

# TECH1502-17 Introduction to Community Media

## Lecture Fifteen – Creativity & Making Stuff

### Contents

1	Introduction - Making is Connecting.....	2
1.1	Development Communication .....	2
1.2	Making & Doing.....	2
1.3	Craft Skills.....	2
2	DIY vs Mainstream .....	3
2.1	Lo-Fi.....	3
3	Craft – Making, Fixing & Repairing.....	3
3.1	Hands-On .....	3
4	Handmade.....	4
4.1	Handmade Festival.....	4
5	Online Creativity .....	5
5.1	Self-Expression.....	5
6	Gift Economy.....	5
6.1	Exchange Economy .....	5
6.2	Utopian Alternatives .....	5
6.3	Supplanting Commodities.....	5
7	Being Noticed.....	6
7.1	Well-Being.....	6
7.2	Creative Principles.....	6
8	Make It Yourself .....	6
8.1	Transformations.....	7
8.2	Intelligent Communities.....	7
8.3	Discovering Potential .....	7
9	The Art of Community.....	7
10	Summary .....	8
11	References .....	8

## 1 Introduction - Making is Connecting

“Citizens cannot just retreat to their own communities. They have to cultivate the virtue of solidarity. This means engaging other communities and voluntary institutions to create common ground to deal with common problems” (Etzioni, 1995, p. 8).

“Community media studies has understandably been preoccupied with methodology in recent years. How do you measure community outcomes? One way is to spend time with communities to observe the way they use and produce media” (Rennie, 2006, p. 138).

### 1.1 Development Communication

“Development communication seeks to transform existing living conditions through communication strategies, practices and technologies” (Howley, 2010, p. 181).

#### Craft Group

A Look Around The Craft Group

<https://youtu.be/xllb6KZ4lC4>

### 1.2 Making & Doing

“We can see a growing engagement with a ‘making and doing’ culture. This orientation rejects the passivity of the ‘sit back’ model, and seeks opportunities for creativity, social connections, and personal growth” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 11).

“Creativity might be better understood as a *process* and a *feeling*” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 17).

#### ‘Hombres Tejedores’ Blast Stereotypes in Chili Chilean men take needles to the streets.

Knitting needles, that is! There is a collective effort in Chili to break down stereotypes surrounding gender roles, specifically with yarn work including knitting and crochet. The men sit in public and do their yarn work to demonstrate that it is a craft that can be done by men or women, and there is nothing emasculating about doing the craft. <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/publicacts-stereotype-blasting-in-chili-b-hobres-tejedores-lbkr/>

#### Crafty Men Find Community in Knitting

Bryant Park Knits, a knitting group for all levels hosted by the yarn shop Knitty City, draws mostly women. But the men who attend say they love the craft. Photo: Natalie Keyssar for The Wall Street Journal <https://youtu.be/bJwGTZJBCeg>

### 1.3 Craft Skills

“Craft might suggest the careful work of a woodcarver or a ceramicist, a skilled practice of making beautiful objects. The term might be associated with traditional and rather twee items which you might have seen on sale at craft fairs in church halls – corn dollies and doilies at surprisingly high prices. Or it might suggest a newer, cool approach to making things yourself, as seen in the recent rise of knitting, ‘craft guerrilla’ fairs, DIY culture, and other trendy craft activities” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 22).

#### Holmes Valley Quilters Club: 4-in-1 place mat demo

On the third Thursday of every month starting at 5:30 p.m., 48 women gather together at the First Baptist Church of Bonifay to share their latest accomplishments, troubles and news as the Holmes Valley Quilters Club, and on Aug. 15, this was no different. <https://youtu.be/eDst5wJmYyI>

## 2 DIY vs Mainstream

“Today, the mainstream notion of ‘DIY’ is associated with the everyday home improvement – putting up shelves, assembling flat-pack wardrobes, and fixing drainpipes oneself, without professional help. This is a commonplace, suburban kind of phenomenon, popularly seen as a bit boring and nothing to do with any kind of radical politics movement” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 49).

### 2.1 Lo-Fi

“A similar but different version of the DIY ethos is the ‘lo-fi’ music and zine culture, influenced in part by the punk scene. This DIY culture is characterised by a rejection of the glossy, highly produced, celebrity-oriented mainstream of popular culture, and its replacement with a knowingly nonglossy, often messily produced alternative which is much less bothered about physical beauty, and declares an emphasis on content rather than style” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 53).

“This ethos is discussed, for example, in Amy Spencer’s book *DIY: The Rise of Lo-Fi Culture*. She’s an enthusiastic guide. On the first page she says: ‘In the face of the bland consumerist pop that dominates the airwaves and the bestselling celebrity biographies that fill the bookshops it is exciting to realise that there are an increasing amount of independent and creative minds who care enough to go against the grain and produce music, art, magazines and literature that is truly unique – whether it is likely to sell or not’ (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 53).

### Brief History of Lo-Fi Music

The emergence of lo-fi music in the 1950’s was started by amateur musicians that had low recording budgets. The DIY recording and non-ideal recording venues meant that unnatural distortions occurred. Despite the lack of quality the records had, the lo-fi sound became popular among the masses; it was the character and uniqueness of a song that made it popular, not how faithful of a representation it was. One example of a lo-fi song is Johnny Ace’s ‘My Song’. It was both written and recorded at a radio station. The co-writer David Mattis called it ‘a fifteen minute job’, and when you listen to it you can definitely hear how the rushed recording affected the quality. It has a raw sound with an uneven mix; the drums are too quiet and the piano and saxophone are in a constant battle to be heard. Even so, ‘My Song’ stayed at number one on the Billboard R&B chart in 1952.

<http://hotvox.co.uk/news/brief-history-lo-fi-music>

## 3 Craft – Making, Fixing & Repairing

“The DIY ethos, and a passion for craft, are not just about isolated projects, but spill over into everyday life more generally. Suggesting that people can make, fix, and repair things for themselves has much in common with sustainability and environmentalism. It also connects with anti-consumerism – the rejection of the idea that the answer to all of our needs and problems can be purchased from shops” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 57).

### 3.1 Hands-On

“The hands-on engagement of crafting and making; then, connects us with broader values, but the crafting orientation becomes one which can be a continuous part of everyday life, regardless of whether or not we happen to have a hands-on craft project” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 59).

### Wood Craft – ASMR

Another project from the craft store, this time it is wood blocks and glue. We are making a covered wagon. Go West young man! [https://youtu.be/XcNc\\_bKKUOg](https://youtu.be/XcNc_bKKUOg)

### The Leicestershire Woodcraft Folk

Claire Knight talks about the Leicestershire Woodcraft Folk, a cooperative group for children, young people and parents (<http://www.woodcraft.org.uk/category/...>). She was speaking at the Leicester

CND Annual Garden Party that was held in Leicester on September 2, 2012.

<https://youtu.be/YfVDvR0fZps>

#### **Woodcraft Folk in Leicester**

See a short interview about the Woodcraft Folk recorded at Our Leicester Day on Sunday September 9 2011. <https://youtu.be/RXcuXWcrpVA>

“The understanding that we make our own experiences, as well as shaping our material surroundings, is an important one to emerge from craft activity” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 59).

“The link with craft and making is that when one is not just a consumer, guzzling thing after thing, but also a producer, going through the necessarily slower and more thoughtful process of making something, one becomes more aware of the details and decisions which underpin everyday things and experiences, and therefore more able to gain pleasure and inspiration from the appreciation of things” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 60).

#### **4 Handmade**

“Although this judgement may be unfair, this move away from the more obvious ‘handmade’ feel, towards a level of glossy wizardry which we find it more difficult to relate to, seems to contribute to a general feeling that ‘creativity’ was not really taking place” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 73).

“This, then, added up to a strong vote in favour of loving but not overcomplicated craftwork, at a human level, designed to create a response of emotional engagement rather than mere appreciation of technological achievement” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 72).

#### **'Knitting group, at a brown bar in Amsterdam' | DAM SLOW tv**

The knitting group Westknitters meets regularly in a brown bar in Amsterdam West to knit and chat. <https://youtu.be/xsmEjSmksfA>

#### **4.1 Handmade Festival**

Hey. We're Handmade. We're a totally independent music and arts festival that takes place on May bank holiday in the city of Leicester. Our aim is to find the best new and forward thinking music, comedy, art, film, performance and photography and bring it all together for one weekend. The festival is curated by some of the city's best loved independent venues and promoters, all of whom have been involved in putting on events for decades, working tirelessly to bring great things to Leicester. We wanted to create an arts festival the city could really be proud of together.

<http://handmadefestival.co.uk/>

#### **Handmade Festival Leicester 2013 | Interview with John Helps**

John Helps, the curator of Leicester's new arts festival 'Handmade', chats to Holly Holdsworth about the event. Taking place 24th-26th May 2013 around the city.

<http://handmadefestival.co.uk/>

<https://youtu.be/LaTN8zX3194>

“The challenge of building a participatory medium hinges upon the extent to which a diverse user population can not only access the system, but also make safe and productive use of it” (Howley, 2005, p. 250).

## 5 Online Creativity

“This approach helps to explain why we might want to assert that a selection of amateur videos on YouTube are ‘more creative’ than an evening’s worth of stuff on network television. The latter is likely to be polished, very professionally produced, and may be quite imaginative, but it’s not quite the kind of thing that the word ‘creativity’ was made for” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 78).

“Creativity is something that is *felt*, not something that needs external expert verification” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 79).

### 5.1 Self-Expression

“The boom in free-flowing self-expression is largely taking place outside of established notions of professionalism. It signals a desire by the public to take advantage of tools that allow for creative expression. This paper suggests that established news organisations are shifting towards the retention of a traditional gatekeeping role with regard to UGC as a way of integrating user media into a professional journalistic framework” (Hermida & Thurman, 2007, p. 24).

“People spend time creating online content because they want to feel active and *recognised* within a community of interesting people, and because they wish to express or display aspects of themselves and their interests” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 101).

## 6 Gift Economy

“The simplest way is command hierarchy. In command hierarchies, allocation of scarce goods is done by one central authority and backed up by force. Command hierarchies scale very poorly. They become increasingly brutal and inefficient as they get larger. For this reason, command hierarchies above the size of an extended family are almost always parasites on a larger economy of a different type. In command hierarchies, social status is primarily determined by access to coercive power” (Raymond, 2001, p. 98).

**Charles Eisenstein: 'In a gift economy the more you give, the richer you are'**

<https://youtu.be/6S1egXWYwXo>

### 6.1 Exchange Economy

“Our society is predominantly an exchange economy. This is a sophisticated adaptation to scarcity that, unlike the command model, scales quite well” (Raymond, 2001, p. 98).

“In an exchange economy, social status is primarily determined by having control of things (not necessarily material things) to use or trade” (Raymond, 2001, p. 98).

### 6.2 Utopian Alternatives

“During the Sixties, the New Left created a new form of radical politics: anarcho-communism. Above all, the Situationists and similar groups believed that the tribal gift economy proved that individuals could successfully live together without needing either the state or the market. From May 1968 to the late Nineties, this utopian vision of anarcho-communism has inspired community media and DIY culture activists” (Fox, 2005).

### 6.3 Supplanting Commodities

“The giving of gifts was seen as the absolute antithesis of market competition. There could be no compromise between tribal authenticity and bourgeois alienation. After the social revolution, the potlatch would completely supplant the commodity” (Fox, 2005).

“The notion of the gift economy helps us, in particular, to understand the rewards for participation – such as ‘status’, ‘prestige,’ or ‘esteem’ – which have no (immediate) economic value” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 95).

## **7 Being Noticed**

“People want to lay down signs of their existence and their ideas, and they want this to be *noticed*” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 101).

“Gift cultures are adaptations not to scarcity but to abundance. They arise in populations that do not have significant material scarcity problems with survival goods” (Raymond, 2001, p. 99).

“Abundance makes command relationships difficult to sustain and exchange relationships an almost pointless game. In gift cultures, social status is determined not by what you control but by what you give away” (Raymond, 2001, p. 99).

### **On a global mindshift towards 21st century thinking**

The particular balance a society adopts is going to reflect the unique blend of history, culture, infrastructure, environment, relationships, mythologies, religions, and politics of that society. A central irony of our times is that our major social institutions revolve around the idea of rationing "scarce" resources, but the technology of the 21st century has the potential to make most resources very abundant. So, our policies relating to areas as diverse as education, welfare, healthcare, economics, infrastructure, research, urbanization, transportation, communications, copyright, patents, and agriculture are built on increasingly obsolete conceptual foundations. <http://www.pdfhouthout.net/>

#### **7.1 Well-Being**

“Happiness, then, is about family, community, and well-being. It cannot be determined by a certain level of material comfort. Instead, it stems from having meaningful connections with others, and meaningful things to do” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 126).

#### **7.2 Creative Principles**

“Everything else is boiled down into a set of five key principles, namely:

1. A new understanding of creativity as a process, emotion and presence.
2. The drive to make and share.
3. Happiness through creativity and community.
4. A middle layer of creativity as social glue.
5. Making your mark, and making the world your own” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 217).

## **8 Make It Yourself**

“‘Making is connecting’ suggests that society is stronger, and kinder, when we take time to listen to the voices around us, when we pay attention to the diverse stories presented through the everyday creativity of our fellow human beings, and when we engage helpfully in the world” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 227).

“Compared with the mass-market populism on the one hand, and pretentious elitism on the other, the multitudinous and diverse fruits of the ‘make it yourself’ ethic, or the ‘make it with others’ ethic – as seen across YouTube and the rest of the Web, and in craft fairs, guerrilla gardening interventions, and elsewhere – are easily winners” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 229).

<http://makezine.com/>

## 8.1 Transformations

“Making things is about transforming material into something new, but it is also about transforming one’s own sense of self” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 245).

### Artisanal Appeal - The Rise of Craft: Goldman Sachs' Judy Hong

Riding many of today's consumer megatrends, craft products from soap to whiskey are rapidly gaining share across staple and discretionary categories and forcing established brands to adapt. Goldman Sachs Research’s Judy Hong, senior Beverage and Tobacco equity research analyst, explains what this craft revolution looks like in two of its biggest markets: beer and spirits.

<https://youtu.be/RQrwSGWMuXY>

## 8.2 Intelligent Communities

“The more we are able to form intelligent communities, as open-minded, cognitive subjects capable of initiative, imagination, and rapid response, the more we will be able to ensure our success in a highly competitive environment” (Lévy, 1997 p.1).

## 8.3 Discovering Potential

“The Iron rule of never doing anything for people that they can do themselves implies, ultimately, the kind of community of leaders that Cortes suggests here, an organisation in which everyone’s potential is discovered and nurtured and leadership is genuinely collective. He and others in the IAF emphasise active citizen engagement, as opposed to the idea of citizens as clients or consumers who expect to have things done for them or to them” (Putnam, Feldstein, & Cohen, 2003, p. 23).

## 9 The Art of Community

“It is not merely the group that generates community, but the interactions within it. These interactions, and the feeling of belonging that they produce, are generated from a distinctive kind of economy: a social economy” (Bacon, 2012, p. 5).

“An economy is a set of shared concepts and processes that grow and change in an effort to generate a form of capital... A social economy is the same thing – but we are the product, and the capital is respect and trust. The processes and techniques here are different – open communication mediums, easy access tools, and so on – but the basic principles are the same” (Bacon, 2012, p. 5).

“Great communities are built on great relationships. When people really feel a sense of belonging they are enjoying not only being productive but also swimming in the tide of your community’s personality. When you put productive people together in a room (real or virtual) and they feel a sense of family, your community will be inundated with belonging” (Bacon, 2012, p. 407).

“The difference between belonging and family is subtle yet important. It is entirely possible that people can feel a sense of belonging and yet have little in the way of personal engagement with other community members” (Bacon, 2012, p. 406).

“Great process are beautiful creatures, but they need care and feeding to thrive. Our goal... is to identify these needs and produce processes that exhibit the following criteria:

- *The goal of the process is achieved as quickly as possible.*  
The quicker a process ends, the quicker your community can get on with more interesting things.
- *The fewest possible steps can achieve the goal.*  
Redundant steps merely make the process feel long and drawn out; let’s avoid that.
- *Each step is simple, well documented, and clearly communicated.*  
Each step should be absolutely necessary, and performing it should be simple....
- *The process is as friction-free as possible.*

We want to avoid confusion and annoyance, not only with each step in the process, but also in the process as a whole.

- *Quality is maintained at every step.*

We need to identify and maintain the different types of quality involved in a process: its accuracy at achieving the outcome, how efficient it is, how well documented it is, how current it is, and how open to change and improvement it is” (Bacon, 2012, p. 102).

## 10 Summary

“Pragmatism also sees knowledge as participative. According to this view, any knowledge we have is dependent on the technology, circumstances, situations, and actions from which it was constructed. It is knowledge in a community of engaged people, in a situation, from a perspective, felt, and senses. For pragmatists, therefore, knowing, doing, feeling, and making sense are inseparable. Pragmatism is a practical, consequential philosophy, a practice that is concerned with imagining and enriching as much as understanding. The test it sets for itself is to improve things” (McCarthy & Wright, 2004 p.17).

### **SALT PRINTING WORKSHOP - Leicester Lo - Fi.**

An event organised by the Leicester Lo-Fi Photographers - Experimenting with an old technique from the 1830's whereby paper is treated with a solution of salt and silver nitrate and then exposed to the sun. For more info - [Leicester-lofi@hotmail.com](mailto:Leicester-lofi@hotmail.com)  
<https://youtu.be/surachzly4>

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