

Call for abstracts

Values of Crafts: Unpacking tensions in the valuation of craft knowledge

International symposium

Antwerp, 4-5 Feb 2027



photo: Pierre-Antoine Vettorello

This symposium proceeds from the observation that **crafts are increasingly (re)valued and supported** by a wide range of people, actors and institutions. Although crafts remain under pressure in a society that continues to structurally undervalue craft knowledge and manual labor, the past decade has witnessed a significant increase in research, projects and funding aimed at strengthening the conditions for the revitalization of crafts in contemporary society.

While each of these initiatives contributes to creating the conditions for a broader structural resurgence of crafts, they are driven by different motives and interests, rely on varying definitions of crafts, and consequently include, shape, and exclude specific people, practices, and forms of knowledge in many different ways. **Crafts can be understood as a boundary object**, to which various actors assign different meanings and values, despite not necessarily sharing the same objectives or addressing the same people, practices, and forms of knowledge.

Today, both policy and research on crafts increasingly recognize the need to explicitly address and disentangle these tensions, as they risk generating unproductive and even counterproductive dynamics that may undermine the growth and the effectiveness of the crafts ecosystem from within. We therefore argue that **unpacking the “black box” of the different ways in which crafts are valued is essential** for understanding which frameworks and measures not only support the transmission of crafts knowledge, but also enable crafts to fulfil broader societal roles, e.g., as drivers of sustainable transition, social inclusion, health and wellbeing, etc.

A shared understanding of these different valuation frameworks is needed for developing coherent and broadly supported measures that can effectively contribute to the revitalisation of crafts in society. The aim of the symposium is therefore not only to unpack and critically examine different ways of valuing crafts, but also to **identify common ground and build bridges** between them. This includes fostering dialogue across scientific disciplines as well as between researchers and societal stakeholders.

We welcome **contributions from all disciplinary backgrounds** aimed at the (re)valorisation of crafts that make their underlying values and assumptions explicit. Contributions may present case studies or findings from broader research examining the multiple values attributed to crafts across different contexts, including social, cultural, economic, educational, environmental, and political domains.

The symposium will consist of two complementary parts. The first part will focus on the presentation and discussion of research findings, while the second will explore the implications of different valuation frameworks for policy, practice, and implementation through a moderated discussion with researchers and societal stakeholders.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- * The definition and delineation of crafts and its impact on the wider ecosystem
- * The plurality of forms of knowledge construction, dissemination and sharing within crafts
- * The heritage value of traditional crafts vs. the incorporation of new technologies
- * The economic role of crafts as driver of employment, growth and innovation vs. embedded socio-cultural values such as health, wellbeing, sustainability and social cohesion
- * The need for economic viability and self-sufficiency of crafts vs. the dependence on government subsidies and support
- * Crafts as carriers of a specific local or regional identity vs. crafts as shared frameworks for supra-regional or global exchange
- * The value of crafts as a creative or artistic process vs. crafts as a way of making functional everyday objects
- * The role, recognition and remuneration of the designers of craft objects vs. those of the makers
- * The promotion of crafts, making and repair activities as a bottom-up grassroots movement vs. the top-down validation and endorsement by public authorities

Submission Guidelines

Submit your **abstract** (ca. 300 words) and a short **biographical note** (ca. 150 words) by October 15th, 2026 at the latest via info@craftingfutures.be and julie.degroot@uantwerpen.be.

Important Dates

Abstract submission: Oct 15, 2026

Notification of acceptance: Nov 1, 2026

Programme online: Dec 1, 2026

Symposium: Feb 4-5, 2027

Fees and Registration

Please note that there is no general conference fee, but we ask attendees to cover own travel and accommodation expenses. A limited bursary fund is available for travel or accommodation for participants without own operating funds. When submitting your abstract, please state why you wish to apply for bursary support.

For more information, registration and updates, please visit the conference website: www.uantwerpen.be/en/conferences/values-of-crafts/

Organisation



TRACKS4CRAFTS

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