio, and reading books. Their work demanded only their bodily-motored power. These descriptions of everyday practices are at odds with how weaving is imagined and portrayed as a labour of love, romanticised and engaging.

These everyday practices of weaving work remain hidden behind an illusion that is historical, presented through a specific technological vision of black and white imagery, croft houses and Hattersley (and more historical) looms. It presents a compelling technological vision as representative of practice which melds history with heritage, now and then, to imply the dominance of non-salient practices and technologies.

These historical technological visions do a lot of authorial work (Figure 7.18), and reinforce a romantic imaginary of weaving practices and technologies, one that is small, always quaint, always romantic. The problem is not so much that these practices are not present in the industry. The critical issue is that the dominant representation is misconstrued as representative of the many contemporary practices now found. Promoted histories meld indistinguishably into practice which poorly reflect the complex practices of work, technologies, and visions of labour which underpin them. To learn more of the practices an everyday account of loom life must be sought which transcends these representations, and which reveals them to be more politically and economically complex and problematic.

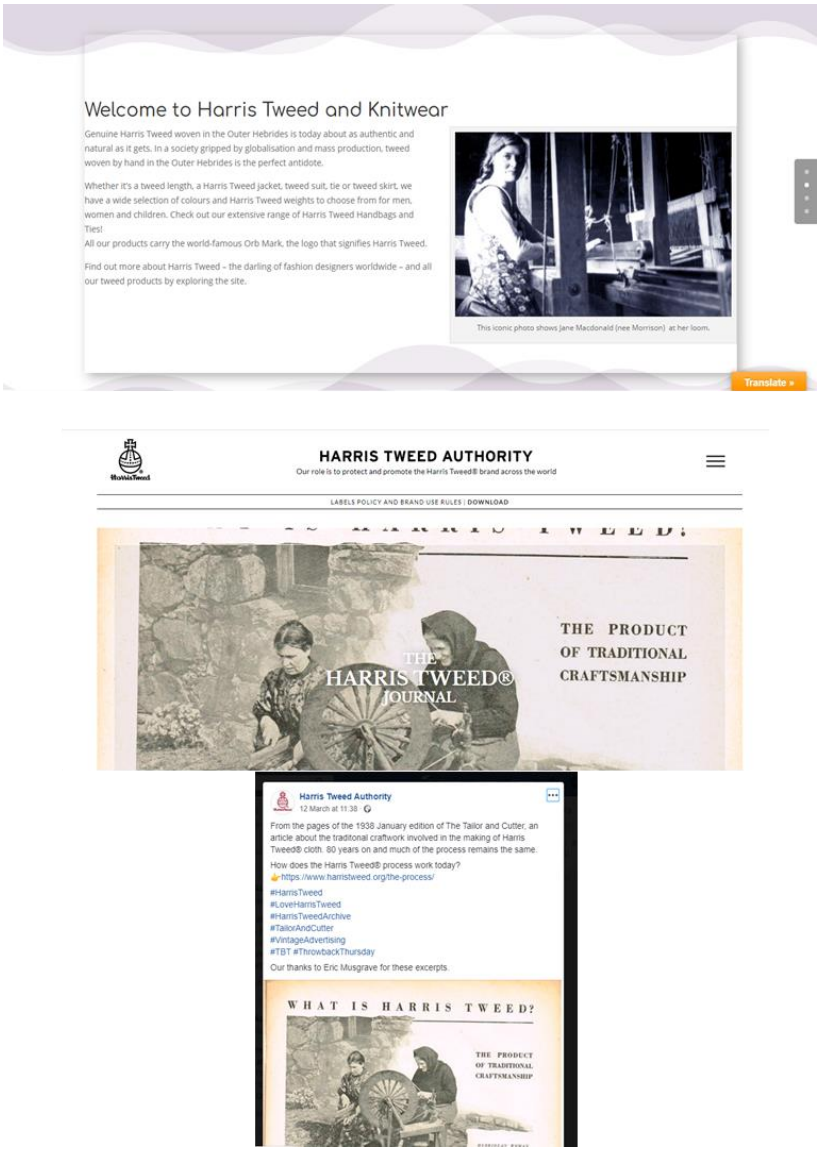


Figure 7.18: Historical visions featured within promotional material of Harris Tweed. Source: (Harris Tweed Knitwear, 2020, HTA, 2020)

7.4 Tinkering and Parts

Everyday practices were defined by the loom, operating it and dealing with its challenges. Weaving mastery was defined by a command of its unpredictability, and something fabled by its promotions; ‘each loom has its own sound and idiosyncrasies and only the weaver will know how to get the best from it’ (HTA, 2020). Yet beyond this narrative of quirky interconnection, weaving was seen more mundane. Being a ‘good’ weaver, was typified as one who cared for and maintained their loom regularly. Looms were unreliable and temperamental. Yet, upon them, weavers were expected to produce regularised consistent product. This was an uneasily reconciled tension,

whereby weavers would have to enlist their mechanical prowess and good loom care routines to ensure a highly functioning and productive loom.

> "I oil it every day, and sometimes twice a day. Cream bits and pieces[43]. It has given me no problems… but there are other guys, who don't do any maintenance, who get it wrong, on the loom, or that's wearing out, but no. I keep on top of it. Every day! It is good." (Phil, M, DW)

> "…60% science, 40% black art (laughs). Sometimes it will just do weird things. And I don't know what it has done. And then it will stop doing weird things, and I won't know why it has stopped doing weird things. But it does… the loom is a beat unto itself." (Charles, M, SW)

> "There is no guarantee that your loom…well you might leave it tonight, and you might go it tomorrow morning, and there will be something wrong with it. You have these scenarios with it, and you just don't know. It is the way it is. There is nothing *certain* about it..." (Harry, M, DW, emphasis added)

> "If you look after the loom, the loom will look after you!" (Josh, M, DW)

Weaving involves moving parts, moving bodies and moving materials. No matter how good weavers are at coordinating these effectively, warps inevitably snap, wefts wane, and belts break. Looms wear, parts tear, and mechanics need maintenance, and it was the job of weavers to react to these, and consistently make their production as efficient as possible. Weavers had to make unpredictable machines as predictably dependable as they could. In this vein, weavers 'tinkered' looms and altered their mechanics, doing so to enhance their efficacy, adjusting loom settings and operations to enhance them.

[43] Slang used to describe the practices of putting grease/oil onto the moving parts of the loom to aid the smooth running of it.

This was an ongoing ‘tweaking’ process, of trials and errors, involving time, energy and expense. Yet, regardless of how well weavers did this, weavers inevitably encountered problems.

> “This loom is close to 60 years old, and it is still going strong. It was a wreck when I got it- a lot of work and money went into it to clean it up and fix it” (Sam, M, SW/DW)

> “[The looms] can be very temperamental. This one I have to say, it is an old machine, and I have done a lot of work… [but it] has been very very good. I’ve done a lot to it… being able to do it myself, is a huge advantage.” (Dan, M, DW)

> “Usually the only things that wear on the looms are the guides and the rapiers- these are the things that are moving all the time. They are the first things that go usually. Most of the other things... you have the odd weft. Detector wires, you have to replace those, but nine times out of ten, you are talking about guides and rapiers. The parts that are constantly moving all the time. Belts and things like that. Those things can be expensive, pretty expensive.” (Josh, M, DW)

When parts break, weavers must procure replacements and endure the inevitable downtime awaiting their arrival. To mitigate against this, weavers keep a small stock of spare parts. To order parts, weavers navigated a heavily intermediated marketplace, investing large sums of money and time doing so. Parts were accessed via five routes; the mill, the HTA, the Association of Harris Tweed Weavers (AoHTW), second-hand looms, and Griffiths; the loom manufacturer.

The preferred access route for spare parts was through the mills. Mills kept a small stock of loom parts and sold them to weavers at cost price. This was seen largely in self-interest as weavers were practically integrated into mill production. As such, weaver down time was mill down time. Weavers would phone their commissioning

mill with a spare request. If available, the mill would deliver it through their existing networks along with the next beam and yarn delivery to their homes. If unavailable, it would be ordered and delivered as soon as possible. Mills were the preferred access route for spare parts because of their practical integration with weavers. This framed their mill as the common sense provider of spares, because of their ease of access.

> "I need spare parts, and the mill drivers will drop it off….if you need parts, [I] *just* phone the mill, and ask for [redacted], and you tell her what you want, and they sort it out. She will have it on the lorry, if not that day, but the next day... They even post it. Yeah, they will post it." (Grace, F, DW)

The HTA also sold spares at cost price, however, it was less preferable to mills. Weavers had very little day-to-day interaction with the HTA, who were rather seen as 'inspectors' and 'stampers'. Their little interaction made engaging with them an 'additional' tasks, which weavers went out of their way for. This was particularly acute when, for some weavers, visiting the HTA offices in Stornoway involved a 100-mile trip. Whilst the HTA utilised informal delivery networks for their parts- such as on buses – they were comparatively less convenient to mills, who had already in place an operational integrated delivery network.

> "[The mills] are not bad with me actually; same with the HTA. If I need a part, and if they have a part…they will just stick it on the bus. It then arrives at my house, essentially. It might not be the same day, but it will be the day after!" (Brad, M, DW)

The AoHTW also historically sourced parts. This collective scheme emerged in response to the difficulty and costliness of individualised part sourcing. As such, weavers paid a fee, and received in return reduced part costs from communally procured items, volume ordered at cheaper rates. Whilst noble in ambition, this buying scheme was described as being poorly implemented and riven with problematic organisational politics.

> "the Association took on buying in bulk, parts that were then sold at cost to the weavers. But then the association collapsed somewhat" (Sue, F, DW)

> "There used to be, the Weavers Association- which is still a thing- but they used to do a spare part scheme where they tried to source spare parts for cheaper, but it just, well no one was doing it, no one was actively practically searching… Once you had the spare part scheme, that fell apart. And then membership then was about £2 or £3 a year- that was fine…and you could get cheaper parts! If they could source them at the time! And, if they could source them, they were really bad! But the year after, the membership went up to £120, or £240 a year. Which is a big, a big amount from £2 or £3…£2 to £3 a year, to about £200…but it was for a reason. It was to pay a wage. To pay a wage for someone's cousin, who wanted to, well this is the nepotism I said about…You will get the job, you are my cousin and that's how it is." (Louise, F, SW/DW)

The failure of this buying scheme was primarily attributed to the organisation's questionable judgement, making decisions on behalf of the collective. It exposed the questionability of the politics of the organisation which undermined the trust placed in it, and resulted in its members disinvesting and disengaging. This failed scheme highlights the challenge of collectively organising self-employed workers, who compete against each other in the labour market. These dynamics cultivated conditions which lacked mutuality, and disrupted shared ambitions in a competitive race to the bottom in search of cheaper. Weavers all had divergent ambitions and expectations, and when these were not achieved or when an individual determined that their contribution was not 'value for money', their collective goodwill disappeared, and they withdrew. This lacking communality fuelled the fragility and futility of the scheme.

> "It is not just that a half want to go this way, and half want to go that. But there are various other fragmentations, and they just can't agree. Because everyone has got their own motivations and everybody has their own push for why they want to weave, and financial constraints, and how much they can risk, and how much they can rock the boat. Some, well some actually have just retired, who think is fine, and just do it …[well] everyone is just so different. You know? And I thought, what the point of this is. So I just stopped going to these meetings. I was asked back. I joined up, and after a few meetings, I have paid out, and one of the guys said why don't you come back? And I said it is pointless" (Chris, M, DW)

Instead, weavers established informal part-sharing practices, grouping together trusted friends, each of whom stockpiled parts and swapped them in times of need. This 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours' mentality allowed weavers to improve their operational resilience whilst also strengthening their community bonds with local trusted weavers.

> "Here is a really good community of weavers … I think there are now [a number of] weavers in the village. There has not been that in years! And they are really good to each other. You know if you are having problems, you can go, if you know, your part breaks and someone else has it, you know you can borrow off of them, get them a replacement, so you're not held up." (Tracey, F, DW)

Weavers also bought old looms to salvage parts. This was particularly practiced amongst Hattersley weavers; whose looms were no longer in manufacture. Given loom scarcity however, spare salvaging was the least dependable strategy through which to source spares, and weavers competed against others who wanted looms for spares,

others, for weaving, others for scrap metal, and others still who just discarded them. This made it highly competitive.

> "Somebody has bits. Most have been left for scrap! There was a fellow, over in South Shawbost, and his father died. His next-door neighbours, and there were two looms- so three looms there. I said, what happened to all these? He said, we put them over the side! I said WHAT?! That is bloody criminal. Oh yes! Three of them went over the side [of the cliff]…oh yes. I said, do you know what you are doing. It is history! But it is worth a lot, a lot of money!...the money. The garage down the road, he was just buying them, and sending them away for scrap!" (Aidan, M, SW)

> "[When] They were of no use. They were of no value! They were just dumped for scrap." (Jess, F, SW/DW)

> "When we moved here, there was a loom in my parents shed. And nobody wanted it. So they just took it apart and put it in a skip!" (Louise, F, SW/DW)

Sourcing parts from old looms was additionally problematic because they lacked inter-changeability. Weavers described how older salvaged looms would over time develop slight differences, because of how each loom was slightly differently set up. Individual placement, movement and the use of each loom subtly changed each part and prevented interchangeability from loom to loom.

> **"**…they will never ever go together again….If you don't have the actual loom that it was made, and you mix them, it is not going to work!" (Aidan, M, SW)

Spares were also bought from the manufacturer, Griffiths Textile Machines. This provoked significant discussion amongst weavers who felt most frustrated with their experiences. Weavers described how they were discouraged to deal directly with Griffiths for part ordering and instead told to order through the HTA and mills. They also felt frustrated at part prices which were described high, for parts of poor quality,

and legally protected by patents which precluded their cheaper reproduction. Central to the costliness of part-production was how Griffiths Textile Machines was a large machinery manufacturing company, and the custom of small loom parts was insufficient enough to achieve economies of scale. Despite this, weavers had no choice in needing the part for a functioning loom, and so were dependent on Griffiths regardless of their cost. In addition to noting the excessive cost of parts, many were also frustrated at the quality. This was attributed to cheap manufacture, which was claimed to be offshored, and then individually packaged by the loom manufacturer for a premium.

> "We have found out that a lot of the things that they were obviously selling, they were buying in bulk from China, and splitting it into smaller packages, and then selling it onto weavers in packs of one or two, or whatever…so there is a red rubber band [on the loom] say. They sell this continuous red rubber band for I think £7 or £8 quid. I found the rubber on a wheel of 1000m for £9.99! They are cutting and joining. It is just, well all it takes it a little bit of heat, and it is joined. It is that sort of mark up, but because a lot of the items are sold in such huge bulk, there has never been, well enough weavers come together at a time, and say look, there are 40 of us here, lets buy one of them, between us all! I am not going to buy 1000m of this stuff. I won't use it, I will only use one in my life maybe! That is the problem. It is bulk." (Kathryn, F, DW)

> "The shuttles are the big thing. They are like £100 each. Yes, they are hard to get hold of and they do break….[like] we got one from China as a trial one, it cost me £3.60. I contacted somebody in India, a couple of weeks back and sent them a sample, and they said yes we could [make it]. Then they said they couldn't do it with a quick loading bit. That's the bit you want, although they've got shuttles with that on, they couldn't

> do this one…the £3 something one from China, you had to pull the thread through with a hook. Which was fine, because it was nice wood, and it was fine because it did work, but we'd rather have the ones you can just put straight through…. But the minimum order from China was 500. I should live so long! (laughs)… the double-width is really expensive to keep going, the parts go really easily, because they are really expensive. Just crazy money!...it is so corrupt. I was just bound to notice, as I was on the Alibaba Site from India, they sell GTM bits, which is Griffith Textile Machines, for a pittance. So a rapier from GTM, from the HTA would cost you £500 complete. From them [India] it was £50….so they don't even make them at Griffith, they assemble them, like car…[and] it is Griffiths that are probably getting the biggest mark up." (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

To overcome these difficulties, some sourced more generic parts by alternative means, using local trade outlets and offshore manufacturers. With large minimum orders and quality only determined post-payment and delivery, this was particularly risky. That being said, savvy purchasing was rewarding in terms of lower costs and increased operating profit. However, this strategy relied upon technical knowledge and understanding of each part in order to search for the appropriate materials in keeping with the loom specification.

> "I mean there are a lot of things that I have bought recently, [which] aren't necessarily a loom part. It is just a bearing, or a fitting. I haven't actually had to buy a specific loom part… I mean you can buy a bearing from Griffiths for £10 and you can buy it online for £2, if you know what you're looking for. Not everybody can, but depending on being a mechanic, I can do that… I don't buy all of my parts off of Griffiths…it is expensive." (Dan, M, DW)

There were, however, more specific parts solely produced by Griffiths. These were both costly and contentious- not least because they were basic in technology, but integral to loom functioning, and therefore necessary purchases. As weavers explained;

> **Lucas, M, DW**: …these two plastic blocks-
> **Kieran**: oh yes the [size of] Lego blocks?
> **Lucas, M, DW**: I think they were 80 quid!

> "I bought one rapier and it was £300!...if I wanted a belt to go on the rapier, it is another £100! And you can't weave without it!" (Grace, M, DW)

These high costs fuelled innovation, with some using on-island fabrication. This was largely informal, whereby technologically able weavers 'fabbed' loom parts to produce their own mechanical solutions.

> "... I mean it is a limited number of looms, so they are not mass producing them, so they have to. The stuff they are sourcing from other places, I guess they want to make it worth their while, certainly! But there is a lot of things you can get, and make! … I am able to work at…Most of the time, from what I can find, it is working out what material it is. Once I have sussed that out, then *I can make the things no problem*." (Dan, M, DW, emphasis added)

Fabbing displayed real ingenuity amongst weavers. Fabbing weavers were bright, mechanically minded, and innovative; hallmarks of a potentially thriving on-island making ecology for parts. Yet, legal protections, licensing and patenting were perceived to limit part reproduction and consolidate weavers as customers, rather than mechanical innovators. Patents protected parts, but added confusion amongst weavers of the acceptable limits to their mechanical fabbing. Socialised anecdotes recalled legal ramifications of weavers who fabbed, which constructed a grey area of loom innovation, in which weavers clearly thought, made and solved their loom problems through fabbing, but did so anxiously in mind of legal writ of repercussion.

> "It is Griffiths that have the rights, they say, to them…patents, the Intellectual Property Rights. There was a man in Stornoway, an engineer, who was going to make bits, for the Weavers Association, and they slapped him with a writ. You can't. You can buy the bits from other places, but you can't manufacture them." (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

Yet fabbing and tinkering resulted in diversity of looms. Some were set higher, avoiding back ache. Some had alarms that alerted the weaver of breakages or faults. Some had overhead yarn-feeders, which minimised yarn tearing. Others had heavier flywheels, for smoother more rapid weaving. And others had different seats - all additions that made the labour of weaving more comfortable (Figure 7.19). In each instance, weavers demonstrated how their tinkering made their looms more suitable for their everyday weaving lives.

> "[pointing at beam which is higher] I put extra timber under the loom, and I've also got red locks, they are scissor jacks. So I actually lift up, well my loom is up here when I tie in…as my back is, well I can't sit and standing is just agony. It actually lifts it up sideways…it is brilliant and a fantastic solution." (Dan, M, DW)

> "I had a wheel put on the end…by [community member] … he put that wheel on, which has made it a lot easier to pedal. It is no faster, but it feels better. When you are pedalling something for like 10 hours, you want it to feel smoother. … I have got my iPad holder, if that counts, and I have got an internet booster (laughs). At the end, I have put a piece of wood, and some piece of metal, because I didn't like the way it works. I put in a wee bit of wood, and I think it puts it as a better angle. Little things" (Grace, F, DW)

> “I've had the modifications. I have a fly wheel thing, which makes it a bit lighter.”(Lucas, M, DW)

> “…a lot of the double width looms to have a fly wheel, and lots of other little things on the loom, which make it less fool proof to go wrong, or if it does go wrong, it can alert you it has gone wrong.” (Luke, M, DW)

These technological tweaks transformed the lives of weavers. Weavers now worked on quieter, cleaner and more technologically able looms rigged with alarms which notified faults. This allowed weavers to get on with other tasks whilst weaving- TV, radio, audiobooks and e-readers- all without impacting cloth quality. These modern realities were acknowledged by weavers to disappoint those who sought the quaint imaginaries of their work.

> “[visitors think we are] people that are doing this ridiculously archaic job! So we are doubling up on the weirdness for them (laughs) but they come and they are so disappointed that I am sitting there, listening to music, on my Now TV or whatever, streaming something (laughs).” (Kathryn, F, DW)

> “That's what you do when you're pedalling. Your brains either, well you're either watching TV or trying to work shit out (laughs)” (Luke, M, DW)

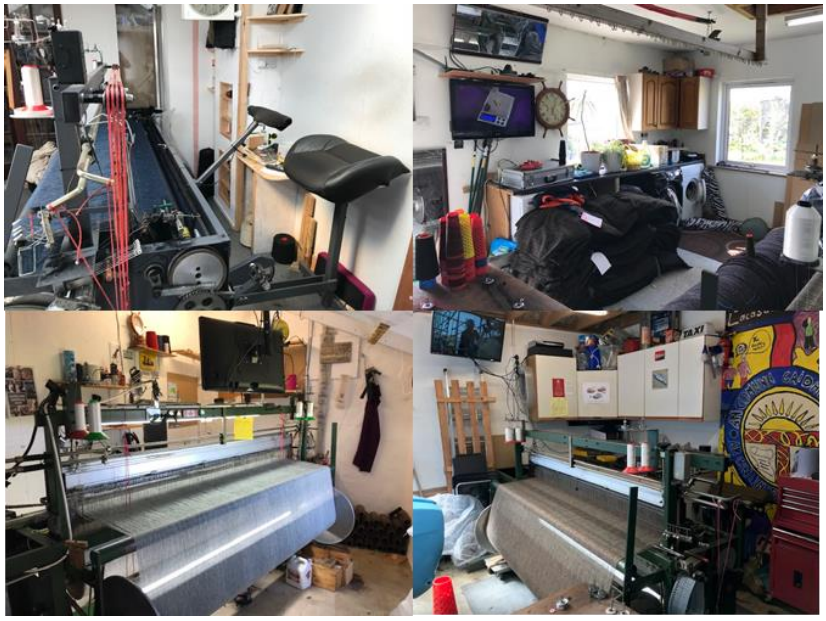


Figure 7.19: A montage of loom sheds. A seat alternation to make weaving more comfortable (top left), a television and mirror placement to monitor yarn breakage (top right), an overhead/overloom mounted television (bottom left) and a wall mounted television above a loom (bottom right). These are typical of many loom sheds. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

In contrast to the imagination of Harris Tweed as being crafted without modern technology, its practices were defined through precisely that. Harris Tweed was promoted and represented through technological practices that shaped two divisions of labour defined by loom technology: independent Hattersley weavers, and mill-commissioned Griffiths weavers. Working life was explained through technological stories, of loom and mechanics and finding parts, and it involved hidden technologies and practices- sensors, tinkering and televisions- which fundamentally shaped weaving work. These multiple practices and visions suggest the mythmaking of the simple craft weaver belies a hidden technological complexity, and is one riven with the political and economic realities of the loom.

7.5 Speeding Up Slow Work

The central appeal of Harris Tweed is its imagined labourer and labour - the careful, traditional and human powered working of craft production by hand and loom. This is an image that is reinforced through promotion and is specified in legislation. However, its labour relations suggest a more complex picture (see Chapter 6). Weaving is precarious, similar to the ‘gig’ economy (see, Bloodworth, 2018, Zwick, 2018, HM

Government, 2016), in which the majority of weavers- mill commissioned- compete with each other for work. Far from apart from the pressures of speedy working, those weavers who run looms most efficiently are advantageous. Those who can stockpile parts, tinker best with their looms, and return quality cloth quickly position themselves in a good position to compete for future issue. These practices of efficiency become the hallmarks of a 'good' weaver.

The requirement for speedy efficiency is compounded by piece-rate working which reinforces the benefits of speedy and productive weaving. The more a weaver weaves, the more they earn, and the more rapidly they do it, the greater hourly rate of pay they achieve. It is in this context that weavers discussed practices of loom automation and motorisation - a practice that contravenes Harris Tweed regulations. Motorisation involves weavers attaching small motors onto their looms, allowing them to avoid manual labour and enabling the concurrent operation of multiple looms.

Loom motorisation is nothing new, and is well documented as a historically recurrent issue; the history of the legal (re)definition of Harris Tweed speaks directly to this (see Chapter 5). Often, motorisation emerges from challenging market conditions, which impel weavers to compromise their work practices in a struggle to make profit (Hunter, 2001). This was how weavers rationalised their need to automate, framed as a justified response to a flawed labour market and poor pay. To gain consistent fair pay, some weavers described how others motorised their looms so to achieve greater and speedier output. The justification of automation was intertwined with a discourse of justice; it was a fair response to attain fair wages. However, this individualised rationalisation overlooked the collective ramifications. Average output and turnaround time were considered key determining variables of the piece-rate wage and decision making of work distribution. Those who made more efficiently were given work accordingly. Motorised looms decreased the average turnaround time of a weaver, and enabled them to produce more speedily. Their individual decision to automate, however framed, had broader ramifications and perpetuated the conditions that encouraged motorisation, making it more challenging for those to continue weaving compliantly.

Given that motorisation remains illicit, it was an open secret. Everyday conversations throughout my ethnography confirmed this. Some requested that I should avoid

unannounced visits to avoid catching weavers out. Others asked that I give weavers a chance to turn off and put away their 'little helpers', whilst others too talked of their neighbours alarms sounding when they were not there. In each instance, motors and automation were an accepted reality, but spoken of as if a secret entrusted by the community to keep.

> "I know a couple of guys that have integral garages! I mean. But we all know, I mean I have never found out who it was. But there is someone that comes and installs motors. You must have heard of it?!...it is like Whiskey Galore (laughs). I was talking to our vet the other day. He was saying he turned up with a different van to see this guy's sheep, and he suddenly realised this old man was legging it across the croft. Only when he managed to catch him and said what is the matter with you? He said [he] didn't recognise the van, and [he] was covering the motor." (Vanessa, F, SW/DW).

Evidencing these practices was an impossible task. Whilst it was present in everyday conversation, very few would talk openly on record. Many instead preferred un-recorded conversations. Thus, whilst people spoke informally of automation, I did not see a motorised loom, and only few talked on record. This was not surprising. However, those that did talk about looms on record, described how it impacted their work, their pace of production and their work allocation.

> "[Motorisation is] slightly more so with the double-width looms than the single-width looms, because they lend themselves better for motorisation. The crime of it, is not so much the lack of human power, but the fact you just walk away from it…. you could run two looms…as one weaver. Therefore, you are producing, and disadvantaging someone who is not doing that, because you are knocking out a piece with far less effort…and you're getting paid the same." (Charles, M, SW)

Sam (M, SW): Some people can bash out a tweed in a day...well they bash out five or six tweeds a week'
Kieran: a week? Their legs must be like gazelles!
Sam (M, SW): *mouths 'motor' so to not let it get picked up on the dictaphone*

"I wouldn't have a motor, but I know, from [somebody who'd been] going around to loads, well he reckons… well he said somebody at the mill says 75% of weavers have motors…and that is one of the reasons why I jacked it in early, because there [was] no way I could compete and earn a living wage, and still be able to function (laughs) as a healthy human being, on that. It is ridiculous…You know, on average, I don't think anyone could do more than three a week, having a normal work life balance, and that is going some! Three a week. And those that are doing 8 or 9 or 10, well, or 4, 5 , 6, well they [the mills] must know! …They are keeping the prices low, because they are paying the weavers nothing! That is why they have the motors, because they can't make a wage normally. If they could earn a decent living weaving, handloom weaving, they would do it, I am sure! The incentives are all wrong." (Catherine, F, DW/SW)

"You could probably tell [a motor] if somebody started clacking out (laughs) 8 tweeds a week….you might think something is going on here. But the cloth itself, you can't tell… on the double-width at all- it stays the same no matter what. So... it is a very delicate issue, and it is not something that anybody on the island would like published or spoken about. Or anything like that, for the island. It is just something... just…It is just the way it is. I mean the double-width loom came in, in the 90's? They said it was impossible to put a motor on this loom. They

> were determined that nobody was going to put a motor on it. Within a week! Within a week there were people hooking up a motor to it…I think the majority of people here don't care so long as it is not spoken about. Just get on with it and keep it to yourself ” (Kathryn, F, DW)

> “I mean one of the big problems, which I’m sure you've heard of this from a few weavers, is there are still people with motors. And the people with motors are getting [work]…. [I got] two tweeds over a three-week period, but the guy up the road who has a motor got 9 tweeds over that [same] three-week period. And he basically stands and watches... He literally is just watching his motor, servicing his motor and tying in. You can't say anything, and clearly, if I said anything or object to it, I would never get tweed again.” (Luke, M, DW)

There were mixed feelings on this issue. Some viewed motorisation as a logical result of a difficult labour market. Others felt angered and cheated. Motorisation revealed a politics of pay that rewarded speedy production. As a result, weavers felt that the mills were complicit - they rewarded by piece rate speedy production, left unchallenged higher than average production rates, and accepted and paid for quality cloth.

Automation poses fundamental questions of the robustness of the certification process of Harris Tweed, a task entrusted to the HTA in its duties of *inspection* to ensure the production practiced is legally compliant, and *stamping*, to ensure the cloth is of quality and is documented to be in compliance with the law.

Loom inspections were undoubtedly the most commented upon interaction that weavers shared with the HTA. During the inspections weavers provided access to their loom sheds for unannounced inspections. Inspections were politically contentious and practically difficult. The HTA policed the legal compliance of a small industry comprised of many known friends and families. These communal dynamics

constructed unspoken rules of governance, in which many saw it wrong to penalise or unfairly catch-out its community members. In this, an implied and practiced communal obligation transcended the legal obligation to the legislation. These communal ties were described to shape the method and form of inspection, and the inspectors communal ties and allegiances made them impossibly objective.

> "The guys at the HTA who do that job, have a very very very difficult job. Because they know all these people, and they are related to half of them, and they don't want to catch people. It would be awful for them, and it would be awful for the person" (Kathryn, F, DW)

> "If you were an inspector here, and you caught people out, nobody would speak to you. You would be a parasite." (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

To reconcile the need to practice legal compliance in a manner which met these implied communal obligations, HTA inspectors were alleged to undertake funny, peculiar practices to announce their 'unannounced' visits.

> "The inspectors, when they did come, they would sit outside for ten minutes, before they came in." (Vanessa, F, SW/DW)

> "the HTA [inspectors] was pacing up and down outside her house, before they came in, just to say if you have a motor on turn it off." (Catherine, F, SW/DW)

> "They would drive round for a little bit at the gate way and leave time for you to put your motor away…That's what they did to us. The first few times. They came for inspecting, they would come in, park the car, rev it a few times. Sit in the car for a few minutes. By the time they would get to your shed, you would have put away for motor. Well we didn't have a motor to put away" (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

> "What you hear about the inspections, is they come and reverse into your driveway, for a very long time…and give you time..." (Louise, F, SW/DW)

These alleged practices undermined the integrity of the inspections. Inspections were further undermined by the communication amongst weavers warning each other of sightings and locations of visiting inspectors. Inspectors drove around in HTA liveried vehicles, clearly visible from the roadside. With this, weavers informally monitored and communicated amongst each other their location, ensuring good time was provided to make appropriate accommodations.

> "The day the inspectors are going around, (laughs) there is not a flipping text in the world as fast as when the weavers are phoning each other. I know exactly where they are at all points in the day. I've had five phone calls to say they're having their tea break at so and so, OK. And then I run down and tell [a neighbour], and he has phoned him, and then, you know! It's just the way it is. *Nobody wants anybody to get caught. Nobody wants controversy*." (Kathryn, F, DW, emphasis added)

The socialised risk of reputational damage resulting from the use of motorised looms ensured that they were rarely found. This made it more difficult to deal with the problem. Attempts by the HTA to improve the inspection routine were also quickly undermined, with their attempts to bring in off-island adjudicators and inspectors seen equally as easy to undermine.

> "Somebody sent a letter anonymously to the mills, and the HTA and some newspapers…saying that the industry is a farce- its, well there are people using motors. And I think it was one of the Editors at one of the newspapers phoned [someone] at the HTA, saying I have just got [the letter] and I'm telling you, quite obviously I'm not going to publish it, but you need to sort it out. That kind of forced their hand. [The HTA] had to employ external auditors, to check that they were

> doing everything within their power to make sure people weren't using these motors. So now there is somebody that comes up, and drives around, with the existing inspectors- this external person from the mainland comes with them, to make sure they are following the right procedures and things like that." (Noah, M, DW)

> "We've the new directive now, saying, not only we have got the inspectors coming round, but they'll have someone from the mainland! So obviously they don't trust their inspectors" (Vanessa, F, SW/DW)

> "As soon as he's up the airport, everybody here knows what flight he's coming on, and what flight he is leaving on, and what route he is taking." (Kathryn, F, DW)

During the fieldwork, the inspection process was under consultation. The HTA was seeking consent for greater scope in terms of their investigations. Whilst this was reasonable given the suggested practices of hiding motors in adjacent buildings, it was very contentious on the grounds of privacy, with weavers unhappy that their homes would be open to scrutiny. It highlighted the delicate balance the HTA navigated between ensuring its integrity of inspection, and garnering the consent from weavers, upon which the whole process rested.

Inspections were further complicated by the lengths that motor-using weavers went to ensure that they were not caught; fortifying loom sheds with lockable barriers to entry, creating hiding spots burrowed in holes and hidden compartments, and using CCTV which monitored anyone approaching unannounced. These collectively prevent the HTA from retaining consistent integrity, objectivity, and thoroughness in their inspection practices.

> "I don't know what they do with these people, who have the doors locked and with CCTVs outside, because we know why they've got the door locked and CCTV outside [motors]. but it is nice to know they are *at least*,

> well *trying* to keep it, the integrity in the system" (Luke, M, DW, original emphasis)
>
> "Some people have cameras too, to see when the inspectors come." (Sandy, F, SW/DW)
>
> "You go around old sheds, and there is a hole dug out in the floor!" (Jess, F, SW/DW)

Stamping – the process of checking quality and impressing onto tweed the famed orb- was also viewed as more complex. It was a task undertaken at the mill, where the HTA sent their Stamper to authenticate that the cloth was woven by a registered weaver. The cloth was checked for an attached signed legal declaration, declaring its compliance. This is a legally binding document which declares production compliance, and enshrines the weaver accountable for the integrity of the cloth. The cloth meterage is recorded, and its documentation checked, and upon satisfaction of the inspector, the cloth is stamped (Figure 7.20). Stamping was a compliance exercise, instilling accountability to legislation through the documentation of evidence. This was a bureaucratic traceability process, where documents are recorded and stored by the HTA in the eventuality cloth authentication is disputed.

This presented a tension between procedural and practiced compliance. On the one hand, there were working procedures that effectively documented self-declared compliance, but on the other hand, the inspection practices failed to demonstrate consistent corroboration of practice. The disconnect between the practices of production – weaving and automation- and the practices used to account for them – stamping and inspection- presented real challenges to openly talk about production issues, not least because doing so would undermine the whole integrity of the process. This risk in reputational damage compelled weavers to keep these illicit practices secret. Most felt anger towards those who motorised their looms, but felt paralysed to resolve them openly. The legal protection of the cloth was the promise of quality they all traded upon. Trying to resolve problems would undermine the integrity of the industry in a manner that would indiscriminately damage not just weavers who used motors, but everyone who used the quality assurance process which the motored cloth was passed under.



Figure 7.20: Photography of stamping in process. The use of an iron and a wax orb transfer by the researcher in stamping the cloth (left), and the recording and verification of legal declaration and meterage by the HTA Stamper (right). Source: Personal Photography (2018)

> "My biggest worry about the motors is that, and I have had someone ask me questions about it, and I didn't answer because I presumed he was a journalist, but if people find out just how much tweed is woven on a machine. We just had a big scandal with the Hebridean Salt, did you hear about that? A woman setting up a company Hebridean Salt, with a massive, well a supermarket contract, I think it must have been Tesco, so her order book just went whoosh, really really quickly and imported loads of salt, and was found out! So obviously, instant bankruptcy, closed down and hounded off the island! Clearly that's the sort of things, well if the integrity of Harris Tweed was put into question, in a big way like they said that it turns out it is not hand woven, but made by machines, and you're paying premium prices for something it could be made anywhere. *If that happens, well my livelihood is gone*." (Luke, M, DW, emphasis added)

> "You can't do six tweeds a week. He can do it because he is doing it watching telly with his legs up on his loom. And he is my friend, I won't say anything to the HTA about them. In fact, they said to me do you know anyone who is using motors. I said, you must be mad, I live here. I think that was a trial to see if I would spill the beans…well if you had of, it would of come out, that [we told them]. And that would be it, you know? We would be blacked by the community. That is why the industry depends upon it. If they clamped down on it, there wouldn't be enough tweed produced to keep the mills going. That is the long and short of it. And *if they would clamp down on it, we'd be gone. We would be sunk as well*." (Sandy, F, SW/DW, emphasis added)

It is because of this risk most did nothing to change it. They accepted the futility of the situation, which was compounded by communal pressures of reneging on trust, community, and friendships, all of which made public whistleblowing more difficult. Instead, communal ties entrenched a climate of secrecy which made the resolution of automation near impossible, in which everyone simply looked the other way.

McGoey's (2019) work on strategic ignorance and tactical non-disclosure are conceptually valuable as frameworks to understand these practices. She unpacks the role of strategic ignorance in avoiding inconvenience and repercussion within business strategy. McGoey (2019) argues the integrity of 'truth' is always threatened by vested interest, risks to reputation, financial reward, or commercial success. In reiterating Gray (2002) who claims truth is denied for piece of mind's sake, McGoey (2019) attests to the pervasiveness of tale telling and finds distinction between 'truth' and what is told.

McGoey's (2019) distinction between *micro-ignorance*, the individual act of ignoring or turning a blind eye, and *macro-ignorance*, the sedimentation of micro-ignorance into practices and cultural norms which perpetuate ignorance, is particularly useful.

Weavers explained their own complicity in the normalised practices of strategic ignorance; they allege other weavers fail to disclose automated practices; they explained how inspectors avoid 'finding' these, and they kept these secrets for fear of communal ostracization and repercussion. These are all rationalised as strategies which minimise their communal exposure to risk. The cumulative acts of these, cultivate a normalised culture of *macro*-ignorance, where secret-keeping is sedimented under an assumed obligation to themselves and their industry. Strategic non-disclosure avoids undermining the integrity of the structure of authentication, upon which the whole industry relies.

This study suggests inspection, secret keeping, automation, and passing off can hide behind a system of bureaucratic compliance. It invites us to place importance on distinction between practices of production, and the written verification of them, and reflect upon the role of strategic ignorance at their intersection. The disclosures of weavers suggest that the compliance process of Harris Tweed authentication, both in inspection and declaration, hide and overwrite problematic practices. Industrial actors turn a blind eye and secret keep perpetuating the 'truth' claims of the authentication process in efforts to avoid disrupting its integrity, and weavers avoid public disclosure of poor practices to protect their work and others. To this end, the practices of authentication and compliance appear as an industrial structure of macro-ignorance.

Much of the literatures on trademarks focuses on the constitution of the brand into property; and the way they create claims, rights, and fixes, for the trademark owner, which underpin a value extraction strategy based on defending these monopoly rights. Much of their attention is afforded to the practices of the owners of trademarks pursuing and defending their claims, and the effect this has on their competitors (see da Silva Lopes and Duguid, 2010). This is an evident strategy within this case study, where the Harris Tweed Authority pursue and defend infringements and illegitimate uses of the trademarks associated with Harris Tweed; its name, its label, and its underpinning production practices and geography set out in its legislation (see Chapter 5). However, the revelations of this chapter suggest a particular geography of legislative enforcement, where infringements by non-proximate competitors are astutely policed by the litigation of the Harris Tweed Authority, but *authorised*

producers[44] in the Outer Hebrides appear to be not held to the same standards, nor applied with the same rigour. These producers, who are integrated within the industrial organisation of the industry, are alleged to be poorly policed by an ineffective 'in-house' (or rather on-island) authentication system, involving practices and rules selectively applied and negotiated by its actors. These actors subjectively rationalise the application of the authentication process by considerations of their cultural and political-economic lifeworlds. This cultural, social, and political-economic inflection collapses distinction between the industry's distinct actors, the verifier and verified, or inspector and inspected, and reveals them to navigate enforcement instead as known colleagues, friends, and community members with shared trust, allegiances, and duties to one another. This prevents the objective and rigorous application of the authentication process and cultivates conditions which allow internal infringement of the legislation to go poorly challenged.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has critically evaluated the role of technology in the production of Harris Tweed. Moving away from Harris Tweed 'as history' (see Chapter 5), this chapter reviewed the contemporary technological practices of the industry. Moving beyond the dominant vision of Harris Tweed production as croft and handicraft, the chapter discusses the critical role played by the mill. In doing so, the chapter constructs a vision of technological modernity that is at odds with its popular representation. The mill is a geographical space that is larger, more industrial, and more efficient than the imaginary affords. The chapter then turned to a discussion of looms. Here, the story of loom innovation is critically understood as part of a complicated way in which work, labour, production and technology are intertwined. The chapter reveals that two distinct divisions of labour emerge based upon the loom technologies used; the single-width independent weaver, and the double-width mill-commissioned weaver. Their practices and varying extents of incorporation into mill production are shown to be more complex than the conventional representations of the industry. The key contribution of the chapter is its critical understanding of the hidden technological practices of the loom, relating to maintenance, tinkering and part procurement. With this, the weavers are explained to navigate complex cultural and political economies

[44] Those with a Harris Tweed weavers number issued by the Harris Tweed Authority

riven with problems. Through a consideration of these practices a more complex political economy emerges, implicating not just weavers, but also the many stakeholders who implicitly govern and are implicated in their lives and practices.

To this end, weaver stories construct a narrative of 'good' craft work through technology and productivity. They work with unreliable machines and 'make do' – the price they pay is being rewarded by piece rate system that values fast production of quality cloth. The up-shot is that what is promoted as slow and traditional hand work has a dark underside – hidden from view - illicit practices of motorisation and automation. The chapter critically reflects on this disjuncture and reflects upon the practical challenges of dealing with the complex and politically fraught relationships with the HTA who govern quality and authenticity. The disconnection between the promotion of Harris Tweed and its hidden labour relations present a real risk to the integrity and reputation of the brand that the industry relies upon.

Chapter 8
Branding Origins

8.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the branded origin story of Harris Tweed. Section 8.1 sets out the theoretical framework of the chapter, discussing branding practice through the lens of (dis)association, (dis)connection and origination. This contextualises the discussion of the chapter which argues that branding actors of Harris Tweed 'originate' by galvanising a specific moment, representation and experience of production and presents that as the dominant narrative. This has political ramifications. Section 8.2 then works to establish the governing logic and actors of the origin story. This is rooted in commercial logic and competitive survival, and helps to explain why the brand 'originates' as it does. Section 8.3 explains 'The Harris Tweed Story' exploring key visual strategies and representations within it, which are argued become its dominant image. Section 8.4 then works to explore the tensions between promotion and practice- between the singular Harris Tweed Story, and the many practices and people that underpin it. These are explored using two worked examples: textile tourists and journalists. In doing so, they reveal a knotty political interplay between the authorship, representation and governance of the brand, and the practices, performances and politics of display at work in production. Section 8.5 develops this further, by developing two clear brand divisions of labour, which reveal the differing agencies of different actors to define and participate in the authorship of the brand. Lastly, 8.6 discusses how these promoted visions- the terms of how production is 'originated' in the brand- warps understanding of the geographical practices and politics of the industry.

8.1 (Dis) Association, (Dis) Connection and Origination

Marking products with symbolic distinction has long been a method to communicate and associate commodities with origin and quality (Pike, 2015, Lindemann, 2010, Room 1998). With industrialisation and market expansion, branding helped to dislodge local preferences and associate unfamiliar products with familiarity. In doing,

branding sustained lengthier market relations, differentiated products, and lubricated sale (Pike, 2015, p.4, Klein, 2010, Ollins, 2003). Thus, branding is inherently geographical and associative, and a core activity of capitalism (Holt, 2006).

Contemporary branding practice mobilises multiple techniques to imbue commodities with meaning, and add value through association to intangible narratives. Aaker (1996) uses 'brand equity' to explain this, that through deliberate, considered, political and strategic association and connection, brands create valuable equity (Arvidsson, 2006, Lury, 2004). In a world where product meanings are entangled within the messy socio-spatial relations and identities of consumers (Pike, 2015, p. 7), brands marshal their imaginations to articulate very particular sets of narratives. Brands are used to actively frame, script and stabilise a desired reading of the cultural-economic relations of the commodity for the consumer (see Chapter 3). Beyond this, of course, commodities circulate in ever changing contexts, politics and economies. They flow through contexts which remain multiply framed and imperfectly distinguished from one another. Branding sits in tension to this dynamism as it attempts to stabilise and frame specific associations for value equity.

Underpinning brands are global and complex supply chains which stretch across multiple times, spaces, practices, peoples and geographies, and connect lifeworlds of difference. Brands are used to frame these connections, in a manner favourable for brand equity, often hiding production from view. Yet in catastrophic moments such as factory collapses or labour exploitation, these hidden connective threads to production reveal themselves and reveal that behind the glamour of promotion, sale and purchase, lurk ugly dark realties of supply chains (Crewe, 2008). This ongoing tension between presenting and framing branded commodities with stabilised brand meaning to consumers, and having their production underpinned by unstable, hidden, and dynamic productive relations and practices, reveals branding to be a process as much part of dissociation, strategic framing and fetishisation, as connection and stabilisation.

These associative and disassociative tensions have been at the heart of geographical scholarship on production and consumption, with frameworks such as de-fetishisation (Harvey, 1990) and following (Cook *et al.,* 2004) being the most widely used (see Chapter 3). These frameworks problematise the tensions and contradictions of supply

chains and use the brand as a site of political contestation. Central to this project has been the desire to 'reveal' the lived realities of production, and tell fuller stories of the commodity beyond the framing of the brand. Its political power is in disrupting the associative storytelling of the brand by accounting for the hidden realities of production, and juxtaposing these against the intangible and positive claims of the brand.

This politics of reconnection has been successful, and has informed consumer activism and consumer trends. Purchasing decisions indicate growing mindfulness of manufacturing malpractices, and demonstrate a re-prioritisation of good labour practice, sustainability and ethical trade (Wood, 2008). Moves to re-shore, localise, and make supply chains more ethical, transparent and accountable all attest to this, as does growing interest in brands which label and account for the geographical lives of their products (Hills, 2018). Branding actors are now more keen show their supply chain practices, doing so through images, stories, and accreditations, in an effort to assure consumers about the production practices of their commodities. Production has moved from being hidden by branding, to being incorporated within it. Their inclusion disrupts bifurcated debates around de-fetishisation- fetishised or de-fetishised- not least in how branding actors show and account for production through narratives of labour, place and production, which arecurated and produced for brand equity. It impels us to reappraise our frameworks to more meaningfully engage with discussions of transparency and connection, to ask more fundamental questions of what we connect to and through, and what we see, how and why. This move towards 'showing' and 'telling' production as brand strategy is particularly acute within the luxury sector, who routinely showcase the provenance of their production. Their brand narratives emphasise their production locations and their craft workers: their hardworking hands, their happy faces, their slow craft skills. These all help present a vision of production which is rooted, placed, peopled and compelling to the consumer, and valuable for their brand equity (Figure 8.1).



Figure 8.1: A selection of promotional vignettes used within premium/luxury sectors to sell their products. Case studies used are Barbour (Top Left), Prada (Bottom Left), and Burberry (Right). Source: (Wonderland, 2016, Barbour, 2015, Prada, 2012).

Tokatli (2012) argues that the construction of place in brand narrative has become a strategic organisational tactic in order to valorise place for the brand. Through analysis of the symbolic evocation of place as a strategy in the commercial activities of Gucci and Zara, Tokatli (2008) demonstrates a more complex associative picture, in which the brand governs and projects a representation of the geographies of production to the consumer, and renders indistinguishable more hidden geographical associations with 'real' ones. They highlight one production geography to define them all.

In this regard, showing and telling place through the brand masks the multiple geographies of a commodity. Attesting to this, brands which tell tales of provenance in their brand narratives often perform poorly in assessments of supply chain transparency (Fashion Revolution, 2020). Far from lifting the veil of production, branding actors construct an aura of transparency which guide consumers towards desirable and valuable supply chain practices and locations, whilst at the same time they exploit locations and poor practices elsewhere. Glorified associative geographies appear to help disassociate and eschew other hidden supply chain practices, like

poverty pay, labour rights abuses, environmental degradation (Siegle, 2011). In this regard, branding actors actively narrate and frame people and places of production, and govern which connections consumers make through the brand. Far from lifting the veil, this brand strategy represents a more complex double (Cook & Crang, 1996), or even layered and multiple commodity fetish (Smith & Bridge, 2003).

Geographical origins of products have become more complex, with the idea of a singular 'origin' complicated by contemporary production, supply chain, branding and consumption practices. Commodities circulate through multiple geographies and behold multiple connections through their geographical lives. Pike (2015) uses origination as attempt to explain how branding actors call forth and associate particular geographies through the brand. This framework helps articulate who 'originates', identifies which actors reconcile these multiple geographies, which behold agency in ordering, framing and putting them to work through the brand, as well as what logics govern these practices; accumulation, competition, differentiation, and brand equity. Pike (2015) establishes multiple actors and spatial circuits of origination- where the brand is born, thought of, designed, headquartered, delivered, sold and made, as well as its discursive associated imagined geographies- in doing so he articulates how selective and deliberate associations and representations of these in the brand summon up and hold meaning and value in market situations.

Origination recognises and theorises the multiplicity of geographies that underpin geographical brands. It articulates the multi-layered cultural, spatial and economic origin-connections that the commodity embroils, and helps articulate the governance of, association to, and disassociation from these multiple geographies through the brand. Perhaps most pertinently, it gives language to explain how one geography can be evoked through the brand to speak for, override or obscure the other geographies of origination at play. Whilst the most obvious application of this framework would be brands which stretch across multiple national geographies and define themselves as 'national' brands such as Gucci, Prada, Dr Martens, or Burberry, its framework also has potential at regional and local scales (see Tokatli, 2012, 2013, Pike, 2015)

Harris Tweed is a brand cultivated around a compelling regional story of the Outer Hebrides. It is a brand story of the labour, loom and landscape, and its rootedness to

the islands. It has a very specific geography of production, and constructs its brand around 'showing' and 'telling' it. Yet, as Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 advance, there are disconnections between the brand story told and sold, and the multiple lived experiences and practices found in the industry. Much like how specific moments and geographies of an international supply chain can be mobilised to speak for and override multiple geographies, the complexity of the geographies of craft work and the geographies of technology are overwritten by a presentation of them in the brand. Whilst the branded associations and representations of labour, loom and landscape summon up and hold meaning and value in market situations, they often do so by representing them through vignettes which poorly capture the multiple practices that underpin production. This chapter therefore turns to reflect on the origination production stories involved in Harris Tweed, to explore how the actors of this local, embedded and rooted craft brand galvanise specific moments, representations and associations of production to construct its brand.

8.2 Brand Logic as Industrial Survival

The recent history of Harris Tweed is one defined through its commercial 'resurrection' (Carell , 2012). Its development from decline to competitiveness is attributed to the 'sharpening up' of the industry, in which key industrial players – the Harris Tweed Authority (HTA) and the mills- have become more confident and proactive in their marketing and branding. To this end, the greatest success of the industry has been in its transition from a commodity cloth to a branded cloth. Harris Tweed is as much brand as textile. The strategic development of the brand reveals a move to transcend its limited traditional markets and attract new consumers (Crewe, 2019, pp. 75-79). Its repositioning as a 'brand' sought to attract new and sustained custom, which was developed alongside a renewed project of modernisation and strategic sales growth (Rogers, 2014). With this, mills and the HTA now target fashion shows, trade fairs, and cultivate retail partnerships in developing the brand awareness and reputation of the cloth for its history and quality (Carrell, 2012). To this end, the development and growth of Harris Tweed as a 'brand' beholds a particular politics of sale, growth and accumulation, and is undertaken largely by the coordinating actors of the HTA and the Mills.

Harris Tweed as a 'brand' was explained by weavers as a noteworthy strategy developed from 2006 onwards, part of a more general shift in the commercial logic of the industry, in which industrial competitiveness was attributed to more proactive brand strategy and marketing (Young & Martin, 2017, p. 122). This was evoked through the motifs of 'fighting' and 'battle' in the marketplace.

> "It doesn't take a lot to keep a small industry like this, going. But it doesn't take a lot to destroy it either. We're very much dancing on the head of a pin. … Many a day since the 1990s I thought, you're fucking dying here pal. But we've somehow- by sheer luck- pulled through it, but I think with the likes of Margaret Anne [Brand Director of Harris Tweed Hebrides] and Annie [Head of Marketing, Carloway Mill] …complacency has gone out of the window… I find these women are very, very skilful at what they do…and well they know what they're doing, and their *heart* is in the industry" *(*Derek, M, DW)

> "I think the industry is probably *more competitive*…you're *competing against* the Chinese. Bangladesh. Harris Tweed is not any different, or any better from other things. But the fact that it is hand woven, and the story, you can't over emphasise that enough!" (Marcus, M, DW)

> "I'm so scared that *they*'re just going to miss a trick, because they've not- well they've taken their eye off the ball- Well not taken it off the ball, because it never was ON the ball. But there's just not that push for it. It is like, we're not, well there is not *a fight* for it. *Not a fight for the market*, and they'll lose them. I'm quite worried about that actually. But I think it's because the industry has never had to do it. It has been so unique, that is has

never *had to fight*…. you do have to *fight hard for jobs*."
(Sue, F, DW)

These show how branding is embroiled within a logic of competitive survival; brand strategy responds to an intensification of market competition; a need to keep the industry going. Specific industrial actors- the mills and the HTA- are seen to exert agency as coordinating parties, and have power to frame and narrate the brand. They have important authorial power to narrate and govern the brand on behalf of the industry. This depicts a particular authorial politics of the brand, in which the ability to articulate, frame, direct, and mobilise resources to 'originate', 'tell' and 'show' the origin story, is one held by a few, but upon whose story the whole industry is invested.

The vocabulary of fight in these discussions is also telling, and provides reminder of the difficult and competitive commercial context of the industry, which is dependent upon sustaining consumer demand within a limited, niche and luxury marketplace. This has been achieved through a strategy of differentiation, by telling their unique story; a compelling origin story of production which differentiates their product and drives demand to survive.

8.3 The Harris Tweed Story

Harris Tweed is famed by its 'story' (Figure 8.2). Rooted in the Harris Tweed Act (1993), the brand is built around its definition; a cloth with a specific rooted geography of production and hand method. However, its more recent branded narration is much more than legislation. It spins a compelling tale of islands and industry, its people, places, production, all wrapped up in the cloth. To achieve this, the cloth is associated to territory- from land comes the cloth – and evokes by this, an imaginary of island life based on a distinctly Celtic and Gaelic geographical imagination (Chapter 3 & 6), and mobilises Highland and Island tropes to construct a geographical imagination of the Outer Hebrides as barren…remote…[and] rugged' (Figure 8.2), defined by tradition and ever quaint rurality.

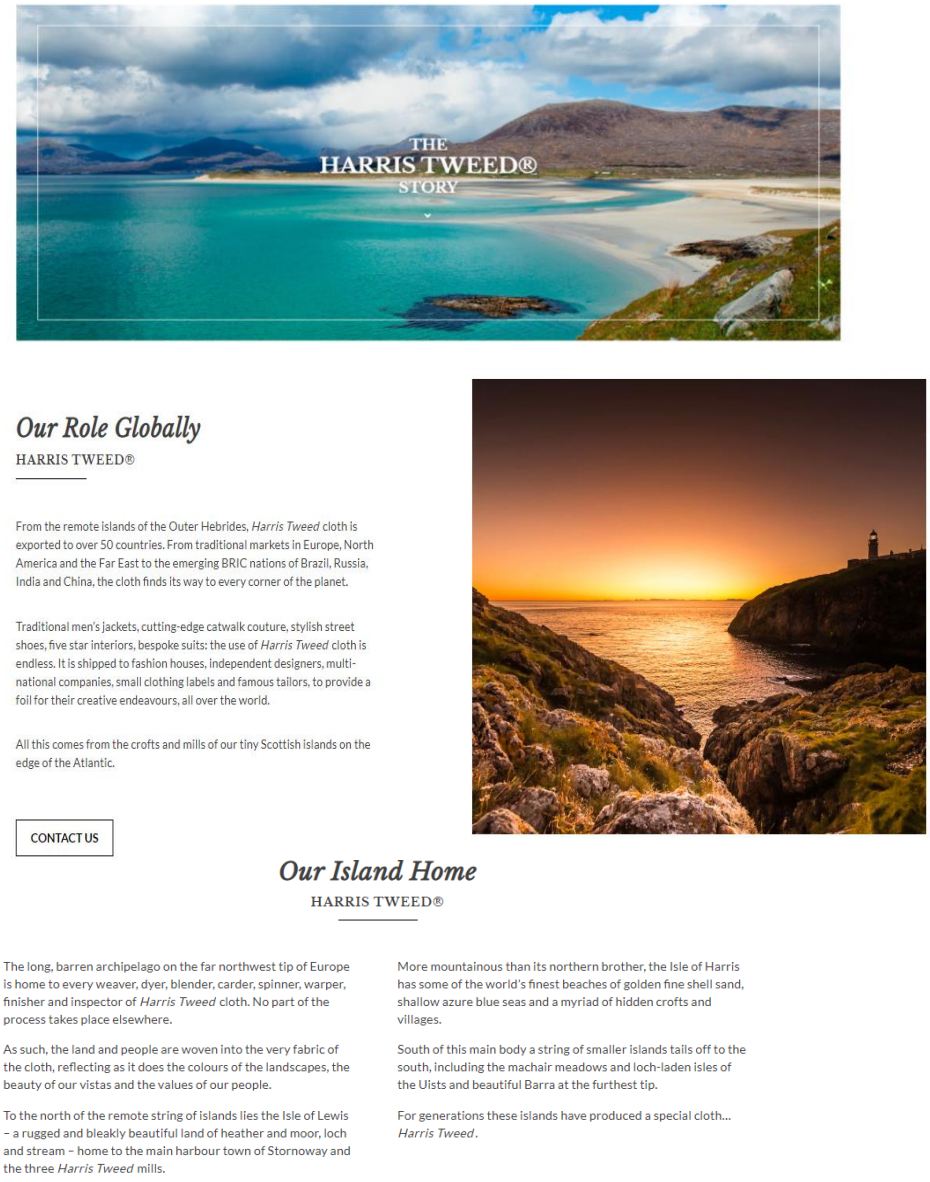


Figure 8.2: The Harris Tweed Authority website, entitled 'The Harris Tweed Story'. Source: (HTA, 2020)

This 'Brand as Land' associational strategy is best evidenced by the partnership of the HTA with Ian Lawson (2015), whose photographic series '*From Land to Cloth'* (Figure 8.3) has for many years been the mainstay of the visual identity of the industry. These vignettes, used for promotions, play to a cultural imagination of the fabric being quite literally woven from the landscape, and the tweed and yarn colouration used to evoke the moors, braes and beaches of the Outer Hebrides. This narration was reinforced in the 2018-19 HTA promotion, which thematically grouped point of sale literatures by key features of landscape; peatstacks, herring and moorland (Figure 8.4). As Crewe (2019, pp.77) writes, 'Harris Tweed speaks of landscape, place and

origins…It looks and smells like the land. It captures land and life in fabric'. As such, in its promotion, the origin story of the cloth is rooted, framed and associated to its place of production, through a cultural narration and visual story of landscape.



Figure 8.3: Photographs from *From the Land Comes The Cloth.* Source: Author's photography of (Lawson, 2015).

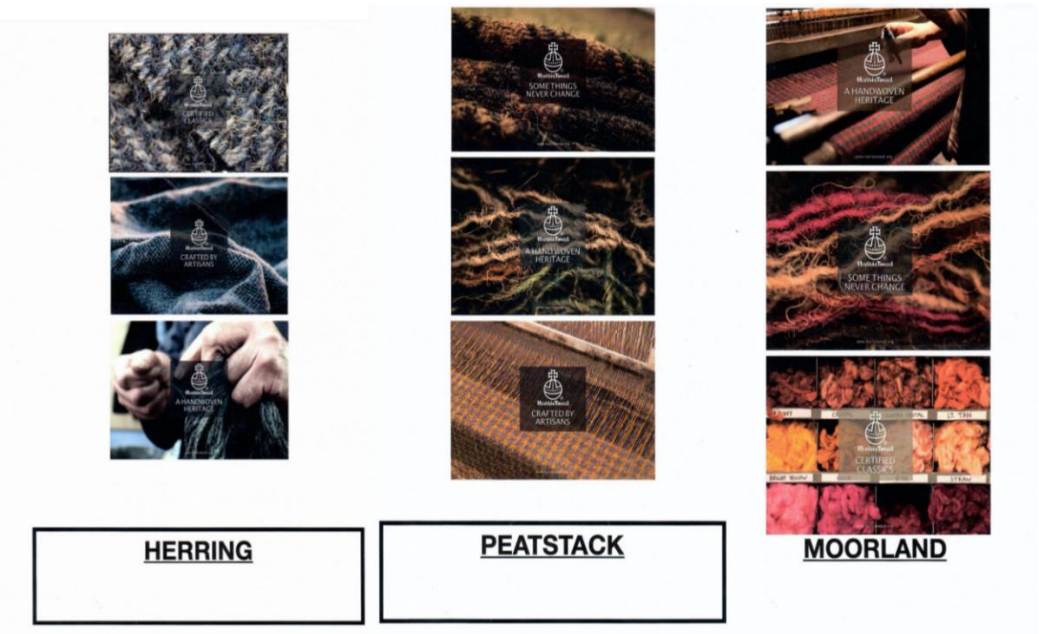


Figure 8.4: The themes of HTA Point of Sale literature. Source: HTA (2018) given in the field.

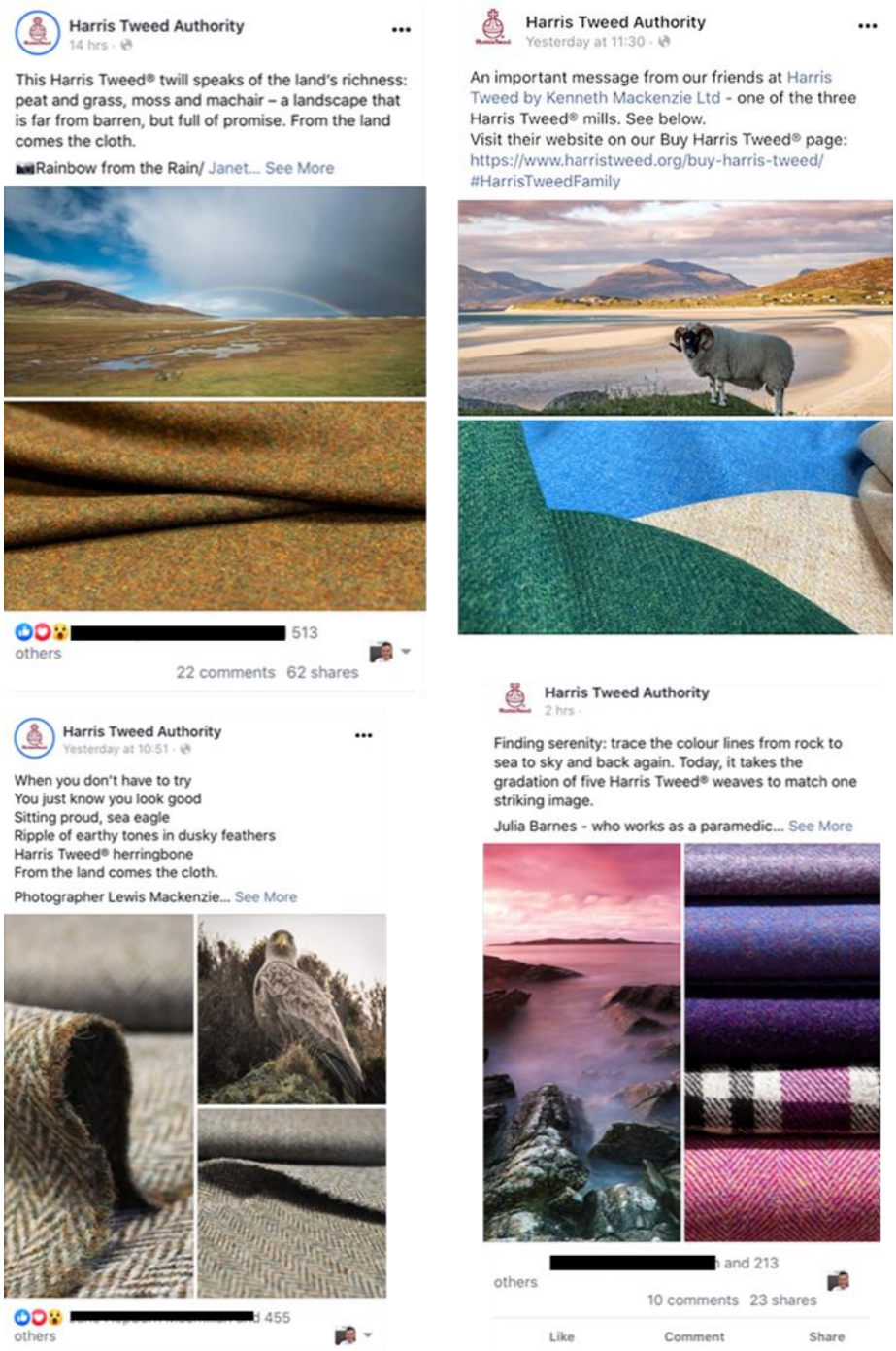


Figure 8.5: Screenshots of HTA Facebook promotions displaying their 'land as brand' strategy. Source: (HTA, 2020).

This narration, visual story and cultural representation depicts a landscape largely devoid of people, populated only by flora and fauna (Figure 8.5). Where islanders are

depicted, their images typify a caricatured island subject, framed through a discourse of humble, simple, and rural life, isolated and convivial. Through these vignettes, industrial practice is associated with island crofting and crafting, in which craft work is couched in a depiction if island life ever equitable, communal, harmonious and worry-free. The industry is described 'all one family, all working as a team, everyone helping each other' (Mary Ann Macleod in Platman, 2011, p.103). This associated evocation of island life in the origin story has an understated politics. It constructs and frames a way of seeing and imagining the geography of production of the cloth, and defines terms through which its place, community and labour are shown and understood. Interestingly given the politics of representation within the origin story, its storytelling was defined as something 'honest'. It was defined by its marketing professionals as distinctly truthful, which was set in contrast to conventional branding. This is best shown by Brian Wilson, the Chairman of Harris Tweed Hebrides, in Carrel (2012) who claims promoting Harris Tweed is unlike conventional branding precisely because it is truly genuine. It is not spinning a story, around something which does not exist. It is a story of authenticity and reality. This sentiment was echoed by interviewees when describing the consumer appeal of the cloth

> "So I would say genuine. Like what [I've] said before- *that is the story and that is what we do*. I think a sense of place; so 'provenance' I guess- that is a huge part of it, and when people come here they fall in love with the brand so much more- don't they! So, it is genuine, provenance, maybe longevity, I guess?" (HTA Spokesperson 2, emphasis added)

The brand was described as transparent, and truthful in its attempt to show the product, people and workplaces of production. Its provenance story was emotive, associative, and valued by consumers because of its sense of 'authenticity'. In this sense, branding professionals described the brand as 'more than a brand', but a shared story of life, loom, work and identity, and they perceived themselves as being its custodians and protectors.

> "I don't think it's just a fabric, but it is a product with a great story! Which I guess is a bit of a brand, *but it is not*

> *the kind of brand that's been made up*, or had a new face [and] had 'experts' come in, and tell us 'this' is the story you should tell. But this *is* just the story. This is just actually how it is made, and how it has always made. How it has been protected. *This is our story*. It is so genuine. So I guess if you are talking about it being a global brand, and you know, the HTA, protecting and promoting it, it is such an easy thing to do - promoting it- because it is so genuine. It is hand woven by islanders in the Outer Hebrides, in their own homes; *there is nothing made up about it. There is nothing false about it.*" *(*HTA Spokesperson 2, emphasis added*)*

This depiction of the brand speaks directly to claims that craft offers real connection (see Chapter 2). It appears to sit in antithesis to a model of branding which obscures production (Harvey, 1990), and shows and tells of the places, labourers and labour which underpin it. Yet despite its claimed realness, the brand remains a 'story'. This idea of fiction highlights the active agency of its storytellers- the HTA and the mills- and reminds that governing their active evocation, narration and representation is a logic of sale and survival. The origin story they tell is told not solely for 'truth', but because it summons and holds meaning and value in the marketplace. To produce this, they actively intermediate practice, and use photography, videography, association, dissociation, framing and curation of the many stories of the industry, to bring 'the story' to life.

This sits in contrast to the idea of a designer-maker subject, who makes their own products, and who brands and markets their own work. The construction of the most dominant Harris Tweed origin story- 'The Harris Tweed Story'- is told on behalf of craft weavers by the mills and the HTA. In this sense, its branding more closely resembles conventional branding strategies, which involve a specialised division of labour for promotion and branding which enlists content creators and marketing professionals who are distinct from the division of labour for production, but who instead 'produce' the brand. It was these brand builders who craft the origin story of

production, out of ideas and representations of craft practices, weavers, and places of production.

This production of the brand story revealed two distinct politics. The '*promoters*' who *defined* 'the story' through the interesting 'characters' and 'stories' of production as if cultural resources for their brand work, and those '*promoted*', who *identified* with the story and their place within it, but who had *little involvement in its authorship*.

> "I guess it is a brand, and a cloth, but it is more than that. It is a *whole story*… when we were talking about the 'five' things that describe the brand; 'people' is probably the first one (laughs). It is the people that make it. And the weavers, and *their stories*." (HTA Spokesperson 2, emphasis added)

> "I'm quite proud to be a weaver. That's something I really am. I don't quite know why that is. I think it is because it's something up here that is quite historical. It is Scottish. And I'm involved in it, and I'm now part of that *bigger story*." (Brad, M, DW, emphasis added)

Thus, behind the narrativisation of the 'story' is a political complexity rooted in a tension between those who represent and promote the people and places of the cloth, and those who live it; between how the promoters show and tell the lives and stories of cloth production, and the terms in which they are lived and practiced. In drawing distinction between the multiple practices, people, and places of Harris Tweed production, and the representations and narratives of them in its brand story, one affirms the possibilities of multiplicity in practice, and heightens need for greater appreciation of the authorial and framing power of its homogenising origin story, which can wrap up diversities of people, experiences, and labours of production into a singular and compelling narrative of it. It provides reminder that in the production of the associative origin story, brand builders could selectively compile and curate production stories for sale, which in their association, disassociates and erases also other negative experiences of life and labour that exist. The promoted story of production could deviate from its practices.

These slippages between promotion and practice can be seen in both of the chapters that discuss labour and technologies (Chapter 6 & 7), which demonstrate how the promotional activity appears to airbrush out a more pernicious political economy of production, and push out of view precarity and poor pay behind a veneer of production transparency. The actual production practices are overwritten by mythologised and romanticised visual images and narrations of them. The remainder of this chapter reflects on the tensions that arise through this narration of the brand story and interrogates the intersection and interplay between representations of production in the brand, and the experiences and practices of production. It reveals a more complex politics of cultural representation, storytelling and performance of craft and island life, which challenges the claim that craft brands are unproblematically transparent and authentic.

8.4 Brand as 'Life': Promotion and Practice

For weavers, the Harris Tweed story creatively blurs fact and fiction. It was their story of production, their lives, and their work, but it belied their lived reality. To this end, the brand was recognised as compelling and valuable and they invested in it to give meaning to their work and sell product, but it also perpetuated a misleading imagination of producers as romantic, wild and parochial (Platman, 2011, p. 25). The brands extraordinary depiction left little room for the mundanity and normality of worker's lives, but instead played to a cultural representation of them which overstated their islandness and extraordinariness, and presented these as if ordinary realities of their lives and labour.

> "Well you see when there's stuff on the TV about the island of Lewis. You'll see a few sheep in a croft, and an old blackhouse, and ruins. (laughs)…But they don't tell you how busy the town is. How many shops! And if they scanned through the car park in town, they'd see all the brand new Audis, and BMW's. If they went out and showed some of the houses- the actual houses- they are massive! Massive houses (laughs). These houses, they

cost, to build one here, it is a few £100,000's but to buy that in house down the south of England, they're over a million!" (Phil, M, DW)

"[Weaving?] I thought it was an old lady, behind a loom! I really did. But I was shocked to find out there is a lot of men doing it- it is mostly men! But aye, I thought it was an old lady, sitting behind a loom, in a wee shed, on her croft. But it is not like that at all (laughs). It's far from it- well that's what I'm finding. Because it's hard work." (Brad, M, DW)

"I think people have a romance about the place. You fight with yourself as to whether you *prolong the romance*. (Sarcastically) 'Yes! We're out today, and it was sunny, and we were skipping, all the sheep were jolly', you know?... I know what you're selling is this whole lifestyle… *Because that is what they want.* They want to *buy a bit of your life*, and see it as being, skippy-dee-doo (laughs). …. But then I think, the Tesco delivery van doesn't sell the whole image. And that is what I want to see; the reality. People coming out of Tesco or the Co-Op. You know. All of that normal stuff… doesn't sell, I just think somehow it will sell, but it won't, would it?!" (Vanessa, F, SW/DW, original emphasis)

"I think it has been very well branded now… [people] are amazed really when you tell them how many people live here, you know? We do have shops! And broadband!... and most things that are in the cities. We have here, on a small scale… They are quite amazed. They think, 'an island', there's only a few people living there, and you tell them the Western Isles, there is

> probably over 30,000 people, they think WOW (laughs).” (Paula, F, DW)

Weavers were clearly alienated from the cultural representations of their lives. Behind a branded façade of island life, weavers lived and worked. Weavers’ lives were fetishised by these images, which saw their labour defined always in terms of croft, blackhouse and sheep (Phil), old lady and old loom shed (Brad), and a romanticised and remote rural idyll (Vanessa & Paula). These formed the mainstay of the brand narrative. Deliberately or not, the brand story is constructed in a way which misleads, misconstrues, and mythologises weaving life into a popular, yet one-dimensional representation of it, behind which weavers labour, largely ignored in the dominant brand story.

This representation was, however, recognised by weavers as valuable. Weavers noted that consumers liked the perceived authenticity and connection of the provenance story, which however contrived or caricatured, constructed an imaginary of work and weaving that was seductive, enchanting and drove consumption. These narratives and images produced a story about weaving work and island life by the compelling imaginative geographies they inspired, and defined and established for the consumer an aestheticisation and visualisation of island life, crofting, and work that defined what the life and labour underpinning the brand ‘should’ look like.

Clearly, therefore, the origin story sits in multiple tensions. On the one hand it misleads, because it leans into a one-dimensional caricature of island life and work. On the other, it is desired for its authenticity, and secures sale. On the one hand, it claims to show and tell of work and island life, yet on the other, those who live it fail to recognise all of their lives in the story. On the one hand the brand creates and ideal-type aesthetic of weaving work and island life, yet on the other, what is promoted is not that as practiced by the workers themselves. To this end, the brand story fetishises production and place, but does so through a narrative of association and connection, using caricatured representations which in turn define the entire experience of place and production in its story.

Despite the alienation of weavers by the story, weavers were also invested in its success. This limited its challenge. They saw their industrial success predicated on its retelling, and saw challenging or questioning the terms and conventions of its retelling as something contentious. Challenging the story risked damaging the equity and reputation of the brand, and questioned the integrity of the framing of the story already told. For actors with most branding agency and resource- the HTA and the Mills- the story remained fit for purpose, because despite its representations, it continued to generate sales. As such, there was no cause to re-think the problematic representations and cultural politics of the brand.

Yet these tensions between promotion and practice bore themselves out in other ways. This was reflected upon within interviews with weavers, in moments where their branded representation collided with their practiced working lives in moments of encounter in everyday life. In these instances, weavers reflected on how they reconciled these slippages between promotion and practice, and how they actively performed and negotiated the brand in these moments that perpetuated the valuable mythologisation of their lives. These are reflected upon in two key moments; meeting textile tourists, and journalists and photographers.

8.4.1 Textile Tourism

For many tourists of the Outer Hebrides, Harris Tweed is part of the appeal of the islands. For single-width weavers, tourists provided valuable yet seasonal opportunities to generate direct sales. With this, many opened their loom sheds for visitors for weaving demonstrations, photographs and purchasing opportunities. Open loom sheds were widely advertised for visiting, and were supported by the tourism board marketing them as authentic island experiences (Figure 8.6, 8.7). Recognising this income stream, many weavers formalised the commodification of this experiential offer as part of a growing livelihood strategy. As part of this, some accommodated larger groups, coach trips, and cruise excursions as a way to increase sale (Figure 8.6).

Weavers described tourist visits as instances where their lives and their promotion collided. Textile tourists visited unannounced and were eager to witness the reality that lay behind the brand stories they had read. As such, textile tourism was viewed with mixed feelings. Tourists were positive for their income and sales, but they

scrutinised the lives of weavers who were on display. These moments of encounter, above and beyond an opportunity for sale, served to corroborate or challenge the dominant branded framing of weaving lives for tourists.

.



Figure 8.6: (Left) A tour group visiting a weaving shed. (Right) A Tourist Information printout listing weavers for tourists. Source: Personal Photography (2018)

As such, tourist visits were both economic and cultural. They were economic for they provided direct sales opportunities for consumers to buy the commodity, but they were also cultural, viewed by tourists as unmediated brand encounters, in which they learnt of weaving work and tradition. Weavers described these two purposes of encounter as a source of tension whereby they were both cultural storytellers who told and performed their craft story, and self-employed weavers who needed to sell and earn. Weaver's difficultly reconciled accommodating tourists with their working priority to remain productive: they were required to reconcile *showing* and *performing* their craft work, with *producing* and *selling* their craft product.

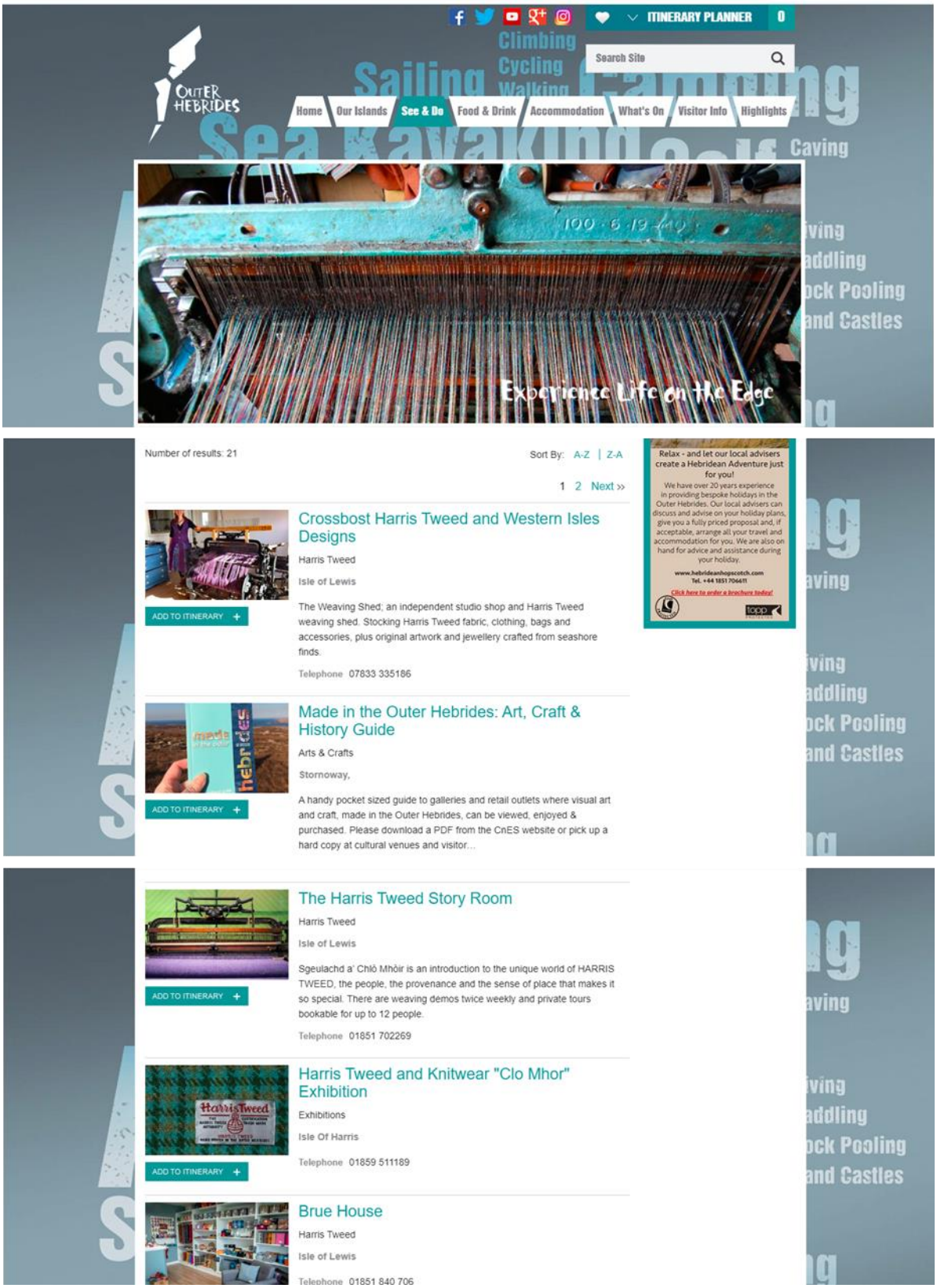


Figure 8.7: Outer Hebridean Tourism Board Website listing loom shed visits an 'experience' of 'life on the edge'. Source: (Visit Outer Hebrides, 2020)

"Can I get a picture of your loom- literally said by everyone?... [sometimes open sheds are busy, but] almost not busy enough to justify it, …[but] too busy because you have to stop weaving as well, and it is not worth it just for someone who wants a picture…because if you stop for half an hour and they don't buy anything…obviously it is fine they don't buy anything, because you understand they want to see the loom an everything, but it's half an hour of work you are not doing. And then another lot come." (Louise, F, SW/DW)

"Well you have two types of visitors. You've got ones that are coming, because somebody has said oh you should go and see a weaver…they've not much interest in Harris Tweed, no idea about what Harris Tweed is, but it is just something to do. Which is fine! You know, everybody should get their chance to learn about it, so I do, I do try and tell them about it, but they will take a lot of time, but [they'll] *never* buy anything. So you're losing time talking to them. But I always think, in my head…maybe they will go away, think about it, and maybe buy some Harris Tweed. ….then you get the ones, who you can tell because actually they walk into the shed, and if they start off with 'oh what a lovely shed, workshop, space, room, delete as appropriate' you know they've not much interest in the tweed. If they walk in and clock the tweed straight away, you're like you know it! They would've seen the loom, and seen the stuff. And yes, they are still interested in YOUR story,…It is interesting, because you can pretty much tell pretty much as soon as they come in if they are...well I don't mean *time wasters* that they are, but for me, it is a 'waste of time' in one way, but at the same time, if you're

> educating, it is never a waste of time. Usually, before the ferry leaves [redacted], about an hour before the ferry leaves, you'll often get tourists who just want to waste time… But no, I honestly think I might inspire somebody to buy a wee bit. Whether or not just now, but in the future, they might just think, 'you know that chair we are going to cover, what about that Harris Tweed stuff' …at the height of summer, some days you are literally 'one person is about to leave, and another is going to leave'. It is starting the same thing over and over again; 'how long have you been doing this, and you know, how does it work, and you know' It is the same question that I would ask if I was visiting someone. There is nothing wrong with those questions, but sometimes, when you've said it for the 8th or 9th time that day, it is just like…'it is like- 'six years...yes it was in the family...yes I am from [here]...yes I am from [redacted]...yes my mother was from [redacted]...yes my mother was from [redacted]...yes my grandparents are from [redacted]...yes my grandparents are from [redacted]. No...after that they were from the East Side of the island. Before that they were... you know. That whole thing. It makes me sound like I don't like doing it- I do! (laughs)" (Laura, F, SW)

Accommodating tourists took time and resources, and impacted the production of woven cloth. This played into an existing uncertainty of work (see Chapter 6 & 7), already pressurised by production efficiency, unpredictable technology and poor pay. Despite textile tourism being popular, its income rarely justified the time it consumed. Because of this, weavers were increasingly reappraising 'open door' visitation, and were instead adopting appointment-only models of consultation. This reframed visits as primarily commercial encounters and enabled weavers to remain open to custom whilst controlling the terms, times and duration of the visits.

> "…people [can] still come [next year], but they need appointments…we haven't said we are open this year yet, but that's how we will be doing it….we have people who already have pre-booked by appointment this year" (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

These visits were all-encompassing brand experiences. Loom sheds and weavers were viewed as characters in a 'lived' Harris Tweed story. As such, their personalities, mannerisms, homes, private lives, and ways of living were consumed part of the brand experience. In these encounters, visitors wanted to 'see' the promised and spectacularised images of the brand, and look at, watch and photograph weavers and loom sheds as if living cultural commodities. Tourists fetishised and yearned to find their promoted image.

> "In the summer. We do [get tourists]! We put a sign down last year [at the bottom of the drive] at the end of June, early July. And I couldn't believe the amount of people we had! It was fantastic! We absolutely loved it! You know, people; well we have people who are interested in tweed, and have no interested in the loom. But we also have people interested in the loom, but no interest in the tweed!...I still remember we had two people from America. They came in, and all they had eyes for was this loom! And I was showing them the tweed, and they were going 'yeah' (looked uninterested and gestured back to the loom)…it was the loom! And they took so many pictures of the loom!...But then we have others who are just so interested in our life. In our way of life here…and we do [demonstrations] *if they do ask*. I am sort of getting used to it now. I hated it first of all. Only because I was just so panicky." (Jess, F, SW/DW)

> "Yes we do [get textile tourists]. And it takes hours! Normally, it is a Swiss and Germans. They want to know

all the ins and outs. I explain warping, beaming, this that and the other. And then they say, we'll leave you then! We found it shocking really…some people would say they'd come and buy things, but they never did…[and] there were certain people that weren't interested in the looms or processes or anything, they just wanted to go straight in to what there was to buy…well it takes up a lot of weaving time!...and we don't need it…We had a few weird ones; we had a German chap came on his bicycle (laughs)…and he came and spent a little bit of time in the shed with me, and I asked do you want to meet [a fellow weaver]. He said yes, and he met [them], and he asked if he could have a photo. He asked, could I have it with [the fellow weaver]. I said that is fine, I will do that. And then he kept weaving, and he kept saying can I take photos of you?...oohh they look beautiful. (laughs)…He kept looking at these photos. And saying, oh they are beautiful! Beautiful (laughs)…and we had this lady come and ask [the fellow weaver] if they mind taking a photo with me and them (laughs)…[They were] here for hours! We couldn't get rid of him! He didn't buy anything either! He just went away with his photos!" (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

"…they'll watch you. And ask real personal questions. *What does your husband do? How do you earn your money*?…Well they just won't buy anything. Nothing. They just think that you've come to the island, so you are all a bit like you've got nothing to do, other than pedal the loom for them. They ask a million questions…one woman complained about everything. She'd parked a campervan in a car park so she wasn't paying any of the campervan fees. She was in here for about an hour. She was moaning about everything, and saying she preferred

> Uist… It's my home. I was so insulted. She was absolutely awful. She said she couldn't buy anything because she had just paid one hundred-odd pounds on the Ian Lawson book….I've had some in my garden, peering through the window. (laughs). My mum was up to stay, and she was sitting out the front of the house, on the decking, and she is sitting there whilst I was in the loom shed. Next minute, a man walked past in my garden with his dog, whilst his wife was in the loom shed. My mum said, 'oh hello' . He replied that 'it is a lovely view'. I would've said get out my garden. I didn't know because I was in here with his wife, and my mum was around there with her dressing gown" (Julie, F, SW)

Tourist encounters were a salient point of discussion, and weavers told of visitors crossing personal boundaries as part of their desired 'brand experience' of their lives. They asked personal questions, outstayed their welcome, and invaded privacy and personal spaces in their homes. Given weavers and weaving life are central storytelling conventions of the brand- the brand story is told to show and tell of them- they were viewed by tourists as rightly see-able, show-able, and experience-able in these encounters. In this, the brand story melted away the usual distinctions and boundaries of life- personal, private, public, work, home etc- into what was perceived by tourists as an unlimited and explorable 'brand experience' on display. Tourists sought to find the brand vignettes. These established for visiting tourists an expected scope of their 'brand experience', and an expected imaginary of their weaver-encounter. To this end, weavers felt they were branded performers living Disneyfied lives putting on shows of a perceived reality of work in an effort to stage an authentic spectacle for sale.

> "I know you get the tourists, who basically come here thinking its Disneyland and you're going to perform for them. But you know, I am a weaver! …I have had the loom shed open now, and I have just realised how rude some people can be. I feel like I should have Mickey Mouse ears on, and I am just part like a theme park - they have paid their ferry ticket and it is all

> included…they want you to weave. And if you haven't got a tweed on the loom, they are disappointed." (Julie, F, SW)

The image and narratives of production in the origin story structured and governed the loom shed encounter, and preconditioned tourists to expect a fantasy of weaving work. It constructed, scripted, and provided aesthetic for an imagined geography of production, by presenting as 'ordinary' production practices, a vision of extraordinary production tourists expected to find. Thus, weavers performed and reconciled the branded images, to meet their visitors expectations.

Performing brand experiences through emotional and bodily labour is nothing new (Bryman, 1999, Ritzer, 1998, Hochschild, 1983). For weavers, however, their performance was a curated *imaginary* of their *own* work practice that was not entirely resonant of their experience. The 'staging' of their performance (Goffman, 1971) was part of the 'brand story. Weavers showed their loom and commented on its age and treadle operation. They showed yarn and bobbins and commented on their colouration and landscape, and they recounted their positive experiences of weaving work and island life, all as if part of a well-rehearsed script. This self-narrativisation of their loom shed actively sparked discussion and centred the key features of significance; loom, yarn, loom shed, loom life. In doing so, weavers actively reproduced, in their encounters with visitors, the frames, images, narratives, and vignettes that were dominant in the representation and storytelling of the brand.

Showing and telling origin stories is a defining feature of how craft has been branded. The success of this strategy is reliant upon the cultural capital of the crafter, who must show and communicate their technical prowess to establish structures of elite taste-making (Ocejo, 2017, Bourdieu, 1984). Testament to this, the 'hipsterisation' of craft and neo-artisanship attest to the importance of enchanting products with discourses of authenticity, connection, connoisseurship and taste making (Thurnell-Read, 2019, Wallace, 2019, Land, 2018). This plays into a broader socio-cultural depiction of a contemporary craft subject who is articulate and educated, and an author and performer of the craft sensibility they promote.

This archetypal ‘craft subject’ is not found easily (if at all) in this case study. This fieldwork reveals a very different set of stories and experiences. The weaver is not the author of the brand, but the subject of it. Branding actors produced an origin story of them, and defined the terms in which weavers were shown. This promoted a reality of production crafted for consumers and created an imaginary of authentic work, a vision which visitors sought to find.

These cultural representations of island life and craft work become the vision and spectacle used by consumers to determine what they find is ‘authentic’ work practice. It has become its controlling image. In order for weavers to be viewed by consumers as ‘authentic’, they felt compelled to live out the promoted imaginary: those who deviated from the dominant narrative needed to justify their authenticity in different ways. As a non-Scottish weaver commented;

> *“The amount of people who say I’m not from here. And I have to say, I’m not from around here, but I’m coming from here, and I’m just as deserving of [custom]*, but I’m taking it in a different direction …” (Julie, F, SW, added emphasis)

The justification and performance of ‘authenticity’ was salient during my time with weavers as they reflected on the interplay between the imaginative geography of the brand, the experiential offer of the loom shed, and consumer valuation and adjudication of ‘authentic’ practice. Echoing Hickey (1997) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (1988, p. 61) description of production site visits as important verifiers for craft authenticity, the loom shed was a proxy of authenticity for visiting tourists. The loom shed, and weaver were compared against the highly evocative brand representations of a humble, simple and traditional islander and weaver (see Chapter 7). The cultural imagination evoked through the brand story speaks to Chibnik’s (2003, p. 243) assessment of brand strategies, who argues that crafts ‘sell well when they fit into a romantic narrative that places maximum cultural difference between artisans and customers. Those who lived out the stereotyped narrative were best placed for this, whilst those that did not, had their authenticity questioned. Because of this, weavers faced incentives to reflect the popular imaginary of their lives, and refine their

display, performance and visitor experience to accord with the story of their origin, practices and provenance.

This interface between the promoted image, the expectations of the consumer, and the experiential offer of the weavers, revealed a politics of display at work, one where those who matched the narrativisation and framing of the brand were best able to perform it and exploit its value. In doing so they were cast as embodiments of the authenticity of the brand. This politics of display was best demonstrated by weaver reflections on their display to tourists. This was governed by considerations of the extent to which they deviated from the representations of the brand, and the imaginations of the consumer.

> "[When you're a tourist] you're not just going to this tiny little island, but you are going to see these people that are doing this ridiculously archaic job! So we are doubling up on the weirdness for them (laughs) but they come and they are so disappointed that I am sitting there, listening to music, on my Now TV or whatever, streaming something (laughs)" (Kathryn, F, DW)

> **Dan (M, DW)**: I know [The HTA] were looking for [a demonstrator] to do the Hattersley, and I didn't have any experience of that… they probably want an old, traditional, who fits the…
>
> **Kieran:** …stereotype? (laughs)
>
> **Dan (M, DW):** Yes! I think that is more suitable for that. Plenty old stories, and knowing more about 'back in the day' (laughs)
>
> "[A friend does] stuff with cruise ships arriving. She was trying to encourage me to [run] a 'hands-on' experience thing for six or so people. But I was like NO! No ! No!

> I'm not an expert. I'm not a local. And actually I think people who come here 'need' a bit more 'authentic-ness'- as much as what I do is authentic, I'm not quite the part. I think they would be much better off going over to, somebody who does it for a 'living'. Rather than [me] a hobbyist…I'm still genuine!! But, I think they'd be a bit disillusioned coming into the garage, [passing] the lawnmower (laughs)" (Charles, M, SW)

Each demonstrate a politics of performance and display at work, in which weavers had to determine their suitability against the imagined 'ideal type'. For Kathryn, their modern shed was the determining factor, seen too disappointing for consumers who expected the archaic. For Dan it was their youth and deviation from the older stereotyped weaver which made them unsuitable as a weaving demonstrator. Lastly, for Charles it was their inability to offer an 'authentic' experience on top of their compliant weaving, which governed their choice not to open.

The work of the brand's authors- their framing, representation, narrative and visualities- therefore had an important impact on the lives of the weavers. In these encounters, the images and narrative of the brand created expectation as to what Harris Tweed production should look like. It created a controlling image through which consumers learnt of, and determined the authenticity of the cloth and production practices. Its aestheticisation and narrativisation cultivated expectations of loom shed experiences, which became informal proxies used to determine the authenticity of the weaver. To what extent consumer experience matched the narratives and visualities of the origin story determined the ability of the cloth and weaver to summon up and hold meaning to claims of authenticity and value. To this end, loom shed visits were not unmediated brand encounters after all, but more complex branded situations governed by a politics of display, in which weavers lives, and their representations were actively reconciled, and during which weavers either performed the brand narrative by reproducing its valuable 'authentic' vignettes, or self-excluded themselves from display because of their lack of fit with their promoted imaginaries.

8.4.2 Itineraries, Control, Journalists and Photographers

This interplay between the politics of display, brand representation, and practice was not just actively reconciled by weavers for tourists, but was also something managed, and actively reproduced by the actors who construct and promote the brand: the HTA and Mills. In promoting 'the brand story', these actors actively curated, selected and reproduced its framing, and worked hard to coordinate others to re-tell their story on their terms. They worked to reproduce their origin story on the terms and frames used in the brand. This is best demonstrated by the control exerted over journalists and photographers wanting to 'tell the story' of the brand.

Central to the governance of the reproduction of the brand's image was the way access to production was heavily mediated. Whilst single-width weavers who made up the minority of the weavers remained publicly accessible, the double-width weavers were mostly hidden, and worked for the mills out of sight in their homes. To tell *'their'* stories, relied on finding and meeting them. Working to tight deadlines, most journalists and photographers interested in 'telling' the brand story relied on gatekeepers to access them, and necessarily enlisted the authors of the brand image to coordinate this. In doing so, the mills and HTA coordinate itineraries and convene meetings with weavers for visiting press. These include selected individuals for inclusion and publicity. This is an overtly political act which worked to script the story 'found' and 'shown' and control which story was 'told'.

> **Kieran:** [the HTA] get loads of guests… so how do you decide what to show? Because there is such a diversity of weavers, let alone the mills as well. If they're only here for a couple of days, how do you come up with an itinerary that captures everything?....
>
> **HTA Spokesperson 1:** Well it is learnt. Over time. We got it wrong, many times before we got it right. It is really now about some very searching diagnostic questions before they meet them, about what they want, what their expectations are, and how long they have got,

> ultimately. So the ones I do recall and take real pride in personally, where I made good decisions, for once.

> "[The HTA normally send] interviewers. Newspapers. Magazines….Not particularly people, well they try and find someone in Stornoway…well we do feel that that HTA should really promote everybody in turn almost. That was the exception yesterday, that was nice. But [other weavers], I would say they have never promoted anything of theirs, and they do some lovely checks. I wouldn't say anything to the HTA, but it is blatant, and you would have thought you would be able to see that. And, how they can justify promoting some person, so much, when we are all paying them in our fees." (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

This intermediation of access has ramifications on the images produced. These itineraries actively frame the brand story by quite literally governing and structuring the encounter and determining which stories are shown and shared to journalists and photographers, which in turn are re-produced and circulated by them through their outputs. Itinerary setting thus, creates winners and losers, which undoubtedly can favour and overrepresent certain weavers, over others.

Promoting the industry is a difficult task, which relies upon telling the stories of weavers who are resource and time limited. Access to weavers was ever in demand, and the HTA and Mills saw itineraries as a method to minimise the unfair impact of their imposition. Itineraries were a way to evenly spread the burden of visitor-related loom 'downtime'. That being said, each weaver was self-employed, and therefore however benevolent their intention, itineraries did privilege the promotion of certain weavers, over others, determined by who constructed and reinforced the brand representation and story. The coordination of 'showing' the brand story to visitors through a schedule of connected visits and convened encounters reinforced and promoted the origin story and its framing. It was this story and its representations

which held onto meaning and value in market situations, and which contributed to the revival of Harris Tweed, the brand. The owners of the means of production controlled the management and coordination of the worker's display.

For those charged with the governance and promotion of the brand, the motivation for their narration was not just profit. It was also seen as communal obligation, a means to showcase the industry in a commercial manner to sustain industry livelihoods. The story tellers of the brand- the HTA and the Mills- describe themselves as entrusted to promote and cultivate brand desire; the collective goodwill of the industry. Good branding reaped industrial success, but bad branding risked the collective health of the industry. The risk of reputation posed by telling different origin stories cemented the existing origin conventions in brand strategy.

For actors with branding agency, the practice of constructing its 'story' was governed by a moral imperative: to represent the industry in the most effective way to hold onto meaning and value in the marketplace so as to safeguard the commercial success and collective goodwill of the industry. This moral obligation of brand actors to safeguard and protect this collective goodwill was expressed most acutely in their experiences of economic decline, in which the material realities of the subjects of the brand – the weavers with no work and no pay- gave rise to personal resentments towards branding actors, who were cast as failures in cultivating the demand through their storytelling. As a source at the HTA reflected;

> "[It was during the deep decline, and it was] the First Christmas, in 2008; several wives, daughters, mothers, girlfriends; the women of the Harris Tweed men, [were] meeting me in the supermarket and coming in the office on Garden Road…they would say, it's alright for you, you've got Christmas this year! Bet you can put toys under your Christmas tree for your kids! We won't be able to. …Well I am useless at that. I am no steely person at all. Especially with these human issues. I found that *desperately, desperately difficult*- being part of the town and living here, you know, and to be around, knowing

> that they thought that I was OK, and they weren't! I wasn't OK! *I was trying to fix it desperately. …*These were really difficult times. And I think, possibly upon reflection, allowed media opportunities- it was a BBC4 programme ….(sighs) and *we trusted them*. We let them in… And the output let us down. *Badly*. In the end. It presented me as a buffoon, and many others much worse. Wow- what a learning curve that was. … beyond the staff, there are an army of guys and girls that provide professional services to the Authority- and you know, you have to kind of kiss quite a lot of frogs (sighs) frog graphic designers, and frog branding consultants, because they think we're… Well they don't 'get' it. You waste a lot of time and energy you know, courting companies you think that can provide, and they just don't get what is unique about this very very unique organisation and industry." (HTA Spokesperson 1, original emphasis).

This insight reveals the real *human* story behind the branding, by actors wrapped up in the social, economic and cultural world of the islands. To them, the brand was not an abstract story told for brand equity, but a story with implications for their lives and island community, which they collectively share and experience. For them, their promotional storytelling had real life and immediate implications affecting not just the success of the industry, but also their social and cultural relationships in their community. Appreciating this, it felt that 'telling the story' was risky. Previous experiences enlisting external support and actors- brand consultants, professional services, promotional advisors- had demonstrated how storytelling can go quickly wrong, and resulted in the story of the industry being told unfairly, unflatteringly, and negatively.

In this context, plans and schedules represented a logical control measure to mitigate these real risks. The survival of the brand story- and in turn the industry- was the

guiding imperative of the storytelling, and governed the practices of the promotion of it.

To this end, the story was not seen in the terms of the consumer as representative, or of transparency- but was an attempt to find voice in a demanding marketplace. It was not perfect, nor reality, nor even without inequity, but was seen a pragmatic trade off necessarily made in light of a dearth of viable alternatives. It was about putting on a show, a story, and a tale, which represented the practices of the industry in its best light; putting its best foot forward.

> "I decided it is about, what I present, and of course it's a presentation; a performance, and it's about integrity and hard working-ness. It's about place and people. Yes of course, it's a lovely product, but it's these values of kind of, *well sometimes, I feel a right fraud*- because I know how bitchy and backstabbing it can be- *every industry is!* But I've to go out and present what I feel - and what I feel this is something we love doing. I love doing it. People I meet in that office day in, day out… And so, even though I know that all is not sweetness and light, I go about presenting the HTA in the way I think *it should be*. This is about an army of people that love and agree with me that it is worth fighting for. … We have to conduct ourselves in line with how the World wants Harris Tweed to be. And let the business, the shitty stuff- the arguing over a few pounds a metre- let that be the mills- let that never be us." (HTA Spokesperson 1, emphasis added)

In this sense, the construction of the origin story reflects both the cultural and political economies in which the industry sits. Branding actors recognise this tension between promotion and practice, which they reflect in their feelings sometimes of being 'deceptive' presenting something as 'reality' when it isn't their experience of reality, but they accept that the marketplace restricted their ability to share anything other than 'sweetness and light'. In this sense, the story was an imperfect representation of the

industry, a fiction based on a reality which was one sold for the sake of its ability to hold value in the marketplace and support their livelihoods.

This fictitious reality was best displayed in weaver's encounters with journalists and photographers, who often requested that they 'play up' their islandness for the camera. Weavers shared of their unease in these moments, both in their complicity to myth make around their lives, but also the absurdity of the cultural imaginations they were expected to perform as part of this. In which, a tension of 'authenticity' arose, when in performing 'authentic' vignettes of the brand, weavers clearly performed 'inauthentic' and staged moments unrepresentative of their everyday realities.

> "I had these meetings [with a photographer promoting the industry and], she came to take [them]. Well I was actually quite worried about her. I did the interview, and she came to take photographs, but she obviously had a really old image [in mind] and she wasn't being swayed from it. What she wanted to do was for us to fit into her image, and not take picture as what was in front of her. I was getting really annoyed with her. She started going on about, I want to take pictures of children, I do have children, but they don't live here, and she was like, oh well, can you find me some children. I don't even know who you are. You are starting to really worry me now. She didn't take one photo of the loom, even though she spent about 45 minutes talking about the loom. And she said, oh no, I just want a picture of you. I just thought, 'well why have you wasted all of my time?' Because you could have stopped anybody on the street and taken a photo of them. She put a big white sheet behind me. And took no photos of the loom or the loom shed, or anything to do with the weaving or anything. And the whole thing for me is about promoting the tweed. I don't particularly want my photograph taken randomly. So what's the point of giving my time, so that you can promote Harris

> Tweed, because that is the industry I am trying to promote. She was really odd. But again, she had this image in her head, and that was all she wanted photographs of. She was, she must have been really disappointed that that's not what she'd found. She was having none of it. She was having the photographs of old, oldy worldy stuff and that was it!" (Sue, F, DW)

> "Oh [the photographer] definitely had an idea- she wasn't happy with the way I looked, and thought I looked too much like a surfer. She wanted me to find a woolly jumper to wear instead, but then wasn't happy with how modern the exterior the house looked. It 'wouldn't be a good backdrop for the photos'. So I had to jump the fence, to my neighbours barn! A really really really old building that he doesn't even use! It is just a ruin. But to her, this was what…I *should* be working in. She was quite disgusted with the modernity in my shed! She did not want to photograph anything in the shed, because she could see there were posters on the door, magazines on the floor." (Kathryn, F, DW)

These examples reveal how the images of 'connection' and 'authenticity' are actively produced, and are extraordinary in their production but are represented as if ordinarily part of island and weaving life. These are manufactured, choreographed and enhanced, and presented as truthful and representative. They are a fetish of 'reality' which can hide the real practices of production that underpin them. (Figure 8.8).



Figure 8.8: A selection of screenshots from the Harris Tweed Hebrides Twitter feed, in which they host *Parisian Gent*, a fashion and style website Source**:** (Harris Tweed Hebrides, 2018)

8.5 Divisions of Brand Labour

Coursing through the discussion thus far has been the interplay between brand actor and subject, promotion and practice. Throughout the chapter I have explored the ways in which weavers are enlisted in the representation and the image production of their work. This is demonstrated in their encounters with journalists and tourists, which reveal tensions and contradictions relating to issues of control, authorship, and performance.

As Chapter 4 explains, the structure of the industry is complex. The experience of weavers, and particularly their representation to the public, is heavily choreographed and defined by the labour they perform. There is a marked difference in the experience of those weavers who work on single width production and sell directly to customers, as compared to the mill-commissioned double-width weavers who are obliged to sell their cloth to mills. It is along these divisions of labour that two distinct divisions of 'Harris Tweed' labour emerges: the former are active agents in the narration of their product; the latter are subjects of a brand story constructed and narrated about them, on their behalf.

For independent weavers, branding is an active task. Backdropped by the institutional narratives of the Mills and HTA, independent weavers defined and undertook their own promotional work. This brand-labour mirrors the archetypal image of the 'craft-entrepreneur' (Luckman, 2015) who, as self-employed business owners, share direct relationships with the marketplace and make active decisions about their brand presentation, communication, and representation. This is done largely through social media, and through commercial marketplace platforms such as Etsy and eBay. To this end, these digital platforms enabled independent producers ability to disintermediate and short-circuit the brand, enjoy a more direct relationship to the consumer, and provided space to tell their stories on their own terms.

> "[For my branding] there is budget involved, and it has to be something that I've done. I just like simple things. I like simplicity, and I suppose. Whether it has been deliberately as 'branding'…it is just part of who I am, and that's the way it is. You know, I was tempted to go down the elaborate, Harris Tweed, Luxury- those typical golden, curly fonts (laughs) and you know? But then that's not what 'Harris Tweed', or that doesn't reflect that 'out there' which is simple…quite *earth*y… [branding] *is rooted in who I am and what I think this is- my interpretation.*" (Julie, F, SW, emphasis added)

“For selling I decided I would do mostly through Facebook, and because a lot of people use Facebook for buying and selling, and they trust Facebook. Now that I have started slowly building up a reputation on Facebook- I have 730 followers! Which is quite a good number. I have also started using Instagram…I've been able to get quite a few good posts. I have been doing pictures of my tweeds, and things. I have also started doing videos- I have got myself a new camera- and I have started to get some HD videos on. I am just learning to use video software- editing software. So that is a new task I am learning, to put writing and everything else on it. That is a skill I am slowly developing. Once I have got that down, I will start looking at posting more videos and pictures. I have just got to find time to do the videos and do the pictures…. I have also built my own webpage. That is all my own work. So that webpage is something I built myself [via] YouTube.” (Sam, M, SW)

“I have to say, I have to give credit [for my Facebook] to my son, my youngest son! He is just fantastic…he still watches me (laughs) which is good because he'll go, 'you've had a message there' - for some reason my phone does not always let me know when someone has commented...and his one does, my husband does, as we all have admin rights, but he'll say, have you replied to that lady messaged you two hours ago! I said I didn't know, and he replies, you better do it. Even when he is at work, he will notice if I haven't replied. He say's someone has sent you a message, you better reply!...So he's really good and he did the website. You know, and like that, he keeps a really close eye on it as well. There's things I need to add into the website which I haven't

> done yet, but that is trying to find the time to actually sit down and do it. But Facebook is fine- it is just a channel for people to see you, and people, you know. Ideally, I would probably prefer it if people just went and bought through the website. But I understand there is a customer base that just doesn't want to do that" (Jess, F, SW/DW)

Success as independent weavers relies upon digital literacy to sell and cultivate brand images and narratives to customers. This relied upon informal networks of friends and families to share knowledge and best practice on how to construct a brand online. Central to this was constructing content which showed their craft labour and lives, constructing an aura of authenticity around their manual making practices. Consumers yearned for weavers to show and tell more and more of lives as part of the commodification of the cloth, which caused some weavers anxiety.

> "People always say 'you never show your face on your profile'…. So I actually put a picture up. I hate having my photograph taken. I had some really wicked ones taken, when people come here. So I have to ask, I don't want my picture putting out there. Because I am really self-conscious. And they even have put them on Facebook, and I said don't do that! But my husband took a picture and put it on Facebook, and my bloody picture got more likes than any of my tweeds!" (Julie, F, SW)

'Branding' was perceived by independent weavers to be less formal and professional than that of the HTA and Mills. The interesting point is that the apparent 'lacking professionalism' made for a more unmediated and 'genuine 'brand experience, in which the content was seen to be more 'real' than their professional counterparts.

> "The commenting and liking [on social media]- well it made me think it's a chance to show a different side to the kind of 'standard' Harris Tweed weaving.…somebody did get in touch to say you should think about how you're setting your shots for [Instagram]. But NO! I'm not going down that. This is

> [not] a *perfect* Instagram photo… this is a *real* photograph, and I've just put it on Instagram. I don't want to be spending ages, 'no, that's not quite right.' And out of like 3000 photos saying 'that is the best one'- I don't have time for that. Unless it's blurry, it goes on as I take it. I want it to be 'more' real. (laughs)" (Laura, F, SW, original emphasis)

Branding platforms such as eBay and Facebook created new quantitative metrics through which to define and determine their brand success, relating to social media reach, audience size, and rapidity of reply. These analytics became key features of discussions which underpinned successful brand strategy.

> "It's about getting established on Facebook first. I mean [a fellow weaver], helped us...without them...they seem a bit of a whiz!... she is the Queen...but I felt bad starting, because she was helping us so much! It was a bit like, you know, you can do this for yourself, instead of helping us! But obviously you would help.... I mean we have around 650 likes. She has about 10,000! (laughs) and we're still selling…you can imagine how much she sells…You have got to reply promptly and put stuff on [Facebook] (laughs)…We have messages at like half ten [on Facebook], but we will respond to it, because it does your response time! If we left it all night, it would be a longer response time…Sometimes you get some American, messaging when you are asleep...and messing up our response rate (laughs)" (Louise, F, SW/DW)

> **"**I think some people think if you are not in the shed, you are not working. But, you know, me and [redacted] both say, you've got to answer emails. She does all her emails in the morning and stuff. I feel sometimes that social media is such a quick thing- somebody sends you a message

> and they know if you've seen it or not ...so don't open that, if you haven't got time to reply (laughs)…. [Facebook Messenger] actually messages you, if you haven't replied to a message in like half an hour or something, saying 'to maintain your excellent response rate, reply now'. It does!...You know, and that is a down side, as it is so fast. People expect and answer straight away. I always feel like I have to message people back as soon as I can. Yeah, like in the beginning, selling, you know, Facebook, before they put all these restrictions, was so good. And I have just started my page, I think maybe a year, or a couple of months, before they put all their restrictions in place. So, you get a lot of followers from that, and then it got harder and harder to gauge the reach…[but] I have got such a big following, I have a list on my wall, of people who are waiting for tweeds" (Amy, F, SW)

In contrast to its popular presentation as an industry defined by the absence of modern technology, the branding practices of independent weavers reveal a clear awareness of contemporary digital technologies. Virtual spaces have emerged as the primary sites of encounter and connection for consumers, and through them most sales were completed. Independent weavers told the stories of their slow and analogue production through the use of these digital and speedily connective internet-based platforms.

The direct nature of this style of branding- where the producer brands and markets the product- was described as important for customer relations, and provided room for consumers to become involved with the making and design of their projects. Direct sale aided thicker personal connections to consumers, eliciting a 'more-than-market' feel to these interactions (Phillipov, 2016), and provided a sense of connection for the weaver which prevented their alienation from the purpose and meaning of their work. Most importantly, weavers were active in their own storytelling. They knew where their products were going and who they were going to be sold to, and they authored their own story of production on their terms. This aided their job satisfaction.

> "…sometimes, I offer favourable terms to people. So I have a particular person in America who always orders 11m, and goes to particular kilt maker in Edinburgh So we are keeping everyone busy! And he pays, it won't be until next week, but I say it is fine, I will sit on it for you. Because I know he will pay! Eventually" (Sandy, F, SW/DW)

> "I often ask people, if you can and if you're willing, send me a picture, because I would love to see it! I mean somebody made me a table runner, and got glass cut, to put that on the top of the table, put that in , some random patchwork, and then covered their dining chairs in it, so each one was different, but the same. You know, it came from the same thing. I thought that was cool. I liked that. (laughs). ….[another customer] sent me pictures of their wedding day and it looked stunning. The men were in waistcoats, and you know, it was just really really nice. And then of course, accessories, and hats" (Laura, F, SW)

For double-width weavers, branding was passive, a task done about them on their behalf. Other than a rare request for a promotional photograph or visit orchestrated by the mill or HTA, branding was something they were completely removed from and completely disconnected from the consumers of the cloth. Weavers described their alienation from the consumer thus;

> "The only thing you see is some fashion shows, and you'll see some tweeds you've done. Maybe the Scotland football team, or rugby team and think, oh I weaved that one! But, generally no… not a major idea of where it goes next" (Lucas, M, DW)

> "I have no idea where this piece I'm working on at the moment, where it will end up. Or what; it could be furniture; it could be anything (laughs)" (Mark, M, DW)

> "I don't care where it goes! They could set fire to it, I don't care (laughs) so long as I get paid!" (Grace, F, DW)

To this end, the consumer communications of the brand for double-width weavers was the exclusive domain of the promotional activities of the mill and HTA. It was something done for them, authored about them, on their behalf, but something they had little involvement in. To some, this disconnection was alienating, but to others it was immaterial to getting paid. Whilst double-width weavers undertook the productive labour of weaving cloth, the mills and HTA did the authorial labour producing their promotion. Weavers were branded subjects, not branding agents, with little agency over their own representation in the story.

8.6 Warping Origin Geographies

To this end, its origin story is more complex than simply an unmediated story of 'connection', and has a more nuanced politics than what is afforded to it in bifurcated discussion of 'fetishised' or 'un-fetishised'. Bound in the presentation of a compelling representation of authentic traditional craft, there appears a knottier practice of origin storytelling bound up in a more complex division of labour, cultural economy and political economy.

Central to this is the way a promoted representation and way of seeing Harris Tweed, irons out all of its complexity, diversity and politics, into a homogenising and universalising valuable origin story. Similar to place-image (Tokatli, 2012) which sees a singular associated place-image define the perception of all the geographies of production as a method to disassociate from its many others, this case study does the same. But unlike the work of Tokatli (2012, 2015) it does so not with multiple production locations, but with multiple experiences of the same moment of production based within the same production location. It presents and associates to vision of production- an image, aesthetic, and narration- which serves as a defining veneer which eschews differences of politics and work, disassociating from more negative experiences of them, and creates in the process a monopolising and de-politicising framing and imaginary of production expressed as landscape, looms, weavers, and cloth (Figure 8.9, 8.10, 8.11).

To this end, the visual language and narration of the origin story tell consumers little of the multiple originations with which actors in spatial circuits are working, and perhaps more problematically, presents a branded narration which makes it harder to distinguish amongst these, because the origin stories look superficially similar. This is seen in their common representation, which despite being involved in different spatial and economic circuits involving different actors and politics, are presented similarly as a story of land, cloth, loom, and weaver, regardless of the important differences of politics, agency, and power.

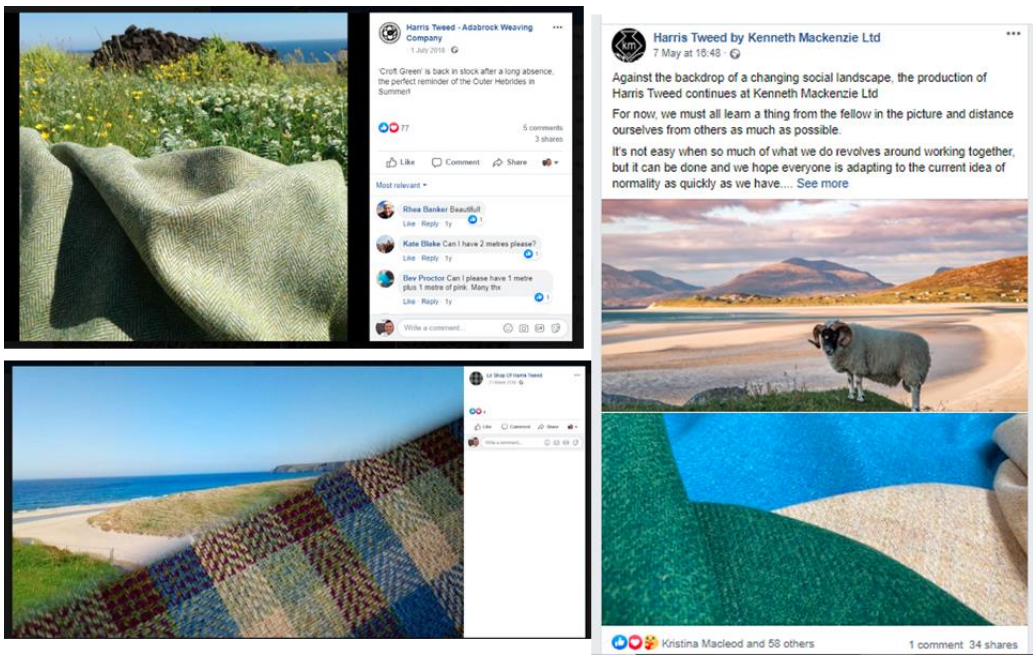


Figure 8.9: 'Land as Brand' brand convention featured in Facebook posts of independent weavers (Left Top, Left Bottom), and Mackenzie Mill (Right) Source: (Kenneth Mackenzie Ltd, 2020, Lil Shop of Harris Tweed, 2019, Adabrock Weaving Company, 2018).

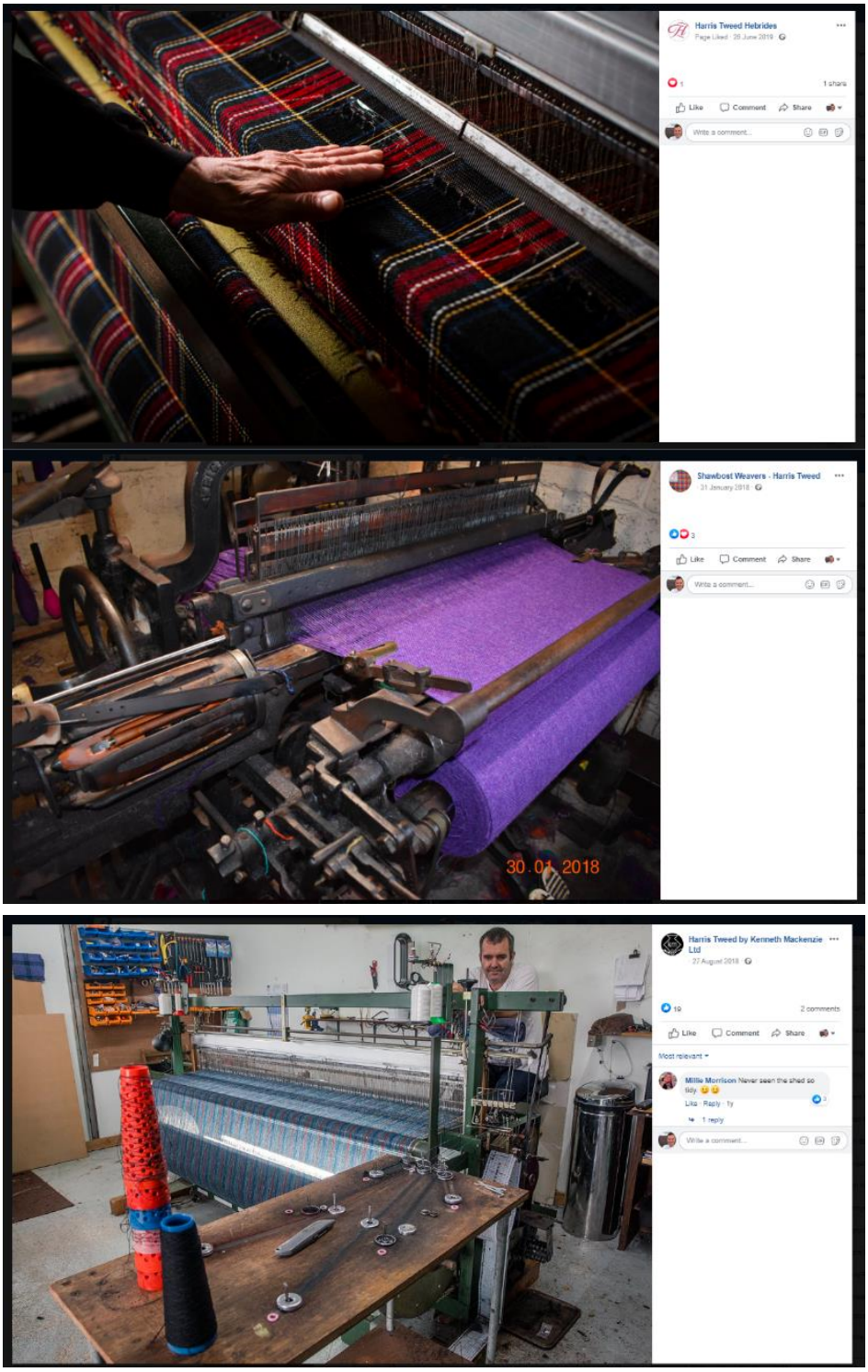


Figure 8.10: Screenshots of Facebook posts uploaded by Harris Tweed Hebrides Mill (Top), Kenneth Mackenzie Mill (Middle), and a single-width weaver (Bottom), all of which feature weavers and looms. Source: (Harris Tweed Hebrides, 2019, Kenneth Mackenzie Ltd, 2018, Shawbost Weavers, 2018).

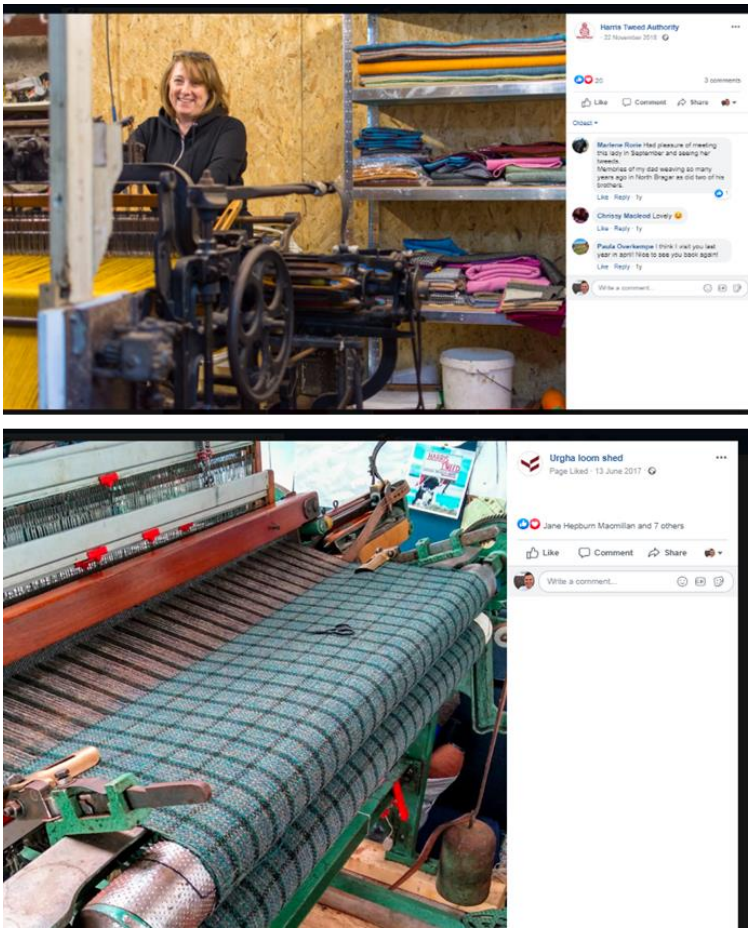


Figure 8.11 Screenshots produced by the HTA (Top) featuring a single-width weaver, and a single-width weaver (Bottom)**.** Source: (Harris Tweed Authority, 2020, Urgha Loom Shed, 2017)

This warping of the geographical origin of the brand was best shown by actors reflecting on exchanges with consumers who poorly understood the different actors and institutions of the industry, and the political and cultural economy the industry exists in. Instead, the imaginative geography depicted through the brand warps understandings of the complex multiple commercial relations wrapped in the cloth.

> "It's not a normal set up at all. People think Harris Tweed is a jacket, and will phone up [the HTA] and say 'Hi! A button has just come off my jacket, what can you do?'. We have to explain that you need to contact the person who made the jacket. And we get people not quite

> understanding what Harris Tweed is- phoning up about these enquiries" (HTA Spokesperson 2).
>
> "The name [HTA] suggests we are hierarchical of the mills, and we have 'authority' over the mills…customers and stakeholders don't understand, the structure, until you take the time to share that with them." (HTA Spokesperson 1)
>
> "…we've had people email us and ask if they can come and work for us for a month… We are only two people… And they don't understand that… They don't understand, and seem to think it is a huge company, but there's literally two of us...and the guy in Japan, asking the same thing! He was studying and wanted to work here and see what it was like! From JAPAN! They don't understand, we are just two people…" (Louise, F, SW/DW)

8.7 Conclusion

Using a framework of origination, this chapter critically evaluated how the geographical origins of Harris Tweed have multiple motives and representations. The chapter established the governing logic underpinning the brand story as one interlinked with industrial revival. This was demonstrated in the branding discourses of Harris Tweed. The story the brand originates was driven by its ability to summon demand and hold meaning and value in the marketplace. The chapter then accounted for the origin story, 'The Story of Harris Tweed', in which it is argued the brand evokes a particular associational connection defined through islandness and Celtic identity, evoked by a 'Land as Brand' brand strategy. This story is commercially compelling.

Yet, through discussions of the storytelling of the brand, there emerged two distinct politics of representation at play, divided into those with agency to tell it, and those who did not. There were actors with agency who 'originated' and who constructed the brand through their storytelling- chiefly the HTA- and there were those who were 'told' as part of the story, but had little agency to tell it on their terms- chiefly weavers.

Important distinction was made between how the origin story was represented to summon and hold meaning and value in the marketplace by the storytellers- how the story was 'originated' -and how the actors, 'characters' and industry actually practiced them day-to-day (see Chapter 6 and 7).

This interplay between the promoted framing of production, the imagined geography of production by the consumer, and the practices of production was then explored in moments of encounter, and worked through using two examples; textile tourism and journalist and photographer visits. Through textile tourism, the origin story was shown to create a controlling image of authentic production. In which, in order to be determined authentic by visiting consumers, weavers necessarily performed the promoted vignettes of the brand, and explained the discursive power of the brand story on their lives. In this sense the promotion had an effect on the material practices of loom shed visits, and weavers actively reconciled and performed the representations of the origin story.

Through the visits of journalists and photographers, the origin story was revealed governed, and its access and reproduction were highly controlled and scripted. Couched within a practice of 'telling' the right story, branding actors actively curated what was shown and told, governing where and how the brand 'originates'. In these moments of visitation, weavers were revealed to be enlisted to uneasily myth-make around their lives, and play up their caricatured representation for the camera. In this, what is understood as an authentic origin story, was revealed produced through the construction of staged moments which although unrepresentative of their everyday realities, become used to define them.

The chapter then went on to map out two divisions of brand labour that underpin 'The Harris Tweed Story'; independent weavers who actively brand themselves, and mill-commissioned weavers who are branded subjects, disconnected from brand practice and who are branded on their behalf. Each participate in different divisions of labour, and are embroiled in different productive relations with different actors and practices of brand storytelling. Underpinning the brand story were different authorial politics of work.

To this end, the chapter establishes the geographical capacity of provenance and its contradictions. In associating a vision of production through the story it 'originates', it simultaneously disassociates from more negative experiences of them and creates in the process a challenging vision of production that renders meaningful differences similar, and makes it harder to distinguish the different geographies, relations, agencies, actors and politics of representation at play.

Chapter 9
Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

This thesis has provided an ethnographic explanation of Harris Tweed It has critically examined the interplay between the brand and the geographies of its production. Through a critical discussion of labour, technology, and branding, the thesis has revealed the many tensions and contradictions that are wrapped up within the fabric. This chapter addresses the significant contributions of the research in four key respects: methodologically, empirically, theoretically, empirically and in relation to policy intervention. Section 9.1 outlines the empirical and methodological contribution of the thesis. Section 9.2 outlines the conceptual and theoretical contributions of the thesis, focusing particularly on origination, strategies of (mis)representation and craft theory. Lastly, Section 9.3 reflects on the contributions of the thesis and its ramifications for consumer activism, and outlines scope for future research and engagement.

9.1 Weaving New Stories

This research makes both a significant empirical and methodological contribution to the study of the Harris Tweed industry. Whilst world famous as a fabric in the consumer's imagination, the industry is largely absent in academic literature on the production, labour or technology that underpins the industry: the social, economic, political and cultural economies of the Harris Tweed industry are little understood. This thesis begins to tackle this empirical research gap. The dominant and romanticised representations of Harris Tweed effectively 'black box' the contemporary economic practices of the industry. Current published work adopts a promotional, journalistic approach that focuses on land, life and tradition (Maceacheran, 2021, Anderson, 2017, Young & Martin, 2017, Platman, 2011). This plays into a politics of promotion and display, and reinforces an inaccurate one-dimensional representation of island life and work. Thus, the greatest strength of this research is the way that it uncovers and critically reveals the complex economic

practices- specifically those relating to labour and technology - written out of the dominant narratives about the brand. Using the voices and experiences of the workforce, this thesis develops an account of the industry which prises open the black box of its contemporary practices, specifically regarding its labour, technologies, and branding. Through its critical interrogation of the politics of work, this research contributes to new and hitherto undocumented knowledge of the work experiences and practices of weavers, and uncovers a more complex and nuanced labour process than might be assumed at first sight.

Of particular strength is the way that the research deployed an ethnographic method, which was crucial in accessing and revealing the working practices and technologies that underpin the production process. It was only through the immersion in the field via an ethnographic approach that enabled the personal, long-standing relationships and understandings to develop and emerge. This methodological approach of immersion in the field for six months, gaining trust, understanding lives and connecting with the workers is a key strength of the research and explains the richness of the findings. The engagement with the community enabled significant levels of participation. The outcome was a depth of insight gleaned through intensive interviews with 41 weavers at their homes, and 12 brand professionals. This level of access and trust is, I suggest, both unusual and reaped rich rewards. This sample of ethnographic encounters with weavers represents over 10% of the registered weaving workforce. Given that over half of the weaving sample were double-width weavers - i.e. weavers with no direct 'public' facing relationship- the ethnographic method was shown particularly effective at 'getting in', learning from, and revealing the many stories of experiences and practices of this largely 'hidden' and difficult to access workforce.

The ethnographic research on labour practices was particularly insightful in revealing how complex and demanding the work of production was. The immersive approach enabled the diversity of voices and experiences of Harris Tweed weaving to be understood and acted as an important counter to the popular narrative and romantics of the brand which disguises the realities of production. This ethnographic project foregrounded, learnt from, and took seriously the multiple voices and lived experiences of weavers, and did so on their terms by listening, hearing, questioning and giving voice to their own stories of life and work. Because of this, the research

became a unique mechanism for weavers to communally reflect, discuss, and challenge the terms of their collective representation. Being a project with anonymised participation, the research was particularly effective at revealing hidden practices: fears about the personal ramifications of disclosing unethical practice or 'whistleblowing' publicly enabled full, honest and frank conversations without fear of personal attribution or retribution through the research. This approach is particularly significant methodologically in that it gave participants the space, anonymity and trust to speak with such candour. They saw our conversations as a means to express the realities of their working lives and their very real worries about precarity, power and agency.

9.2.1 Connection, Fetishism and Origination

This research contributes to the existing literature on commodity connection and fetishism, and responds directly to the empirical ambition to use origination as a framework to explore geographical association through branding (Pike, 2015, p. 198). Through the case study of Harris Tweed, the thesis empirically demonstrates the significance of the concept of origination in interrogating the mystical stories that envelop place-based brands (Harvey, 1990, Pike, 2015). In recognising the inadequacy of current debates that simplify and polarise practice: fetishised/de-fetishised, veiled/unveiled, connected/disconnected, origination provides an important framework to demonstrate how ideas of place of production and work are valorised through a complex process of strategic association and disassociation. Harris Tweed is positioned as archetypal of a broader shift within branding practice, which embroils geographical association and disassociation through its promotional and romanticised representations of the people, places and practices of production.

This thesis argues that the actors of the Harris Tweed brand- 'the Harris Tweed Story'- promote a particular narration if island life and work. It is compelling and commercially successful, and is revealed as a strategic project of geographical association and evocation based on upon spectacularised imagery, sensational storytelling, and enchanting mythmaking around a particular geographical imagination of the geographies of island life and work. This story holds value and

meaning in the marketplace through its associational claims, which are consistently revealed through specific cultural representations, tropes and caricatures of island life and craft work. Through the brand, and the associational story it tells, a particular imaginary is mobilised, defined, produced, and reproduced. Through its images and narratives, the brand is constructed to narrate a dominant geographical imagination, which confuses, conflates and (mis)shapes our understanding of the geographies of island life and production.

Through an examination of the dominant 'story' of Harris Tweed, as promoted to tourists and consumers, this ethnographic research has revealed the very real disconnection between the dominant brand narratives and representations and the reality of worker's lives and work. The significance of the immersive, long-term ethnographic study is how much it enabled me to understand – from the worker's perspective - how disconnected their experiences are from the popular Harris Tweed story that is sold to consumers. The real significance of this research is that it has revealed that the success of the Harris Tweed brand lies largely in its actors' ability to strategically tell, show and valorise a particular 'version' of the fabric that belies the very real, and very challenging, experiences of production, hard labour, precarity and uncertainty. The dominant story is one of framing, curation, performance and branding. This thesis has revealed that there are a range of different, and difficult practices, around technology, labour, power and agency that are masked in the dominant story-book narrative of 'island life'.

The thesis used the framework of origination to provide an analytical framing to explain the realities of labour, work and technology which at cross-purposes to the dominant branding story perpetuated by the mills, the owners of production and the marketeers. Origination as a concept enabled me to articulate how practices are governed, and it was a lens through which this research could reveal the representational logic of the brand, explained not by transparency or branding, but through graft, exploitation and industrial survival. Central to the argument in the thesis was an appreciation of the politics, power and control of the branded story. The thesis critically revealed questions that will have broader resonance: who 'originates', what is 'originated', by whom, where and on what terms? Far from representing a simple

land-and-loom based brand, the research has revealed a more complex and politically and culturally challenging set of work relations.

Central to this thesis has been the aim to critically interrogate the tensions and omissions that underpin the portrayal of the brand. This was achieved through an exploration of the moments of connection and deviation between brand promotion and labour practice. In Chapter 6, this was achieved through a focus on labour – much neglected in academic literature to date. The research compared the representations of working life narrated by the brand, with the stories told by the weavers. The result was a significant methodological contribution: hidden stories were revealed, and a more complex picture of working life was brought to life. The significance of this work is that it challenges the dominant representation of weaving work as romantic, a hobby, a craft, or land-work, and reveals that the work is challenging, far from romantic and based on long hours, low pay and work often dictated by the mils and their exacting requirements. The daily challenges of loom acquisition, training, self-employment, poor pay and precarity are erased from the popular representation of Harris Tweed. This research corrects this and adds a critical insight into the realities of labour and life as a weaver. As such, Chapter 6 argues that behind the branded romanticisation of life on the loom lurks more problematic work politics, practices and relations. The 'Harris Tweed brand' is based on a story of production that de-politicises, de-contextualises, and is devoid of sensitivity to the knotty political and economic realities of the industry. The research has revealed that the Harris Tweed story is a fictional romantic narration of craft work that simultaneously silences and disassociates the negative experiences of work and labour in the industry.

Chapter 7 continued to build on the ethnographically close approach to reveal how technology is deeply interwoven with the production of the cloth – although largely obscured from view. The dominant story about Harris Tweed emphasises hand-based production, and ties to land and the seasons. Chapter 7 disrupts the simplicity of this representation. It reveals a more complex economic and cultural reality, resting upon a more elaborate division of labour than is suggested by the promotion. It reveals hidden technological practices of maintenance, tinkering, part-procurement and automation, which together impel weavers to navigate a complex political and cultural economy. In doing so, the chapter reveals hidden power relations and highlights the

tensions between craft and technology, slow work and efficiency, transparency, performance of transparency and governance, all of which are wrapped up and eschewed by the framing and promotion of the branded origin story.

Lastly, in Chapter 8**,** the research critically reflects on and establishes the politics and agency of brand storytelling. It explores who 'originates', what is 'originated' and on 'what terms'. This reveals the political act of origination, in which actors are revealed to construct, resist, reinforce, and reconcile their practices with their promoted and branded geographical imaginations. The story of Harris Tweed as presented in the dominant narrative has an effect on material practice, and this research revealed that the popular story was governed, controlled, curated and produced by mills, the HTA and branders.

The most significant contribution of this research is in its immersive ethnographic methodology. Without living island life for six months it would be impossible to unpack the realities of the labour processes that enable the production of the brand. Origination is shown to add nuance to conceptualisations, analyses and explanations of commodity fetishism when applied to the branded origin story of Harris Tweed, and is used to demonstrate the complex ways branding embroils and valorises particular imaginaries of production and work through a story which connects as much as it disconnects, associates as much as it disassociates, shows as much it hides, and tells as much as it supresses.

9.2.2 Challenging Craft Discourses

This research adds critical contribution to scholarship on 'craft'. As this thesis outlines in Chapter 2, 'craft' has a slippery definition and is often imagined through hackneyed discourses: as 'traditional skill', 'artistic practice', 'radical' practice, or 'connected consumption'. Harris Tweed was shown to play to some of these imaginations; chiefly traditional skill and connected consumption. But this masks critical discussion of the labour process and technology. The conceptual elusiveness of craft allows many theoretical politics to be attached to it. For Marx ([1909] 1976), craft is pre-capitalist and imagined the antithesis of alienated labour; for Smith (1776) and Taylor (2009) craft is autonomous and subversive, and work to be divided and governed; for Poire

and Sabel (1984), craft is the romantic, human and progressive labour of flexible specialisation (Chapter 2). This thesis has challenged many of these assumptions, chiefly that craft work is always good, fair, unalienated and meaningful work. To this end, the thesis mobilises the voices and experiences of craft workers to challenge these myths, and argues that it is deeply problematic to antithetically position craft as a better alternative to other ways of working. Through this research it is clear that 'craft' can be just as precarious, inequitable, poorly paid and alienating as any other forms of production. This research provides empirical justification to challenge literature that asserts craft as empowering and stable. Instead, this research has constructed a more critical and ethnographically rooted project which attends more explicitly to the problematic politics of craft work and labour.

The major contribution of the thesis – beyond its methodological approach and empirical findings- is not just that it has emphasised the importance of adopting an economic-political and cultural economy approach to the study of how brands are represented, but, critically, what labour practices underpin such representations. The thesis is rooted in the experiences and voices of craft workers. It validates the multiplicity of their experiences and constructs a more complex narrative of craft labour, which is sensitive to the politics of worker's lived realities and practices. In this regard, the thesis speaks directly to an ongoing and developing project which critically interrogates the practiced injustices and inequities of the craft sector (Patel, 2020). However, unlike these analyses that adopt a cross-sector approach to reveal injustices of race and gender, this study suggests an additional need to also analyse the injustices within craft workplaces, and with greater focus on the political-economy of the craft labour within them.

9.3 Contributions to Consumer Activism

Finally, the thesis contributes to ongoing discussions relating to supply chain transparency in consumer branding, and provokes questions relating to the consumer politics of this. Contextualised by the growing popularity of craft products labelled 'Made in the UK', there is now a growing body of literature that questions the ethics of their claims (Butler, 2020, Clark, 2020, Blanchard, 2017). The findings of this thesis challenge many of their positive assumptions, not least that products made in known

production locations are *inherently* more transparent and 'better' for workers than those of distant and unknown locations. It responds directly to these literatures and provides further evidence to support efforts to critically examine the political and cultural economies of origin-based brands. More pertinently, whilst the use of origination in this thesis has shown how significant the concept is for conceptualising, theorising, analysing and enhancing understanding of the production and branding of Harris Tweed (Pike, 2015, p.198), it does not necessarily encourage and mobilise actors to work against these revealed inequities. As such, there remains a need to flesh out what a consumer politics of origination looks like.

Initiatives such as Fashion Revolution's '*Who Made My Clothes?*' (Figure 9.1) begin to ask these important questions (Blanchard, 2019, Newbold, 2019), but do so through a model of consumer engagement which risks conflating transparency with branded performances of transparency where brands show some of the people and practices of their supply chains. Whilst activist campaigns have developed important transparency indices and metrics of brand transparency for consumers (Fashion Revolution, 2020), what remains uncertain is how origin brands such as Harris Tweed now navigate improvements of these 'revealed' supply chain practices, when so much of their brand equity is embedded in an idyllic performance of them.



Figure 9.1: A collage of participants in the 'Who Made My Clothes?' initiative by Fashion Revolution. Source: (BBC, 2017)

Given the public outrage to exposés that reveal supply chain injustices, there is an important need to acknowledge the high stakes involved in the current political environment of consumer culture. There are growing political calls for greater transparency in supply chains, for an end to modern day slavery and for corporate social responsibility to be taken seriously. This makes it particularly challenging for researchers to expose production malpractice and injustice without potential negative repercussions for the workers concerned. This tension was particularly evident in the discussion of labour practices where weavers both confirmed their need for Harris Tweed to remain successful for their livelihoods, but acknowledged the very real challenges and pressures they faced and that require intervention. These challenges are particularly acute given that the industry is already precariously positioned in the marketplace. This research revealed that there increasingly seems little ground upon which to cultivate a nuanced discussion of supply chain improvement which both secures long term prosperity, but also recognises the need to identify and create space for supply chain improvement. Given that the industry was honest, reflective and encouraging of this research, and opened themselves up to scrutiny and critique, this research highlights the need to further explore how critical reflections on practice brought about through close ethnographic encounters can contribute positively to industrial improvement, and can open up genuine dialogue for positive change. There is therefore urgent need for further research exploring the politics of origination, which can account for and reflect upon how research can positively cultivate improvements in the inequities and injustices it reveals.

These considerations inform the dissemination strategy of the research and embed within it a constructive politics of stakeholder engagement. In the presentation of these findings, there is hope industrial actors leverage them to find resolution. However, in recognition of the fragility and specificity of this case study, concluding remarks will end by scoping debates which provide fertile territory for constructing helpful onward engagement. These will relate to competitive upgrading, labour standards, and the Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda, which demonstrate hopeful frames to navigate, adapt, and overcome the supply chain issues of this case study.

The first of these strategies could be to situate this research within discourses of industrial upgrading. This literature seeks to understand the trajectory of industrial development, through analysing the strategic shifts firms make to higher value-added activities (Kaplinsky, 2004). The history of this case study (Chapter 5) traces a successful industrial upgrade; one from commodity cloth to branded item. Yet, the empirical findings suggest that the distribution of the rewards have not been equally shared. This speaks to broader concern amongst upgrading scholars of the need to better incorporate empirical analysis of capital and labour. There are not only few details concerning how value is captured when manufacturing moves into 'higher value' activities, but also how much of that additional value is shared amongst its labourers. To this end, Brewer (2011) argues in favour of the identification and explanation of different forms of economic organisation to understand this dynamic; something which this case study responds to. In developing an empirical account of intra-firm relations attentive to the political and cultural economies of the case study, this research primes onward investigation to ask a knottier question; if the industry has upgraded, for whom (Tokatli , 2013)?

This question impels us to add nuance to upgrading trajectories by acknowledging that industrial advancement is not unidirectional; multiple forms of upgrading exist. For example, Smith *et al*. (2014, 2006) and Pipkin, (2011) speak of economic upgrading; better wages and regulation. Milberg and Winkler (2010) speak of social upgrading; improved collective bargaining and freedoms of association. Future research using this case study could develop a model of industrial improvement which appreciates what Barrientos, Gereffi and Rossi (2010) refer to as the positional power of labour, to waymark steps of economic and social upgrading. This thesis already identifies various lynchpins of coordinating labour power, and leaves room to further assess the role of buyer power in demanding change (Tokatli, Wrigley, & Kızılgün, 2008). This would begin to generate further understanding of the scope and potential leverage buyers have in engaging with questions of upgrading equity and would identify barriers which the industry could use to strategize improvement. Indeed, the case study also suggests how brand equity (or rather the risk to it) could provide impetus for engaging with these questions. Yet, the study of Smith *et al.* (2014) exploring Slovakian upgrading serves as warning of the sensitive political economy this navigates; in which labour victories such as increased wages can make industries

vulnerable to economic crisis. When considering capital-labour relationships such as in this case study, facilitating upgrading becomes significantly more complicated than helping firms to innovate or access new markets, and it changes the social and economic relations of production. Whilst this was out of the scope of this project, these considerations provide fertile ground for future engagement.

The second of these engagement strategies could be to root future research within discourses of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and practices of labour standard disclosure. This is an agenda which has gained significant traction within the business community and has been institutionalised into supply chain governance by companies wanting to demonstrate they provide good and socially responsible employment (Buhmann, Taylor, & Giuliani, 2019). This traction suggests there is now growing space for businesses of all kinds to reflect upon their supply chain practices. Ongoing research could work with the Harris Tweed industry to develop a reflection and action strategy with the specific purpose of implementing further standards and assurance mechanisms to address the concerns raised. This would speak to shifts within business practice where companies now establish and implement labour standards, frameworks and compliance measures through due diligence and disclosure procedures (see Waas, 2021). Existing frameworks, such as those established by the ILO, or the Global Reporting Initiative, provide useful frameworks and standards through which to navigate organisational improvement, and manage actionable impacts and stakeholder engagement through proactive monitoring and benchmarking.

Lastly, engagement with Environmental, Social and Governance investment (ESG) may also aid future enquiry. ESG investment is a phenomena where investors apply ESG non-financial considerations to investments as part of the identification of risk and opportunity (CFA, 2021, Temple-West & Talman, 2021). ESG has become an influential impetus for investors to demand credible supply chain accounting to benchmarked standards. Recognising both brands are financialised in models of brandization (Willmott, 2010) and the link between investor-led brand capitalisation and corporate strategy (Pike and Pollard, 2010, O'Neil, 2001), there is significant potential of ESG to transform brands, and advantageously position suppliers who actively demonstrate supply chain improvement. With growing pressure on large and capitalised brands to transparently disclose and account for their supply chains,

suppliers who do this proactively could benefit. Future research could respond to this and use these findings as a starting point to acknowledge the shortcomings of the industry to construct a more robust and open auditing process the Harris Tweed's supply chain. In validating the claims of this thesis, the industry could move forward by acknowledging their shortcomings, and compellingly position themselves as insightful suppliers, who have a serious commitment to proactively address these. The challenge of this would be in avoiding constructing narratives which end at the revelation of malpractice, to construct a continued story which explains improvement. Whilst this requires careful thought and strategy, brands like Patagonia provide hope of the viability of this path (see Patagonia (2021a, 2021b). With consumer appetite growing for brands which show leadership improving their supply chains, and with ESG investing reflecting this, there now signals hopeful structures downstream, from business and consumer buyers, which could provide demand for the industry to change, as well as provide fertile ground for the industry to position these findings positively, and to their commercial advantage.

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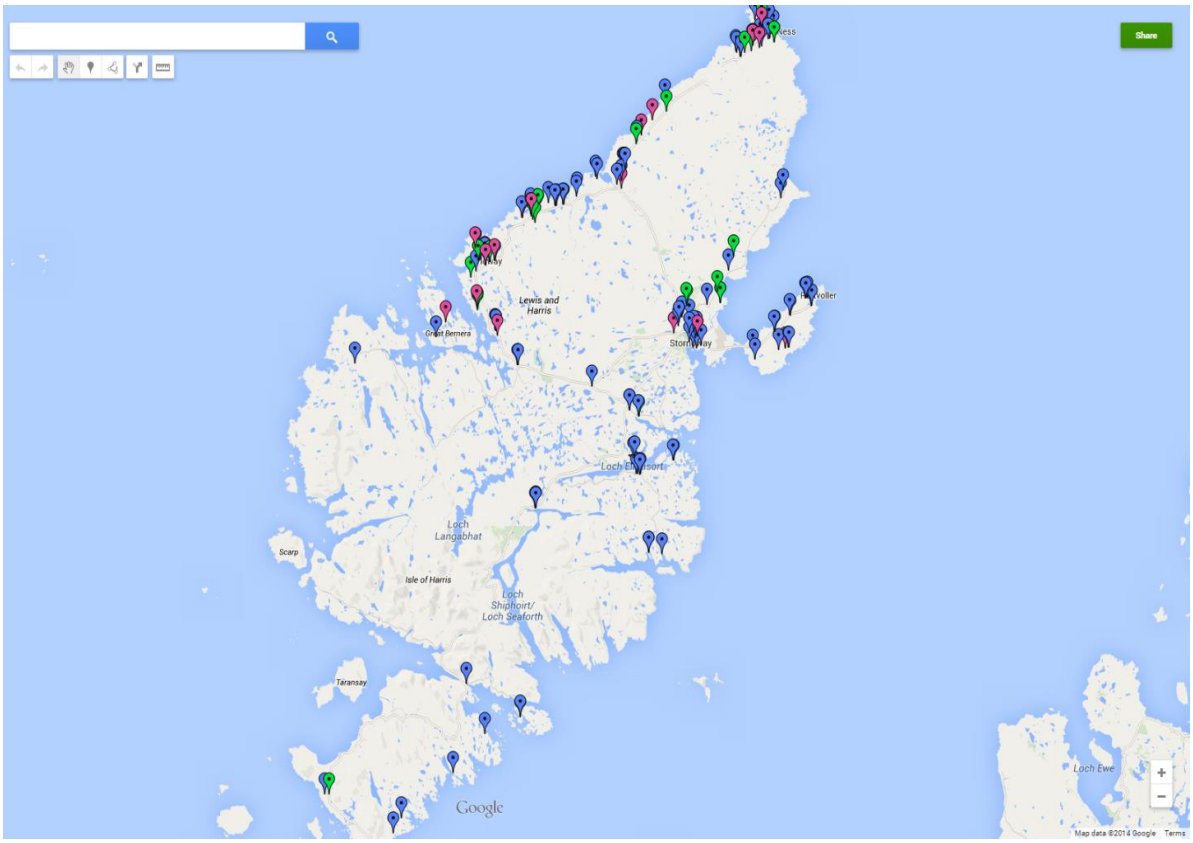
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of Weavers Locations.



Source: Harris Tweed Authority (2021)

Appendix 2: Weaving Numbers Registered 2021 (Not FTE).

Double-Width Weavers	246
Single-Width	67
Total	313

Source: Harris Tweed Authority (2021)

Appendix 3: Weavers Interviewed

Name	Age	SW/DW	Gender
Julie	41-60	SW	F
Catherine	41-60	SW/DW	F
Derek	60+	DW	M
Luke	41-60	DW	M
Chris	41-60	DW	M
Sandy	41-60	DW/SW	F
Tracey	41-60	DW	F
Jess	41-60	SW/DW	F
Louise	18-40	SW/DW	F
Emma	41-60	SW	F
Vanessa	41-60	SW/DW	F
Phil	41-60	DW	M
Harry	41-60	DW	M
Charles	41-60	SW	M
Dan	41-60	DW	M
Aidan	60+	SW	M
Josh	41-60	DW	M
Grace	18-40	DW	F
Sam	18-40	DWSW	M
Lucas	18-40	DW	M
Noah	40-60	DW	M
Sue	18-40	DW	F
Stuart	41-60	DW	M
Kathryn	18-40	DW	F
Mark	60+	DW	M
John	60+	DW	M
Tom	18-40	DW	M
Marcus	60+	DW	M
Alistair	60+	DW	M
Jack	60+	DW	M
Norman	41-60	DW	M
Laura	18-40	SW	F
Les	60+	DW	M
Brad	41-60	DW	M
Amy	18-40	SW	F
Paula	41-60	DW	F
Ronald	60+	SW	M
Colin	60+	DW	M

Source: Personal (2021)