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The Brand DIY

Crafting, Hacking und Open Source as Recent Reifications of the Prosumer Idea

Some recent phenomenons, economic, technological and cultural trends highlight the fact that the merger of prosumer and consumer is actually happening: The crafting movement in the USA, originally a post- and pop-feminist project of slowing down and self-organising against the fashion regime, brand craziness and global exploitation of labour, has gained broad effect through the internet and spills over to Europe. Etsy.com, a global marketplace for hand- and selfmade items, has enormous growth rates and teaches its members according to its company claim "to make a living making things". Hacking, a niche activity with only a few thousand followers in Germany for the longest time, has turned into a commonly shared culture technique - at the latest since the introduction of the Telekom iPhone. The use of codes, technique and products beyond its intended purposes gains market power. Strongly intertwined with this is the conquest of open source software, which can be best estimated along the diffusion rate of the Firefox browser. Approaches like Creative Commons stretch the open source principals to the entire field of intellectual property. The essence of these phenomena is the outline of a changing value chain leading toward an every more complex and granular economic structure. Other drivers are the global crises of capitalism, growing discontent with traditional forms of 9 to 5 office work in hierarchically organized companies, a shift in production techniques through rapid prototyping and changing consumer consciousness. Therefore, economies of scale for big companies are being diminished, with their outer boundaries becoming more and more porous. At the same time the sharp distinction between hobby and profession - a by-product of the industrialisation - is blurred. There is strong evidence that the brand DIY is becoming the most valuable brand of the 21st century.