<a>Chapter 4 - Social Embedding, Artisanal Markets and Cultural Fields: Quality, Value and Marketing in the Cases of New Wave Custom Motorcycles and Boutique Guitar Pedals<a>

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We have witnessed an exponential growth in 'all things artisanal', of artisanal economies of small-scale making (Ocejo, 2017). According to a recent report from the UK-based *Crafts Council*, the total value of craft sales in the UK alone has grown from £883 million in 2006 to over £3 billion in 2019 (Crafts Council, 2020). According the Crafts Council (2020), 'the growth in the public's desire for authenticity, for experiences, for ethical and sustainable consumption have helped fuel an interest in making and in handmade objects' (Crafts Council, 2020; p. 5). In a similar vein, Ocejo (2017) has claimed that 'businesses in the artisan economy…are based on shared understandings of quality, authenticity and the importance of "localness". They thrive on cultural omnivirousness and the idea of connecting people with the products they buy and the people who connect them' (Ocejo, 2017: p. 20). At its heart, artisanship, reflecting the craft upon which it is based, can be understood as 'quality-driven work' (Sennett, 2009: p. 24). The marketing of artisanal goods routinely draws on such associations in its representational practices, and in fact, so productive have such associations become, that corporate manufacturers of mass produced goods have also been eager to 'wash' their products as embodying craft and artisanal qualities.

Artisanal markets face the challenge of establishing, consolidating, and growing themselves within a broader context of hegemonic, globalised neo-liberal capitalism (see Scrase, 2003). Against the manifest pathologies of neo-liberal capitalism, artisanal markets may make legitimate claims to providing a more sustainable, just, locally-emplaced, and creative economic model for supporting human flourishing, at least in some contexts (see Korn, 2013). Consumption of artisanal goods in turn may offer alternative relationships to consumption itself, and to the goods that are consumed (Crafts Council, 2020).

Understanding the nature, dynamics and prospects of artisanal markets is not only important intellectually, as these markets present significant challenges to our sociological and economic understanding of markets more generally, but is important to our considerations of what a progressive political-economic and social alternative to the toxicities of neo-liberal capitalism may look like. Artisanal markets offer an effective case study for sociological critiques of neo-classical economic models of the structure and dynamics of markets generally, of economic action within those markets, and of the nature and forms of marketing found therein.

Specifically, the paper asserts, and explores, the concept of embeddedness as a means to understanding the ways in which artisanal markets are socially enmeshed within, and co-produced by, cultural fields, and in ways that profoundly complicate the economic logic of these markets. Stressing a multi-modal understanding of embeddedness, the paper draws particularly heavily on the work of Jens Beckert (2020, 2017, 2007, 2003), understanding embeddedness as a solution to inherent 'problems of coordination' in markets. Rather than thinking of economic actors as 'rational actors' along the lines of neo-classical reductionism, we offer a more fully sociological account of economic actors as engaged in culturally-grounded interpretive practices within a context of inter-subjective meaning formation. Again drawing on the work of Beckert, the paper then goes on to explore the construction of quality as a defining feature of artisanal goods, and specifically the role that field-specific, inter-subjective, symbolic practices play in complicating the ways in which goods are ascribed with properties of 'quality'. Drawing on the ideas of Ravisi and Rhindova (2004) we then go on to explore how quality relates to questions of value. In markets of uncertainty, where the 'intrinsic quality' of the good may not always be readily determinable, and where quality itself is in some significant part, symbolically constructed, ideas of both quality and value emerge from complex, inter-subjective processes of meaning formation in fields-as-embedded markets.

The paper goes on to apply this framework to two selected 'non-typical' artisanal markets, new wave custom motorcycles and boutique guitar pedals, and specifically to two illustrative case studies (*Old Empire Motorcycles* and *Cog Effects*) to illuminate the context-specific dynamics of socially embedded artisanal markets, and to demonstrate how such embeddedness goes on to frame how quality and value become variably constructed and marketed. The paper concludes by arguing that only a substantive and sophisticated *sociological* model of social embeddedness is able to provide a platform for understanding how artisanal markets may function in their profound inter-weavings with cultural fields in the framing of quality and value.

<b>Understanding the Social Embedding of Markets<b>

Despite the 'fuzziness' (Hess, 2004) of embeddedness as a concept, undergoing its own 'great transformation' within the New Economic Sociology (Beckert, 2007), and notwithstanding important challenges to its very conceptual value (Beckert 2003; Krippner

2001), the concept of embeddedness has enjoyed centre stage within the New Economic Sociology, establishing something of a privileged position within this context (Krippner 2001).

Though Karl Polanyi himself made only very limited explicit reference to embeddedness in his groundbreaking *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi's insistence on the need to understand the ways in which economic structures, relations and exchanges are necessarily embedded in social institutions set the scene for the concept's foundational status within the New Economic Sociology (Beckert, 2007). But it was arguably Mark Granovetter's (1985) seminal paper that was to become the 'founding manifesto' of economic sociology (Beckert, 2007). With a particular regard for the role of social networks, Granovetter (2005) argued that economic exchange is structurally embedded in social networks, which in turn serve to shape economic activity through framing the flow of information, facilitating punishment and reward, and crucially serving as a basis for trust.

However, notwithstanding its influence, the limitations of this narrow structural reading of embeddedness have been highlighted by many (Varman and Costa, 2008; Podolny, 2001). Structural models of embeddedness advanced a rather abstracted understanding of how economic action was channelled through the 'pipes' (the connections) provided by social networks (Podolny, 2001). But in so doing, such models failed to appreciate the nature and role of the *social substance* that flowed through these pipes (Krippner, 2001; Podolny, 2001). The structural embeddedness thesis also largely failed to offer a sufficient challenge to the ways in which neo-classical economics understands market actors as pure rational actors (Varman and Costa, 2008; Krippner, 2001).

Reflecting these limitations, the embeddedness concept has developed in multiple directions in an effort to render it more effective and comprehensive, in its grasp of 'the social nature of economic processes' (Hess, 2004: p. 165). One of the most all-encompassing early taxonomies of embeddedness was provided by Zukin and DiMaggio (1990). They considered embeddedness to have political forms (associated with the situatedness of economic processes in a contestation for power involving economic and non-economic actors), cultural forms (concerned with the role played by collective understandings in framing economic action), cognitive forms (the impact of structured regularities of thinking on economic action) and structural forms (the role played by social networks). As a further example of such

typological efforts, Hess (2004) proposes a three category framework of societal (including the cultural, cognitive and political dimensions), network and territorial embeddedness.

Efforts to develop more holistic and comprehensive accounts of embeddedness seek to resist accounts of the market as exogenous, a-social, and defined entirely by the rational-instrumental pursuit of economic gain. They variably seek to illuminate the ways in which 'the social' may *constitute* markets (Krippner, 2001). As Fligstein and Dauter (2007) have insisted, sociological accounts of the market must be 'prepared to unpack the black boxes of exchange, competition, and production' (p. 113) and explore the dynamic roles also played by 'trust, friendship, power, and dependence' (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007: p. 113).
We argue that at its best, embeddedness invites ways of recognising the dialectic inter-penetration of the economic and the social, such that each may function to *constitute* important elements of the other.

Varman and Costa (2008) assert that where markets are socially embedded, producer and consumer behaviour typically transcends anonymous, atomised, gain-seeking instrumentalism. Within such markets, we generally witness more holistic forms of social action, driven by a normative order that includes moral, emotional and expressive dimensions (Varman and Costa, 2008). From the vantage point of the economic actor then, the cognitions that inform behaviour must be understood as complex, and social. Dequech (2003) points to the importance of the interconnections between the cognitive and the cultural in informing market participation and behaviour. Whilst some residual cognition might be thought of as beyond the cultural, much cognition is inherently cultural in nature. The beliefs and values that govern the terms of participation itself, the exercising of roles within the market, and the acquisition of the substantive cultural knowledge that makes participation in a marketised culture possible (including the capacity to read the cultural and interpersonal signs that are the basis of trust) are all products of cultural and cognitive embeddedness (Dequech, 2003). Finally, we would also assert, certainly in the context of emergent markets that lack equilibrium (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007), that embeddedness is best conceptualised as fluid, processual, and never entirely settled. In stressing the flux of embededdness, as always 'a work in progress', Ryan and Mulholland (2015) have proposed the value of *embedding* as an alternative conceptualisation. This chapter will deploy this idea of *embedding* where the processual, nuanced and contingent nature of embeddedness need to foregrounded.

Beckert (2003) argues that given their inherent social embeddedness, markets can only be understood with regard to the particularities of the meanings that flow within given communities of interpretive action, where 'judgments on the relevant parameters of the situation are based on generalized expectancies which are, at least in part, intersubjectively shared' (Beckert, 2003: p. 773). More fully, embeddedness exists to provide 'solutions' to three inherent 'coordination problems' of market exchange (Beckert, 2007); namely the problem of value, the problem of competition and the problem of cooperation, and in so doing providing markets with stability and order. In terms of the *problem of valuation*, 'the embeddedness of economic action is a necessary condition for classifying the material world in terms of the relative value of the products offered' (p. 13). The determination of value is dependent on cognitive-cultural process of commensuration, whereby actors assess the extent to which a particular good satisfies their needs both technically and socially (Beckert, 2007). The socially embedded dimensions of value-determination lie both in the communicative processes through which 'quality markers' are established, but also in the ways in which goods allow owners 'to be positioned and, conversely, to form social identities based on market choices' (Beckert, 2007; p. 12).

In respect of the *problem of competition,* producers are commonly driven to seek out 'imperfect' market conditions, markets where pure price competition is impeded in the interests of economic success (Beckert, 2007). This may be achieved amongst other things through network closure or product differentiation (Beckert, 2007). *Cooperation is a core problem* of market exchange because of the imperfect and unequal nature of market-related knowledge, and the ever-present risk of non-satisfaction. Where conditions of uncertainty and therefore risk prevail, trust becomes a principal resource alleviating the perception and reality of such risk. The facility for trust in market exchanges is made possible 'by cognitive scripts that are culturally anchored' (Beckert, 2007; p. 5). Flowing directly from a recognition of such multi-dimensional embeddedness, comes an appreciation of the necessarily variable and context specific nature of markets. As such, a market is a 'product of its own history and socioeconomic milieu' (Varman and Costa, 2008: p. 153), and we might then stress the value of understanding *embedding* as the process by which markets sustain connection with histories and milieus across place and over time.

<b>The Problem of Quality and its Valuation<b>

At the heart of artisanal markets is the matter of quality, and how quality is valued in exchange in conditions where the quality of goods may be uncertain for the consumer. Embeddedness provides solutions to the problem of valuing quality in conditions of uncertainty. According to Beckert (2020), whilst there are markets in which the quality and value of goods may be largely determinable by the 'intrinsic' character of the goods themselves, there are markets where quality and value are determined primarily symbolically, through culturally-grounded, and hence inter-subjective practices of valuation (Beckert, 2020, 2017). Whereas in the first case, quality can be objectively and technically verified (at least in principle), in the latter case ('markets from meaning') quality assessment is concerned predominantly in respect of the good's 'immaterial' character (Beckert, 2020). The valuation of quality in 'markets from meaning' is an ascriptive practice determined discursively and inter-subjectively, where those markets are best understood, in Bourdieusian terms, as meaning-attributing *fields* in which a plurality of actors compete and contest for position and influence (Beckert, 2020), just as they form contingent, periodic, and partial consensus. In many 'real-world' markets, including those that serve as our case studies, a complex interplay of quality measures prevail. In fact, such markets function as 'trading zones' in which competing notions of quality are accommodated, contested and navigated (Dahler-Larsen, 2019) and in a context in which different actors' valuations of quality operate within an unstable, relational and hierarchical order (Beckert, 2020). Hence, the quality and value of a good emerges as an outcome of 'endogenous preferences' emanating from the meso-level social order that is the cultural field-as-market.

In markets with a significant 'autonomy' from corporate mass production and consumption, such as in artisanal markets, there tends to be a meaningful level of homology between producer and consumer, reflecting their shared cultural embeddedness in the field-as-market and the dialectical relation between the two in shaping the regime of taste, quality and value. According to Beckert (2017), the 'capital endowment' of consumers in such markets, that is the basis of their capacity to understand, discern and enjoy the goods associated with that market, is a product of their occupation of a shared field-specific habitus. Field-specific cultural goods serve simultaneously to position producers and consumers through processes of distinction (Beckert, 2017) within a hierarchical order, just as they confirm belonging to that order.

The endogenous preferences characterising a cultural field-as-market are framed partly by the role of social and cultural institutions, that may perform a function of cultural arbitration, such as in contexts of goods being curated for inclusion in prestigious exhibitions, or success in competitions. The role of such institutions is to instil confidence, defined as 'the belief in the credibility of a narrative of the alleged quality of a product' (Beckert, 2020; p. 292), and to set 'how-to' rules for producers (Beckert, 2020).

Inter-subjectively constructed determinations of quality, within the context of fields as markets, however fragile, partial and temporary those constructions might be, provide sufficient amelioration of uncertainty in the market for consumers to feel enabled to make quality-based valuation judgements (Beckert, 2020). But the fact that such markets as fields are dynamic and pluralistic, and as such unstable, is precisely why the quality valuation of a good, or a producer, can never be established 'once and for all', offering both opportunity and risk in the light of shifting meanings within the field (Beckert, 2020). Producers face a perpetual challenge in deploying their capital successfully in sustaining or augmenting the value of their products (Beckert, 2017). In the context of artisanal markets, producers will consistently need to instil confidence amongst consumers regarding the quality of their goods. They may strive do this by stressing the dis-similarity of their goods from that which is mass produced, and confirming their goods' embodiment of current field-specific symbolic valuation criteria, including: their aesthetic quality; their 'authenticity', their use of high quality materials, their 'exclusiveness', and critically their embodiment of artisanal know-how and practices.

Key then are questions associated with how value is understood within the production and consumption of artisanal goods, and what differentiates them in value terms from their mass-produced counterparts. As the immaterial elements of the goods circulating in these embedded markets are central to their valorisation, we focus here on the idea of symbolic value. Many writers have sought to conceptualise value or symbolic capital (Porter, 1985; Slywotzky, 1996; Ulaga, 2003; Smith and Colgate, 2007). For our purposes, the work of Ravisi and Rindova (2004) chimes well with the creative production that we find amongst our artisanal producers. For Ravisi and Rindova (2004) symbolic value is understood as the immaterial stock and investments required to produce a good. Symbolic value creation requires three types of capital at the same time: firstly; intellectual or cultural capital, i.e. the firm's ability to understand and imbue the product with cultural meaning - aesthetic, artistic, educational,

technological; secondly social capital, i.e. the network of resources and partners in production, suppliers of parts, informational networks tied to the production of the goods, and thirdly; reputation capital - a symbolic capital associated with reputational prestige. This capital will typically be deployed in the marketing of the product or the self-representation of the artisanal producer within their networks of communication.

Ravisi and Rindova (2004) further deepen an understanding of symbolic value by situating it in relation to functional (or instrumental) value. Symbolic value relates to a cultural space, and a particular culture of knowledge and understanding. Symbolic value relates to a good's ability to generate meaning related to a consumers social identity, their status and the social networks and cultural environments that they inhabit. Functional value refers to the ability of a product to perform specific tasks in satisfying customer need, drawing on human, physical and technological capital to produce a good that fits the customer's value chain and instrumental needs (Ravisi and Rindova 2004). As such, functional value is created by resources internal to the physical production process itself.

In contrast to the reductionist, rationalistic, understandings of economic actors characteristic of neo-classical economics, Ravisi and Rindova's (2004) account of symbolic value points to how consumers and producers alike inhabit a world of ethics, and accordingly evaluative ideas about production processes (at times resisting massified or overly mechanised methods) and possess an elaborate capacity to understand a good symbolically. But their account of functional value also enables us to see how artisanal production may reconnect producers and consumers into a social relation that removes some of the fetishization of commodities, reinstating an understanding of the importance of the material quality of the product (as use value) in addition to its symbolic value, in determining a good's exchange value.

As both complexity and fluidity clearly characterise such 'fields-as-markets', we are better to think about the processual dimensions of social embedding against any fixed condition of embeddedness. At this point we will go on to explore the nuances of social embedding in application to two selected case studies.

<b>Our Project: Researching New Wave Custom Motorcycles and Boutique Guitar Pedals<b>

The data informing this paper were gathered as part of a 1-year project funded by the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK (*Being Authentic: Exploring Dynamics of Consumption and Production in the Vintage-Retro Market*); a project which served as the platform for the international conference, *Artisan! Crafting Alternative Economies, Making Alternative Lives* (10-11th Sept. 2018, UWE Bristol). Data collection was via semi-structured interviews with artisans (18 in the case of the hand-built motorcycles and 14 in the case of the boutique pedals) and key stakeholders, along with some observational work, and content analysis of related websites and magazines. The interviews took place both face-to-face, where viable, and by telephone or Skype where not. The duration of the interviews tended to be between 1 to 1.5 hours. Participants tended to be highly engaged, articulate and enthused in discussing their work. Interviews were recorded, anonymised where requested (rarely requested as the artisans often wanted their name and brand to be known), and coded, using an open thematic coding technique, via NVivo Pro.

<b>New Wave Custom Motorcycles<b>

The 'New Wave Custom' motorcycle scene is commonly credited as having its origins in the hand-crafted motorcycles produced in Go Takamine's workshop, *BratStyle*, in Tokyo, from the late 1990s. From this point and place, but drawing on multiple related developments, a globalised social network of artisanal builders and connoisseur aficionados quickly emerged, facilitated in large part by the WWW. New Wave Custom motorcycles tend to share in common the practice of making hand-crafted aesthetic and technical modifications to 'donor bikes', the latter typically dating from the 1970s-1990s; bikes which were often relatively unremarkable vehicles in their 'first lives'. The cultural objects produced via 'Brat Style' customisation took an aesthetic 'stand' against excess, flamboyance, designed obsolescence, relentless technical progress, and materialist gluttony, and embraced a certain 'trash aesthetic' (see Le Zotte, 2017), often valorising the aesthetic value of the patina of age and decay. This 'stand' took the form of a retro, even nostalgic, aesthetic, asserting the virtue of simplicity in form and function, facilitative of a return to a more authentic and unmediated relationship to a life less encumbered by the cluttering advancements of late-modernity. 'Brat-style' motorcycles were stripped of all 'unnecessary' components in pursuit of clean lines, under-statement, and a selective valorisation the 'ordinary'.

Since the late 1990s, the New Wave Custom scene has grown into an international phenomenon, evolving and diversifying in its forms, and ranging from the grass-roots creativities of the shed-crafter to the internationally-recognised accomplishments of 'celebrity' artisan builders producing high-value, two-wheeled 'works of art'. Key to understanding the hand-crafted motorcycle market then is its social embeddedness in a cultural field. The cultural field in question, closely related to other fields, displays certain characteristic orientations, including: a resurgent valuing of crafting and making; a selective sustainability ethic that stands opposed to a 'throw-away' society; a stylistic and consumed nostalgia; and a host of counter/sub-cultural scenes, including punk/hardcore music, surfing, skateboarding, BMX, and tattooing. Reflecting, and in part driving, the marketisation of the new wave custom bike scene, the field-as-market has been penetrated extensively by corporate interests, evidencing the ways in which capitalism is so readily able to digest and then capitalise on criticism (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). In this sense, we can conceptualise the New Wave Custom motorcycle phenomenon as a cultural field first, with an emergent habitus and valuation order, only subsequently evolving into market form.

<c>Alec Sharp, Old Empire Motorcycles (OEM)<c>

'What makes us happy is quality not quantity' – Alec Sharp

Alec was captivated as a child by the motorcycle road movie *Easy Rider*, and the influential United States TV series, *American Chopper*. Having had the opportunity to build some experience in a local motorcycle workshop after completing his education, whilst putting himself through welding and metal fabrication courses, Alec set up his own company (*OEM*) at the age of 23 and crafted his first custom bike; a Royal Enfield. It was at this time that the 'new wave custom' bike scene exploded into life in the United Kingdom, and *OEM* secured a presence for one of its bikes at the inaugural *Bike Shed* show in London in 2013, where the *Bike Shed* was to emerge as a key institutional medium through which the symbolic quality and value of bikes in the market were to be established, and the endogenous preferences of the field-as-market were to become formed (see Beckert, 2020). In this sense, *OEM* were structurally and culturally *embedding* in the emerging New Wave Custom motorcycle scene from its earliest years, and were in a position to 'sediment' (Beckert, 2020) an early reputation within the market through such institutionalised inclusion.

Alec feels structurally embedded in the new wave custom bike market, and the cultural field in which that market is itself embedded. Alec talks extensively about his strong and weak ties within a network of builders and cultural intermediaries. Beckert (2007) argues that embeddedness can best be understood as a solution to the fundamental problems of market exchange, including the problem of competition. Alec's account suggests that some of the more problematic features of competition between makers (such as copying or 'stealing' the artistic ideas of others) are ameliorated by a combination of the market's still small size, by the mutual accountability of builders, and by the significant social ties that connect them, including good friendships. Our data confirms the importance of social networks in facilitating trust between builders (see Fligstein and Dauter, 2007). Many commentators (Beckert, 2003, Varman and Costa, 2008, Krippner, 2001) have challenged the rational choice economism that frames the ways in which all market action is assumed to function within neo-classical economics. Theorists of structural embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997, 1996) have demonstrated the influence of social networks, and weak and strong ties in shaping market relations and exchanges. Reflecting Sennett's (2009) account of 'sociable expertise', Alec maintains an open attitude to sharing information, and to mutual learning through collaboration; 'if anyone emails me I give them as much information as I can to help them out'. Alec believes that a feature of the contemporary era is a greater openness to sharing and collaboration, suggesting a need to reconsider, through a fully sociological lens, the ways in which markets (at least some markets) work to complicate rational choice assumptions regarding market action (Fligstein and Dauter, 2007).

OEM's cultural embeddedness is manifest in the motorcycles they produce. The cultural field that is the new wave custom motorcycle scene functions as a symbolic order of valuation, amongst other things, and the motorcycles themselves sit centre-stage within that order. Cultural fields embed discursive, intersubjectively-constructed meanings governing the meaning and value of goods (Beckert, 2020, 2017; Ravisi and Rindova, 2004). *OEM's* motorcycles expertly navigate a path between reproducing primary elements of that sign order, but also seek to selectively and carefully challenge some of the boundaries of that order, producing distinction (Bourdieu, 2010). Those builders who successfully deploy this strategy succeed precisely because of their cultural embeddedness, and because of their capacity to build homologous relationships with consumers (Beckert, 2017). This relationship is the basis of producing goods rich in the signs that instil confidence amongst consumers that

the good is one of quality, and is one that will position builders with status vis-à-vis other actors within the field (Beckert, 2020; Dequech, 2003; Bourdieu, 2010).

Given that the cultural field in question is one defined by a certain connoisseur consumption, consumers must be 'confident' in builders 'narratives of quality' (Beckert, 2020). *OEM's* business strategy has been to walk a 'middle path' within the market, crafting bikes of distinction marked by high quality design and building, but informed by a pragmatism that promises a chance of economic viability. The key platform for this strategy has been to build a strong quality reputation in the 'grey area' (as Alec calls it) of the market, namely at what might be thought of as a market centre point, sitting between the twin poles constituted by 'top of the game' one-off motorcycles on the one hand, and high-volume product lines on the other. To this end, *OEM* committed to building a series of 10 unique motorcycles, but each sharing a common aesthetic DNA, and some common hand-crafted components. In this way *OEM* successfully acquired the quality distinction marker of the bespoke, whilst also taking the opportunity for some carefully considered cost-saving standardisation. The success of Alec's careful judgement in this difficult balance act rests entirely on his cultural and cognitive embeddedness within the field-as-market.

OEM have also recognised the value that can be derived from producing a 'top-of-the-game' 'halo bike' (a highly-expensive impact motorcycle displaying the full technical skill and aesthetic qualities of the builder) in bringing international attention, and enhancing a reputation for quality. Such 'halo bike' strategies appear to evidence the way in which measures of quality may rank goods in relation to a 'golden top' of excellence, where excellence is marked by being 'superior' (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). But whilst *OEM*'s own 'halo bike' (*The Typhoon* - http://oldempiremotorcycles.com/tag/oem-typhoon/) secured much international regard, attention does not last long in the field-as-market. Whist enjoying their day in the sun, it became clear that a business model grounded on building 'halo bikes' was the exclusive preserve of those at the 'top of the game', or with external sources of income. Whilst building 'absolutely amazing motorcycles' that are 'a work of art' remains a preferred option, diversification is a practical necessity. To this end *OEM* also undertake more modest customisations of contemporary mass-produced motorcycles, producing 'bolt-on parts' for sale to consumers who wish to modify their own machines, and sell merchandise. Beckert (2020, 2017) points to the role of inter-subjectively constructed ascriptions of quality and value within 'markets from meaning'. In artisanal markets such as this, maintaining one's

position within a symbolic hierarchy of quality remains a difficult and precarious balancing act.

Underpinning consumer confidence in the quality of cultural goods in artisanal markets is the quality of the artisanal labour invested in the good, or at least the presence of confidence-enhancing narratives about that labour quality (Beckert, 2020). In being largely self-taught, Alec sees himself as typical of artisan building in the new wave custom bike market. Speaking of other young builders he knows, 'I don't think a single one has any formal qualifications as such, not that there is a qualification for building bikes.' In the new wave custom bike market, artisans are in the most part self-trained, and via the democratising medium of a WWW rich in informational resources. According to Alec, many builders use You Tube 'on a regular basis to effectively teach ourselves how to do these particular things'. Interestingly, rather than such DIY routes to know-how serving to discredit the artisanal credentials of new wave custom bike builders, this DIY logic appears to resonate with the grass-roots, counter-cultural qualities of the cultural field, lending the builders reputational position and credibility. Within the context of specific cultural fields, acquiring know-how through such means may be framed as evidencing provenance within the field, as manifesting an organic embeddedness, in turn furnishing the artisan with a confidence-inspiring narrative to accompany the marketing of their goods.

As a niche artisanal market comprised of small producers, marketing budgets are inevitably minimal, and marketing responsibilities fall on the artisans themselves. At the same time, given the highly symbolic nature of these motorcycles' value, the quality threshold for 'marketing' content is necessarily high. *OEM* hosts a website (http://oldempiremotorcycles.com/) comprised of exceptionally high quality photographic images, and video content, accompanied by evocative narrative and an evidencing of reputation and regard within the field. The site is rich in field-specific symbolic references, evidencing their cultural embeddedness. *OEM* also appreciate the importance of social media platforms to building and maintaining reputation and position in the market, reflecting the growing importance of social media for selling in craft economies (Yair, 2012). *OEM* also host highly followed Instagram, Facebook and Twitter sites. The key function of such marketing platforms is the opportunity they provide for a builder to construct a convincing narrative of quality in which the consumer can have 'confidence' (Beckert, 2020). On-line platforms provide powerful multi-modal opportunities for artisanal producers to

communicate marketised meanings rich in virtual contextualisation, where the quality of the good is brought to life in its symbolic and functional use within narrative-rich video and photographic content (see Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). But of particular importance within the field-as-market is the role played by cultural intermediaries, or brokers, whose *de facto* gate-keeping does much to govern builders' inclusion and position. Of particular note here are the curated websites *Bike EXIF* and *Pipeburn*, and the multi-modal *Bike Shed*, whose annual curated exhibition in London is a pivot-point of the field's annual calendar. Features in influential field-specific magazines such as *Built: Handcrafted Motorcycles* are also important. Presence at festivals and rallies, participation in build competitions, collaborations with celebrities, corporate entities, motorcycle manufacturers, cool brands associated with linked cultural fields, and inclusion in films, documentaries and TV programmes comprise *OEM's* broad marketing portfolio. The ongoing work needed to ensure sustained position and profile within the field-as-market, and to continue to attract an ever-moving virtual spotlight on international field attention, is more evidence of the value of processual-focus of the concept of embedding over embeddedness.

<b>Boutique Guitar Pedals<b>

The term 'Boutique Guitar pedals' describes the making, design, sound development and manufacture of guitar effects pedals that are not mass produced in factories using cheap components. The history of the term, like the history of guitar effects pedals generally, is contested, but there are some clear dates, times and companies that demarcate the boutique sector. The first guitar effects pedals were manufactured in the 1930s, as integral to, and part of, the guitar itself, by companies such as Rickenbacker. By the late 1940's early 1950s the first stand-alone pedals were being produced. From the 1960s to the present day, major companies such as Boss, MXR and Electro-Harmonix dominated the pedal making scene, but as the 1990s developed into the 2000s, small DIY/boutique pedal companies began to emerge. Tom Hughes writing in his book '*The Analogue Guide to Vintage Effects'* refers to 'Boutique' as meaning 'high-quality, handmade effects built in small-scale production runs without the use of automation or mass-production techniques, thus allowing for greater attention to detail and custom-tuning of individual units' (Hughes, 2004: p. 20). In terms of quality, these pedals are usually built using higher grade components. The electronics are sturdier, and often placed differently to mainstream company pedals. The price of such pedals

is typically higher, though not always as the economic and business modelling operates in a more ‘ad hoc’ way. As Hughes says,

> part of the popularity of boutique may lie in its grassroots, back-to-basics appeal. There is a sense that you have *a product of fine craftsmanship* made by a real person who’s into what he’s doing, not some faceless corporation cranking them out by the thousands, always with an eye on the bottom line. We want to believe that the boutique pedal we’ve just purchased is a *labour of love*, made with the *finest ingredients*. It’s the difference between fresh-baked, homemade Tollhouse cookies and Chips Ahoy (2004, p:22).

For makers and musicians then, the ‘Boutique’ tag signifies ‘craftsmanship’ or ‘artisanal crafting’ as a marker of quality, uniqueness and the longevity of the product. It also signifies a certain differentiation from the logic and production values of the mass market. For Boutique pedal makers, their craft is a labour of love, that relies on the components used but is measured in its quality and value by the pedal’s functionality of sound and sound optionality. The Boutique pedal industry is a socially embedded market that relies on connoisseur consumers with a good deal of technical and sound knowledge grounded in music production.

<c>Tom George of Cog Effects<c>

Tom George of the Boutique pedal company ‘Cog Effects’ follows a similar pattern to many boutique pedal manufacturers in a socially embedded market. Tom is embedded in the field of music making, performance and production having played in bands, gigged regularly, toured and recorded. As a bass player he found that there were few pedals aimed at the bass playing community. He began making pedals for himself around 2009/10, including crafting multiple effects pedals into a single unit. He modified a popular pedal – the Big Muff by Electro-harmonix. As others heard the pedal in use he was asked to make pedals for them. Reassessing his life in 2013 following the birth of his children, he started to take pedal building more seriously, developing new ideas for pedals and worked towards becoming a full-time pedal maker. Work that commenced as a hobby gradually developed into a career over time. Tom progressively reduced his paid employment and became a full-time pedal builder in 2016.

As a networked actor he was well embedded in his social and cultural field, comprised not only of pedal builders but also musical producers, consumers and distributers. His understanding was built upon years of music listening, playing in bands and working within the industry. He talks about strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) to certain sectors of the industry, or field. His ties to other pedal makers are strong, but his links now to record labels and touring are weak. Disembedding may occur as readily as embedding. Pedal makers themselves have a strong appreciation of certain sounds, and ways of making those sounds for musicians live and in the recording studio. This appreciation also requires a substantive knowledge, and understanding of, the recorded and live music scene, and particular artists. Tom had a deep appreciation of Soundgarden, Rage Against the Machine, Pearl Jam and Alice In Chains, the studios they used, the effects the guitarists used, and the way they set up live. Such cultural knowledge conforms to the idea of cultural capital within Ravisi and Rindova's (2004) theory of symbolic capital. Consumers and other producers are able to read the cultural, aesthetic, technological, artistic meanings and knowledge embedded and realised in Tom's products. This feeds into his reputational status, and his capacity to build homologous and connected relationships with consumers (Beckert, 2017). The quality, design, reliability, sound, and cultural knowledge imbued in Tom's pedals enables the consumer-musician to position themselves as a knowledgeable actor in the field. Cog Effects have the symbolic value that chimes with this socially embedded market.

As stated earlier, Beckert (2007) argues that embeddedness can be understood as a solution to the fundamental problems of market exchange, including the problem of competition. Tom values the ways in which the community of pedal builders are willing to discuss their work on a number of online forums and Facebook groups, where innovation was rarely copied directly but rather championed by other builders. Ideas were shared and competition muted by the embedded network of actors, and their common love for their craft. As Varman and Costa (2008) suggest, there are moral, emotional and expressive dimensions to the normative order of these types of socially embedded markets. Tom's account of the culture of this builder network illustrates this idea; 'there's a really good community of pedal builders both here and kind of worldwide…there's a really good community spirit. When people have a good idea, other people, other pedal builders, tend to support and celebrate that fact'.
In respect of how quality is evaluated, we can see that the artisanal pedal and custom motorcycle markets function as complex market hybrids, as 'trading zones' (Dahler-Larsen,

2019) where both ‘intrinsic’ material properties and inter-subjective symbolic meanings simultaneously frame the valuation of quality (see Beckert, 2020), in a process of complex inter-connectivity. Tom and many builders like him seem to operate in both arenas. His approach, in terms of the ‘intrinsic’ quality of his pedals, is based on using the best quality components for the price that he charges. He uses components that are the ‘highest end that I can reasonably use for the price I charge’. In terms of design, he constructs pedals in ways that the mass manufactured pedals don’t. In his popular T-16 pedal, the jack inputs are separately mounted rather than mounted on the PCB (Printed Circuit Board), which makes the pedal much less likely to break. Mass manufactured pedals connect everything to the PCB and slot them into the pedal housing.

But the ‘market as meaning’ (Beckert, 2020) dimensions of the Boutique pedal market are also evidenced through the role consumers play in their connoisseurship via by the testimonials that they leave for the pedal makers, and the ways in which the pedals are discussed on forums, chatrooms, Facebook sites and online magazines (and to a lesser degree within some of the printed press that still survives in the digital era). Quality of sound, and the ways a pedal can be utilised, feature highly in the testimonial feedback for pedal makers, and this reinforces their markers of quality and functionality within the interpretive and discursive arena of the embedded market. Testimonials and discussions from musicians and consumers appear on the Cog Effects site itself (https://www.cogeffects.co.uk/), and on websites and forums such as *ibassmag.com, notreble.com* and *scotssbasslessons.com*. These then are the spaces of interpretive ascription, and the confirmation of the quality of the product.

Boutique pedal makers are excellent examples of the ways in which artisanal craft is embedded in, and co-produced by, cultural fields and markets. The products they make are valued for their quality and technological or artisanal knowledge, and the symbolic value order endogenous to the field-as-market. It is also clear that the economic model followed does not fit one of traditional rational-actor economics, as the builders invest much un-costed time in the pursuit of quality, largely driven by their love of their craft. It is also clear that value is measured through a mix of use, and exchange-value, but with a high level of symbolic value interwoven into the computation (Ravisi and Rindova, 2004). As Tom says when a customer gets in touch they know they are talking to the guy that ‘will design and build their pedal for them’ and that the knowledge, technical know-how, design aesthetics,

and importantly for effects pedals, the knowledge of sound, is key to Tom's products and persona. Without a model of social embeddedness it would not be possible to understand the strength and character of these forms of connectedness.

<b>Conclusion<b>

Artisanal markets may offer a contribution to building progressive alternatives to the pathologies of globalised neo-liberal capitalism, but such markets remain only partially understood. A multi-modal and sociologically-rich conceptualisation of such markets' social embeddedness provides valuable resources for illuminating how such markets function. We have argued that (at least some) artisanal markets are deeply embedded in cultural fields, such that we might conceptualise these as cultural fields-as-markets. By understanding the particularities of such cultural fields as markets it becomes possible to discern some of the means by which artisans produce quality and value, and establish successful homologous relations with the connoisseur consumers that typically occupy such fields-as-markets.

Through the use of two 'non-typical' case studies we have shown how some artisanal markets function as 'trading zones', where the quality and value of products are constructed through a complex interplay of use, exchange and symbolic values. Quality and value are invariably constructed discursively and inter-subjectively within such fields-as-markets, where an artisans' social embedding largely governs their capacity to navigate (commonly) complex and shifting taste orders, and in doing so both evidencing and (re)establishing their reputational position. Given the reality of artisanal markets as 'trading zones' for the deliberation of quality and value, artisanal products are also bearers of use values associated with certain 'intrinsic qualities' deriving from the materiality of the object itself. A boutique guitar pedal unable to produce the dynamic sound qualities associated with its specified purpose is less likely to become the object of a connoisseur consumer's valuation. As artisans' navigation of the shifting contours of a field's unstable attributions of quality and value are never complete, never a done deal, the process-focussed conceptualisation of *embedding* may offer greater value as an explanatory tool, over the more static concept of embeddedness.

Our artisan's social embedding takes multiple forms and plays multiple roles. It frames the process by which they have acquired, and successfully communicated, their know-how, as

developed not through formal training but through a DIY pathway validated through their organic relationship to the field, and the conventions of quality circulating within that field. It is reflected in their position within social networks of co-artisans and cultural arbiters that show patterns of cooperation as much as they do competition. It is also expressed in the manner in which the artisans successfully navigate the complex and precarious trade-offs inherently associated with the need to balance the pursuit of quality, with economic realism, but in a manner that enhances rather than jeopardises their reputational position. Our artisans have an acute understanding of the quality, functionality, design and use value of their goods. This approach to value and quality is symbiotic with the connoisseur consumer's assessment of these types of product, illustrating the different approach to quality and value that these embedded markets create.

Finally, it is manifested in the ways in which, for our artisans, marketing is necessarily effected through immersion in the institutional and cultural landscape of the field. The material and symbolic quality and value of the products, as these are articulated through the substantive content of our artisans' marketing, 'convince' their target connoisseur consumers only because of the homology of their relations with those consumers. The mediums through which our artisans' marketing takes place (social media platforms, discussion fora, review sites, selection for participation in curated exhibitions etc) are all characterised by the integration of such mediums within the cultural field itself.

Future research might usefully explore the similarities and variabilities found across different and particular artisanal markets to enrich our understanding of the multiple ways in which social embedding may function.

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