

CHAPTER 9

Branding, Selfbranding, Making: The Neototalitarian Relation Between Spectacle and Prosumers in the Age of Cognitive Capitalism

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1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the process of consumers' cognitive exploitation in which they simultaneously stand at the centre of the universe peopled by global brands and the victim of a sort of identity burglary. This process already became visible during the 1990s with a revolutionary approach of companies to communication and advertising (Klein, 2000), but it became even more powerful recently with the emergence of a new digital economy based on the centrality of UGC (User Generated Content). The first idea of a total exploitation of the consumer comes from the world of global brands that implemented a process of fetishization of the consumer's experiential field (Barile 2009), which was somehow prepared during the 1990s, many years before the development of the so-called Web 2.0. We could state that the positive idea of a productive consumer has

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been first theorized by Toffler (1979), then adopted by the global corporations during the 1990s as a rhetorical principle, finally implemented as a concrete integrated environment (digital+real) with the innovation of social media. It was only after that moment that the Web 2.0 became the tool to exploit the user's emotional capital (Illouz 2007) as well as other abstract categories such as the 'social' (Lovink 2011) or the amateur's creativity (Keen 2007). Adopting the same democratic rhetoric of the global brands in the 1990s, the digital economy has come to be able to make a full cognitive exploitation of the users. If in the 'industrial world the social brain is modelled by standardized acts of physical production...cognitive capitalism is all about the standardization of cognitive processes, and mental activity cannot be detached or diverted by the flow of information' (Berardi 2013, 11). However, the emphasis on the standard is not the fundamental aspect of this 'object' because, as we will investigate, cognitive capitalism is even more interested in the qualitative dimension.

Debord's notions of spectacle, very powerful and inspiring for the reasons here discussed, covers only a part of the further capitalistic development and must be integrated with other approaches that have been elaborated during his period or even older, but are somehow more useful to describe the contemporary transformation of cognitive capitalism. Considering that cognitive capitalism can just be considered as 'one of a number that have tried to politically inflect the colourless notion of the knowledge or information economy' (Terranova 2013, 46), this paper will discuss three fundamental models to understand the evolution of this system and the relation between imaginary, power and consumption.

The first model is the timeliness of Debord's notion of spectacle (1970) and its relationship with commodities and fetishism. The second model is Bateson's double bind (1972) that can be adopted to analyse the hegemony of global brands since the moment of its peak of world visibility during the 1990s. The third one is Foucault's 'ritual of confession' (1978) that will be more useful to examine the selfbranding strategies at the time of Web 2.0. Between these three models there are similarities and differences. For example, all of them are based on a sort of metonymic relation between the totality and the parts. According to Debord, the radical evolution of the capitalistic society moves from the centrality of the goods to the centrality of the spectacle which can be considered as a new and more impactful 'general equivalent', so that 'in the spectacle the totality of the commodity world is visible in one piece' (49). Bateson's double bind reflects on the controversial relation between the child and the mother, that we can apply to the general relation between the consumer and the brand where the brand is basically a total world of meaning surrounding completely the consumer experience. The third model is also based on a metonymic configuration since Foucault's confession is a device in which 'the dominant agency does not reside within the constraint of the person who speaks but rather within the one who listens and says nothing; neither does it reside within the one who knows and answers but within the one who questions and is not supposed to know' (Foucault 1978, 61–62). Notwithstanding the similarities of their structures,

these three models are able to describe different ages of cognitive capitalism, especially the evolution from a totalitarian role of consumption to a neototalitarian dimension (Barile 2012). With the expression of 'neototalitarian' I consider that the form of spectacle moves from a totally strategic orientation (as in Debord's reflection) through a more tactical and mimetic approach in which the spectacle pretends to be more authentic than real life. This is why the Debordian powerful intuition of the spectacle as the real essence of power and consumption must be developed through other theoretical models that are able to manage the cognitive and emotional dimensions of consumption.

If in the case of the global brands the cognitive exploitation of the prosumer is still more rhetorical and played on the side of the communication campaigns, in the case of selfbranding, analysed as confession, the exploitation is extended, to the entire cycle of social life so that, as Debord probably forecasted, there is no distinction anymore between image and reality, or a better description today, between digital and real. In fact, selfbranding is not just a technique of self-presentation via social media, but it is a more complex strategy based on the transformation of emotions as a competitive resource in the global market of identities (Barile 2012). Therefore, what follows after the aforementioned third stage, based on the contemporary productive and participative emancipation of the makers (Gauntlett 2011), could be considered as a new form of over-exploitation in which production is externalized into the consumption. The cognitive hegemony of global brands at this stage could be empowered by a hyper-sophisticated storytelling.

The contemporary world of communication is ruled by two main trends. On the one hand, global brands will shift their scope to the direction of real content providers, producing even more elaborated examples of storytelling (McStay 2016). On the other hand, the overlap and integration between the virtual and the real in the so-called end of digital dualism (Jurgenson 2011), made possible by the Internet of Things (IOT) and other DIY devices such as Arduino, could create a new alliance between physical objects and their symbolic meanings. If those two processes are generally considered as positive and creative, their intersection could make possible a world of ultra-exploitation in which consumers, persuaded to play the role of active prosumers (Toffler 1979; Jenkins 2006), would be the physical producer of the commodities, while also cognitively completing every narration connecting the products and the brands.

2. One Step Back: The Actuality of Debord's Definitions of Spectacle, Consumption and Commodities

The actuality of Debord's theoretical framework is somewhat controversial. In fact, although his vision of the structure of the spectacle society is defined during the era of the broadcasting media system, or in other words a strategic conception of the spectacle. At the same time his Situationist intuitions, which

has influenced some specific subcultures such as the punk experience as Malcom McLaren used to admit, can be considered one of the first examples of a tactic movement against the strategic structure of the market. The critique of the spectacle is regaining its relevance in media studies today because of two main reasons: a) the fact that several theoretical models elaborated to describe the mass media and mass society are today applied to the new world of social media, b) the fact that the so-called Critical Internet Studies are re-launching the neo-Marxist approaches to understand the so-called Web 2.0 (Fuchs 2009).

In his analysis of the role of consumption, Debord re-discusses the Marxian notion of fetishism of commodities, considering them as the main example of the domination of society through spectacle. In fact, commodities are not just material and 'perceptible' things but mostly immaterial and 'imperceptible.' The cognitization of commodities starts with Marx's idea of the obliteration of social inequality but becomes much more evident in Debord's triumph of the spectacle, in which the power of the imaginary replaces and dominates the simple physical features of the goods. Of course, Debord was not always right about the relationships between spectacle, consumption and consumer alienation. In fact, he argued that 'the loss of quality so obvious at every level of the language of the spectacle...the commodity form is characterized exclusively by self-equivalence it is exclusively quantitative in nature: the quantitative is what it develops, and it can only develop within the quantitative' (Thesis 38). This statement sounds like an old representation of a simple dystopian world in which the logic of quantity sacrifices the quality. Nevertheless, in the end this is not what happened to our societies. Our contemporary world attests to a resurrection of quality everywhere: not just in the emergence of new consumptions related to a more pleasant lifestyle, but also in the logic of qualitative data analysis that is able to penetrate the intimate sphere of the consumer and to extract the main qualitative information about his/her preferences, tastes, feelings etc. At the same time, Debord made a convincing argument about the direction of the process of globalization in the consideration that the 'commodity's original standard [...] is a standard that it has been able to live up to by turning the whole planet into a single world market' (Thesis 39). However, even in this case his criticism was still projected against the 'standard' that used to be the main ghost of the mass society. Although we still have standards in the cultural or technological consumptions, like the TV formats or the operative systems and so on, they are modular and most of the time they can interact with the ideographic characteristics of the consumers.

In Thesis 42 Debord pointed out how the 'spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life', which is a sort of bright intuition of what the global capital has created between the 1980s and 1990s under the sustenance of neoliberal ideology. The colonization of everyday life by commodities, and by global brands later, has been detected by other social scientists like Baudrillard (1970) who talked about 'profusion', a process that I consider as the clear representation of the

complete overlap between consumption, brands, and everyday life during the 1980s. For Debord, this process was already working with ‘the advent of the so called second industrial revolution’ (Thesis 42), so that ‘alienated consumption is added to alienated production as an inescapable duty of the masses’. Notwithstanding he was talking about a totally different economic regime that was still organized around the physical production, the symbolic power of the commodities was already able to extend itself to the total amount of the life cycle, so that the ‘entirety of labour sold is transformed overall into the total commodity’ (Thesis 42).

More actual and contemporary than the notion of ‘spectacle domination’, that changed meaning with the techno-cultural change, is Debord’s definition of ‘détournement’. According to one of the tips he gives to his followers in the famous guidelines he wrote with G. J. Wolman, and more recently recalled by Mario Perniola: ‘the main difference between the artistic and the situationist détournement is that the arriving point of the first one is still an artwork with his peculiar artistic value, while the arrival point of the second one is [...] the negation of the art’ (Perniola 1998, 22). Détournement is not just a tactic against the bourgeois system of art, it is also the attempt to create a link between the intellectual and the people through consumer culture. This is why Debord and Wolman (1956) argue that ‘the distortions introduced in the détourned elements must be as simplified as possible, since the main impact of a détournement is directly related to the conscious or semiconscious recollection of the original contexts of the elements’. The aim of finding a simply, conscious or semiconscious understandable meaning for the common people, is the theoretical trap that makes possible the further re-exploitation of those products from the system of art or from the system of consumption or in a word, from the spectacle society. This is very similar to what happened during the 1970s with the punk *Great Rock’n’Roll Swindle* or during the 1990s with the culture jamming that was completely counter-exploited by the world of global brands. As we will see in the next section, the destiny of the détournement is to be re-configured and re-used by the spectacle, so that its aim is a sort of epic fight against windmills.

3. The Second Model Explaining Cognitive Consumption: The Double Bind

The Debordian co-presence of both a strategic and tactical notion of spectacle is something that we find, more powerful and controversial, when observing the culture of 1990s. On the one side this period is characterized at the same by the complete triumph of globalization, driven by the cognitive power of global brands. On the other side, we see the affirmation of a global tactical and creative form of protest against that power (Klein 2000). If the no global movements adopted a sort of neo-situationist style of communication, fighting

against global brands, as in the case of ad busters and the movement of culture jamming (Dery 1993), the response of global brands was the shift from a strategic level of their campaigns to a more tactical, intercepting and imitating the grassroots creativity. The increasing dependence of the consumer on the brand, and the impossibility to solve the cognitive contradiction between the strategic and tactical approach, can be explained with Gregory Bateson's 'double bind' model (Bateson 1972; Barile 2009).

The communication model of the double bind, which is established between a source (one or more) that sends messages and a recipient in the role of the victim, produces identity issues in a subject that has difficulty recognizing the same boundaries of his ego. It is not simply about the paradoxical dimensions of the ego but has its own particular existential significance. For this reason, the double bind model can be applied to a wide range of social situations and behaviours: from religion, art, politics, to the consumption sphere. In consumption, this happens clearly in the increasingly cognitive relation that the consumer has with brands. They vaguely promise to all a world of happiness, which potentially accommodates any individual, but at the same time they dramatically select their own target through barriers that are not only economic. The trial of escaping from the global brands double bind produced several movements struggling for the rights of consumers during the 1990s. The galaxy of consumerism includes a wide array of organizations, associations, NGOs and informal groups operating to defend more universal values.

Paradoxically at the exact moment when the citizen loses his political weight in favour of the new identity called 'consumer', the protection of his rights becomes an issue of paramount importance. The famous campaigns against Monsanto, McDonald's, Nike and so on express this renewed civil awareness acting on a global scale and give pressure from below thanks to the new aggregative capacity and grassroots organisation offered by the web. Monsanto was the more conspiratorial and the more dangerous, because of its capillary penetration into everyday life with the bio-chemical innovation. McDonald's became the icon of the degeneration of the system as in the London Green Peace campaign. At the same time, other brands like Nike responded to this movement by changing communication strategies. The turning point of the new communication is undoubtedly the formidable campaign 'Obey your Thirst' by Sprite (Klein 2000) trying to beat the myths of a hedonistic consumption and reaffirm the centrality of the person instead of the bombastic promises of seductive lifestyle: 'the image is zero, thirst is everything'. Obey your thirst'.

The zeroing of the brand symbolic capital serves to create a vacuum that must be filled by the consumer that is invited to return to the real sources of his experience, to the practical needs of his 'real' life, to affirm his personality in the new communication space offered by the brand. Only one problem: the authenticity of a hyper-gassed and sweet soft drink in no way can satisfy the need of thirst.

The brand goes down from the pedestal from which it usually pontificates, to entertain a friendship or familiar relationship with the consumer, but, at the same time, the consumer feels this movement as a double interference in his life. In fact, the brand tries to give up its position of advantage only in the rhetoric of communication, as also happened in another major initiative of the same period that operates on the same issue but with very different purposes. I'm referring to Diesel's ad campaign named 'Brand zero', which is able to regenerate the brand's symbolic capital through a neo-situationist approach coming from counterculture phenomena such as culture jamming.

Once again, the concept of 'zeroing' realizes a breaking position in which the brand itself calls into question its authority to the whole system in which it is inscribed. The 1997 campaign is based on the representation of big billboards designed in a retro style, showing the glittering promises of the old American dream while in the background there are real contemporary ruins (from the suburbs of New York to the Palestinian banned places). The same technique, which will return in the 2000 campaign with the pseudo country rock star called Johanna Zychowicz and in 2001 with Africa (Barile 2009), is clearly borrowed from the language of subverting and Adbusters and perfectly imitated by the brand. While the double bind proposed a different model to describe the interdependence between brands and consumers, the neo-situationism movements like culture jamming are looking for an exit strategy from the cognitive power of global brands. This phenomenon recalls somehow the subversive Situationist practices against the spectacle, as in the case of my friend Joey Skaggs, considered as the father of the movement (Dery 1993).

During the punk era, the entire subculture was prepared for a total exploitation operated mostly by the music industry. Not just Julian Temple's *Great Rock'N'Roll Swindle* (1980), but also Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* (1978) with his iconic scene of the 'impresario' Borgia Ginz: the human personification of the conspiracy against youth, mixing the acronyms of power (BBC, CBS, CIA, KGB) with the cannibalization of punk authenticity. The spectacular exploitation of the subcultural capital (styles, symbols, values etc.) generates a counter-reaction that is already prepared to be over exploited by the system. Something similar happened with the co-opting of Afro-American's style made by the fashion brands in the 1980s (Klein 2000), even if that subculture was less confrontational than punk. During the 1990s we are witness to a paradoxical process of a total exploitation of new generation's values and practices by global brands just when there are no longer well-defined subcultures. In place of the subcultures there is a world-wide multitude, fragmented in strong local intensities but unable to interact programmatically with other counter-powers (Negri & Hardt 2001). At the same time, this new critical approach has already been re-functionalized into the strategic communication of the global system (from cool hunting to guerrilla marketing) that re-uses the same principle to produce innovation that can be sold to the new consumers.

4. The Third Model Explaining the Evolution of Cognitive Consumption: The Ritual of Confession

Many years before the development of a post-Fordist reflection on cognitive capitalism, Debord already defined some crucial aspect of this process, especially when he argued that the capitalistic accumulation has reached a state of 'abundance' so that a surplus of 'collaboration' of the workers becomes necessary. From the centrality of the workers in the process of economical exploitation, the system creates the centrality of consumption so that 'once work is over, they (the workers) are treated like grown-ups, with a great show of solicitude and politeness, in their new role as consumers' (Thesis 43). The idea of a centrality of consumption and at the same time of a 'polite' total exploitation of the consumer, was already there, ready to be elaborated in the future development of the system. At the same time, the idea of a spectacular subjectivity must be integrated with a model that complete the process of the alienation through spectacle with an active production of the authenticity and of the reality of the self (Foucault 1978).

During the 1990s the symbolic interdependence between business and the alternative public contexts increased. Notwithstanding, there are some apparent conflicts between them. I use the term 'interdependence' not to represent a reconciliation between the giants of multinational capitalism and antagonistic cultures but just to underline how they share the same needs to innovate communication as exemplified in the so-called non-conventional marketing (tribal, guerrilla, experiential etc.). The double bind is based on a paradox: on the one hand, it helps to rethink the relationship between brands and consumers in a more democratic way, putting brands on the same levels of consumers to free them from the previous subordination. On the other hand, the brand, by adopting a more subtly empathic style, strengthens its relationship with consumers while also exploiting their world of experience as in the so-called 'experiential marketing' (Schmitt 1999). This process became even stronger when the Web 2.0 gave to the global brands the possibility of a permanent presence in the consumer's life as well as the possibility of completely customized and tactical communication. The innovation of the Web 2.0 implemented the new relation between brands and consumers that was formalized during the 1990s in a concrete digital environment.

If during the 1990s the power of web marketing was very limited, the shift to the new web determined the possibility for redesigning the brand strategies from the bottom. The combinations between the social media innovation and the brand strategies tried to implement what the rhetorical language of advertising described during the 1990s as an active or productive consumer. This combination can be defined 'branding 2.0' and it aims to create user generated brands from the examples of User Generated Content. In other words, the new strategies tried to 'open', customize and redesign innovation as a grass root process but also to add an experiential and emotional value to their activities

(Maringer 2008). For this reason, to understand some aspects of the so-called branding 2.0 we should integrate the model of 'double bind' with Foucault's model of the ritual of confession. In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Michel Foucault examines the analytical report, the 'disposed operative part of the confession' (58). Originally considered as a tool to extract the truth from the sinner, it turned into a mechanism of production of truth and 'authentication' of the individual, transforming the western man into a 'beast for confession'. The process started a long time ago since when '...the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth. We have singularly become a confessing society' (59). From the initial pedagogical purpose by the religious institution, confession turns into a more general cultural process revealing the truth of pleasure.

After Foucault, the emancipation and secularization of the ritual of confession becomes the main trait of the post-television spectacle and becomes a narcissistic mirror when the media-consumption system enhances the values of leisure and hedonism (Illouz 2007). Illouz emphasizes how the origin of the confessional society must be detected in a pre-mediatic age. In fact, she describes four main periods in which the idea of a therapeutic use of the communication is defined: the first one is the early Fordistic development, the second one is time of the counter-cultural movements such as Feminism and Ecology; the third one is the age of the confessional TV talk shows; the fourth one is the age of web dating and more generally of social networks. In other words, the emotional ontology is the idea that emotions can be detached from the subject for control and clarification. Such emotional ontology has made intimate relationships commensurate, that is, susceptible to depersonalization, or likely to be emptied of their particularity and to be evaluated according to abstract criteria. This in turn suggests that relationships have been transformed into cognitive objects that can be compared with each other and are susceptible to cost-benefit analysis (Illouz 2007, 36).

This process is not just limited to the ancient perspective of a full commodification of an intimacy turned into an external commodity and regulated by the logic of exchange. It is also about the primacy of the quality over the quantity, of what is still not completely available on the market. This is why, very perceptively Lovink (2011) quotes Illouz to introduce the idea of selfbranding. Because it is not just about a strategy to promote people's image, but also to give them a sense of depth or to produce an effect of a third dimension that in the past was not required by the system (instead of the classic bidimensional men in the mass society).

From the twilight of the broadcasting era to the rising of a new media ecosystem re-organized around the Web 2.0 (Barile 2012), confession turns into a technology interacting with the deep emotional world of the user, that in the meanwhile belongs to the prosumer (Jenkins 2006). The contemporary issues about Big Data and privacy (boyd & Crawford 2012) are today the field of a new battle between the needs of a prosumer's self-promotions through the selfbranding

strategies (Lovink 2011), and the quali-qualitative exploitation of their life through the data analytics. Going back to Debord's reflection on the process of automation we can figure out how today the recommendation algorithms are not just a tool used by the system to orient the user's choice but also a complex device that is able to automatize the user's taste (Barile & Sugiyama 2015).

Even though Illouz's notion of 'emotional ontology' (2006) already blurs the borders between the world of things and the immaterial world, her perspective is still too much animated by a tension that tries to preserve the fundamental distinctions between reality and virtuality. The word 'ontology' applied to the domain of emotion means basically a process of reification that turns emotion into a new currency, or a commodity able to be exchanged and circulated in the communicational circuits. What is missing in this perspective is the older and as well fundamental role of things that were fetishized a long time before the advent of digital communication. The world of things, even the one produced by industrialization, was already the place of an emotional investment by the consumers (Baudrillard 1968; Douglas & Isherwood 1979). It is not just the Marxian or Debordian fetishism of commodities, the former referring to the disguise of an unequal relation of power and the latter referring to the imaginary behind the products, but is also a double investment (Barile 2009) that generates a circular movement: from the consumer through the commodities to the imaginary (emotional investment on things), from the imaginary through things to the consumer (implementations of roles, situations, experiences). The new social media domains and their interaction with the physical world has implemented something similar, as in Illouz's notion of emotional ontology, but it is even more visible in the recent extension of the libertarian ideology of the Internet to the world of things, trying to build a new vision that is concerned with the makers' movement.

5. The Integration Between Bit and Atoms: From the Automation of Everything to the Destiny of Makers

Debord's discourses on the centrality and the 'polite' exploitation of the consumer by the system are also related with another fundamental innovation that from that period arrives to our times, generating a huge revolution in the production and consumption policies. This is the 'automation, which is at once the most advanced sector of modern industry and the epitome of its logic, confronts the world of the commodity with a contradiction that it must somehow resolve: the same technical infrastructure that is capable of abolishing labour must at the same time preserve labour as a commodity and indeed as the sole generator of commodities' (Thesis 45). With this reflection Debord closes the circle of the total exploitation of producers/consumers, and at the same time, enlightens the mythical possibility of a society liberated from heavy work, as in the dream of few post-industrial theorists. Many of those topics are regenerated

by the contemporary debate on the so-called fourth industrial revolution, including the process of automating many aspects of our everyday life and the so-called movement of makers.

Today robotic functions are increasingly relevant to our everyday life. Although the notion of social robots tends to trigger the idea of autonomous machines such as humanoid and zoomorphic robots, it can be extended to include information and communication devices. The implications of the deepest penetration of mobile ICTs in everyday life through the proliferation of technologies as well as the cogent effect of software and new applications controlled by algorithms demonstrates how mobile ICTs such as smart phones have the power to shape, and furthermore, to 'automate' our emotions and taste (Barile and Sugiyama 2015). If in Debord's conception there was still a separation between the automation as a physical process and the cognitive dimension of the spectacle, the automation today of every process (even creative and emotional) is the axial principle of the contemporary spectacle. Notwithstanding, there is still a sort of dialectic between a strategic vision going tactic (the algorithms penetrating our everyday life) and the reversed movement of a tactic becoming strategic (Arduino, makers, open design, co-creation etc.).

For a couple of years, the theme of 'making' has inspired public debate around the collective idea of a radical transformation of contemporary capitalism. The speculative transformation may be capable of changing the unfair global production landscape and bringing about a new system in which auto-production and free exchange of ideas and artefacts finally triumph. This approach, which comes in a moment when the informational economy and diffused knowledge are taking over, suggests a return to a more 'concrete' and practical approach to our actions and to reality in general. The main protagonist of this era is a new kind of artisan not just ousted by machine, like in Debord's prediction, but freer to express his 'embodied knowledge' through digital innovation. This is how the 'computer-assisted design might serve as an emblem of a large challenge faced by modern society: how to think like craftsmen in making good use of technology' (Sennett 2009, 44).

'Making' in this context can be understood as an object, an aim, a way of solving a problem, a virtue or a practical endeavour, or a tangible and measurable result. The term here calls for a strict interpretation, tied to practicality, although without the severe tone that the same may assume when pronounced under the circumstances of any regime trying to justify its absolutism with 'facts'. The innovations we are seeing originate from a new global sensibility, capable of magnifying the creative contribution of new technologies and means of communication, rather than simply focusing on their public reception. In this context we can place machines, such as 3D printers, and pieces of hardware, such as Arduino, that allow a facilitated, artisanal approach to complex themes like manufacturing and robotics. This appears to be the third revolution of capitalism. David Gauntlett, one of the main scholars of the Makers movement defines 'making' as the ability to tie connections.

Making is connecting because you need to connect things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something new; making is connecting because acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people; and making is connecting because through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments (Gauntlett 2011).

The changing paradigm we face undermines many basic pillars of modern culture, industrial society and the way in which we conceive of politics. The Cartesian approach once considered standard for many disciplines, implying a distinction between rational analysis and practical creation, is now subverted by the 'learning-by-doing' concept, key to the Makers movement. The physical creation of highly innovative objects is even revolutionizing the way we learn: Gauntlett writes about a practice that evolves from 'sit comfortably and listen' to 'make and build'. The former is the result of traditional educational systems, generalist media and related policies; it implies a disjunction between learning, practical experimentation and the production of artefacts. The latter initiates a new era where knowledge is built and transferred through participation, shared experiences and active involvement of different communities.

The Makers movement is being popularized thanks to technological achievements that seriously undermine the contraposition between a digital and a physical world towards the final overcoming of the 'digital dualism' concept (Jurgenson 2011). For this reason, another key player in this landscape is the Web 2.0 which, as Gauntlett (2011) tells us, cannot be untied from the practice of the Makers movement since, in some ways, the former has been a reference for the latter.

The combination of rapid manufacturing technologies and control systems is deeply changing the notion of production, distribution, consumption, creativity, sharing, automation, and so on. It appears to be shaping a neo-artisanal world, where new technologies may lead us to the most advanced frontiers of customization and reach a new shape of capitalism.

In the very moment in which an object is created, a series of intimate connections are tied between the product and the creator so that his or her emotional capital (Illouz 2007) somehow lives in the artifact. The new craftsmanship involved in the participatory environment of FabLabs improves sharing of this capital and thus emotional connection between people, objects and their environment. The passion that drives participants is the same that guides the objects' realization; these factors help us to see in Makers the most advanced manifestation of the core capital of the 2.0 universe: *amateurs* (Keen 2007). Amateurship is the emerging value of our age and is key to understanding a new form of *cognitive delocalization*, which is taking over the *geopolitical delocalization* we have experienced during the last decades. The new capitalism does not delocalize geographically, exploiting different working standards throughout

the world, but rather shifts the role of the producer to the consumers, taking advantage of the productive vein shining in the eyes of the new craftsman: the same vein which, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, fostered the creation of tons of digital contents.

In the discussion of motivations in chapters 3 and 4, we saw that people often spend time creating things because they want to feel alive in the world, as *participants* rather than viewers, and to be active and recognized within a community of interesting people. It is common that they wish to make their existence, their interests and their personality more visible in the contexts that are significant to them, and they want this to be *noticed*. The process of making is enjoyed for its own sake, of course: there is pleasure in seeing a project from start to finish, and the process provides space for thought and reflection, and helps to cultivate a sense of the self as an active, creative agent. But there is also a desire to connect and communicate with others, and – especially online – to be an active participant in dialogues and communities (Gauntlett 2013).

The opposition between the ‘viewer’ – protagonist of the old spectacle society – and the ‘maker’ as the protagonist of a new participative and dis-alienated society, sounds too enthusiastic. Unfortunately, some of the connections tied by Gauntlett between ‘making’ and other key concepts of capitalism (such as social, cultural and emotional capital) may be subject to some perplexities in the minds of critical readers. In particular the ability to produce and share freely everything everywhere could subjugate ideas, relations and contents produced by Makers in the same way that, for Marx, work has been subjugated to capital. As in the title of Formenti’s book (2011), this could make us all ‘*Happy and Exploited*’.

Seen through this lens, the revolution could be a simple extension, applied to the producer-consumer structure, of classical geopolitical delocalization processes that have distinguished rich countries from poor ones. Better named as *multi-localization*, this process could be a new way to externalize the production in the hand of the consumers, instead of the low paid workers in the emerging countries. If the creative invention and physical production is in the hands of *prosumers* spread throughout the globe, the global brands could be the ‘simple’ management of communication through symbols and cognitive strategies. It is not new, in fact, about the ideal of brands as content providers, as producers of immaterial concepts based on complex narrative structures and inflamed storytelling, as we have seen in the practice of widespread media.

Although what the chapter discussed about the Makers movement is nothing more than a remote hypothesis today, some big brands such as Nike and McDonald’s have already started to understand the potential of the Makers wave, and 3D printers are appearing in sale locations. There is the risk that the spontaneous creative potential of the crowd maybe subjugated under the cognitive influence of the brand. At the moment, the process of appropriation is mainly limited to the means of production and applied only in promotional services and merchandising. However, everything suggests that a further

development may lead to an incorporation of ‘making’ practices into the world’s most powerful brands, as has already happened with the subculture of 1970s, the neo-situationist movements of the 1990s and with the user’s experience of the Web 2.0. The subsumption of the tactic action (makers) under the force of the strategic power (the corporations) relaunches Debord’s *détournement* on another level; as a Dadaist possibility to design unfunctional or uncanny devices, able to resist the process of subsumption. On the other hand there is the optimistic option of a positive dialogue with the system in the trial of creating a sort of parallel circuit in which the exploitation could be less oppressive than in the standard marketplace. In this second option the Debordian totalitarianism of consumption must be completed with a new model in which the system not just standardizes and commodifies human sociality and emotion but also encourages their production. A neototalitarian system that incentivizes the production of authenticity as its main resource.

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