

Media Aesthetics

05 Participatory Media Cultures

01: Introduction: from mass communication to convergent social media

- Classic communication: who (sender), says what (message), in which channel (media), to whom (receiver), with what effect?
- The study of mass communication: society-wide communication, as distinct from interpersonal communication, large-scale industrial practices of media production and distribution.
- The transmission model of communication: primarily a one-way flow of messages, feedback, noise and signal failure: 'the audience', 'mass', 'the masses'
- 20th century mass communication features
 - 1) the use of media technologies
 - 2) institutional separation of the producers and distributors of media content from the receivers: various media gatekeepers
 - 3) an asymmetrical power relationship between producers/distributors and receivers of media: a large one-way communications flow
 - 4) impersonal, anonymous, large-scale commercial media industries upon advertising revenue
 - 5) standardization of content to maximize market share

- **21st century convergent social media**
 - 1) dramatically reduced barriers to entry
 - 2) blurring of distinctions between media producers and consumers
 - 3) greater empowerment of media users
 - 4) potential for more personalized media environments: UCC
 - 5) diversification and demassification of media content: 'long tail'
- A right to media participation, from mass communication to mass self-communication, from read-only to a read-and-write mode of socially networked mass digital literacy

From mass media to social media?

	Mass communications media (20 th century)	Convergent social media (21 st century)
Media distribution	Large-scale; high barriers to entry	Internet dramatically reduces barriers to entry
Media production	Complex division of labour; media content gatekeepers; professional ideologies	Easy-to-use Web 2.0 technologies; multi-skilling; small collaborative teams
Media power	One way communications flow	Greater empowerment of users/audiences
Media content	Tendency towards standardised mass appeal content to maximise audience share	'Long tail' economics; de-massification and segmentation of media content markets
Producer/consumer relationship	Impersonal, anonymous and commoditised (audiences as target mass market)	Potential to be more personalised and user-driven (user created content - UCC)

02: participatory media

- The Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press (US 1942): social responsibility theories of the media: theories of media citizenship
- **Concept of participatory media**
 - 1) to be different to mainstream media
 - 2) around mainstream media
- Community media: from the sphere of civil society
- Alternative media
 - 1) de-professionalization
 - 2) de-institutionalization
 - 3) de-capitalization [?]
- From cultural studies and the traditions of active audience theories
- The rise of convergence culture: media convergence, participatory culture, collective intelligence

03: pro-ams, making cultures and everyday creativity



- Tendencies
 - 1) flattened hierarchies between content producers and consumers in an age of many-to-many media communication
 - 2) new opportunities for participation, and the enhanced power to connect with others who have similar interests
 - 3) network amplification, where 'social networks ... enable broader, faster, and lower cost coordination of activities'
- Lawrence Lessig's example of photography (2004) on digital content: 'Kodak model': making cheap and easy to use cameras → mass activity
 - 1) amateur photographers' standard camera vs. professionals' high-end equipment, professional training, darkroom
 - 2) limited circles for displayed or published opportunities: digital 'capturing and sharing' integral to our culture across the globe.
: shift from the Kodak model to the model now provided by online (Flickr or Instagram), from cameras to mobile phones

- Democratizing and participatory potential of new media technologies through the concept of **vernacular creativity**. 'Both an ideal and a heuristic device, to describe and illuminate creative practices that emerge from highly particular and non-elite social contexts and communicative conventions' 'a productive articulation of consumer practices and knowledges' (Jean Burgess 2006)
: 'hybrid forms of media consumption-production'
- **The Pro-Am Revolution** (Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller 2004)
 - 1) as 'innovative, committed and networked amateurs working to professional standards'
 - 2) as diverse as rap music and music sampling, the Linux open source software program, the Make Poverty History campaign, user modifications of The Sims
 - 3) micro-credit schemes by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh: 'when pro-ams are networked together, they can have a huge impact on politics and culture, economics and development'

Pro-ams and participatory media cultures

Pro-Ams				
Devotees, fans, dabblers and spectators	Skilled amateurs	Serious and committed amateurs	Quasi- professionals	Fully- fledged professionals

Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller, *The Pro-Am Revolution*, DEMOS (2004), p. 23.

- Between **digital technologies and making cultures** (David Gauntlett 2004)
 - 1) the rise of the internet, Web 2.0, a shift from a sit back and be told culture to a making and doing culture
 - 2) Antecedents in the arts and crafts movements by 19th century British socialists John Ruskin and William Morris: DIY culture, 'punk DIY'
- YouTube, 'post-broadcast' age'
- A systems model of **creativity** from the interaction (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi 1996)
 - 1) a domain for creativity: a discrete set of symbolic rules and procedures (mathe vs. humanity) [?] [[1](#)]
 - 2) a field, into which new ideas are received: all of those individuals
 - 3) an individual person who, 'using the symbols of a given domain ... into the relevant domain'
: creativity as 'any act, idea or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one' [?]
: creative person as 'someone whose thoughts or actions change a domain, or establish a new one'

04: digital dialogue or convergence scepticism?

Assessing participatory media culture

- **Welcomes:** new opportunities for engagement, collaboration, sharing and the exercise of collective influence over public institutions
- **Critics:** the downsides of the Web 2.0 environment (the scope of surveillance and the loss of personal control over data on a corporate network platform) → for-profit corporations' new ways to extract value from users (free labour)
- 'Cultural capitalism' : a new form of capitalism
- Public service broadcasters (PSBs), BBC, NHK, etc into public service media organization: across the multiple platforms repurposing content for different media environments, engaging the wider public as content co-creators
- **Digital scepticism**
 - 1) social media platforms [just only] for distributing original content
 - 2) the content on social media sites is traditional media content (8% traditional media content providers, 40 % of overall content, 75% of the most viewed content)
 - 3) constituting 'a new aristocracy of opinion' than the harbingers of the democratization of voice

Conclusion
