

Identity in craft

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Abstract: In contrast to efficiency, a bakery on the countryside in Norway is known for its slow pace of work. The slow pace allows the product, as well as the craftsperson, time in production and quality in relation to market. Therefore, the emphasis is on the importance of the aesthetic in craft, the building of identity as well as the association of tradition as part of the craft. Furthermore, allowing the time to understand both craft and tradition is what makes knowledge meaningful (Arendt, 1998/1958). Closely following craftsmen at a bakery in Norway, for two days, allowed the collection of observations and interviews. This paper is presented in narrative format. The study utilises support from Sennett (2009) and Arendt (1998/1958) in the analysis of the collected empirical data. The results regarding identity and enhancing vocational education in craft point towards the importance of concentration, judgement, an unhurried education process and a sociable master.

All photos in article by Agneta Knutas.

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Introduction

Late in the afternoon, my colleague and I arrived by car at a small village high in the Norwegian mountains. We were going to spend a couple nights observing the staff at an old-fashioned bakery. Knowing that we were going to stay up two nights in a row, we made sure to get plenty of rest and sleep before arriving at the bakery around midnight. At the bakery, we would be observing the “master”, Ole (pseudonym) in the production of bread, rolls, scones, and Danish pastries. In addition to the master, there was one apprentice and two young bakers who had just been awarded their craft certificates. We met Ole and the apprentice when we arrived at the bakery at midnight the first night.

According to Sennett (2006), craftsmanship sits uneasily in the institutions of flexible capitalism. The challenge for capitalism is that it does not understand the importance of doing something for its own sake. Institutions based on short-term transactions and quick fixes with numerous shifting tasks have no need to breed depth. Craftsmanship, in comparison, emphasizes objectification; judging both the right and the wrong, it invests the whole person in the object at hand, and this brings pride into the equation (Sennett, 2006). In this paper, from the standpoint of an apprenticeship, I discuss the baking craft as object, culture, and identity as connected to the education (in this craft). We start with the

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word “culture”, which is derived from *colere* – to cultivate, to dwell, to take care of, to tend, and to preserve. From this perspective, culture could be said to be a matter of spirit and mind (Arendt, 1968). Following this thought, one criterion, as I see it, tells us that culture (to cultivate, take care of, preserve) pertains to something with relative permanence. Certainly, something that lasts over a number of centuries can be regarded as a cultural object.

When it comes to identity, John Dewey (1908/1978), the acclaimed educational philosopher, reminds us that education has the responsibility to support the individual’s moral character for both the world and society. He argues that when confronted with moral problems, the individual is given the possibility of considering his/her habits, actions, and interests: “What shall the agent be? What sort of character shall he assume? On its face, the question is what he shall do, shall he act for this or that end?” (Dewey, 1908/1978, p. 194–195). According to Dewey (1908/1978), it can be argued that identity as selfhood and the shaping of character cover the question of *who I want to be* rather than what I am thought to be by others. To enhance the identity of the individual, education has a task in supporting and allowing young people space to take a stand in connection, as mentioned above, with the world and society. When it comes to space, since we are all part of a network of relations that was here before us, the individual’s identity and the culture’s configuration are the result of communication (Dewey, 1908/1978). Subsequently, *who I want to be* is about culture and communication, about the subject of world and society. In fact, the complexity in our time is also known to involve *recognition politics* as well as *the other* as part of what democratic societies are struggling with.² The question of individuality then becomes a matter of balancing between autonomy and fellowship. This brings us back to the moral questions as to *who I want to be* in relation to the world and a democratic society. According to Dewey (1916/1985) and Arendt (1998/1959), the relation between reproduction and changes in identity demands that the individual act. Arendt (1998/1958) explains disclosure of identity (selfhood) in the world as an initiative where the being of action shows who the person in question is. Action and language contribute to showing who we are – our uniqueness. Therefore, our idea of the beginning is to start something new on our own initiative. This, according to Arendt (1998/1958), is different from labour and work, which she claims are instrumental activities that serve as means for reaching certain goals. Action actualizes the human condition of freedom (the capacity of starting something new) and it provides us information on who somebody is. Therefore, action gives us the possibility of showing who we are, while speech provides us the opportunity to give answers to questions such as to show just how I am unique in relation to others (Arendt 1998/1958). In connecting this to *who I want to be* and that relationship to world and society, Benhabib (1996) suggests that autonomy and fellowship have become more complex. She suggests that *difference* supports a potential possibility for action and reconstruction of what is established, and therefore allows for diversity and acceptance of what is unknown and not yet spoken, in terms of both culture and sub-culture (Benhabib, 1996).

In retrospect, baking is a craft where the human being in action (as well as hand and spirit) is involved. Baking deals with consumer goods, it is the work of body and hand, as such, it is the responsibility of somebody (identity). The baked product must be consumed within a few days,

² The Nordic countries are prominent (social democratic) examples, having relatively tight and autonomous political solutions that include the entire population. In contrast, the (liberal) welfare regimes, such as the U.S.A., Great Britain, and Australia, are recognized as “assistance after the needs testing requirement” states (moderate economic support/social insurance). In addition to these countries, France, Austria, Italy, and Germany, have traditionally accepted a strong welfare state and maintain differences in status (amongst the population) where church and family are seen as key institutions. See G. Esping-Andersen’s *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 1990.

especially if the baker avoids using chemical additives in the production process. The bakery is the institution on one end of the scale and the customer is on the other end. Baking, as an object, even if it deals with consumer goods, has permanence; it has lasted throughout the centuries, and it is carried on by human memory. From a historical perspective, during the nineteenth century, culture became part of a social commodity, which could be circulated and cashed in as an exchange value for other values, both socially and individually. When culture became an exchange value, to some extent, it lost the capacity to arrest our attention and move us. This is because, as an exchange value that can be cashed in, culture tends to eliminate other values. One such value is the thread of tradition, since consumer goods have now moved from the hand of the individual into high technology mass production, flexible capitalism threatens to break the cultivation, tending, and care connected to action, spirit, and mind (Sennett, 2006; Arendt, 1968).

When it comes to the baker and the standpoint of action, these changes (high technology and flexible capitalism) have had a bearing on the craft of baking bread. The object of bread, as carried by human memory, to a large degree, has broken with the tradition over the last century. The craft has largely been technologized, and along with the exchange value aimed at increasing profit, the craft of baking bread, and the tradition of baking itself, has changed in character (Sennett, 2009). Even if crafts in general have always depended on tools in production, high-tech baked bread has taken over the tradition. Bread produced in assembly lines undermines the permanence of speech and action connected to body, hand and spirit, as well as human judgment (Sennett, 2009).

Nonetheless, as we have seen, even with the arrival of the new techniques in making mass-produced bread, the craftsperson of action remains involved in the object of bread. One possible reason for craftsmanship maintaining this involvement could be a matter of pride; as a reward for skill and commitment, the individual takes extensive pride in a skill that matures in the slowness of the craft. It is suggested that this serves as a source of satisfaction and supports Dewey's question *who I want to be*. Why so? Sennett (2009) argues that slow craft time enables the person to reflect and imagine, and this gives room for pride; *mature means long; one takes lasting ownership of the skill* (Sennett, 2009, p. 295).³ A much larger picture regarding craftsmanship draws on climate change concerns, specifically, the pollution created by industrial countries and global justice. This discussion led to yet another topic concerning the good society, as a cultural project, where people participate and engage in solving problems that they find troublesome. One such cultural project is the growing interest in locally produced (slow) food.⁴ In this case, the craft's attraction also refers to taste as judged by the customer, which in turn raises the question of *difference*, where autonomy and fellowship have become more complex (Weltzer, 2009; Benhabib, 1996).

Along the same vein of culture as an exchange value that can be cashed in, Carr (1999) argues that education and contemporary pedagogical theorizing is overtaken by a trend. We currently face a shift to conceptions of professional preparation, which gives us a skill construal of all aspects of teaching and learning. According to Carr, the problem with this approach is that, to a large degree, goal directed acts and activities are now understood as skills (Carr, 1999). As for the question raised earlier regarding identity and the educational responsibility to support *who I want to be* (involving moral character), we find that this question is being displaced. Carr finds that these changes are self undermining since speaking of all intentional human behaviour exclusively in terms of skills is to talk indifferently of, for example, teaching, management, caring, listening skills, learning skills, or even

³ Another word for skills is "*poiésis*", which is the act of making or producing something specified.

⁴ <http://www.slowfood.com>

being a skilled craftsman/woman (Carr, 1999). As for the Scandinavian countries, which since the 1990s also have transitioned into the use of goal directed acts (skills approach), Aasen (2003) argues that these changes are found in a new conservative accord that has influenced the educational field. Through a market-based choice and consumerist policy, education steered by goals is under pressure to provide a return on investment, efficiency, and quality control (testing) of goal directed activities (skills) (Aasen, 2003).

As for craftsmanship skills, Sennett (2009) discusses the problem and points out that the marked, consumerist, and competitive reward system of today's society (considered as an individual good) has a demoralising effect on human beings. In the consumer society of today, the question regarding *what quality consist of* in connection to being skilled as a craftsman/woman to a high degree subsides and in its place, we find quantity in production (Sennett, 2009).

Returning to Dewey (1908/1978), *who I want to be* is about culture and communication, about the subject of world and society. It can be concluded that, in our time, it also involves *recognition politics* as well as *the other* as part of what democratic societies are struggling with. This *who I want to be* question indicates that the cultivation of a democratic ethos additionally touches on the notion of citizens being capable of using their freedom to act. Noted challenges are that citizens are facing a neoliberal discourse with a culture that favours return on investment, quantity in production, as well as intentional human behaviour understood exclusively in terms of skills. With *a focus on culture and education*, the goal of this paper is to explore what challenges can be found in acquiring and acknowledging craftsmanship using *field research collected at a slow food bakery*.

Action, appearance and taste

Whether we are talking about utility objects, arts and crafts, consumer goods, or works of art, they all appear in the world carrying some manner of shape. Utility objects and arts and crafts all possess a degree of permanence and, as such, they are distinguished from consumer goods, such as bread. In terms of permanence, appearance, and tradition, they all have a relationship to action.⁵ As for action, events and words would hardly survive if our memory did not preserve them. The memory and fabrication skills both contribute to the weaving of stories and both these skills are important to the coming and going of generations. It is here that culture survives and resists the consumption of the life process of people, out-lives them, and develops into tradition. Another important point is that the things (i.e., knowing how to bake sourdough bread), which exist independently of utilitarian and functional references and whose *quality remains* (knowing how), can be considered art. The work of art, seen as knowing how, exists for the sole purpose of appearance and the proper criterion for judging this appearance is beauty (Arendt, 1968).

The interesting thing here is that to be aware of appearance, we must be free to establish a certain distance between the object, and ourselves and allow the work of art to come about – *as it appears to me*. Therefore, the love of beauty, with respect to our interaction with things of the world, brings about culture. Here, *cultura animi* (cultivation of the soul)⁶ says something about people being able to take

⁵ Action is initiation, the possibility of starting something new; it is what holds generations together through the weaving of stories. See Arendt, 1998/1958.

⁶ For Cicero, “*Cultura animi philosophia est*”, underlines the rational-volitional and moral specificity of human nature. This motto may have been the first attempt to mark the content of the notion “spiritual and moral culture”. The term “culture” gained a new sense and meaning, namely, the development of the human spirit through the formation of certain mental abilities, intellectual properties, and moral virtues (http://www.crvp.org/book/Series04/IVA-6/chapter_ix.htm).

care of things in the world. It is a matter of taste and sensitivity to beauty. This suggests that the baker (the person of action) who knows how to bake sourdough bread, and who by experience has created distance and works in the craft due to his/her love of beauty, is involved in a culturing of the mind based on taste and beauty. Furthermore, we are additionally told that the artist is the one who is occupied in his/her work with such things as function, utility, and fabrication. This work always involves means and ends. The final product determines and organizes everything that is to take part in the process. It is daunting when we start to generalize this thought, and consider that ends can be reached with certain means according to some fabrication procedures. Indeed, we might forget to think. Even worse is that action might be judged by the same standard of utility as valid for fabrication, specifically, with a predetermined end. This is of interest because failing to consider speech, action, thinking, and imagination threatens the cultural realm (in this case the cultivation of baking bread) and leads to the devaluation of things. If the mentality that brought things into being in the first place is permitted to prevail (culture of the mind, appearance, love of beauty), then we are left with nothing but utility. What follows is the loss of the things with intrinsic independent worth (to cultivate) and all that remains are the means and ends (Arendt, 1968).

Returning to art and the product with respect to how things are to find their place in the world, they (the things) need a public space where they can appear and be seen as fulfilling their own being (appearance) in a common world. Who then decides what is to be displayed? The conflict between the *artist* and the man/women of *action* is, as mentioned, mediated by the *cultura animi*, meaning a mind trained and cultivated to be concerned with appearance according to the criterion of beauty, and as mentioned above, the criterion of taste. Taste involves judgment,⁷ and as such, it is connected to aesthetics. A mind trained and cultivated to be concerned with appearance based on taste it involves reasoning and thinking in place of somebody else. This it is a kind of political activity – it is an enlarged mentality of being and thinking in a place where I am actually not.⁸ Regarding the realm of fabrication and display, taste as an activity of the *cultura animi* recognizes the truly beautiful; it introduces the personal factor when giving things human meaning. Taste contributes to addressing the beautiful in its own personal way, thereby contributing to culture and what comes into being in the form of tradition (Arendt, 1968).

The art of knowing how

Before exploring the art of knowing how, I want to elaborate briefly on the topic of society and work wherein we find names such as Weber (1905), Durkheim (1893), and Marx (1844). Weber was concerned with capitalism, both capital and ethical exchange values, and always with God in sight (Weber, 1978). Whereas earlier societies were based on sameness, which was considered to consist of mechanical solidarity, Durkheim was interested in the division of labour and argued that this division gives society a new form of organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984). Marx (1844) argues, among other, that work is a means to reach certain needs outside of work. However, he also maintains that work creates alienation, since the workers do not own the product that they create (Marx, 1973). Both Durkheim and Marx were interested in structural topics regarding society and work. In comparison, Sennett (2009) was occupied with postmodern topics, such as the individual's potential to influence their own life world in relationship to society. It could be argued that Sennett's (2009)

⁷ Judging here falls back upon that which we typically call common sense – we judge according to the fact that we are to share the world with others and so adjust ourselves to this fact. See Arendt, 1968.

⁸ Lisa Jane Disch uses the term “visiting” to explain how we can experience trying to see the world from a perspective unfamiliar to us. See Disch, 1994, p. 158 f.

craftsman/woman (in a consumer society) ends up as a victim since there are conflicts/splits in experience of time (values regarding skill), which threaten the potential of human beings to shape their character to a coherent narrative. In contrast, Bauman (1998) argues that the consumer in our consumption society, the flexibility on the labour market, and the restlessness regarding individuality actually fills a function in maintaining the individual and in the shaping of identity (Bauman, 1998).

As for the critique against Sennett, I still find him interesting on the topic of identity in craft, since at this point, he contributes with theories that connect Arendt's understanding of action, appearance, and taste with theories on the body, and conceptual and physical challenges in determining the art of knowing how. Sennett (2009) argues that to survive the art of knowing how,⁹ human action needs to carry cultivation forward. This refers to the trained hand and is connected to technique, such as expression. For human beings to say that *we grasp* something (conceptual or physical) must imply that we are reaching for it. For instance, the body is ready to hold something before it knows what the circumstances are. The body anticipates and acts in advance. It understands or grasps for sense, or something more known, such as "prehension". Prehension is physical, and refers to the coordination between body, eye, and hand, and signalling alertness and commitment. We can see this as the spirit of looking ahead (Sennett, 2009).

One example of prehension is when we create music where, in practice, we focus on momentary error, in which the errors, through experience, increase our confidence in being able to do things better (improving). This tells us that we open up for variation when we make something happen more than once (experience). We explore what is the same and what is different. In principal, we end up with a narrative where practising is integrated in the body involving the body, ear, eye, and hand in this work. Another important point is that through practising technique we gain confidence. This does not mean as a personal trait but rather the dialectic between the correct way and the willingness to experiment through error. Trial and error is important for determining *fit for purpose procedures* in reaching a sense of a practical whole. These procedures are in themselves an achievement, as they seek to eliminate anything that does not serve a predetermined end. The art of knowing how also involves considering and dwelling over wrong moves, and in arriving at the goal as a means of understanding/achieving the working procedures. We must also understand that these procedures are local, meaning that they occur in a setting, such as a workshop, where the spoken word is used to communicate. Here, it is possible to discuss back and forth and most often in a vocation; it is possible to receive feedback from a "master". Since the master as well as the apprentice has the capacity for recall, this is where the memory kicks in; hence, the weaving of stories can take place, as does the passing on of tradition to the next generation (Sennett, 2009; Arendt, 1968).

Another noteworthy point is that the development of hand skills requires concentration, which, in turn, gets the person emotionally and intellectually involved (Sennett, 2009).¹⁰ In addition to what they learn from repetition, the skill of physical concentration is based on how people learn to practise and repeat what they are actually doing. The coordination between hand and eye plays an important role in organizing the work and in the process of practising. Furthermore, since posture steadies the focus, the whole body is involved when it comes to posture. Another challenge with the learning process is understanding the breaking of habit. Meeting resistance makes you *become aware* when the body,

⁹ Art as knowing how a quality exists independently of utilitarian and functional references (Arendt, 1968).

¹⁰ Sennett (2009) argues that educators work the other way. In an attempt to develop their concentration skills, they try to interest children mentally and emotionally in a subject. Sennett maintains that the development of hand skills indicates that the ability to concentrate comes first and only when that is in place will the person become emotionally and intellectually involved. See Sennett, 2009, p. 172.

hand, and eye support the concentration and the reconstruction of experience. In looking back on the process, *imagination* comes into play. When the object is removed, we retain an image of the things we have seen and experienced. Therefore, in addition to allowing intuitive leaps in the reconstruction of knowledge, we can imagine how we could work things out by judging different approaches based on taste and beauty.¹¹

Sennett (2009) claims that becoming aware also means losing ourselves when the body comes into contact with/and becomes absorbed in the physical material *being as a thing*. This *being as a thing* is engaged in corporeal anticipation (prehension) attempting to stay one step ahead of the material when practising and repeating. This stage becomes a pleasure in itself as the eye, hand, and body become more attuned, and find their rhythm. Rhythm keeps the body alert and supports disciplining the hand as well as the eye, which is scanning and judging to establish tempo. Thus, when becoming absorbed, *being as a thing* is the rhythm that supports concentration (Sennett, 2009).

Methodology

Since it transmits meaning to our environment and it is related to our existence, language always says something about somebody. Indeed, we refer to the world and others through language. In the context of this paper, this means that I, as a participant at a bakery, see, listen, and talk with the staff who are situated in a world where thought and things meet. What the baker says about something contributes to a course of events expressed through a story. The meaning that is presented through the story addresses a particular audience (in this case the other) and contributes to a continued and open conversation (Kearney, 2004).

In the process, the story is open with several horizons of possible interpretations. It concerns the understanding of how we are a part of/or become a part of this process, and the reality that is being expressed. Then we, along with others, look into this reality. In interpreting the visit to the bakery, we were given the opportunity to gain an understanding of the world both behind and in front of the conversation. When interpreting, we attempt to combine epistemological interests (questions concerning knowledge) with the ontological understanding (questions concerning our being in the world) of how the world in which we find ourselves looks when we interpret it. In the possibilities that arise through the dialectic between conversation and the world, we have the opportunity to take our pre-understanding seriously. Theories and concepts have brought certain patterns to light. Regarding the bakery, one is the sense of repetition, the work, and the coordination of the body, eye, and hand. Communication creates a common world in the bakery – a world recognized by every-day/night routines and the techniques of prehension and experience support the finding of rhythm and the promotion of *cultura animi* – specifically, action cultivated to recognize the truly beautiful based on taste. The importance of persistence and concentration, which is anticipated will lead to becoming engrossed/absorbed, involves emotion and intellect to support both the fabrication of bread and the cultivation of tradition, and is additionally enhanced. Relations between humans consist of action, conflict, and agreement, which contribute to a world in constant change. This dialectic characterizes the identity that arises and to which people are assigned or allotted through stories. In hermeneutics, the narrative identity is not merely something that is maintained in the world in which we live. Storytelling also functions as a resource for the person who wants to maintain a critical distance and

¹¹ In Greek, the word “*poiein*” is the root word for making. According to Plato, whatever passes from not being into being is a “*poesis*” – a cause for wonder. Walter Benjamin used the word “aura” – bathed in its own light – to describe the wonder over the fact that a thing exists. See Sennett, 2009, p. 211–212.

change a given identity. Therefore, we are always participants and spectators in our own lives and identities (Uggla, 2002).

Data collection

My colleague and I visited a bakery, in Norway, which produces bread in accordance more with body and hand – slow procedures – than traditional assembly line atomized industrial production. This bakery bases its operations on the concept known as “slow baking”, which means baking bread in a way that enhances processes that allow the yeast, enzymes, flour, and the flavour of the bread to develop over a longer period. Curious as to what was actually involved in the craft of slow baking, we were on-site, following along with the bakers in the bakery for two nights. We carried on a conversation with the “master” and we observed him and his colleagues while they were working. Starting with the master in the production room, we observed the machine that kneaded the dough. After that, we went with him into the baking room and he worked and talked at the bakery table. From there, we followed along with him as he operated the ovens. He would talk about topics that were of a concern to him, such as why he thought slow baking was important and why the apprentice needed to concentrate, what it took to become a baker, and why it was important to be thorough in the work. We took notes as the master talked about the topics that concerned him; occasionally, we would follow up with questions of interest to us.¹² We also took pictures of the different phases in the production process.

Findings

The bakery

My colleague and I arrived in the afternoon, by car, at the village where the bakery is located. Knowing we were going to stay up for two consecutive nights, we made sure to get plenty of rest and sleep before arriving at the bakery around midnight. At the bakery, we knew we were going to observe Ole, the master, for two nights in the production of bread, rolls, scones, and Danish pastries. In addition to Ole, there was one apprentice and two young bakers, who had just earned their craft certificates, working with him. We met Ole and the apprentice when we arrived at midnight the first night. Although their shift went until around eight in the morning, in reality, they worked without break most of the hours up until they stopped for lunch. The second night, Ole, the apprentice, and one of the young bakers worked from midnight and again worked most of those hours before taking a lunch. Both nights, at around four in the morning, the third young baker would come in and start to prepare new batches of dough for the next night’s production. Ole was the first to arrive at the bakery at midnight and we arrived about the same time he did. The shop was connected to the main production room of the bakery, which held a long wide bakery table and two wood burning baking ovens. The first thing Ole did on entering the bakery was to open the doors of both wood burning ovens to let them cool off a little.¹³ After that, he went behind the counter in the shop and started brewing coffee. Then he changed and came back out in clean work clothes. By that time, the coffee was ready, the apprentice had arrived, and they were ready for work. Ole made himself a coffee latte

¹² For example, why he thought slow baking was more interesting than industrial baking (he had previously worked in the industrial production of bread); if he felt that baking was connected to aesthetics, and what he felt it took to become a baker in terms of managing slow baking.

¹³ Every afternoon, around five o’clock, the owner of the bakery would start firing the ovens, which would then burn all night. By morning, the ovens had reached high temperature.

in a large glass and politely asked us whether we also wanted one. We politely declined; since we were not used to staying awake through the night, we both stuck to black coffee.

After completing the procedures with the ovens, changing clothes, and making coffee, Ole walked over to the production room where the dough was made. This was a separate room from the bakery and it held two large machines for kneading dough. Batches of dough, which had been started the day before, rested in both machines. The baking room, where the apprentice had initiated his own tasks, was parallel to the room where Ole was producing the dough. Ole worked on dough (weighing and shaping) that had been in a yeasting process since the day before (about 17 hours). As things progressed, we would experience that, as a hallmark of their work, the apprentice and his colleague, the young baker, would be standing at the bakery table all night, repetitively tending to batches and batches of dough. While they did that, Ole worked on the batches of dough that had been waiting in the machines in the production room. From these batches, he weighed portions into smaller batches (around 9 kilos each), from which he produced batches of bread of various kinds to be worked on by the apprentice and the young baker. Ole was very thorough in preparing new batches and he used a recipe and a scale to measure everything.



After that task, Ole went into the bakery to help the young men at the bakery table; he worked parallel with the apprentice and the young baker. After that, he worked on the bread, which the bakers had previously prepared and was now in the yeasting process. The breads that had risen to the correct size were ready to be baked in the oven. Before baking, the different breads were cut into a variety of patterns and decorated with an assortment of flours, sugars, and creams.



During the time Ole worked with the apprentice at the baking table, he would take the opportunity to correct the handwork of the apprentice and he would make sure that the bread had a nice shape, the correct weight, and the right elasticity. The master and apprentice would also carry on a conversation about things they had in common and the master would draw parallels to life in general, for example, using the game of poker as a metaphor in educating the apprentice in the use of one's own judgment. As night turned into morning, Ole was completely occupied with operating the ovens and making sure that the breads were put into the oven in a particular order.



To get the right kind of crust, Ole made sure that the breads were dusted with water when they were first put in the oven. Then he moved the bread around in the oven during the baking process to get the right colour and texture. The apprentice continued working on the new batches of bread. As time passed, different kinds and shapes of bread were lined up.

The desire

According to Sennett (2009), an organization interested both in enhancing quality and in benefitting from it has to be well crafted in form and focused on achieving good tangible results. In this case, quality is more a matter of issue than advertisement. Being quality-driven indicates an obsession, not by force but by desire, and a belief invested in action to produce a concrete object – in this case, bread. The desire here entails action and the importance of quality regarding cultivation of tradition (what is carried forward by human interaction) as well as fabrication to satisfy means and ends.

On the one hand, this concerns repetition and finding the correct rhythm¹⁴ to get things precisely right. The energy used to create rhythm, which is created through prehension, must be balanced well against desire, taste, and beauty. This involves paying close attention, involving body, eye, and hand in all parts of the production, letting nothing slip by through carelessness or indifference. Since the baker prides him/herself in the art of knowing how, this is worn like a badge of distinction. Through a good balancing of desire and energy in finding the rhythm, play permeates the work.¹⁵ When it comes to play, the trying out, the imagination, and the experience of coming to know how, is what helps us to

¹⁴ The routines in a craft relieve stress as they provide a steady rhythm for the work (Sennett, 2009).

¹⁵ The German word "*Funktionslust*" means the pleasure of doing, of producing something where creativity comes about in the searching even more than in finding out what is to be found. As in play, the act is its own destination. Play is intrinsically satisfying if it is not conditioned on anything other than itself. See Nachmanovitch, 1990.

recognize a work of art.¹⁶ The desire and belief invested in an action so that it takes on quality is a way of subjecting the work to the idea of art (Sennett, 2009).¹⁷ The art of knowing how is a quality that for Ole involves *cultura animi*, specifically, cultivating the apprentice's attitude on the matter of taste and on what is beautiful:

You have to become one with the element (piece of dough) and this is an intuitive feeling, you have to be willing to become engrossed and absorbed, and let it get under your skin to learn, I believe in love and care when it comes to my relationship with baking.

As Sennett (2009) maintains, the development of hand skills requires concentration. Concentration, in turn, gets the person both emotionally and intellectually involved. Concentration is a matter of repetition, which the apprentice experiences night after night when weighing bread, shaping bread, and reshaping bread after it has rested. Then, involving rhythm, and prehension, in turn, enhances engrossment – the act of becoming absorbed, *being as a thing* then falls back upon the idea of supporting concentration. In practising between doing things right and cultivating knowing how, when doing things wrong, the apprentice meets resistance, which, in turn, supports concentration and the reconstruction of experience. For Ole, the aim is to develop “a spark that lights the fire”, since this, in turn, will support the apprentice in both finding new solutions and his own solutions. As Sennett (2009) explains, the apprentice will start developing different approaches using his/her own judgment. This applies to addressing appearance according to the criterion of beauty and taste, as well as to the means and ends in production, and this involves intuitive leaps in the reconstruction of knowledge (Sennett, 2009).



As for enhancing *cultura animi*, it is suggested that Ole is focused on cultivating object and action at this point. The cultivation concerns the object, the bread, and the passing of tradition to the next generation. It also concerns the artist with a mind trained to enhance appearance using his judgment based on taste to promote quality in action and the appearance of the beautiful. As such, it supports identifying with the craft and the question of *who I want to be*. Ole is additionally concerned with bread production from the standpoint of the fabricating artist. This refers to the means and ends, such

¹⁶ John Dewey: *Democracy and Education*, 1916/1985, Göteborg: Daidalos, p. 242.

¹⁷ The dialogue with material is a physical sensation, while the rhythm of routine draws on experience of play, how to socialize, and how to enhance cognitive development, receptiveness to rules, discipline, as well as creativeness, and experience (Sennett, 2009, p. 269).

as doing things in the right order, and getting the right amount of bread out of a batch. This is also a quality issue where Ole argues:

To secure quality you have to get the right amount of bread out of each batch, out of concern for the customer. If there is any bread missing out of a batch, at the end of the day, there will be customers who won't get the bread they have come here for.



Another important issue regarding the passing of tradition in organized work (in this case, a bakery) is that the person knowing how – in this case, known as the “master”, is sociable. Historically, craft guilds were organized into social groups in which the master had a duty to participate. It was a face-to-face organizational authority – a small community, which cemented sociability by fostering rituals within the community. With the master, as an expert, being sociable through his experience tended to be formal towards procedures; however, it was simultaneously open to oddity and particularity (Sennett, 2009). Therefore, the experienced master thinks in larger units referring towards both the past and the future, and using imagination regarding possibilities for what is not yet achieved, as Ole explains:

To accept that other people do things in a different way is to understand that others are different from me, they have other qualities and other ways of being. I try to act like the giraffe that has a long neck and a fantastic overview. I push apprentices to be concentrated hoping they will become engrossed and absorbed, at the same time, I keep track and follow up things right away so I can try to eliminate bad habits. I try to do this lovingly with the hope they will find the desire to become a baker. We are individuals working together and sometimes I must take more control and take a stand so that the team knows where the boundaries are.

Indeed, Ole focuses on becoming¹⁸, he supports the potential in each individual to become somebody and he supports the knowing how in terms of the object – baking. As such, he avoids concentrating relentlessly on any one problem, avoids total perfection, and he knows when to stop, thus avoiding giving to much negative input. Once more, the capacity of prehension comes into play – purpose and coherence are the qualities of the sociable master who enhances fabrication through speech and action, and fosters *cultura animi* with the purpose of carrying the tradition forward. The master's work is also a narrative that provides education in a *good standard of work*, which must be clear to the people

¹⁸ The well crafted institution responds to desire, this is also where you will find that loyalty matters (Sennett, 2009, p. 266).

involved. This narrative (effort) sparks everyone involved to work better (desire) to attain the goal and to be more honest to this goal – which involves means and ends, as well as art. As Ole claims, the appearance of the bread is an expression of aesthetics, since it is about what attracts the eye. What attracts the eye is, as mentioned above, a matter of taste and involves subjective judgment in terms of this pleases me and that displeases me. Taste and political opinion both share the characteristic of being persuasive. Indeed, whenever people judge things of the common world, they disclose things about themselves through the way in which they judge. At this point, it could be argued that culture and politics belong together. Neither knowledge nor truth is in question, but rather judgment and the decision as to what we want to enhance as being worth something – as opposed to nothing – in our common world (Arendt, 1968).



Discussion

Craft and education – the bigger picture

This section looks at the question of what challenges are involved in acknowledging and acquiring craftsmanship.

Here, it is suggested that the challenge in becoming within the craft for the apprentice/young baker is a question of moral character, identity, and selfhood. As shown above, the master points out that it takes commitment to “light the spark” that can get the individual engrossed in the desire to become. The bigger picture of the master’s challenge (bakery as institution) refers to the responsibility in fostering character and selfhood, which according to Dewey (1908/1978), also concerns society and democracy. Our public school system is an example of an institution that we recognize as educating youngsters in vocational education. As for vocational education, with the introduction of a more comprehensive upper secondary school system in Norway and Sweden (1990s), the intention of the reforms was to reduce the differences between the academic and vocational educational tracks. These reforms prolonged and substantially increased the academic content of all the vocational tracks (Hall, 2009). The Nordic Council of Ministers concludes (Report on Vocational Education and Training) that the high dropout rates and low throughput of students are major problems in all of the Nordic

countries.¹⁹ At present, only 60–80% of students across the Nordic countries achieve their qualifications (Nordiska ministerrådet, 2010). We can also see that public education in Scandinavia has been tested with the promotion of the “skills economy” in the governance changes introduced during the 1990s (Aasen, 2003).

As Carnoy (1999) points out, a new form of institutionalization and frames for education (governance according to result) have influenced and set conditions for educational practice and the work of schools (Carnoy, 1998). This discussion is part of a larger debate whether we live in a knowledge society, a knowledge economy, or an innovation economy (Webster, 2006). According to Aasen (2003), the Scandinavian countries are influenced by the new conservative accord. The ideal citizen is a purchaser, democracy is transformed into an economic concept with consumer choice, and education as a common good is replaced by a private good where students are looked upon as human capital. Through a market based choice and consumerist policy, education is under pressure to provide a return on investment, efficiency, and quality control (testing) (Aasen, 2003).

Taking into account that, to survive, the craftsman/craftswomen is always in a relationship to production, market, and economy, it has here been shown that craftsmanship is also about additional values (doing something well for its own sake). To a greater extent than in previous times, education in our time attempts to separate differences in ability. According to Sennett (2009) and Carr (1999), the preoccupation of schools with goal directed activities and testing for skills is excessively occupied with separating intelligent from less intelligent people. This approach undermines understanding the complexity of human behaviour and the educational systems favours facility at the expense of digging deep (Sennett, 2009; Carr, 1999). Although sorting students through testing might work on a structural level, as shown here, the challenge when it comes to craft and “becoming” is more complex. As for vocational education schools, they have a challenge in being framed as it is from society. This could be a restraint for pedagogy and didactics in finding real enough solutions within the school setting when educating in a craft. Nonetheless, it could also be regarded as an advantage, since this gives teachers and students time off from the market constraints (profit). Another point is that although vocational education in schools does not work with a certain craft object (e.g. bread) over long periods of time (enhancing being engrossed, digging deep), it runs the students through several crafts during their first school year (Norway). Moreover, vocational education/school also teaches mandatory subjects. In comparison, in vocational apprenticeship, the apprentices are there to concentrate on their tasks, to cooperate, and to contribute to making a product. Returning to the findings in this paper: what can we learn from our visit to the slow food bakery regarding identity and cultural challenges?

Identity and culture

As for the challenge of becoming and acknowledging in terms of identity and culture, the metaphor digging deeper describes what it takes. Obsession supports individuals in finding a rhythm for *being the thing*. The pedagogical and didactical advantage with slow baking is, as the word slow indicates, that there is time to cultivate obsession. In this case, obsession refers to quality as culture (in terms of object and the tradition of knowing how), as *cultura animi*, the cultivating of the mind (love and

¹⁹ Vocational Education and Training (VET). In Denmark, VET is organized separately from academic programmes. In Sweden, all upper secondary education, including VET, is organized in comprehensive schools. In Norway, there is a 2+2 model, where half of the education (two years) is taken as a student in school and the other half (two years) is taken as an apprentice in a workplace. Iceland has a model that resembles the Norwegian one, but with far fewer apprentices. Finland mainly has a school-based system for both VET and students preparing for higher education (Nordiska ministerrådet, 2010).

beauty), and as fabrication (means and ends). Obsession comes into play in terms of desire, and, as the master Ole hopes, it will “light a spark”. Regarding the educational aspect, another advantage with slow baking is that it supports the apprentice’s *becoming*. Something which (as this paper indicates), is a matter of repetition to support experience, rhythm to support quality regarding action and process, and apprehension and engrossment to support *cultura animi*. According to Lacan (1977), desire supports the enhancement of identity in conjunction with culture, and in this case, the pace, as well as the engaged master at the slow food bakery gives the apprentice hints in learning how to decide both bodily and symbolically how to take a stand (Lacan, 1977). When it comes to finding rhythm, desire, and engrossment, this is connected to play, and as Nachmanovitch (1990) points out, play is an attitude, a spirit with no rules (games have rules). As such, play contributes to freeing ourselves from restriction and expands our field of action. Play enables us to rearrange our capacities and our identity. Play is always a matter of context. It is not what we do, but how we do it, and for this reason, because the definitions are fluid, play cannot be defined (Nachmanovitch, 1990). Understanding the importance of play in learning a craft means understanding the importance of how practice at the slow food bakery contributes to experiencing and developing technique as well as spirit of mind, where the objectifying spirit contributes to pride (Sennett, 2006). As hitherto pointed out, and considering pedagogy and didactics, this refers both to the cultivating of the mind (*cultura animi*) and supporting the apprentice in finding out *who I want to be* as well as the artist, the man/woman of action who fabricates in meeting means and ends.

As the findings indicate, social conditions and the loving support from a master who works alongside the apprentice at the bakery enhances these matters. According to Sennett (2006), the sociable master supports the community in the making of something in common (Sennett, 2006). On the subject of the master’s actions, it is his memory and his weaving of stories that contribute to this, as does his fabrication skills. It is here that culture comes into the present in the form of tradition (knowing how) (Arendt, 1968). When it comes to education, it is suggested that when thinking in larger units refers both to the past and the future, the master at the bakery (using his imagination) contributes to fostering the next generation of democratic citizens. As for democracy, in line with Dewey (1908/1978), identity as selfhood and the shaping of character is here supported through practice, the *who I want to be* is enhanced when the bakers and apprentice are allowed space to take a stand, showing who they are through responsibility in production. It could be said that identity comes about through difference.

Sociable expertise addresses other people in their unfolding prospects just as the artisan explores material change; one’s skill of repair is exercised as a mentor; one’s guiding standards are transparent, that is comprehensible to non-experts [...] the sociable expert is less obsessed with vindicating himself or herself (Sennett, 2006, p. 251).

Another challenge in acknowledging becoming skilled in a craft (and education) is to understand the importance of concentration as it supports the individual in becoming emotionally and intellectually involved. With any luck, concentration can “light the spark”. Once “the spark” is there, obsession can follow, with a rhythm and an experience of *being the thing*. Overall, this demands repetition, which, in turn, demands a longer time to learn. Time also gives a person the opportunity to reflect and imagine, while being supported by the sociable master. This subsequently brings pride into the picture and, as mentioned, *mature means long; one takes lasting ownership of the skill* (Sennett, 2009, p. 295). As mentioned, the connection to past and future combining of a larger whole is a pedagogical and didactical advantage at a slow food bakery compared to a traditional vocational educational setting. Here, there is time to focus, and to work close alongside a master who is both demanding and, as in our case, supportive. In addition to creating learning situations in craft according to certain schedules,

the teachers in a traditional vocational educational school setting are also involved in a number of side chores and demands from the school system (Knutas, 2008). It is suggested that knowing how, which according to Arendt (1968) can be considered art and which exists for the sole purpose of appearance (judgment and beauty), is a reward for skill and commitment. It is additionally suggested that to pedagogically and didactically consider slow craft time is to enhance and contribute to opening for reflection, imagination, and judgment, which will/might manifest itself in craftsmanship as a sense of pride. As this paper indicates, the culture that slow craft enhances connects the pride in the art of knowing how (quality that remains, beauty) with tradition and this may come into sight when the craftsman/woman, as an artist and in action, meets the customer buying the consumer goods from the bakery.

Presentation of contributor

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²⁰ Mellan styrning och moral – berättelser om ett lärarlag

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