


Traditional Crafts. A Literature Review Focused on Sustainable Development

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Abstract

We witness a revival of the crafts due to complex changes in mentalities and society, but also related to the benefits and positive implications that traditional crafts could offer to contemporary societies and economies. Also, traditional crafts are compatible with the concept of sustainable development, which gives them another boost. The present paper represents one of the very few literature reviews in the field of traditional crafts aiming to map the knowledge we possess on traditional crafts. It documents a significant gap between professional and academic research, with the former being visible at local/national levels, but also an increased interest in the field, especially in understanding the future role that traditional crafts could play in communities and economies.

Keywords

traditional crafts; sustainable development; literature review.

Introduction

Several shifts are registered at the level of contemporary mentalities, interests, and practices. Among them, we highlight only two. One is a re-evaluation of traditions, of all types of traditions including crafts. The other one to which we refer is sustainability/sustainable development. We will highlight in the present study the lines that connect these two elements.

There are two main frameworks for traditional crafts. On one hand, they tend to survive in poor areas, being part of the local economic mechanism, contributing to a relatively autarchic survival mode. In these rather close communities, sometimes outsiders could stimulate some of the traditional ways of living, creating a certain market for traditional crafts and traditions. It is even possible that this opportunity is related to an outside demand to determine some flourishing or even innovation in relation to traditional crafts. On the other hand, in rich(er) areas, traditional crafts are disappearing but they start to be considered increasingly more as something worth saving. In such context, organizations, both private and public, both local and national/international, as well as individuals, both insiders, and outsiders, may develop various types of projects to save and valorize these crafts. UNESCO not only supports the "safeguarding without freezing" (UNESCO Safeguarding) the intangible heritage, but also recommends a list of good practices in this respect (UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage). Again, two main approaches can be observed – the (re)discovery and promotion of traditional crafts in their oldest perceivable form, or their creative valorization by craftsmen, artists, or business actors. Crafts became in this way both cultural symbols and commercial assets. The commercialization of traditional crafts is, in all cases, part of the survival mechanism, as well as of the development of craftsmen and communities.

We observe a mixed mechanism of revalorization of traditional crafts, with many different types of actors: craftsmen, locals, local administration, businesses, and national

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and international bodies. We observe the setup of a stimulative framework for the survival and development of traditional crafts, which has UNESCO as a main engine (Vencatachellum, 2019). Nevertheless, situations are very diverse, and the local, national and international contexts influence to a wide degree specific cases (Chutia & Sarma, 2016).

Academic vs. professional publications

Sometimes, there is a gap between academic and professional publications in terms of the typology of research, coverage area, perspectives, and authorship (Bira & Zbucnea, 2021). An important contribution to this phenomenon is related to the standards that academic publications have to follow, which are more flexible and practice-oriented in the case of professional publications.

Academic publications are under the high pressure of evaluation which impacts the characteristics of the research they include. There are explanations for this approach related to the accuracy of the investigation, the economic and academic value of the research, and other arguments, but there is an increasingly stronger trend of critics evaluating science (Hallonsten, 2021; Lizotte, 2021). The mistrust in academic science might be explained systemically, but also subjectively, considering the behavior of the persons involved in the system, the bad practices in writing and citing academic research, and other factors mentioned by Schneider, Horbach, and Aagaard (2021).

Table 1 presents the most relevant publications dedicated to traditional crafts or which cover them in a significant way the topic.

Table 1. Main journals covering traditional crafts

Title of the journal	Since	No. of articles and additional contributions (editorials, briefings, book reviews, etc.)*
Academic periodicals		
International Journal of Intangible Heritage**	2006	167 articles 49 additional contributions
Journal of Modern Craft**	2008	273 articles 237 additional contributions
Craft Research	2010	166 articles 109 additional contributions
International Journal of Traditional Arts**	2017	13 articles 5 additional contributions
Professional periodicals		
#HeritageAlive**	2017	48 articles 7 additional contributions
International Journal of Crafts and Folk Arts**	2020	10 articles 17 additional contributions

* by the end of 2021

** open access journal

The *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* has a special status, being considered both an academic and a professional journal. It is a direct consequence of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) and is published by the National Folk Museum of Korea with the support of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). It covers all the domains of Intangible heritage, not only crafts: oral traditions and expressions (20 articles until Dec. 2021); performing arts (13 articles); social practices, rituals, and festive events (34

contributions); knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship (20 studies); and others.

The *Journal of Modern Craft* is an academic journal published by Taylor & Francis. The features of the journal are as follows: “The journal covers craft in all its historical and contemporary manifestations, from the mid-nineteenth century, when handwork was first consciously framed in opposition to industrialization, through to the present day, when ideas once confined to the “applied arts” have come to seem vital across a huge range of cultural activities. Special emphasis is placed on studio practice and the transformations of indigenous forms of craft activity throughout the world. The journal also reviews and analyses the relevance of craft within new media, folk art, architecture, design, contemporary art, and other fields” (JMC). We observed that the first volumes of this journal included more research articles than other types of contributions, while in the past years, only 3-4 original articles are included, while the number of additional contributions increased to around 8.

Craft Research is an academic journal dedicated “to the development and advance of contemporary craft practice and theory through research. *Craft Research* aims to elicit craft as a vital and viable modern discipline that offers a vision for the future and the sustainable development of human social, economical and ecological issues” (CR, n.d.). Its main focus is not on traditional crafts, but some studies included also cover this specific topic.

The *International Journal of Traditional Arts* is a relatively new academic publication, that “promotes a broad-ranging understanding of the relevance of traditional arts in contemporary social life. The journal publishes leading and robust scholarship on traditional arts from around the world with a focus on the contemporary policy and practice of traditional music, dance, drama, oral narrative and crafts” (IJTA). It is sponsored by Newcastle University and Sheffield University, in the UK.

#HeritageAlive is a periodical publication of the ICH NGO Forum representing the NGOs accredited by UNESCO to provide advisory services to the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (*#HeritageAlive*, n.d.). The aim is “to share knowledge from fieldwork in communities and with practitioners, between the UNESCO accredited NGOs and experts, in order to learn from each other”. The subtitle of the journal is “Sharing experiences from the field” showing the professional nature of the contribution and the case-study orientation. Each issue published up to now is dedicated to a specific topic. None of the themes addressed so far are exclusively related to crafts: traditional medicine, food, and musical instruments.

The *International Journal of Crafts and Folk Arts* is a South Korean publication, sponsored by the Jinju Culture and Tourism Foundation. The establishment of the journal is connected with the new status of Jinju city, as a member city of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. It “aims to achieve cultural diversity and sustainable urban development by sharing knowledge, experience, and practices of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network member cities in the field of crafts and folk art” (IJCFA, n.d.).

We also mention a few other journals relevant to the topic. The *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge* is published by the National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research since 2002. Only a few articles investigated specific technical aspects of traditional crafts. *Journal of STEM Arts, Crafts, and Constructions* (STEM-arts, n.d.) was published between 2016-2019 and aimed to support the introduction of crafts and arts into STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). The role of crafts has been, nevertheless, only little investigated, most of the contributions concentrating on arts. Besides this, there are different journals less visible, published at the local or national level in various countries, in local languages. These are accessible mainly to professionals in those countries and without knowing their titles it is

extremely difficult for others to access them. Considering this framework, the present investigation will discuss almost exclusively the academic research in the field.

Outline of the investigation

Investigating the wide corpus of academic research in most fields is a challenging endeavor considering not only the dynamics of the research but also the high complexity of the approaches. The attempt is also complicated considering the scope of the bibliometric analysis itself, varying between globalism – referring to the structure of knowledge - and localism – focusing on a certain level of the scientific analysis (Chen, & Song, 2019). In the case of practical fields, as it is traditional crafts, the endeavor is further challenged by the typology of outlets hosting various investigations: academic or professional. The researchers would tend to publish their studies in academic periodicals, while professionals would have as points of reference the professional journals in the field (discussions on a similar situation, in museum studies, are considered by Bira and Zbucnea, 2021). Language and coverage might also be an aspect that fragments the research and makes access to knowledge more difficult (Richards et al., 2022).

The present investigation aims to map the knowledge formed by the corpus of studies on traditional crafts by identifying the subjects mainly approached, as well as by looking closer at the research on the relationships between crafts and the sustainable development of communities.

There are only a few previous literature reviews considering traditional crafts (Chutia, & Sarma, 2016; Latilla et al., 2018; Väänänen, & Pöllänen, 2020), each having a specific focus. Somewhat surprisingly, the “umbrella” concept of intangible cultural heritage, which includes traditional crafts, is the aim of only a few literature reviews, as well. Su, Li, and Kang (2019) reveal that traditional crafts do not form a significant cluster of research. The more encompassing traditional knowledge seems to be preferred as a domain of investigation, connected to topics such as individuals and communities, heritage protection, or heritage interpretation (Su, Li, & Kang, 2019, p.5). The review by Jung-shim (2021) also shows that crafts are not a focal point for the research networks developed in the past two decades. This is confirmed by the study of Chen, Hue, and Dai (2020), which does not find traditional crafts among the frequent keywords in the research dedicated to intangible cultural heritage, despite that crafts are one of the main domains in this field. The literature review of Skublewska-Paszowska et al. (2022) on using 3D technologies in the context of intangible cultural heritage reveals some interest in analyzing how they are used also in the context of traditional crafts (Skublewska-Paszowska et al., 2022, p.5).

This journey includes several stages. First, we discuss why traditional crafts might be still relevant for contemporary society. Then, we present the academic interest in understanding traditional crafts through a structured literature review of main academic publications. This allows us to better understand the significance and coverage of results. This section is followed by a narrative literature review of crafts’ contribution to sustainable development, as reflected by researchers and practitioners. The final section discusses the findings and shapes the main conclusions.

Why are traditional crafts relevant for present-day society?

The 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) identifies traditional craftsmanship as one of the five domains of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). It is important to keep in mind that ICH elements in most cases relate to more than just one domain. A boat builder needs to be a good craftsman, but will also need traditional knowledge of nature and the universe. Making a traditional willow flute would give less meaning without the music / performing arts. A holistic perspective on

ICH is there for important to understand the meaning of the element (Falk, 2017 p.6). A central point in the convention is the ability of intangible cultural heritage to contribute to sustainable development. Specific arguments explicitly stated in the convention, considered at the base of its safeguard and activation as a contributor to sustainable development, are the following: it is “a main-spring of cultural diversity”, it has a strong and significant interdependency with material cultural heritage and natural heritage; can contribute to the intercultural dialogue between communities and decrease of intolerance; determine enrichment of “cultural diversity and human creativity”. We stress also that the convention highlights the need for more awareness, especially among young persons, on the value of intangible cultural heritage and its contribution to society and the economy.

There is a growing demand for the products associated with traditional crafts, as the UNESCO 2003 Convention states: “In response to urbanization and industrialization, many people around the world enjoy handmade objects that are imbued with the accumulated knowledge and cultural values of the craftspeople and which offer a softer alternative to the numerous ‘high tech’ items that dominate global consumer culture” (UNESCO, 2003). This could transform crafts of engine for local economic development, by providing revenues both for craftsmen and their communities.

Traditional crafts, independently or correlated with cultural and creative tourism, are considered increasingly more a source of economic development (Richards et al., 1998; Horjan, 2011; Dragicevic Curkovic, 2021; Richards, 2021). Crafts tourism tends to be increasingly more appealing, determining positive experiences for tourists and bringing added value to local communities (Baruah, & Sarma, 2016). Considering this, Craft Experiential Tourism Model was developed, in India, to maximize the outcomes for all those involved (Jain, & Thakkar, 2019). In the same type, experts warn against the too-intense commercialization of intangible cultural heritage and its transformation as a tourism attraction (Van Der Zeijden, 2015, pp.193-194). Another dimension discussed is the contribution of traditional crafts to developing more sustainable accommodations for tourists (Salim et al., 2022).

The development of the handmade industry is also tightly connected to traditional crafts. This industry has registered an increased interest from consumers in the past decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has determined modified business models in this field too, as well as determined more customers to buy online.

Traditional crafts could also be related to international trade, with India and China being probably the best examples in terms of the impact they could have (Dragicevic Curkovic, 2021). They contribute to the prestige of the country, being a convincing cultural diplomat, determining the creation of jobs in diverse communities, determining creative fusion between traditions and modern design and technologies, etc.

There are also debates on the relationships between crafts and arts. Craftsmen are often considered artists because some of them creatively use traditional crafts’ techniques to design original objects. Another increasingly tighter connection is between traditional crafts and interior design, contemporary design, or even with architecture (Chele et al., 2012; Djabarouti, & O’Flaherty, 2020; Stein, 2011; Suib, Van Engelen, & Crul, 2020; Tung, 2012; Balik, & Allmer, 2017). Therefore, we observe the potential for the development of various networks and cooperation projects between craftsmen and other representatives of cultural and creative industries.

Traditional crafts are also vital for the restoration and conservation of heritage. Traditional techniques and know-how are the ones allowed to regain the original shape of both built cultural heritage (Karakul, 2015) and various heritage objects that are housed mainly by museums. A deep understanding of traditional crafts and their associated techniques could also support the research of material cultural heritage and its better understanding.

There are increasingly more discussions on how traditional crafts can enhance educational processes. At the core of the discussion is art education (Robertson, 2019), but other educational contexts have also been considered. On one hand, studies discuss how and to whom to teach crafts, on the other hand, the contribution of crafts as means for other educational purposes is considered. A few of the advantages brought by crafts in educational contexts are the development of sensitivity, understanding, and development of emotions, increased imagination, developed appetite for discovery and experimentation, self-awareness and desire to express oneself, development of manual skills, etc. We also mention that by being familiar with crafts from a young age, people learn to appreciate crafts and their products, understand better traditional creativity and develop intercultural openness. Studies also show that crafts are relevant for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education – where arts and crafts educational backgrounds contribute to better performance and more innovative approaches (LaMore et al., 2013; Root-Bernstein et al., 2019). Traditional crafts have proved to be useful in educational processes associated with special educational needs context (Falk, 2018). Even in digitally-mediated education, or edutainment (educational gaming), traditional crafts have found a role to play (Partarakis et al., 2021).

Another aspect we briefly mention is that crafts have become a way to spend free time, a hobby for people living mostly in urban areas. This is an example of how ICH is “constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment” (UNESCO 2003). The Do-it-Yourself-trend also has the potential to positively impact the interest in traditional crafts and their creative adaptation. The aging of the population is another factor that contributes to renewed interest in crafts, not only traditional ones, with significant social and health impact, including cognitive performance in older adults, and a positive impact on life satisfaction (Adams-Price, & Morse, 2018; Townsend, & Niedderer, 2020). Considering this framework, it is easy to explain the increased interest in crafts. Therefore, crafts are in various ways part of a new lifestyle. Integrating all the above-mentioned aspects related to traditional crafts, we observe that they could contribute in various ways to well-being (see also Falk, 2019).

The interest in traditional crafts. An academic perspective

Methodology

This section of the investigation aims to identify the main lines of research related to traditional crafts, as reflected in main academic outlets. Bibliometric research is relevant, allowing us to trace the evolution of knowledge in a certain domain. It allows us to observe which are the main lines of investigation, what are the authors most active, the major publications paying attention to a certain domain, etc. It has become a useful tool for researchers to identify trends and better develop their investigations (Merigo et al., 2018).

A bibliometric analysis could be descriptive and/or more systematic, developed using software for more accurate and multidimensional analysis (Osareh, 1996; Cobo, López-Herrera, Herrera-Viedma, & Herrera, 2011). There are several tools available for bibliometric analysis (Moral-Muñoz, Herrera-Viedma, Santisteban-Espejo, & Cobo, 2020), but one of the most popular in the past few years has been VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Therefore, we have also decided to use this tool, which is quite flexible and generates readable visuals, accessible also to professionals who might not be so familiarized with academic literature reviews.

Choosing the corpus of literature investigated is a critical point for the reliability and coverage of the systematic literature review. This is even more relevant in fields such as crafts, where there is a detectable gap between the professionals in the field – very focused on practical aspects and their activities – and scientists. As discussed by Bira

and Zbucnea (2021), and Richards et al. (2022) the main academic outlets do not cover all relevant research in the field, there is a corpus of “missing body of knowledge” included in less known publications, in local languages, which are not so academic and not included in the popular scientific databases. Academic researchers feel pressure to publish in highly visible and indexed publications considering many aspects, both subjective and objective, both personal and professional (Watermeyer, 2019). The practitioners do not feel that pressure, as mentioned before. Therefore, this frame leaves marks on the characteristics and approaches of articles included in “the main academic mainstream” compared to those included in more “professional-oriented” publications.

Having in mind the above-mentioned aspects, we have chosen Scopus as the academic database for a systematic literature review. Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) are currently considered the most reliable academic databases. We have opted for Scopus, considering that it is the largest one covering interdisciplinary research (which is crucial for our topic), two-thirds of the coverage is similar to the one of WoS (although some common journals are presented in Scopus in a limited way) and not being perceived as competitive due to a lesser indexing value (Chadegani et al., 2013) it should be more inclusive. We verified this feature and we found in WoS fewer entries than in Scopus concerning our investigated topic (264 vs. 745 entries). Also, Scopus is considered more reliable in terms of emerging research, such as our investigation (Falagas, Pitsouni, Malietzis, & Pappas, 2018).

There are two main steps we considered in the investigation: data gathering and analysis of the database obtained. Since we wanted an inclusive database, covering as many aspects as possible, but still focusing on the topic, we used a general keyword, “traditional crafts”, searched in the title, the keywords, and the abstract of the articles. From the 741 entries, we excluded reviews and various notes. Also, we vetted for duplicates and papers that do not really cover the topic we investigated. The final database comprises 529 entries. The analysis follows several lines of investigation: evolution of the publication, most influential journals, and contributors, distribution of research, and map of interests.

This methodology has some limitations. The selection of criteria to include papers in the database might be subject to interpretation and previous understanding of the investigated domain. Limiting the literature review to one academic database also narrows the investigation and could determine the exclusion of some lines of investigation more present in professionals’ research.

Findings

The first identified publication in the field included in Scopus was published in 1954 by Krishnamurthy Mir Mira, with a discussion on how the clay market and ceramic industry impact village pottery in India (Mira, 1954). Afterward, there is a large gap, until 1983. It does not mean that the interest of the academic world in the field dropped, but Scopus does not cover systematically publications before the 1980s (Chadegani et al., 2013). Therefore, the present study reflects only the state of the art in the past decades. The increase in the number of contributions started at the beginning of the 21st century, as depicted in Figure 1.

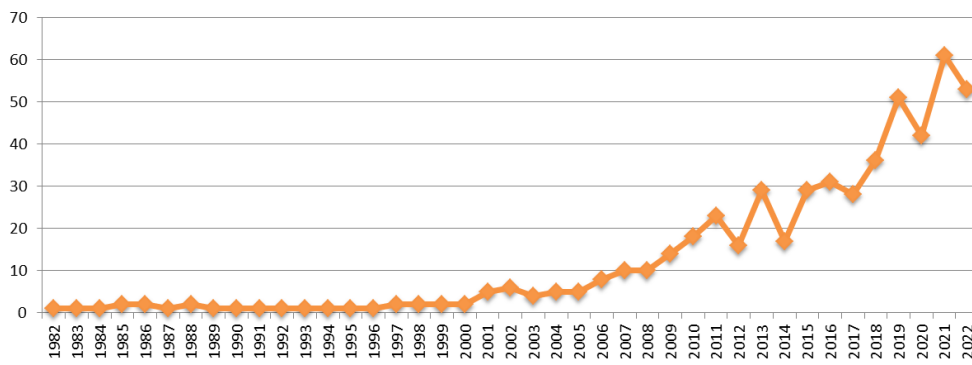


Figure 1. Annual evolution of the publications included in Scopus

9 in 10 contributions included in Scopus are articles and conference papers (Figure 2).

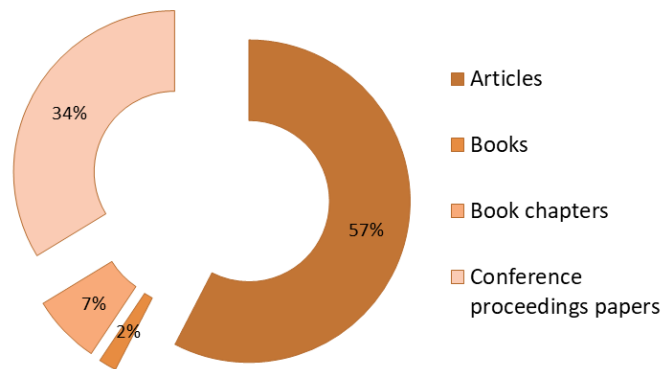


Figure 2. Types of contributions included

Interestingly, almost 2 out of 10 papers were published in journals, books, or conference proceedings dedicated to computer and technological development. It might be a surprising association with traditional crafts, but authors developed several lines of investigation: how to use digital technology for the advancement of crafts (Meissner, & Fitzpatrick, 2017; Padfield et al., 2018), for dissemination and increased awareness (Nishio, Yokoi, & Yasuda, 2009) or for computer-aided design (Jiang, & Cao, 2010; Guo, & Yu, 2022), to mention only some of the aspects researched. This strong attention given to technological and digital advancements is not necessarily a reflection of the overall interest in this field among academics and practitioners in the field of traditional crafts. It is rather the result of the selection process of including contributions in Scopus. Publications under the large domain of computers and digital developments are more likely to enter Scopus or other highly selective academic databases. We also observe that the domains of crafts associated with the textile industry and architecture are covered more than others.

The journals indexed in Scopus that published at least 5 papers on traditional crafts in the investigated period are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Journal with at least five articles in the field

Title of the journal	No. of articles
Craft Research	16
Journal of Silk	10
Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge	9
Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing	7
International Journal of Intangible Heritage	6
Sustainability	6

Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture	6
Design Journal	5

The most influential researchers included in Scopus are Nikolaos Partarakis, Xenophon Zabulis, Nikolaos Patsiouras, Ilia Adami, and Effie Karuzaki from the Foundation for Research and Technology, Greece. Figure 3 presents the clustering of the authors, developed with VOSviewer, considering association strength and citations.

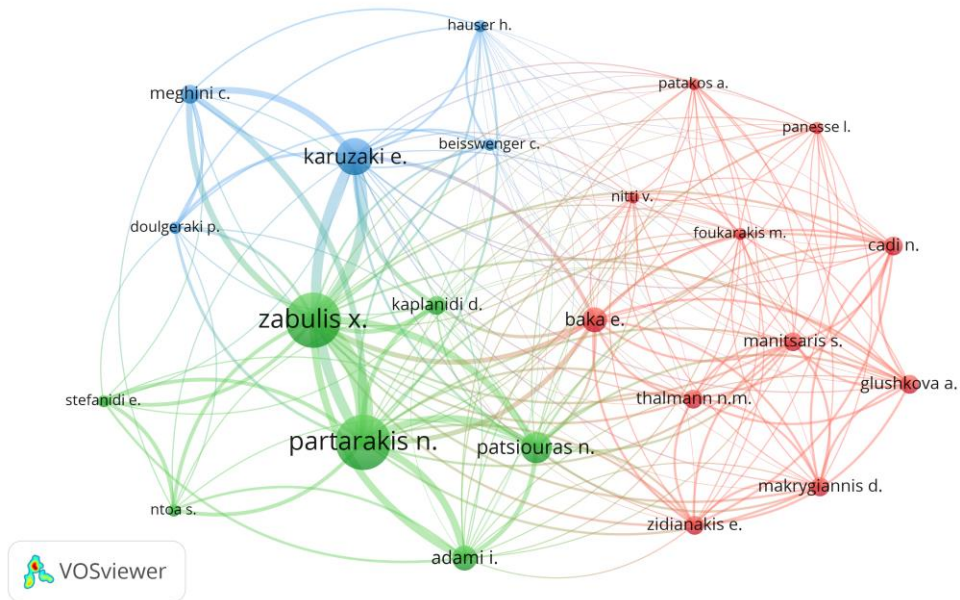


Figure 3. Authors' clustering

We observe a very active group at the Foundation for Research and Technology, in Greece. Otherwise, the landscape is very fragmented, which suggests the need for developing and consolidating research networks in this specific field. The geographic distribution of the authors included in Scopus reveals a different picture, showing a more widespread interest (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Countries' clustering

VOSviewer identified four clusters of countries, considering the association's strengths and documents. The yellow clusters comprise Austria, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The green cluster includes six countries: Canada, India, Malaysia, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam, with the United States and India being the most connected countries both inside and outside the cluster. The blue cluster generally includes Northern European countries: Denmark, Finland, Indonesia, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. The red cluster is formed by western- and central-European countries: France, Germany, Greece, Italy Slovakia, Spain, and Switzerland. The violet cluster is formed by China, Japan, Thailand, and Australia.

The last line of investigation we consider is the map of interests, We used VOSviewer, and we excluded the most general and obvious keywords such as traditional crafts, crafts, and handicrafts. Figure 5 presents the resulting network.

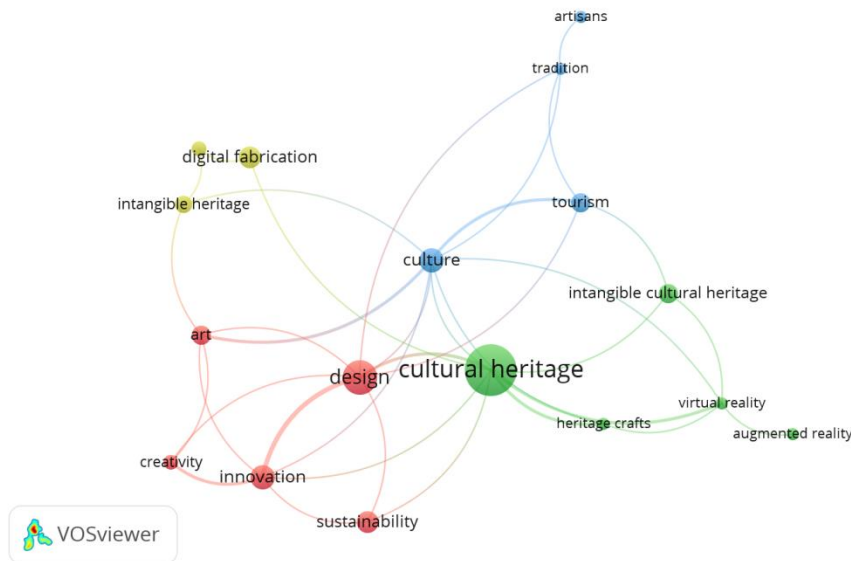


Figure 5. Main lines of investigation

We specify that we took into consideration the authors' keywords that were mentioned at least five times. Sustainability is a keyword associated in general with research on the innovative and creative aspects, while sustainable development is a keyword associated mostly with intangible heritage and digital fabrication.

Sustainability is part of a cluster of studies documenting how crafts can contribute to satisfying the needs of the communities through creative businesses, which mix traditional skills with the new artistic vision of craftsmen (Wechakama, 2011), or blending the interest in heritagization with creative reinventing of traditions and crafts (Guan, Gao, & Zhang, 2019). One of the effects of industrialization on crafts is not only putting them at risk of extinction but also leading to simplifying approaches where it still survives (Goldsmith, 2013). More structured support could contribute not only to their revival but also to their creative development, contributing not only to increased incomes for communities but also to augment pride in their cultural background (Goldsmith, 2013). Still, creative adaptations possess some challenges and are even criticized for diminishing the value of traditional crafts and resulting objects (Gumus Ciftci, & Walker, 2017). On the other hand, creative projects might blend traditional crafts with the circular economy, social entrepreneurship, and other sustainable (and trendy) economic approaches increasing the added value of crafts (see also the examples presented in Gumus Ciftci, & Walker, 2017 and Pathak, & Mukherjee, 2020). Pagán et al. (2020) observe that it is increased interest in applying creative and innovative formulas, design-based, in parallel with the involvement of younger persons in this process. Even if it seems to be a contradiction between traditional crafts and innovation, looking objectively at the development of crafts, we observe continuous innovation (Linton, 2020). The current evolution is not only concerned with adapting to changing local contexts but also with ensuring social sustainability and sustainable development (with an analysis of the textile traditional crafts in southern Japan in Linton, 2020).

The studies investigating more closely the relationships between traditional crafts and *sustainable development* tend to concentrate a little more on the economic aspects connected with classical industries, such as tourism or furniture (Horjan, 2011; Cazacu, Iatu, & Cruceanu, 2015; Zheng, & Zhu, 2021), or focus on future domains such as digital technologies, manufacturing or the impact of Artificial Intelligence (Wen, 2018). In all

cases, creating complex networks that would lead not only to economic development but also to community building is recommended. Attention should be also given to the shifting nature of the products resulting from hybrid design and manufacturing. For instance, Zoran and Buechley (2013) point out that digitally designed and produced artifacts are reproducible, which is not the case for the artifacts that result from traditional crafting. Still, digital technologies will likely impact in many ways even traditional crafts. Such an example is even traditional gastronomy, in which there are seeking a way to preserve its spirit and even the recipes but to use modern technology in preparing the dishing according to a "new cooking methodology" (Mizrahi et al., 2016). Digital design approaches and 3D printing are changing the possibilities of traditional craft for developing sustainably (Magrisso, Mizrahi, & Zoran, 2018; Zoran & Buechley, 2013).

Lastly, we mention that digital technologies could contribute in other ways to safeguarding ICH, including traditional crafts, by contributing to its documentation, presentation, and even training in the field (Carre et al., 2022; Partarakis et al., 2021a; Zabulis et al., 2021). Additionally, through digital technologies and new approaches, the meaning of traditional crafts and the resulting artifacts could be enhanced, and raise new interests in traditional practices, knowledge, and their productions (Partarakis et al., 2021b).

Considerations on traditional crafts' contribution to sustainable development

A first aspect to mention is that the concept of sustainable crafts is increasingly more popular, considering personal, societal, and cultural levels (Väänänen, & Pöllänen, 2020). The concept refers to a complex system, a holistic view, comprising three main components and the relationships between them and associated subcomponents: immaterial craft, craft product, and craft practice (Väänänen, 2020, p.76). Materials, life-cycle, and environment are key aspects for complying with the exigencies of sustainable crafts, but there are interconnections with all aspects of culture and society, being both aesthetic and meaningful (Väänänen, 2020, p.83). They support well-being while dealing with sustainability.

The relationships between crafts and sustainability are complex, registering both positive and negative connections, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Relationship between craft and sustainability

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

Source: Zhan, and Walker (2018)

Traditional crafts could contribute to the sustainable development of communities. They are connected with more than half of the UN's sustainable development goals

(Gudowska, 2020). Nevertheless, this process of contributing to sustainable development is quite complex, depending not only on craftsmen transformed into businessmen but also on a wide network of local actors: the community, governmental and local policies, commitment of various stakeholders, local elites, etc. (Guan, Gao, & Zhang, 2019; Pathak, & Mukherjee, 2020; Wechakama, 2011). Stimulating cultural and creative tourism is one of the most often sought approaches, also more widely discussed in the literature as presented before.

The development of traditional crafts and their impact on communities and economies depend on various aspects and various stakeholders. Ferraro et al. (2011) discuss the connection between sustainable development and crafts in Scotland, pointing out the importance of the educational model used. It could contribute both to the theory and practice of sustainable development in the context of craftsmanship and also building resilient communities.

Traditional crafts also face significant challenges that would hinder their sustainable development. On one hand, they are quite flexible and up to now adapted to the changes in societies and economies. On the other hand, the dynamics of the past century determined them an accelerated decline, especially in prosperous economies and regions. Therefore, not only the preservation of the heritage objects produced is necessary, but also that of traditional crafts themselves is a must – recognized at the political level widely, especially after the UNESCO 2003 Convention. To this aim, Połec and Murawska (2021) proposed a 4-level model, connected to sustainability, to which a level 0 is added referring to the preservation of the object, without the associated usage and production know-how. The fourth level ensures the broadest context for preserving traditional crafts, including the relationship with the evolving social structure. It is also connected with significant changes in consumers' attitudes and behaviors.

Among the barriers to the development of sustainable crafts, which also challenge their ability to contribute to sustainable development, are a lack of access and information about markets, a lack of appetite for innovation (Wanniarachchi, Dissanayake, & Downs, 2020), the investment funds available or the willingness to learn (Herdzina, Nolte, & Hegner, 1998), the mass consumption and globalization (Gumus Ciftci, & Walker, 2017; Ishrat, Grigg, Bezuidenhout, & Jayamaha, 2020). More opportunities and training are necessary to ensure the competitiveness of craftsmen. Another relevant aspect is related to the lack of desire of young people to become craftsmen, which leads to the death of craftsmanship in many regions, even in the case of ones famous for this activity and the resulting products.

Traditional crafts are considered something stable, that never changes. Nevertheless, if we observe them, we see a (slow) evolution, as an adaptation to the sociocultural and economic contexts. Even, in the context of contemporary society, it would be necessary for craftsmanship to be more innovative. The innovation in this field might be considered from several perspectives: introducing new products on the market (Naidu, Chand, & Southgate, 2014), adopting new materials, and originally using new technologies to design, produce, sell or communicate. As in other domains, innovation would ensure both competitive advantages and help to better comply with the exigencies of sustainable development.

Conclusions

As Ferraro et al. (2011, p.18) remark, "craft offers a fertile alternative way of thinking about the world and could be a catalyst for the re-assessment of how we chose to relate to the natural environment and with each other. In this sense, it can challenge our current concepts of the role of humanity". Therefore, a better understanding of the relationships between traditional crafts and sustainable development could lead to

developing the sector sustainably and enhancing its impact on communities and economies.

To stimulate sustainable crafts development, a favorable framework is necessary. Political and social components, responsible educational approaches, access to market information, and training of craftsmen in other domains (business, technology, design) are among the facilitating elements. They could be ensured by developing a complex network of stakeholders and facilitating actors. Another path to follow is to create cooperation networks between craftsmen, artists, and designers. The process is not simple, either, since many factors should be considered, such as the gaps between the partners, social interaction, the sustainability of these initiatives, and others (Gumus Ciftci, & Walker, 2017, p. S2996). Again, economic and marketing aspects are to be considered, while craftsmen (or many artists) do not possess the relevant knowledge and skills in these areas. Still, adequate usage of property rights and marketing strategies might lead to the sustainable development of craftsmanship (Bhattacharya, Dutta, & Waelde, 2021).

The analysis documents a rather low interest in traditional crafts in the main academic literature, although it registers an ascendant movement. This paper is one of the few existing literature reviews in this domain. Previous such initiatives aimed to better understand the concept of sustainable crafts (Väänänen, & Pöllänen, 2020), to map knowledge management practices in the field of arts and crafts (Latilla et al., 2018), and to design a conceptual model of commercialization of traditional crafts (Chutia, & Sarma, 2016). The present investigation shows that we have a partial view of the complexity of the topic investigated. It documents a significant gap between academic and professional publications and the need to facilitate access to the latter. It also reveals an increased interest in the field, especially considering some geographic and thematic aspects.

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