**Stream No. 35 Transformative Crafts at Work**

**Stream Convenors  
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How can we use handcrafts such as crochet, knitting, sewing and marquetry to make work healthier, more diverse and transformative spaces? Crafts can inspire emancipatory practices and foster social activism (Bell et al, 2019). Craftivism is said to communicate emotions and ideas, from outrage and anger to humour and love. Crafting is increasingly associated with wellness, relaxing the mind and lowering blood pressure (Shin and Ha, 2011; Corkhill et al., 2014; Weldon et al., 2016).

Campaigns use crafts to protest the exploitation of the environment such as the knitting Nannas of Australia fighting mining and gas extraction (Ercan et al., 2018) or against sexual assault through the Pussy Hat movement (Black, 2017), and the more intersectional campaign of #hatnothate against bullying (Gonzalez, 2019). These crafts serve to bring people together to create something positive, affirming and transformative in the face of adversity.

A perhaps gentler form of craftivism can be seen in yarn bombing urban spaces (Vachhani, 2013). Anonymous overnight yarn decoration changes public aesthetics to intervene and protest urban development, for example. Decorations can be seen as wigs or perruques, reconfiguring an aesthetic. ‘Michel De Certeau’s notion of la perruque suggests how such devalued activities as crochet and knitting can be envisaged as strategies or tactics that afford agency and shape distinctive social relations (Hackney, 2013: 170). Yet not all yarn bombing is benign: Hahner and Varda (2014) note the similarities between yarn bombing and graffiti, arguing yarn bombing is a class and race appropriation of another’s form of expression, reinscribing a privileged aesthetic. Crafting is often perceived as addictive (Shin and Ha, 2011), causing symptoms such as repetitive strain injury (MacEachen, 2005) and failure to craft can create feelings of inadequacy (Corkhill et al., 2014). Yet on balance we believe crafting can be a force for good, transforming contexts and selves as the conference theme suggests.

Craftivism affords a tempered, quieter form of protest (Meyerson, 2001). It can be seen as a metaphor for an integrated life, bringing together separate “strands” and making a new whole from them; and of healing, as when bones knit together. For many, crafting calms body and mind like meditation, work carried out through love (Hackney, 2013; Sennett 2008). Although we ‘craft’ papers, crafting is the opposite of most of the work we do as academics. It is tangible and colourful and textured; it is kinetic, material, and non-verbal. We see the results of the act of making in knitting as soon as a stitch is moved from one needle to the next. At both an individual and social level we can build connections in groups, such as ‘knit and natter’ and ‘Stitch and Bitch’ groups, between people and generations (Stoller, 2003; Minahan and Cox, 2007) for charity and wellness.

So, how would workplaces such as academic conferences look like if they intentionally incorporated these characteristics and metaphors? We invite scholars to write abstracts that are inspired by crafting techniques, metaphors and practices. How can a crafting approach transform the way we perform work? How can our work become more inclusive by using these non-dominant approaches?

We invite submissions that engage with craft as a critical and fruitful activity, including but not confined to the following where craft can be seen as:

* Metaphors for work
* Techniques and organization
* Perruque
* Connection/ disconnection
* Forms of communication
* Wellness/ illness
* Subversion/ assimilation
* Reinscribing intersectional inequalities
* Tempered radicalism

**Submission of Abstracts**

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (submitted direct to stream convenors, ONE page, WORD NOT PDF, single spaced, excluding any references, no headers, footers or track changes) are invited by **Friday 15th November 2019**. Decisions on acceptance of abstracts will be made by stream leaders within one month and communicated to authors by Monday 2nd December 2019. All contributions will be independently refereed. Abstracts should include FULL contact details, including name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. **\*Abstracts should be emailed to Lynne Baxter lynne.baxter@york.ac.uk; Emily Benson Emily.Benson@keene.edu; Alexandra Bristow Alexandra.bristow@open.ac.uk; Elizabeth Siler esiler@worcester.edu; Sheena Vachhani s.vachhani@bristol.ac.uk;**

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