Ambiguous Stitches
Participatory Textile Making at Trapholt Museum

BIRGIT ERIKSSON AND TINA LOUISE HOVE SØRENSEN

The article investigates how Data Mirror*, a large-scale participatory art project at Trapholt Museum brings the cultural ambiguities of textile crafts into play. Exploring the ambiguities of embroidery, the museum, the artist and 623 citizens unsettle dichotomies between tradition/renewal and individuality/collectivity, thereby uncovering textile crafts' potential for (re) connecting with the world.*[1]

Intro

Since 2014, Trapholt, a museum of modern art, craft and design in the Southern Region of Denmark, has developed a collaborative museum practice, in which one artist and up to 1000 citizens have contributed to large-scale, craft-based art projects. Trapholt's aims with these projects are to strengthen creativity and community, to discuss important issues through craft and to produce interesting works of art (Grøn, 2020, p. 7 and 2024, p. 7). The most recent of these projects have all been based on various forms of textile crafts: crochet in Hanne G and Rasmus Bækkel Fex's *Lighthope* (2020), embroidery in Iben Høj's *Stitches Beyond Borders* (2020-21), quilting in Tina Ratzer's *Among the Trees* (2021-22), embroidery and weaving in Astrid Skibsted's *Data Mirror* (2022-23), and finally knitting in Randi Samsonsen's *Things Matter* (2023-24).

The attention to textile crafts that Trapholt's projects both reflect and promote, is part of a broader artistic and cultural tendency. As a cultural practice, contemporary textile craft wedges itself into, but also between, different and opposing ideologies and values, enabling new identities, connections and communities (Robertson and Vinebaum, 2016). As Julia

Bryan-Wilson has argued, craft is an ambiguous and highly complex cultural practice. Offering "Eleven Propositions in Response to the Question 'What Is Contemporary about Craft?'" (2013), she describes craft as being strung between contemporary art and domestic kitsch, activism and commercialism, traditional artisanal labour and sustainable futures, reactionary gender roles and progressive feminism, mainstream and counterculture. While she addresses craft as an overall category, her cases overwhelmingly draw on textile craft, and her description of the different and contradictory registers of meaning and value is highly relevant to the textile craft we focus on. Inspired by her short and polemical article, which concludes that craft "is a wedge that reveals stark distinctions within ideologies of taste and value", and "polarizes and collapses theoretical positions about what making means today" (Bryan-Wilson, 2013, p. 10), we will dig deeper into two such distinctions, namely between *tradition and renewal*, which she also highlights, and *individuality and collectivity*, which she does not include. While Trapholt's craft projects are stretched out between many oppositional registers of meaning and value, particularly the two above stand out as important both for the participating citizens and for the produced artwork. Based on an inductive approach to a rich empirical dataset we analyse how the project *Data Mirror* (2022-23) – understood both as participatory practice and artistic expression – wedges itself between tradition and renewal as well as between individuality and collectivity. Building on this, we ask whether and how craft-based textile practices like Trapholt's, through their ambiguity, can unsettle conventional dichotomies and thereby uncover new potentials in and between these.

The article first introduces *Data Mirror* and the empirical data that we draw on. Hereafter we outline the current actualisation of textile crafts as an important context for Trapholt's collaborative projects. This is followed by an analysis of how *Data Mirror* alternates and wedges itself between tradition and renewal, and individuality and collectivity. Finally, we discuss the potentials of craft-based textile projects like *Data Mirror* to unsettle dichotomies and, through their ambiguity, to uncover new potentials for resonance.

Data Mirror

In the spring of 2022, Trapholt and the textile artist Astrid Skibsted launched a major collaborative weaving and embroidery art project, *Data Mirror*. A couple of months later, 623 citizens submitted their individual embroideries to Trapholt. Based on a concept and design developed by Skibsted in collaboration with Trapholt, they had all been instructed in how to download their personal data from Facebook or Google, whereafter an algorithm had transformed their data into graphic patterns with up to eight circles visualising their most frequently used words or searches. To ensure a coherent artistic expression in the final artwork, Skibsted had further formulated a set of dogmas, restricting the participants to use fabric and yarn, selected by her and provided by Trapholt, and to stitch horizontally and vertically. Based on these common dogmas, the participants interpreted their individual data patterns in 630 embroideries, which applied on four 6-metre high sheer panels in combination with 14 woven panels constituted a large collaborative artwork to be exhibited at Trapholt 2022-2023 and subsequently preserved (see Ill. 1).

As researchers, we have followed *Data Mirror* from the development of the concept in late 2021 over the public kick-off of the project in March 2022 and the handing-in of contributions in May 2022 to the exhibition of the collaborative artwork November 2022 to November 2023. During these two years, but most intensively from March to November 2022, we have collected extensive empirical material. Inspired by Dawn Mannay (2015), and to ensure a multifaceted dataset, we have combined found data (data produced during the process without involving researchers), researcher-initiated data and participatory productions facilitated by researchers. Our empirical material thus included a survey, conducted in collaboration with Trapholt in May 2022, with closed as well as open-ended questions (203 responses); 26 individual interviews and 13 group interviews with the participants; 26 observations of lectures, workshops and informal meetings at Trapholt, libraries, drop-in centres[2] etc.; 630 embroideries and accompanying submission texts; eight logbooks with participants' descriptions of their creative process; and finally the communication in two *Data Mirror* Facebook groups, one public group, made by Trapholt (1200 members) and one private group, made by the drop-in-centres (87 members). The

article builds on a thematic analysis of this extensive empirical material. For the interviews, we have combined concept-driven and data-driven coding (Gibbs, 2007), as our initial interest in concepts like participation, community and activism has been supplemented by codes like rules, part of something bigger and motivation. Our approach is thus mainly inductive. Bryan-Wilson's propositions have inspired us to look for ambiguous or contradicting meanings of craft, but we have mainly been interested in the ambiguities and contradictions that have appeared in the participants' oral, written and embroidered expressions. We have therefore chosen to focus on tradition/renewal, which cuts across several of Bryan-Wilson's propositions, and to add individuality/collectivity to this, since the experience of this is crucial in a collaborative craft project like *Data Mirror* (Kelty, 2019). Below, we refer to the data by the specific datatype. All the in-text quotes from our empirical data are our translations of first-hand accounts from participants unless otherwise specified.

The Reactualisation of Textile Crafts

Textile crafts have a long tradition. Archaeological museums display crafts' tools and products in ancient societies while contemporary textile craft scholars see it as "a living tradition inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants" (Strand and Harlow, 2016, p. 6). This living tradition, however, is not constant but has intensified since the early years of the new millennium, when the rising attention to textile crafts resulted in influential works such as the journal *Textile: Cloth and Culture* (from 2003), *The Journal of Modern Craft* (from 2008), Glenn Adamson's *The Craft Reader* (2010), and Jessica Hemmings' *The Textile Reader* (2012). Since then, the interest that these and many other academic publications (along with a huge number of patterns and manuals on various textile practices) helped promote has only burgeoned (Knott, 2015; Shales, 2017; Harrod, 2018). The value of handmade items, particularly textile crafts, is now recognised across cultural, social, economic and political contexts (Coles and Rossi, 2022).

ILL. 1 (OPPOSITE)
The final artwork, *Data Mirror*, at Trapholt. Photo: Kenneth Stjernegaard, Trapholt.

The cultural revitalisation of textile crafts unfolds both onsite and online, and often in a combination of the two. While knitting, crocheting, sewing and other textile practices have gained visibility in physical public spaces like cafés, pubs, galleries, streets and public transportation (Robertson and Vinebaum, 2016), social media platforms are used to connect, organise and disseminate a wide variety of online communities of textile makers.

The above cultural transformations in our understanding of textile crafts are accompanied by their prominence in contemporary art (Fariello and Owen, 2004; Hung and Magliaro, 2007). A growing number of artists turn to fibre and use techniques like knitting, sewing, crocheting, weaving and quilting (Robertson and Vinebaum, 2016). Already in 2011, Janis Jefferies subtitled an essay "An Outburst of Craft in Contemporary Art" and described how craft had become "the new cool" (Jefferies, 2011). Craft-based textile art is increasingly accepted by a formerly less welcoming art world. Textiles have featured prominently at recent art biennales (e.g. Whitney in 2014 and Venice in 2019, 2022 and 2024) and various prestigious museums and galleries (Robertson and Vinebaum, 2016; Textile Forum Blog, 2019 and 2022). The boundaries between textile craft and art are now explored and challenged in museum exhibitions and theoretical literature (Risatti, 2007; Gali, 2015; Harrod, 2018).

Trapholt's collaborative projects unfold across all the above fields: They engage in textile crafts as both an everyday and artistic practice, and they take place both onsite, at the museum and elsewhere, and online, particularly in the Facebook groups. In the following, we will dig into, how – and with what outcomes – *Data Mirror* more specifically takes part in the actualisation of textile crafts by wedging itself in between tradition and renewal.

Textile Crafts Between Tradition and Renewal

Trapholt museum – as well as the textile artists – engage in the 'living tradition' of textile crafts when they ask both the participating citizens and the art world to take a specific craft seriously as a creative practice and an artistic medium. Many of the 623 participants highly appreciate this. In our

dataset, we find both a cultural and a personal version of this tradition. The cultural version appears when, in the survey, 94 % answer "yes", or "yes, to a high degree" (weighted average 4.43/5) to the question whether a project like *Data Mirror* has the potential to "save the traditions of embroidery and craft" (survey). In our interviews and conversations, many find the current spread of handicrafts very important, and some relate it to an accelerated or "hectic time" of today (interview). Across our dataset, we see a strong engagement in the tradition of textile craft as something that deserves to be saved and disseminated.

The personal version appears when even more participants relate the tradition of textile craft to their own family and memory: "While sewing, many memories have come to my mind. My grandmother and old neighbour (…), who often sat and sewed the most beautiful works. The calm that comes over you when you work with your hands is absolutely fantastic" (submission text). The vast majority of the participants are women above the age of 50 (according to the survey, 99 % are women, 15% are aged 30-49, 67 % 50-69 and 16 % 70+), and while some have rediscovered embroidery, many others have been engaged in textile crafts for several decades and have learnt their skills from their mother or grandmother. While one "associate(s) it with something pleasant from your childhood" (submission text), another "can't help but think of my late grandmother who taught her craft with great enthusiasm. This is a fantastic opportunity to honour her memory and brush off some old skills while participating in an art project" (logbook).

The cultural and personal traditions do of course interrelate. Compared to the quotes above, some are less respectful of the general female tradition embodied by their grandmothers, whose "pieces would sit neatly under a vase so friends could admire them. Those pieces are now tucked away in our drawers because we don't want to display them" (group interview). The quote indicates how the tradition of textile crafts also carries some problematic feminine stereotypes of domesticity and decoration (Parker, 2010; Sørensen and Eriksson, 2022): the embroideries sitting neatly under a vase. And while some participants embrace this tradition without reservations, others like the interviewee here (supported by the other two women in the group interview) value that Trapholt's projects, when display-

ing the embroideries in an artwork at the museum, not only try to honour and save but also to renew the coding of textile crafts: from a traditional, female, domestic pursuit to something worthy of artistic attention and general public interest.

The renewal happens in two ways: through the thematic focus and the artistic design. In *Data Mirror*, the thematic focus is on how we leave our personal footprints on digital platforms like Google and Facebook (Ill. 2). When Trapholt combines a traditional textile craft with a contemporary societal and political issue like data (also by organising lectures and conversations about data), it distances itself from topics and motifs that are normally associated with embroidery. By linking a feminine craft practice with topics from other fields and discourses (data in *Data Mirror* or borders, nature or public sculptures in other recent projects), the museum unsettles existing, and sometimes condescending, assumptions about textile crafts. As two women in a group interview said: Some "just think this is what women do when they can't think of anything else" (1); "But I think when it gets linked to data, it kind of sounds different" (2). We may critically ask exactly how the theme of data is reflected, and for most participants, a focus on how they could interpret and recognise themselves in the algorithm's translation of their personal data traces overshadowed more general questions of commercial or political exploitation of our data (Eriksson and Sørensen, 2023). Still, the latter issues were also touched upon – and thereby related to embroidery – both by participants and in the final exhibition.

Regarding the renewal through artistic design, *Data Mirror* challenges the most common forms of embroidery, like cross and chain stitches. As mentioned, one of Skibsted's (few) artistic dogmas was that only vertical and horizontal stitches were allowed, and she further tried to persuade the participants to represent their data in an abstract form. The artistic choice of stitches and the (ambition of an) abstract form forced or at least encouraged the participants to venture into new creative territory. Most participants appreciate this, and in the survey a vast majority (weighted average 4.25/5) answer that they have experienced creativity during the project and that *Data Mirror* has the potential for strengthening creative skills at a more overall societal level (weighted average 4.31/5).

Of course, we may ask critically whether 623 citizens' creative practice in *Data Mirror* – and an exhibited collaborative artwork at Trapholt – can save a craft tradition and strengthen creative skills more generally, or whether the participants too swiftly extrapolate from their own experiences to a societal level. In our analysis, however, the participants' experiences and understandings are important. And even if they may exaggerate the impact of *Data Mirror*, the link they establish between textile crafts and creativity is an important register of meaning and value for them. Also in the academic literature, the close link between textile crafts and creativity is often seen as an important reason for the current revitalisation of craft (Gauntlet and Holroyd, 2014; Ingold, 2013; Tanggaard, 2012). In line with this, Trapholt's craft-based art projects are based on a socio-material understanding of creativity as an everyday phenomenon and a process with close relationships between human beings and material tools, and between continuity and renewal (Tanggaard, 2012, p. 29). In *Data Mirror*, several of the participants make this relationship between continuity and renewal tangible, when they tell how they use embroidery to both repair and decorate old clothes. For one, this has inspired her contribution, where she has used two types of Japanese stitches that have traditionally been used to repair and isolate clothes: "With great respect for the original

craftsmanship, culture and history, I have interpreted it in my own Nordic way" (submission text). Like many other participants, she wedges her contribution between continuity/tradition and renewal.

In *Data Mirror* and Trapholt's other collaborative projects, textile craft is a creative practice, where the participants move between tradition and renewal, and where various existing rules, materials, tools, institutions, experiences and practices are the starting point for new creations, discoveries and products. This does not turn the participants into artists, but it does enable them to work with and on the world. As Tanggaard suggests, "we should begin studying creativity as a relational dynamic between artefacts and humans in the social practices of everyday life" (Tanggaard, 2012, pp. 29-30). In our qualitative data, many of the embroiderers are in line with this socio-material understanding. They emphasise how important it is for them to be creative – something that the project has either boosted, confirmed, or opened their eyes to. They associate this with expressing themselves (freely), engaging in the world with the senses, and renewing traditions that are often both personal and cultural.

Textile Making Between Individuality and Collectivity

Textile crafts have a long social history of cooperation, collaboration, and community engagement and their current resurgence is presumably linked to the pronounced orientation towards participation that has gained ground across various academic fields, cultural practices, institutions and policies over the last decades (Holroyd and Schercliff, 2020; Sorkin, 2016; Sennett, 2008; Eriksson, Stage and Valtýsson, 2019). This has also been noted by Robertson and Vinebaum, who link "the recent public and participatory turn in fiber" (2016, p. 7) to the shift toward collaborative and participatory approaches in contemporary art and a more extensive cultural desire for social connection.

Accordingly, the social histories and community-building affordances of textile making are currently being explored in various institutional, cultural, and artistic settings (Luckman and Thomas, 2018). This is manifested in initiatives such as *The Stitching Together Network*, which counts 103 collaborators/members (including Trapholt) and 29 case studies. The

network points to a growing field of researchers and practitioners investigating participatory textile making as a practice, methodology or object of study (Holroyd and Schercliff, 2020).

With their collaborative craft-based practice, Trapholt's projects are situated within this growing field of participatory explorations of textile practice, and *Data Mirror's* participants value the community/cohesion-oriented potentials of the project highly (but lower than the potentials regarding the craft tradition and creativity above). In the survey, 84 % (weighted average 3.99/5) have experienced community during the project, while 86 % (weighted average 4.16/5) agree that *Data Mirror* has the potential to "strengthen social cohesion". As above, the survey indicates positive personal experiences and societal expectations. In our qualitative data, the first-hand articulations of experiences, do, however, paint a more nuanced and ambiguous picture. In interviews, logbooks and submission texts, participants often highlight the experience of participating as introspective and individual on the one hand and collective on the other. Interestingly, the individual and collective experience of textile making is often articulated conjointly, as inseparable aspects of the same creational experience: "I have found pleasure in creating and seeing my embroidery evolve. Just as I have felt the pleasure of leaving my marks in the bigger creative community" (submission text). This quote, like many others, points to an inherent social ambiguity of textile making practices that, as Robertson and Vinebaum describe it, always have "operated at the intersection of individual practice and group activity" (2016, p. 7). But how does *Data Mirror's* craft-based participatory design, which is based on individually embroidered contributions to a collective artwork, operate in the intersection between individual self-expression on the one hand, and socially embedded embroidery practice and collective cohesion on the other?

If we first look at the articulations that concern individuality, the qualitative data bear witness to highly individual making processes centred around self-expression and personal design choices within the given creative dogmas. Some participants express how it is important to "solve the task my way" (submission text) and work with and express "something that only goes on inside of me" (interview). This is prompted by the project design. The participants engaged in textile making via their individual con-

tribution and most of the embroidering was executed individually at home. Furthermore, the vast majority of the participants embroidered their own personal data mirror, and this emphasis on individual data identity and 'self-mirroring' certainly cued the making-experience to revolve around identity and self-representation. For some, and particularly the participants who could not recognise themselves in the algorithm's 'translation' of their data traces, this emphasis on self-reflection spurred on a need to express themselves more 'truly' and recognisably through the embroidery.

Through the lens of participatory theory, we can understand this need for self-expression as having to do with the importance of being seen and heard in the collaborative process and product. Compared to "contributory" projects (Simon, 2010), where the participants perform predefined tasks and can be replaced without changing the result, Trapholt's projects are "collaborative" in the sense that the participants "serve as active partners in the creation of institutional projects that are originated and ultimately controlled by the institution" (ibid., p. 187). In *Data Mirror*, the organisation, design and dogmas of the project were decided by the museum and artist, but the participants used their embroidery skills creatively, and the final artwork was a result of both their and Skibsted's decision-making. They could not influence the overall goals and design of the project, but within the given dogmas they could work quite freely interpreting and expressing the data through stitches. The final embroideries clearly contained the individual embroiderer's personal style and creative decisions as seen in Ill. 2, 3 and 4. The participants generally valued this creative agency, and its importance is perhaps most poignantly expressed by those, who have participated in several projects at Trapholt. Some of these experienced Trapholt crafters shared how they asses the creative agency in the individual projects, and how they decide not to participate if they find too little wiggle room for creative freedom and self-expression for their liking: "When Trapholt initiated a project with crocheted [light]bulbs, I declined to participate. I found it so strictly governed, that I regarded it as free labour. I don't want to do that. I would like to be able to express myself within the given frame" (survey comment).

In Trapholt's projects, however, individual expression and agency co-exist with a strong practice and sense of collectivity. While the indi-

ILL. 4.
Screenshot from Trapholt's contribution database: https://ds.trapholt.dk.

vidual embroidery process evolves around self-representation and creative agency, as we have analysed above, many participants emphasise that they do not need to be 'hyped' or stand out in the collective artwork. On the contrary, participants articulate quite uniformly (and with very similar wording) how they regard their "small contribution" as "anonymous" or as a "drop" or "small piece" in the final artwork that is "greater" than the individual parts. This humbleness and appreciation of the collective destination of the individual contributions is very much in line with Christopher Kelty's understanding of participation as ambiguously "individual and collective at the same time" (Kelty, 2019, p. 19). According to Kelty, powerful and meaningful experiences of participation are closely related to the affective experience of becoming a collective, and this is also the case in *Data Mirror* where the collective artwork is perceived as more important than the individual pieces. The meaningfulness of making a mark and expressing oneself through the creative act is to a great extend tied to the experience of being included in and contributing to the collective whole. It is about "leaving one's mark in something that is collective, that is what I like about it" (interview).

The individual embroidery process is thus situated in a collective process that, even though the stitching, for the most part, is done separately, creates an affective sense of embroidering in concert: "I think about the great number of people who are dealing with the same dogmas and materials and thoughts about their data and the meaning of it. That is truly remarkable" (submission text). This sense of community and making together is first and foremost informed by the collective future of the individual pieces: the artwork that is exhibited at Trapholt for 12 months. Second, it is also to some extent underpinned by physical group activities (workshops at Trapholt, drop-in centre meetings, lectures etc.), online "tips and tricks" meetings hosted by Trapholt and perhaps most significantly the Facebook groups that according to the participants as well as our observations play a vital part in creating a sense of shared practice by facilitating a virtual space for sharing and support. Third, we suggest that Trapholt's participatory design lends some of its collective qualities from the social and cohesive affordances of textiles. Textile crafts have an extensive social history and textiles are embedded with social meaning as they have served to connect us locally and across generations via craft communities, the transmission of skills and inherited and gifted textiles that has been carefully made by hand (Robertson and Vinebaum, 2016). Furthermore, textile production was, historically, a demanding and time-consuming task that had to be distributed among many individuals and thus both necessitated and promoted collaboration. In this perspective, the act of crafting textiles is never solely individual because the social and familial histories tied to the quality of the fibre and/or practice are actualised through the tactile process of textile making. This is also evident in our data, where many participants, as previously mentioned, recollect and share memories about older family members teaching and sharing skills.

It can, however, also be argued, that the connective qualities of textiles transcend the human-centred dichotomy between individuality and collectivity. As mentioned, the creative stitching practice in *Data Mirror* can be understood as a relational dynamic between artefacts and humans in the social practices of everyday life (Tanggaard, 2012). Drawing on Hartmut Rosa's notion of resonance, we suggest that Trapholt's projects employ the socio-materiality of collaborative textile-making in a way that

demonstrates its ability to generate experiences of resonance with the world. Rosa theorises how the current societal demand for acceleration, growth and innovation has left the modern subject emotionally blunted and alienated from the surrounding world that is increasingly experienced as shallow, mute and nonresponding (Rosa, 2017). He argues that we need to replace the logic of increase and acceleration with practices that make us perceptive to our surroundings and allow us to (re)connect with the world. The artisan's material-based labour is one example of how to do this. Along the same lines, some participants in *Data Mirror* articulate experiences of sensory openness and connectivity: "a mental state that enables a sensory encounter with the world" (submission text). This resonance is in part social but also material and affective: "It has been the loveliest experience, encountering lovely people and encountering needle, thread, materials and reflections along the way. This project has opened the door to a new world" (submission text). These testimonies reflect how collaborative craft projects like *Data Mirror* may enable new and meaningful connections to both histories and surroundings.

Conclusion

In this article, we have investigated how *Data Mirror*, like Trapholt's other projects, draw on, explore and revitalise textile craft as a cultural practice that is ambiguously situated between tradition/renewal and individuality/collectivity. We have analysed how *Data Mirror* combines a tribute to a traditional textile craft with untraditional dogmas and contemporary societal issues, and how its participatory, textile practice is simultaneously individual and collective. In our analysis, the creative textile craft practices stand out not as a quality of the isolated individual but as practices anchored in material and social relations. Through these relations, we argue, *Data Mirror* brings diachronic and synchronic cultural ambiguities of textile craft into play in productive ways.

Diachronically, Trapholt's craft projects are ambiguously placed between a cherished tradition and the creation of something new. If we look beyond the museum, the coding of textile crafts has in the last two decades increasingly shifted from a traditional, female, domestic and deco-

rative pursuit to a creative, critical and/or 'craftivist' practice, which makes political issues visible (Greer, 2014; Corbett, 2017; Bryan-Wilson, 2017). Trapholt's projects are neither intended to be nor experienced as activist or craftivist. But they tap into the inclusive and democratic aspects of these practices, when 'ordinary people' are invited to collaboratively co-create an artwork expressing their creativity, skills and interpretations of data or other societal issues. Trapholt's projects are both a celebration of tradition and an ambitious attempt at renewing what crafts can do.

Synchronically, Trapholt's collaborative craft practice is situated ambiguously between individuality and collectivity. By exploring textile-making in a collaborative, artistic format *Data Mirror* and Trapholt's other projects are part of the current interest in textile crafts' community-building affordances. But the framing of contributions based on individual data mirrors, which cues an introspective stitching practice of self-exploration, can also to some degree be said to position the practice within current individual and neoliberal uses of craft (Bryan-Wilson, 2013).

The above-mentioned ambiguities unsettle conventional dichotomies and uncover new potentials in and between these. In line with Rosa's point that resonance requires not sameness but difference and sometimes contradictions, engaging in these ambiguities may be a productive fuel for diachronic and synchronic (re)connections and resonances with the world. The participants may prefer either tradition or renewal in their embroideries, and either individuality or collectivity in the process but will necessarily relate to both in Trapholt's projects. Even if data extraction problems could have been addressed at a more societal and political level, connecting these problems with material and crafted self-presentations, and thereby claiming visibility for embroidery and female embroiderers, is a way of acknowledging other voices and perspectives – in between tradition and renewal, individuality and collectivity.

Birgit Eriksson, Professor in cultural theory and analysis at the Department of Aesthetics and Culture, Aarhus University. She researches participation in arts and culture, art and social communities, aesthetics and politics. Recent publications include "When Borders Matter: Crafting Borders in a Participatory Artistic Project at Trapholt Museum" (2024), "'How participatory are we really? The pitfalls and potentials of participatory research practices" (2023), "Bonding and bridging: Social cohesion in

collaborative cultural practices in shared local spaces" (2023). See also http://au.dk/ aekbe@hum.

Tina Louise Hove Sørensen, Assistant Professor at the Department of Scandinavian Studies and Experience Economy at Aarhus University, researches media, culture and aesthetics, focusing on affective and political potentials of creative and artistic practices. Recent publications include "Participation and affect intertwined: Linking participatory experiences and affective intensities in a collaborative craft-based art project" (2024) and "Ned af piedestalen: Dialogiske, feminine og kritiske versioner af den offentlige kunst og fælles kulturarv" (2024). See https://www.au.dk/aesttls@cc.au.dk.

SUMMARY

Ambiguous Stitches

Participatory Textile Making at Trapholt Museum

This article investigates how Trapholt Museum's collaborative craft-based practice, and more specifically the embroidery project *Data Mirror*, engages with, explores, and revitalises textile craft as an ambiguous cultural practice by navigating between tradition and innovation, and individual and collective creativity. First, we analyse how *Data Mirror* draws on and unsettles cultural positions of textile tradition and renewal by both paying tribute to a traditional textile craft and combining it with contemporary societal issues and untraditional dogmas. Second, we show how the participatory design unsettles conventional contradictions between individual and collective practice by harnessing textile-making's community-building affordances while at the same time allowing for individual expression.

Accordingly, we argue that *Data Mirror* composes and brings the diachronic and synchronic cultural ambiguities of textile craft into play in interesting and often productive ways. These ambiguities unsettle conventional dichotomies and uncover new potentials in and between these. The participants may prefer either tradition or renewal in their embroideries, and either individuality or collectivity in the process, but they will necessarily relate to both in Trapholt's projects. In line with Hartmut Rosa's point that resonance requires not sameness but difference and sometimes contradictions, we argue that textile ambiguities like the ones in Trapholt's projects can be a productive fuel for (re)connecting and resonating with the world.

NOTER

1   The article is part of the research project CraftWorks (2021-25), where, in collaboration with Trapholt, we investigate the creative, institutional and social potential of new forms of participation in art museums (see Eriksson and Sørensen, 2020; Eriksson and Sørensen, 2023; Eriksson and Sørensen, 2024; Sørensen and Eriksson, 2022; Sørensen and Eriksson, 2024).

2   One of the partners in the projects was Landsforeningen af Væresteder (LVS) – an organisation of national drop-in centres from which 136 users submitted embroideries. Our qualitative data include data from LVS-users. Unfortunately, the quantitative data from the survey (the 203 responses) does not include answers from LVS-users, because the drop-in centres changed Trapholt's survey questions and graduations slightly. This makes it impossible to compare the different data sets.

LITERATURE

Adamson, Glenn: *The Craft Reader*, Oxford, Berg, 2010.

Bryan-Wilson, Julia: "Eleven Propositions in Response to the Question: 'What Is Contemporary about Craft?'" in *The Journal of Modern Craft*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2013, pp. 7-10. DOI: 10.2752/174967813X13535106841485.

Bryan-Wilson, Julia: *Fray. Art and Textile Politics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Coles, Alex and Catharine Rossi (eds.): *Post-craft*, London; Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2022.

Corbett, Sarah: *How to be a Craftivist*, London, Unbound Publishing, 2017.

Eriksson, Birgit, Carsten Stage and Bjarki Valtýsson: "Introduction: cultures of participation" in *Cultures of Participation: Arts, Digital Media and Cultural Institutions*, Birgit Eriksson, Carsten Stage and Bjarki Valtýsson (eds.), London, Routledge, 2019, pp. 1-10.

Eriksson, Birgit and Tina Louise Hove Sørensen: *Grænseløse Sting – kreativitet, deltagelse og grænser i et broderet fællesværk på Trapholt*, Kolding, Trapholt, 2020.

Eriksson, Birgit and Tina Louise Hove Sørensen: "Data and Craft at the Collaborative Art Museum" in *Dataspejlet: Data og craft i fællesskabt kunst*, Nina Rise Schrøder and Karen Grøn (eds.), Kolding, Trapholt, 2023, pp. 181-194.

Eriksson, Birgit and Tina Louise Hove Sørensen: "When Borders Matter: Crafting Borders in a Participatory Artistic Project at Trapholt Museum" in *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2024, pp. 227-246.

Fariello, Anna and Owen, Paula: *Objects & Meaning*, Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2004.

Gali, André, ed.: *Crafting Exhibitions*, Oslo, Norwegian Crafts; Stuttgart, Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2015.

Gauntlett, David and Amy Twigger Holroyd: "On Making, Sustainability and the Importance of Small Steps: A Conversation" in *Conjunctions: Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-27.

Gibbs, Graham R.: *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, Los Angeles, Sage, 2007.

Greer, Betsy (ed.): *Craftivism: The Art of Craft and Activism*, Vancouver, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014.

Grøn, Karen: "Grænseløse sting" in *Grænseløse sting. Et kunstværk vi skaber i fælles-skab*, Kolding, Trapholt, 2020.

Grøn, Karen: "Forord" in *Things Matter: Kritiske kig på kunst i det offentlige rum*, Karen Grøn and Nina Rise Schrøder (eds.), Kolding, Kunstmuseet Trapholt, 2024, pp. 4-8.

Harrod, Tanya (ed.): *Craft*, London, Whitechapel Gallery, 2018.

Hemmings, Jessica: *The Textile Reader*, London, Bloomsbury, 2012.

Hung, Shu and Joseph Magliaro: *By Hand: The Use of Craft in Contemporary Art*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2007.

Ingold, Tim: *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, United Kingdom, Routledge, 2013.

Jefferies, Janis: "Loving Attention. An Outburst of Craft in Contemporary Art" in *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, Maria Elena Buszek (ed.), Durham, Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 222-240.

Kelty, Christopher M.: *The Participant. A Century of Participation in Four Stories*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Knott, Stephen: *Amateur Craft: History and Theory*, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Luckman, Susan and Nicola Thomas (eds.): *Craft Economies*, London; New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Mannay, Dawn: *Visual, Narrative and Creative Research Methods*, London; New York, Routledge, 2015.

Parker, Rozsika: *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, London, I.B.Tauris & Co., 2010 [1984].

Risatti, Howard: *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Robertson, Kirsty and Lisa Vinebaum: "Crafting community" in *TEXTILE*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2016, pp. 2-13.

Rosa, Hartmut: "Dynamic Stabilization, the Triple A. Approach to the Good Life, and the Resonance Conception" in *Questions de communication*, vol. 31, 2017, pp. 437-456.

Sennett, Richard: *The craftsman*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008.

Shales, Ezra: *The Shape of Craft*, London, Reaktion Books. 2017.

Shercliff, Emma and Amy Twigger Holroyd: "Making with others: working with textile craft groups as a means of research" in *Studies in Material Thinking* 14, paper 07, 2016.

Shercliff, Emma and Amy Twigger Holroyd: "Stitching Together: Participatory textile making as an emerging methodological approach to research" in *Journal of Arts and Communities*, vol. 10, no. 1-2, 2020, pp. 5-18.

Simon, Nina: *The Participatory Museum*, Santa Cruz, Museum 2.0, 2010.

Sorkin, Jenni: *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Strand, Eva Anderson and Mary Harlow: "Introduction" in *Traditional Textile Craft – an Intangible Cultural Heritage?*, Camilla Ebert, Mary Harlow, Eva Andersson Strand and Lena Bjerregaard (eds.), Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen, 2016.

Sørensen, Tina Louise Hove and Birgit Eriksson: "Ned af piedestalen: Dialogiske, feminine og kritiske versioner af den offentlige kunst og fælles kulturarv" in *Things Matter: Kritiske kig på kunst i det offentlige rum*, Karen Grøn and Nina Rise Schrøder (eds.) Kolding, Kunstmuseet Trapholt, 2024, pp. 12-39.

Sørensen, Tina Louise Hove and Birgit Eriksson: "Threads of participation: Crafting female agency in a collaborative art project in Denmark" in *Conjunctions*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1-16.

Tanggaard, Lene: "The sociomateriality of creativity in everyday life" in *Culture & Psychology*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2012, pp. 20-32.

WEBPAGES

Stitching Together. https://stitchingtogether.net (accessed 28 September 2023).

"Textiles at the Venice Biennial" at *Textile Forum Blog*, 2019, https://www.textile-forum-blog.org/2019/09/textiles-at-the-venice-biennial/ (accessed 30 September 2023).

"59th Venice Biennale 'The Milk of Dreams'" at *Textile Forum Blog*, 2022, https://www.textile-forum-blog.org/2022/05/59th-venice-biennale-the-milk-of-dreams/ (accessed 30 September 2023).