Chapter six
Making

Creating entanglements

Matt is 33 years old. For most of his working life so far he describes himself as having 'flitted around between jobs, hoping for something more satisfying or more engaging.' He has mainly worked as a manager of various shops and supermarkets, but also been involved in various house renovation projects along the way. He enjoyed managing a small team in his various roles, and liked organising things, but found himself uninspired by the type of shop he was working in. So, a year and a half ago, having saved enough money to have enough if his business plan went array, he decided to take what he sees as a bit of a risk and go into business himself. He describes how he 'felt relatively confident about the business side of things … I knew that I knew how to run things, how to keep accounts, how to market things and all that.' However, he was less sure about what to go into, saying 'I really had no idea, I was kind of grasping around in the dark really. Nothing sprung to mind. I knew I didn't want to get anything connected to food or fresh produce as I'd seen all the rules around that from working in supermarkets. I also knew I wasn't interested in making small, intricate things, as I don't have that kind of patience. Eventually, I thought to myself how I had enjoyed the house renovation, especially the bits where I was working with renovated or old materials to smarten things up, like finding old doors from reclamation yards, and so I thought, maybe doing up old furniture would be something I could do.'

Matt describes his decision as pragmatic and 'pretty much entirely unemotional', but some more emotive factors emerge as he talks more. 'I did most of the house renovation with my dad, he's always done that, he's a builder by trade, but got into planning and renovation a long time ago, when I was still a kid. He taught me lots of skills without me even knowing really. Now I'm using them almost every day. But I've kind of gained the skills of my own generation in terms of marketing and that, especially online marketing, that he never had.' So, although Matt is relatively unaware of carrying skills forward in the way described by Hartmann and Ostberg, he is experiencing a similar sense of connection to a generational history.

Once he had decided that doing up furniture was a viable business and one that he might enjoy running, Matt set about finding some affordable premises. The rationale he gives for his choice is interesting in that it provides insight into his vision of himself as someone engaged in a manual line of work. He says, 'I really wanted somewhere that felt like a workshop as much as a shop. I was a bit

of working in clean, corporate shops. I definitely craved some sawdust [laughs]. But equally, I wanted a space that would attract the widest variety of customers possible. It's a bit tricky to explain, but you see, I had already done some research into my potential market and realised that calling my furniture 'upcycled' as opposed to 'renovated' would work best, because I'm not really a qualified furniture restorer and that's what people would expect if you sell yourself as a renovator. Also, I'm not really interested in doing up very valuable pieces or antiques. I like taking just some random piece that might be thrown out and doing something completely new with it… so that's upcycling. But, I recognised early on that upcycling was seen as something for younger people and that was also very trendy and maybe a bit hipster… and I didn't want that market, not just that market anyway… I wanted anyone to feel they could come into my shop and that my furniture might be something they wanted to buy. So, to cut a long story short, I felt if I had a very trendy open-plan space that looked kind of arty and messy it would put off anyone who wasn't a hipster basically, so that's what I mean when I say I wanted somewhere that looks like a shop as much as a workshop. And actually, I kind of slightly divided the space in the place I have to make sure there was a definite shop part and then 'back' part.

Matt's rationale is interesting as it displays all sorts of recognition about what certain types of craft 'mess' connote for the potential consumer. He is aware that the hipster is attracted to the version of the maker who conforms to the romantic vision of a gentle, creative and authentic worker, embedded in his own skill-set and artisanal history. He, however, does not see himself in this light. For example, he says, 'I know a lot of people, mainly rich kids, are setting up businesses where they make things… it's very fashionable and most of those people could do all sorts of jobs, but think there's something more romantic and 'in touch; about doing a manual job. There's nothing romantic about manual labour! So, that's not really my story… I was just looking for something I could run myself, and something a bit more satisfying than running one branch of a massive chain.' Here, Matt shows how he does not place himself in any straight-forward way as pitted against the factory worker, or indeed see himself as particularly authentic in comparison. Such easy distinctions do not work in his case, and quite possibly in most cases.

Sennett argues that there are two motivations for working hard and doing work well; one is for the sake of community, and the other is competition. However, he believes that both recipes have proved problematic in their pure form. The idea of community through work is by no means new of course. Marx was keen to explain how social relations developed through people making things together in the Grundisse. Even in his later work The Gotha Programme, he insisted that communism

would rekindle the spirit of craftsmanship. There was a utopian element to his vision of the worker that is strangely similar to how today's capitalist makers tend to speak about their rationale and motivation. While many small businesses based on making, and those who identify themselves as makers, may be social enterprise not primarily concerned with profit, they are by no means Marxist rebelling against the entire logic of capitalism.

Equally, neither are makers necessarily against machines and concerned about their impact on the actual experience of production like the Enlightenment thinkers were, and in the manner that Sennett argues still exists. Many are concerned about certain types of 'machines' – overly computerised ways of making that feel less organic for example – and if anything they tend to be rather in love with 'traditional' (often mechanical) machines such as sewing machines, or kitchen mixers, or woodworking machines. These, in their view, very much allow for an experience in which one is in touch with one's materials.[19]

In *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett begins by remembering conversations with his teacher Hannah Arendt, and her distinction between Animal laborans and Homo faber (Sennet, 2009:6). For Arendt, Animal laborans was the human equivalent of a beast of burden, for whom work was an end in itself. In contrast, Homo faber was about humans making a life in common, and acted as a judge of material culture and labour, rather a worker pure and simple. For Homo faber then, work was a means as well as an ends. In other words, for Arendt, Homo faber was superior to Animal laborans. As Sennet puts it, for Arendt, as Animal laborans we simply make things and are 'amoral, absorbed in a task'; as Homo faber 'we stop producing and start discussing and judging together' (2009:-6-7). Animal laborans asks how; whereas Homo faber asks why. Sennett however, wishes to challenge this distinction, pointing out that Animal laborans is capable of thinking, and equally Homo faber may hold discussions with materials rather than other people. For him, 'people can learn about themselves through the things they make', and therefore material culture matters more than Arendt felt it did. While Arendt became more hopeful about the capacity of Homo faber to have a positive impact in the world, Sennett suggests that he has become more hopeful about Homo laborans having just such a positive impact. Makers in other words, and the current return to making, whether for livelihood or pleasure, may be part of a positive pattern in humanity's history.

Sennett defines craftsmanship[20] as 'the skill of making things well' and is specifically concerned with the issue of technique as a 'cultural issue' rather than a 'mindless procedure', and one that is linked to conducting a particular way of life (2009: 8). In addition, he captures well the current return to craftsmanship by insisting that as well as suggesting a way of life associated with the advent

of industrial society, it also names 'an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake'(2009:9). Importantly though, he also recognises that social and economic factors impact upon the ability to engage in and make a success of craftsmanship. So craftsmanship is not apolitical or equally achievable by all. The casualties of the financial crash who set up craft ale companies tended to be those who had lost jobs in the City of London, not the dispensable labour of call centres. Acknowledging these politics, does not however, negate the idea that making is somehow intrinsic to the human experience, and this chapter attempts to pick apart our relationships with things we make and how they may differ from relationships with other types of things.

For Sennett, 'craftsmanship finds a philosophical home within pragmatism', specifically the work of C.S. Peirce and its reaction against the idealism of Hegel (2009:286). For Peirce, the key to human cognition lay in everyday, small acts. John Dewey is also deemed useful, largely due to his brand of socialism that rejected Marxism and argued for improving the experience of work, as opposed to transcending labour altogether. As Sennett points out, both John Ruskin and William Morris also saw work as being about collective trial and error, or, as Sennett puts it, 'good craftsmanship implies socialism' (2009:288). For Sennett, the best impact of crafting is the potential for the 'value of experience understood as a craft', i.e. that making physical things provides insights into experience that can shape our dealings with others (2009:288). He further explains this by saying, 'Material challenges like working with resistance or managing ambiguity are instructive in understanding the resistances people harbor to one another or the uncertain boundaries between people … people need to practice their relations with one another, learn the skills of anticipation and revision in order to improve these relations' (2009:289).

In many ways Tim Ingold's version of the maker, is one that intersects in useful and interesting ways with Sennett's point about Homo laborans being the potential hero of our times. Ingold argues that it is 'by watching listening and feeling – by paying attention to what the world has to tell us - that we learn' (Ingold, 2013:1). He argues for seeing making as a process of growth, and thus to place the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials. These materials are what he has to make with, and in the process of making he 'joins forces' with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, sythensizing and distilling, in anticipation of what might emerge' (2013: 21). As Ingold says, this means that the maker is not aloof from the object, imposing designs on a world waiting to receive them, but rather, is simply intervening in wordly processes that are already going on (including plants, sand, water, rocks, etc.) (2013: 21). Here Ingold is drawing upon Gilbert Simondon who argues that things should be understood as processes in which form is ever-

emergent rather than given in advance. Brian Massumi too, take inspiration from Simondon's work in a similar way. (See Simondon, 2005; see Massumi, 2009.) Simondon talks of a hylomorphic model in which a person stands on the outside and sees what goes in and what comes out, but nothing of what happens in between. Both Simondon and Ingold, prefer to think in terms of a process of morphogenesis (Ingold, 2013:25).

The important point that such arguments take us to, is that hylomorphism relies upon a distinction between form and matter, whereas, morphogenesis does not. In other words, as Ingold puts it, the essential relation in the ever-forming world in which we live, is 'not between form and matter but between forces and materials' (2013:45). The hylomorphic model is written about by Holloway and is seen as the maker having a plan or template and a finite set of parts, and completing the object when the final part is in place, i.e. thinking about the work and judging it in the manner of Homo faber. Thinking of myself even as an author of this book, this does not ring true. Sure, I had a plan of sorts, otherwise how would the publisher have known they were interested in publishing it?! But this plan was not a set of parts that I could draw upon without any revision or questioning along the way and 'make' the book. Ideas and contents changed a bit along the way, stumbling blocks through up new issues to be covered. The book was a process of making. Things that happened to me as I wrote it, made their way into it. And even now you are reading it, it is changing, its pages are getting thumbed and maybe words are getting underlined.

In fact, even things that do come as construction kits do not always end up being 'made' as their designer intended. As Ingold says, 'the process of making is not so much an *assembly* as a *procession,* not a building up from discrete parts into a hierarchically organised totality, but a carrying on – a passage along a path in which every step grows from the one before and into the one following, on an itinerary that always overshoots its destinations' (2013: 45). Ingold says making is a journey; the maker a journeyman (2013: 45). When we talk about making something and then using it, we are suggesting that using only happens when making has finished. This he says is a similar false distinction to the designing and making one. But objects are often added to, taken from, changed, according to their uses. Houses are particular good examples of this – with extensions and outside spaces being added on.

Perhaps the distinction between the designer/architect etc. and the 'craftsperson/maker has become so much of everyday life in our time that unless we are actually called a 'designer' in our professional lives we assume we just makers; or unless we are called a maker, we assume we are a designer. And if we are neither (like most of us!), we wrongly assume we are simply the 'user' of an

object. Yet many of us 'make' our gardens, our food. So, Ingold asks 'are design and making merely two words for the same thing?' (2013: 70). Ingold says designs are like catching ideas and dreams before they run away from us - 'human endeavours, it seems, are forever poised between catching dreams and coaxing materials' (2013: 73). In this tension between 'the pull of hopes and dreams and the drag of material constraint', he argues, lies the relation between design and making. 'It is precisely where the reach of the imagination meets the friction of materials, or where the forces of ambition rub up against the rough edges of the world, that human life is lived' (2013: 73).

Ingold's ideas on paying attention to things and learning from them relates directly to what Bernard Stiegler says about savoir vivre - not to be provided with facts about the world, but to enable ourselves to be taught by it. Stiegler first developed his concept of 'savoir vivre' in the volumes of *Mécréance et Discrédit* (2004, 2006), in which he outlined the way in which the industrial organisation of production and then consumption has had destructive consequences for the modes of life of human beings. His particular concern is the way in which the loss of savoir-faire and savoir-vivre (that is, the loss of the knowledge of how to do and how to live), has resulted in what he calls 'generalised proletarianisation'. In an interview with Patrick Crogan, Stiegler interprets Marx's definition of the proletariat as not being about pauperization, but rather as resting upon the de-skilling of the worker (Crogan, 2010: 161). (Marx describes the proletariat as a worker who had skills and savoir faire, but who has been dispossessed of them by the introduction of machines.) Stiegler points out that this is also precisely what Adam Smith had said almost a century earlier in *The Wealth of Nations* (1991), but he had not made a political theory out of it. Gilbert Simondon also talks of this deskilling, calling it disindividuation, based on the logic that when individuation comes through the singular knowledge a person possesses, if this is taken away from them they are disindividualized (1954). For Stiegler, the same process of proletarianization that the worker experienced, has also now rendered the consumer less capable of knowing how to live (savoir vivre). He argues, '…from the moment when marketing invents the service society…we see how the consumer is himself deprived of his savoir vivre. The producer was deprived of his skills or abilities (savoir faire), the consumer is deprived of his savoir vivre' (2010: 161).

So according to Stiegler, the proletariat consumer is left with nothing but his purchasing power, just as the proletariat producer was left with nothing but his labour power – 'so he will work to earn the little bit of money he uses to be able to buy what he produces, having lost everything; he has no knowledge in work anymore and no knowledge in life. So he is unhappy' (2010: 162). Furthermore, Stiegler's vision of the disempowered consumer is instrumental in placing the (already

dispossessed) worker as a (now dispossessed) consumer, who can do nothing but attempt to gain pleasure in spending on the most ephemeral and inexpensive of commodities. Stiegler's solution to this situation is an alternative vision in which rather than there being consumers on one side and producers on the other, there are simply 'contributors' who 'participate in the creation of the world in which they live' – a world which could be described as 'open source' (2010: 162). With a resurgence of savoir vivre then, reciprocal humans not only replace the literal and theoretical presence of economic man, but in doing so forces a broadening of the consumption debate. Reciprocal humans are not simply consumer (or non-consumers), but humans who can only be considered in light of all human activities.

This sits in contrast to Sennett for whom craftsmanship is ethically ambiguous – we can make evil things as well as things that are positive for human existence and the planet. However, he argues that the craftsman uses tools and organises bodily movements in ways that provide viable proposals for conducting life itself with more skill (2009: 11). What he means by 'skill' in this context, is about managing to live life with more satisfying social relationships. In this sense, Sennett's ideas about what craftmanship can deliver are not dissimilar to Ivan Illich's argument in *Tools for Conviviality*, in which he insists we need the freedom to make things - 'People need not only to obtain things, they need above all the freedom to make things among which they can live, to give shape to them according to their own tastes, and to put them to use in caring for and about others' (2009: 11). For Illich, being reduced to the state of a 'mere' consumer, is to be denied conviviality, a term he uses to designate the opposite of industrial productivity (2009: 11). He explains, 'I intend it to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value' (2009: 11). It is Illich's word 'mere' that is interesting here, because what he seems to be saying is not that consumption is simply bad and we should not be consumers, but that we should not *only* be consumers; that we should all also be makers.

Illich's book was first published in 1973, but many contemporary thinkers on the Anthropocene are returning to his ideas for inspiration on a more self-sufficient society; one which could make things rather than purchasing things. And his vision here is about the wider issue of development trajectories. As he says at the beginning of the book, 'two-thirds of mankind still can avoid passing through the industrial age, by choosing right now a post-industrial balance in their mode of production which the hyper-industrial nations will be forced to adopt as an alternative to

chaos' (2009: x). Illich wants us to widen our vision of what is possible so that it is less restricted by industrial expectations that, in his view, render any alternative to more mass production 'a return to past oppression' or 'a Utopian design for noble savages' (2009:xi). He notes that the hypothesis was that machines could replace slaves; but that instead they have made slaves of humans. However, he is not against tools,; rather, he emphasizes the need to give people those tools that guarantee their right to work with 'high, independent efficiency', meaning the need for slaves could be eliminated, but that each individual's range of freedom would also be enhanced (2009: 10). For him, the answer is to recognise limits, and to acknowledge that 'only within limits can machines take the place of slaves; beyond these limits they lead to a new kind of serfdom' (2009:xii). Illich's vision then, is one in which making things not only enables ways of living that resist existing structures and trajectories of development, but also renders the objects made inherently political since they have been made with a specific plan for ways of living in mind.

Enchanting the craft commodity

Recent years have seen a return to making. In the UK, since the 2009 financial crash, many people have taken their chances with being self-employed, creating small or micro businesses that typically manufacture craft products of some sort. The craft beer movement and proliferation of micro-breweries is an example of this. In addition, TV formats celebrating sewing, baking, renovating and more have become daytime and early evening staples – for example *Sewing Bee*, *Great British Bake Off*, or *The Repair Shop*. As Colin Campbell argues, increasing numbers of people are choosing to 'craft' products for themselves, and 'the very popularity of television programmes that feature food and cooking or the redesign and redecoration of household interiors or gardens, together with the many associated magazines and books, supports the suggestion that there exists a large population of consumers who want to be successful in creating their own aesthetically significant end products' (2005: 33). Those with such craft skills have become celebrated, and their products revered. On a deeper level, a nostalgia seems to have set in about the lifestyles that accompany such work or activities. There is a sense that engaging in such activities automatically brings a more community-centred, convivial life, free from certain strains and stresses and less concerned with the profit-motive alone.

Therefore, whilst it is a pretty convincing argument that for the maker, making things enables them to be more than a consumer, and to potentially live life in a more satisfying way, the craft commodity has become 'enchanted' for those who consume and are not makers themselves, in much

the same way as George Ritzer used the term in conjunction with any other type of commodity. So, making as a movement, is not necessarily changing anyone's relationship to material things apart from the maker's. Benjamin Hartmann and Jacob Ostberg make this point, arguing that craft production is in and of itself a specific type of enchantment, one that revolves specifically around the idea of the authentic (2013:882). As they say, 'consumers and marketers alike seem to be united in their quest for the 'real' and 'genuine' – the authentic – and the emotionally charged 'magical' and 'dreamlike' – the enchanted' (2013:882). Therefore, they reason, authenticity cannot simply be built into brands, because the consumer must be convinced that the product is indeed authentic (whatever that might mean for them). If a brand attempts to create authenticity in too unsubtle a way, this simply results in inauthenticity, so products need to 'mediate' authenticity rather than claim it (2013: 884).

Hartmann and Brunk (2019) attribute this ability to enchant to marketers' use of nostalgia in promoting products; a phenomenon one could argue is particularly useful in promoting craft products. They assert that marketers increasingly attempt to enchant consumers through nostalgia by offering past-themed market resources – 'brands and products that foreground an actual or fictitious link to a past' (2019: 269). For them, 'in the hands of marketers, nostalgia appears to be the very fabric from which they fashion and promote brands and products, aspiring to promulgate consumer value across a wide range of market offerings'. They give examples such as vinyl, retro-sounding music, revamped Nokia phones and Hydrox cookies, or series like Vikings, Mad Men, and Stranger Things. However, they are keen to point out that nostalgia can work in various ways. They acknowledge that much literature focusses on nostalgia as arising out of tense contemporary conditions with rapid socio-political change, and therefore being backward-looking in order to provide and sense of comfort and security of the known. As they put it, nostalgia offers 'a valuable resource that anchors consumers to a particular (lost or utopian) place and/or time, thereby allowing consumers to re-establish a temporal experience of belonging' (2019: 671). But, they argue, not all nostalgia centres around a melancholic attachment to the past; some, in contrast, can function as a 'forward-looking and utopian daydream' (2019: 671). (See also Higson, 2014; May, 2017; Pickering & Keightley, 2006 who make similar arguments). Nostalgia can be playful, ludic, and ironic. Hartmann and Brunk conclude that there are three different modes of nostalgia: (1) re-instantiation (symbolic retrojection into a past), (2) re-enactment (reflexively informing the present with past-themed brands and practices), and (3) re-appropriation (ludic re-interpretation of the past) (2019: 669).

Along similar lines, Benjamin Hartmann and Jacob Ostberg, building on the work of Sennett, argue that craft production is specifically important to the process of enchantment 'as it stands in

opposition to the disenchanting rationalization aspects' of modern life such as those mentioned by Ritzer (2013:884). Their case study focuses on a brand that managed to survive by licensing its brand name to a Chinese company and therefore outsourcing production to China – a specific make of guitar no longer made by descendants of the same Swedish family. Importantly, they find that the rationalized brand struggles for authenticity amongst its customer base. However, they conclude that the marketplace 'has developed discursive mechanisms and re-enchanting strategies that counteract forces of rationalisation and disenchanting effects by symbolically re-authenticating the brand' (2013:884). So, for them, authentication is embedded in and mediated through a system of enchantment discourses, especially craft discourses. This is, as they attest, to understand authenticity as a social construction. They describe this social construction as one that 'provides participants with a rich palette of discourses and culturally informed myths' and see it as created by the market and led by market contexts and goals. Therefore, rather than locating authenticity as being present in either an object or in a lived experience, they see both the latter as 'being authenticated'; going through a process of authenticity (2013: 885). This is a valid and useful stance, although it is important to make a distinction here between craft as a construction of authenticity for brands, and craft on the personal level as an activity that makes one feel a certain way and sense certain connections to the material world in one's own life.

Equally, the consumer of craft products has not necessarily fallen for the myth of the authentic and therefore re-enchanted product in a straightforward way. As Colin Campbell points out, there have been two dominating images of the consumer in academic literature. The first is that of an active, calculating, rational actor 'who carefully allocates scarce resources to the purchase of goods and services in such a manner as to maximize the utility obtained' – Smith's maximizing individual in other words. The second is that of is that of the passive, manipulated and exploited subject of market forces (2005: 23-24). However, Campbell argues a third image has arisen in recent decades, of the consumer as neither rational actor, nor as a helpless dupe, but rather 'a self-conscious manipulator of the symbolic meanings that are attached to products'. This consumer can manipulate the meanings of products, using them to create for themselves a specific identity and present themselves to others in a specific way (2005:23-24). Moreover, Campbell argues there is now a need for a fourth image – that of the 'craft consumer' who aligns him or herself with the values of the brand that has managed to gain craft authenticity and to enchant itself in this specific way (2005: 23-24).

What is behind this enchantment? What enables it to enchant? Partly the answer lies in the ways in which craft production is seen as somehow more human than other forms, and therefore as

ennobling, humanizing and a means through which individuals could express their humanity. This line of thought is intricately connected to the work of Karl Marx, specifically in his famous contention that replacing craft production with factory-organized machine production, was an inevitably dehumanizing process and one that could only lead to a state of alienation for the worker. As Campbell argues, as a result of the acceptance of his view, 'craft activity became the very symbol of the premodern age, with the consequence that to argue for the virtues of this mode of production was tantamount to opposing modernity itself' (2005:25). Therefore, he argues, present-day advocates of craftwork have tended to be labelled romantics, 'uneasy with the modern world and either yearning for a return to an earlier preindustrial age or nurturing unrealistic dreams of future post-industrial utopias' (2005:25). The craft maker then is set against the factory worker and mass production, as humane, creative and authentic as opposed to mechanical and alienated. As the ethnographies in this chapter will show however, this is not the case in a straightforward kind of way for those engaged in craft and making.

The other way in which craft enchants is through the idea that it embodies hard work and a high level of skill. As Hartmann and Ostberg argue, 'because the desire to do good work is typically not satisfied by just getting by, craftsmanship often implies an almost obsessive occupation with skill, intensive training, and quality ideals' (2013: 887). They say the three tenets of craftmanship are skills, commitment, and judgement, stating that without commitment high-quality work cannot be obtained. For them, this commitment is 'not about reaching the end through the use of effective means or efficient tools; it is about being engaged with, dedicated to, and committed to high-quality work. It is not about being instrumental, but rather valuing the quality of work for its own sake' (2013: 888). Judgement too is critical in craft production according to Hartmann and Ostberg, and is often expressed in the maker's awareness of the materials used in the production process to achieve high-quality outcomes.

There is also another useful aspect to Hartmann and Ostberg's analysis, and that is the way in which the skills and knowledge embedded in craft, tend to be accumulated and passed on from generation to generation. As they put it, 'skills and knowledge provide the glue that bonds craftsmen to their historical ancestors and their craft communities' (2013:888). Therefore, craft is difficult to explicate, and risks being easily lost if intergenerational transitions of craft production and its surrounding knowledge do not continue. This is interesting in light of the case studies and the sense of desire for a greater sense of touching history.

It is important to note in the context of the above, that as Sennett attests, this sense of crafting is in line with C. Wright Mills' vision of the craft labourer as engaged in working for his or her own satisfaction, controlling his or her own actions, and experiencing the freedom to experiment and build community. Mills' vision has been robustly critiqued by numerous commentators, Sennett being one, for its idealism and romanticism, and certainly there is a romanticism to current-day ideas about returning to livelihoods that involve making. This is not to say that making is not for many a preferable option to other types of available work, far from it, but that behind its fashionable status is a deeper societal desire - the desire to be more in touch with and related to physical objects. For Esme this contact with physical objects – in her case fabric – is absolutely key to why she became a maker.

It is hard to age Esme. She is clearly under 30, from appearances and from personal anecdotes she gives about the music that was around when she was a teenager, and yet something in the seriousness of her face bellies the fact she is in her twenties. There is at one and the same time a detachedness, and an intensity. The detachedness comes perhaps from the difficult on-off relationship she had with (and still has) with her mother; a mother whose struggle with depression and alcohol saw Esme in and out of foster care as a teenager. The intensity comes across her when she is engaged in the things she has found calmness in, and it is upon her now, as she sits at her sewing desk, leafing through a scrapbook of inspiration for the fabrics she designs. She is musing, constantly, turning the book in different directions, peering closer at certain images, running her fingers over some as if to almost imagine what they might feel like if brought to life. Working with fabric is her whole life, admittedly, a kind of obsession. It keeps her calm and centred she says. She explains that nobody in her family sewed. Friends often assume it was a skill taught by a mother or grandmother, but it wasn't. She had a nice art teacher at school for a while, and she had taught Esme a bit about textile art, noticing that she seemed to have a flair for it, and it had started from there. But Esme is keen to point out that she is mainly self-taught, defiantly emphasizing that she did not go to art school and explaining how she used to buy up old dress patterns and source material by cutting up clothes bought in charity shops. At first she had wanted to go into fashion design, but then she had found real pleasure in coming up with patterns and designs for fabric and a couple of acquaintances had commissioned her to create fabric for them. One in particular had encouraged her to set up a website or rather 'get a web presence – even if it's only a Facebook page' – and she had done so. Much to Esme's surprise, a trickle of work had started coming in. The trickle grew. Not enough to provide her with a full living, but enough that she only need do temp admin work now and then throughout the year. She hates the admin work, explaining that she really struggles with things that she doesn't find interesting or

engaging – 'there's not enough in my head and I start to worry about other things; things that haven't been part of my day-to-day life for years, but that still bother me if I'm not doing something interested.' It is visibly apparent, that Esme feels calmer when she is engrossed in her designing, and her designing certainly totally engrosses her in it. When asked what it is about designing fabric that tends to calm her down, Esme replies that it's to do with the patterns, and the repetition of those patterns. 'My mind becomes super-focussed on how the pattern will actually work, like, how it will fit together and repeat, and at what point it can be cut off, and how usable all of that makes it on a piece of fabric. I fall asleep with wonderful patterns going round in my head. They kind of blur out everything else', she explains.

Making, frugal innovation and sustainability in the Anthropocene

So far making has been viewed from a specifically Western angle – the return to heritage crafts as a career or lifestyle choice for (usually but not always) young Westerners, and the popularity of craft and nostalgia-marketed products of that same demographic. But small-scale making has a far more urgent imperative in developing countries, and the notion of frugal innovation is particularly useful here. The concept initially emerged in the global South as a response to poverty and resource scarcity, the key idea being that environments that experienced resource constraints could also tend to provoke innovative solutions – necessity as the mother of invention. Embedded in the concept of frugal innovation is the assertion that such innovative solutions can be more cost-effective, technically efficient and socially acceptable. Frugal innovation evolved from the Indian concept of Jugaad – a Hindi word meaning a temporary or make-shift solution to a problem. Both concepts owe much of their popularization to Navi Radjou and Jaideep Prabhu's book *Frugal Innovation: How to do more with less* (2015), which explains the principles, perspectives and techniques behind frugal innovation.

Examples of frugal innovation include the ChotuKool fridge - a tiny refrigerator sold by Indian company Godrej, which has more in common with a computer cooling system than a conventional fridge; the Foldscope – a tough origami microscope assembled from a sheet of paper and a lens and costing no more than one dollar; the Jaipur leg – a low cost prosthetic developed in India, costing about $150 to manufacture as it is made from affordable materials such as irrigation piping; solar light bulbs made from one-litre soda bottles filled with water and bleach, which provide light equivalent to that produced by a 55 watt bulb and may reduce electricity bills by US$10 per

month; sorghum beer that uses sorghum or cassava instead of barley, pioneered in Africa; plus of course the huge revolution in affordable mobile banking.

Tammy McCausland makes a useful distinction between jugaad/frugal innovation and reverse innovation, explaining that whilst frugal innovation starts with economic constraints as a key driver of innovation, Jugaad is focused on innovating with what is at hand. Reverse innovation meanwhile starts with the price-point the consumer can afford and attempts to pair down the commodity to its bare essentials in order to find a way of producing it for that price (McCausland, 2023: 68). Therefore, as Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble point out, reverse innovations are far more likely to be adopted in the developing world, and frugal innovation more generally has been accepted as a valid way of dealing with precarity in developing world contexts. Indeed, the concept emerged from Govindarajan's work helping General Electric create the world's first portable electrocardiogram to service the needs of the Indian population' (2009: 68).

What is key to recognise about frugal innovation in terms of a study of objects in the Anthropocene is that it is often associated with ecological sustainability due to being characterised by minimizing the use of resources such as raw materials, production resources, energy, fuel, water, and by creating less waste. (See Brem and Ivens, 2013, Rao, 2013, Weyrauch and Herstatt, 2016). Indeed, Martin Albert recommends using the term 'ecological sustainable frugal innovation' in order to make transparent the positive connection to ecological sustainability (Albert, 2019). As he attests, while the idea of frugality has both philosophical and religious roots dating centuries back, the specific combination of frugality and innovation is relatively new (Albert, 2019). But while various authors argue that frugal innovation can contribute to a more sustainable world (see Basu at al. 2013), achieve sustainable development (see Rao, 2014), or contribute to all sustainability (Wohlfart et al., 2016), others argue that it does not necessarily improve ecological sustainability fundamentally. (See Rosca et al., 2017; Sharma and Iyer, 2012; Weyrauch and Herstatt, 2016.)

Perhaps most pertinently, what is not questioned in frugal innovation discourses is the absolute necessity for consumption. Frugal innovation operates on low cost per unit and high sales – mass consumption of frugal innovations is an absolute requirement. To emphasize this further, a key aspect of frugal innovation is the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP), 4 billion people, who live on less than USD 2 a day (Prahalad, 2004). The concept of the Bottom of the Pyramid was introduced by Prahalad in his book *The fortune at the bottom of the pyramid: Eradicating poverty through profits* (2004) in which his central argument is essentially that since the poor represent a huge portion of humanity, they are effectively an immense unexploited market, and can be made into consumers if

the products they are offered products that do more with less (and for less cost). The mainstream literature on frugal innovation does not question the ideology of consumerism nor the political dimension of poverty (Pansera, 2018). Whilst frugal innovation may well create greater entanglements for both producers and consumers, ecological concerns about the Anthropocene are only present as part of a desire to be sustainable for the masses in a world that has seen extreme polarisation of wealth between the majority world of the poor, and the rest.

Making and mending – the repair café movement

So far this chapter has looked at those who make things 'from scratch' as it were but there is another growing trend that taps into the same inclinations as making and that most certainly fosters entanglements with things - the Repair café movement. The Repair Café is an idea attributed to Martine Postma, who, in 2009 organised the first repair café which took place on 18th October in Amsterdam. Following its success Martine set up Repair Café International Foundation, and since 2011 this non-profit organization has provided support to any group across the globe wanting to start a repair café. Put briefly, repair cafes are meeting places where expert volunteers help users (members of the public) fix items they bring in. Depending on the repair café and the volunteers they have managed to find, these items can be anything at all, but often include clothes, furniture, toys, bicycles, and small electrical appliances. The emphasis is on the users fixing their item *together with* the expert volunteer. Tea and coffee and often cakes and snacks are available.

Cafes are quite often part of the wider Transition Town Movement (TTM)[21] in their specific town or city. The TTM has been growing since 2005. Essentially, it is made up of community-led transition groups who work towards becoming low-carbon, socially resilient, and promoting active participation in a just and supportive community. The approach is based upon key principles: 1) To respect resource limits and create resilience, 2) To promote inclusivity and social justice, 3) To self-organise and enable decision-making at the appropriate level rather than centrally control, 4) To promote balance in our lives and provide space for reflection, 5) To be part of an experimental, learning network that learns from its failures as well as its successes, 6) To freely share ideas and power, 7) To collaborate and look for synergies, 8) To foster creativity. In practice Transition Town networks use participatory methods to engage in projects such as setting up renewable energy projects, re-localising food systems, and creating community and green spaces. They tend to be populated by people who believe passionately in slower economic growth, or who are seeking to

follow alternative economic growth pathways. The approach has now spread over 48 countries, in thousands of groups around the world.

The cafés, at least those in the UK, tend to happen for a day once a month or less often, and those that were part of this study reported attracting anywhere between 15 to 120 people on that one day. Cafes exist in all sorts of different geographical areas, from rural villages to inner-city districts. They can be held in town halls, empty shops, public libraries – any space that the organisers can get permission from the local authorities to use. Sometimes the organizers have to pay a small fee for the use of the space (often using the money made from the sale of tea and cakes); sometimes the usual hirer of the space gives it over to the Repair Café for one day a month; sometimes the local authority allows it to be used for free in order to enable it to be occupied and not sit empty. The situations between different Repair Cafes differ vastly and it is largely up to the organizers as to how they run their cafes. The only conditions on the part of the Repair café organization are listed on their website and aim to make Repair cafes recognizable and consistent in their basic format. They are as follows: 'Initiatives that we support and help to get started, must be run on a voluntary and non-commercial basis and must be called Repair Café (and not DIY workplace, Odd Job cafe or any other such name). The Repair Café logo must always be used for publicity and any communications. It is not allowed to make any changes in the logo. The logo is protected by copyright. Publicity and communications will, for additional information, always refer to the website Repaircafe.org/en. People who order our materials, do not mind if – where appropriate – we pass their email address to other people or groups in the same area who have shown an interest in starting their own Repair Café as well.' (See Start Your Own Repair Café - Join the Movement (repaircafe.org). Accessed 9/6/2023.)

Based on interviews carried out with repair café users[22], it became clear that initially, motivations for using repair cafes appear rather pragmatic in nature – consumer frustration at built-in obsolescence or a desire to save money. Even environmental concerns feel played out in quite a pragmatic way, being about landfill in a rather linear way as opposed to about changing consumer culture or forcing change on the part of manufacturers. However, there are deeper social desires at play too. The importance to people of having autonomy, of gaining skills and being self-sufficient, and the deep impact that socialising and feeling part of a community can have on a person's well-being speaks to a changing relationship with the things we buy. In short, it can be seen as part of a relationship of entanglement.

John is in his fifties. Due to the covid pandemic, he was made redundant and has since been working part-time as a consultant in the same sector, but mainly from home. He was made redundant

quite early on in the pandemic and says he lost a lot of confidence at the time. He was extremely anxious that, being in his fifties, he 'would never work again' as he felt people would consider him too old. The isolation of the lockdowns during the pandemic did not enable any alternative viewpoint to this belief or help him to gain a sense of 'still being in the world' as he puts it. Like many people, during these lockdowns, John took the opportunity to sort out his whole house. 'I went through absolutely everything' he laughs, 'I had no work, nowhere to go, so I just worked my way through every cupboard, every drawer, in every room … I threw things away, gave things away, sold things, and I made a special pile of things that I thought could somehow be salvaged or fixed.' It was a friend who mentioned to John the existence of the local repair café. 'Once we were allowed out, and the café started up again, I started taking those things I had put to one side. One by one, I took them. I worked with various different experts – electrical, woodworking, upholstery – and slowly, with the help of those experts, I got those things fixed.' In particular, John talks about a footstool that had been in his childhood home and that he had inherited. He explains how the stuffing had gone flat and started to fall out in one place underneath, and how the edging ribbon was coming off and revealing the pins that held on the upholstery. 'I had no idea how to fix it. It had been like that for years. I knew I couldn't through it out though … getting it fixed and being part of that was really satisfying, really brilliant really.'

However, getting the stool fixed was actually only part of John's experience with the repair café. He found that, over time, as he went to the café each time it was on, it became one of the key ways in which, as he puts it, 'I got back out into society'. 'I had lost so much confidence from being made redundant', he explains, 'and then being stuck at home just made that more so because I had nobody to tell me any different, nobody to tell me that what I was telling myself wasn't necessarily true!' In going to the repair cafe John met new people and re-gained his confidence gradually through his interactions with them and through realizing that 'there are many things you can do in life' and that he could still do many things and did indeed have options and autonomy in many areas of his life. His visits to the repair café, while still motivated by getting his pile of salvaged belongings fixed, became equally about his well-being. What is fascinating about this is that it shows the way in which, in the case of repair cafes, entanglements with things leads to entanglements with people, thus rendering such spaces part of societal change.