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On the Sale of Community in Crowdfunding: Questions of Power, Inclusion, and Value

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Introduction

In 2007 the crowdfunding website Kickstarter was launched. In April 2014 Kickstarter (2014a) reported having received $1 billion USD in donations toward projects started through the site. Kickstarter isn't alone. In recent years, numerous crowdfunding websites have popped up: Indiegogo, Pledge Music, GoFundMe, etc. Despite differences between each website, their general functions are similar: a person builds a campaign or project, promoting an idea that cannot be accomplished due to lack of funding with hopes of attracting willing donors. In exchange for donations, these donors are promised particular rewards or perks that are expected to be delivered if a pre-set financial goal is met.

Ideally, this model provides an opportunity for an aspiring creator to pursue a personal goal unhindered by constraints associated with third party players. It also gives the creator full autonomy and ownership of her product. For the consumer, or donor, it offers the experience of "getting in on the ground floor" – but in a strictly subjective manner. These donations are not investments, nor do they lead to partial ownership. While the donors do receive something for their money, (e.g. the product itself, public recognition of their involvement, personalised material objects, official titles associated with the process), perhaps the primary appeal in donating to these projects lies not the promise of any particular material return for their donation, but the feeling of participation in the creative process.

Indeed, in the "What Is Kickstarter" section of the website, the exchange is characterised by ideals of community, ownership, and democracy (Kickstarter, 2014b). These rhetorics, however, are not connected to any particular policies on structure or outcome, but depend instead on what is at best a "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009) relation with the ideals rhetorically invoked, leaving artists free to choose whether and to what extent to back up the rhetoric with concrete forms of fan-funder[1] involvement.

A recent study (Mitra & Gilbert, 2014) suggests that rhetoric plays an integral goal in the success or failure of a project. Campaigns that exploit the idea of social identity, participation, and exclusivity have been found to be more successful than those that do not, and consultants are available (Gamerman, 2013) to help build a successful campaign. The choice to become a funder is sold as a relationship, and the relationship is sold as a symbiotic one in which the dreams of the artist are not possible without the financial assistance of the donor, and through which both parties are said to benefit. This symbiosis based on mutual perceived benefit has always been true of the producer-consumer relationship, and so to offer this basic element of the very idea of production under capitalism as a "selling point" seems little else but a new form of advertising unless the process of making interdependence of producers and consumers explicit in the pitch to the potential funder corresponds to some alteration in either product or process.

We can easily imagine fan-based funding structures that implement these ideals of inclusion in clear and robust ways. It is worth making them explicit, briefly, in order to emphasise Kickstarter's significant departures from these possible alternative structures. In what we might call "collective funding" rather than "crowdfunding," fan-funders could exercise creative control over the product, either by acting in the role of a producer, or by negotiating conditions for funding – promising a donation conditional on contractual obligation to, e.g., release an album at a certain price point, to produce software in an open source manner, to grant rights to remix or reuse either to funders or to the entire public, or to produce hardware in a manner wherein funders or the general public are granted rights to develop compatible software. Collective funding could be extended into collective creation, allowing funders to specify design parameters or objectives, or even to collaborate in creating content. A more stripped-down and purely economic version of collective funding could treat fan-funders either as investors, entitled to dividends on profits, or as shareholders, forming a board that would have to approve sale of the funded company or the intellectual property rights (IPR) to its product to corporations, and that would be able to require sharing in revenue generated by the sale of the funded company or IPR.

Given how distant crowdfunding is from these robustly inclusive models of collective funding, it seems a pressing question to ask in what, if any, meaningful sense crowdfunding reflects any kind of shift in power, control, voice, or dependence in favour of fan-funder communities. As things stand, given the structures in place, even the well-intentioned artist who upholds values of inclusion and creative fan-funder communities, and who has perhaps even been motivated to pursue crowdfunding for broadly political reasons, has a tough job ahead in working out how to implement these values within the new model. What now becomes of these ideals in an environment that is in the middle of a paradigm shift? What are artists who seek a robust relationship with a fan-funder base – not merely one of interdependence, which has always been the case, but one of involvement as well – obligated to offer to the fan in an environment of hyper-access? How do we conceptualise this community to which the fan-funder elects herself into by means of a financial donation via PayPal? How is value understood in relation to these terms?

On the Value of Crowdfunded Products

The most obvious alteration in process represented by crowdfunding relative to traditional capitalist production is that one exchanges money for the promise of a product not yet available for sale. In the place of an already existing product that the consumer can evaluate, the crowdfunding campaign puts forward nothing more than a singular idea or desire held by an individual to whom the consumer bears no relation except as mediated by the projected product. The primary effect of the time-shifting of manufacturing to be posterior rather than prior to the economic exchange from consumer to producer is then little more than the transfer of economic risk to the consumer – on the face of it, a rather poor deal for the consumer as compared to traditionally funded capitalist retail purchasing. Why then are fan-funders motivated to participate in the crowdfunding model, what role do rhetorics of inclusion play in fan-funder choice, and what is the nature and the extent of an actual "community" created in crowdfunding?

In many cases, fan-funders may be motivated only by a belief that the project or product will simply not be completed in the absence of crowdfunding. Here, typical forms of use and exchange values can account for the fan-funder motivation without any perception of "community" on the part of the fan-funder whatsoever: where the product will not reach the market in the absence of microdonations, the "funding for perks" model amounts to product presales. Rather than the publisher paying the creator on spec, or the creator simply creating the product on spec, the fan-funder buys the product

on spec in a time-shifted purchase. Inclusion and community in this case is irrelevant, and the risk and delay of purchasing a product yet to be made under the rubric of a perk for a donation is counterbalanced by the perceived inability of the consumer to purchase the product otherwise.

Community seems to play a more fundamental role in fan-funder choices to donate in cases where traditional funding is perceived to be available to the creator, cases where donations continue past the full funding of a project, cases where the monetary value of the donation significantly outstrips the use or exchange value of the perks on offer at that donation level, or cases where funding choices are based in perks having a primarily emotional or ideational value, such as souvenir artefacts or "behind the scenes" updates.

These cases must be accounted for in terms of symbolic value rather than use or exchange value – but symbolic of what? The cultural cachet of early adoption or insider access is well established outside of the crowdfunding model, as in the backstage pass or in having been a fan of something "before it was cool." No reference to democracy or symbiosis is necessary to create these symbolic values, although they may intensify these values through the creation of perceived intimacy and stronger connection with creators and products.

Even in the absence of not only actual but even symbolic kinds of inclusion and democracy in product design and development, there is still a robust at least symbolic community among consumers merely qua consumers. It is well established (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984/2010) that consumers often use communities of taste as marks of social distinction and difference, using products to perform significant identity-constructive roles both in self-identity and in our relations to others. This sort of "branded identity" (Castells, 2009) represents symbolic value for the fan even when purchasing mass-produced and mass-marketed goods, as we see clearly by the stock put in many by the essentially meaningless distinction between being a "Ford man" or a "Chevy man." In an age of narrowcasting and the long-tail, the distinction afforded by consumer choice is extended and diversified – again, even within the realm of the mere uninvolved consumption of goods produced through traditionally funded capitalist models. Crowdfunding offers a clear extension of distinction through branded identity, in at least two ways: (1) increased intimacy of involvement, and (2) increased consumer choice.

In the former case, the mere structure of crowdfunding produces several intimacies supporting the formation and performance of branded identity. Crowdfunding produces a more direct connection between fans and creators through the mere directness of economic exchange in the absence of a retailer. Crowdfunded projects also may lack a corporate intermediary, or may

often at least take place through smaller companies or startups, further creating a felt intimacy. The direct, virtually face-to-face appeal to fan-funders extends this further, as do rhetorics of symbiosis and the frequent provision of project e-mail updates as a perk at various funding levels. A last clear factor in creating felt intimacy is the pitch of products, both by crowdfunding sites and by individual products, in terms of creators' dreams and ideas, projecting the idea that funding is not an exchange for goods and services but a striving together toward a vision based in the creator's identity – an idea much more easily connected to fan-funder identity.

Since these perceived intimacies create community as a symbolic value available for purchase through broadcasting structures – videos, e-mail lists, talk of dreams and the creator's vision, which are basically non-interactive and one-directional – crowdfunding allows for the sale of perceived intimacy in a manner seamlessly scalable beyond any material basis of interdependence. In other words, the perception of initial funders that they are "playing a crucial role in helping an artist realise her vision on her own terms" contains little more symbolic value for the consumer than that provided to funders who contribute long after the project has been fully funded: broadcasted markers of intimacy create symbolic values supporting branded identity whether the project's funding goal has not yet been reached or was long ago exceeded.

In the latter case, crowdfunding extends consumer choice beyond the set of actually existing products into the realm of projected projects, which has the direct effect of increasing the number, range, diversity, and niche-focusing of available products for consumption. Forms of branded-identity that seek not popularity but uniqueness and exclusivity are well served by crowdfunding's ability to bring products to market that are merely profitable enough to be worth producers' while, and crowdfunding, like the rise of cottage industry through outlets like Etsy, offers mass distribution and one-stop shopping options for those who seek scarce and little-known products as such – a paradoxical mass production of the small-batch and obscure.

These symbolic values of community and participation may strike us as very insubstantial indeed. Consider Marcuse's discussion of (deceptive) liberty as domination from *One-Dimensional Man*:

> The range of choice open to the individual is not the decisive factor in determining the degree of human freedom, but *what* can be chosen and what *is* chosen by the individual…. Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. Free choice among a wide variety of goods and series does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear – that is if they sustain alienation. (1964/1968: 7–8)

While "a life of toil and fear" may sound a bit dire, the general point stands clearly enough: our ability to buy a range of not-yet-existent products in addition to the existent ones, and availability of increasingly niche products with increasingly more narrow-casted and intimate sales pitches in no way alters our status as consumers giving mere assent to one rather than some other product in which we have no creative role, design involvement, or active participation. Henry Ford (1922/2005) wrote that "[a]ny customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it is black." Consumer choice offers deceptive liberty in the claim that you may have any brand of car you like so long as you participate in middle-class ideals bound up with single-occupancy-vehicle – a (false) freedom to choose how to participate standing in for the (real) choice of *whether* to participate, which choice is *a priori* foreclosed upon. Crowdfunding extends the false choice further: you may fund any project you like, so long as you remain a mere consumer and undifferentiated member of a passive audience. The real choice of whether to be satisfied with being an object rather than an agent of production is still not on offer.

The symbolic value of identity provided here seems similarly insubstantial. Here, we might turn instead to Horkheimer and Adorno's claim that

> Sharp distinctions like those between A and B films, or between short stories published in magazines in different price segments, do not so much reflect real differences as assist in the classification, organization, and identification of consumers. Something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated. (2007: 96–97)

As the range and specificity of types increase in keeping with the movement from mass to niche production, it may well be said to still be the case that "something is provided for all so that none may escape." Crowdfunding offers a safety measure to the copyright industries, a pressure release valve whereby fan frustration at e.g. the cancellation of a beloved show may be released. Rather than becoming producers or owners in order to produce in accordance with their own vision and creative desires, the fan-funder becomes the content industry's sharecropper, contributing value in support of a resource over which she gains no control or ownership, supporting profits to which she gains no entitlement. Even if we take quite seriously the importance and meaning fans find in symbolic values of community and identity – something of which Adorno is entirely dismissive – it is still of significant note that crowdfunding seems more to extend than to challenge the dominance of the culture industry.

On the Value of Crowdfunding as Such

Having begun by differentiating crowdfunding from communal funding, and then having outlined an assessment of symbolic values presented to fan-funders by crowdfunded products, we can now turn to symbolic values presented to fan-funders by the process of crowdfunding itself. The fundamental claim we wish to make here is that, while consumable symbolic values presented by crowdfunded products are in continuity with previous forms of branded identity and distinction in taste communities, crowdfunding presents novel forms of symbolic value through its very form. What we consume as fan-funders is, in part, crowdfunding itself.

The "What Is Kickstarter" section of the Kickstarter page, a reductive bullet point list meant to capture the nuts and bolts of the model, emphasises the subjective qualities of this exchange, one that is described as "democratic" and "magical," and an inclusive process in which both the backer and creator are involved in creative ownership. Backing a project, it is claimed, is "more than just giving someone money…it's supporting their dream," and donations allow access into the "club of art supporting fanatics" (Kickstarter 2014b). In accordance with the guidelines of the model, these donations are not to be understood as investments, and the framing of this exchange makes no mention of surplus value, the recognition of which would undermine the ideological force of the model.

A primary symbolic value created by this rhetoric may be the sense of participation in the process, the appeal of being a part of something made more real or authentic by its location in such a free space of direct exchange, scalable consumer pricing, and airy ideals of artists' dreams and fan community. Horning (2011) offers insight on this process of value creation in his suggestion that a by-product of social media is the way in which it can alter the motivation of the consumer:

> They enhance the compensations of consumerism by making it seem more self-revelatory, less passively conformist, conserving the signifying power of our lifestyle gestures by broadcasting them to a larger audience and making them seem less ephemeral. They temper the anonymity and anomie that consumerism's mass markets tend to impose by concretely attaching our identity to what we consume. (n.p.)

As we noted above, a donation to any particular campaign serves as a way for an individual to perform identity through consumption and taste, bolstered by the active selection of a product characterised in terms of an idea or dream, heightening the feeling of self-expression in consumptive practices. Now, though, as we turn from considering the symbolic value of the product

itself to the user experience of participation in the campaign as such, we see additional forms of identification that extend beyond and do not have obvious parallels in identity functions of niche consumerism. The rhetoric of any particular campaign calls forth a sentiment that is a unique component of the model itself: the solicitation of the creator's personal ambition or ideal goal is made successful through a subjective identification with a consumer who is invited into, and included in, the process of creation, framed through the concept of mutual participation through an expression of crucial reliance upon the backers if the project is to "come to life."

The appeal for the backer is thus positioned in an ideational sphere in which consumption is veiled by the subjective aspects of the exchange. By nature of its subjectivity, the consumption of idealised symbolic value remains insulated and intact despite the otherwise crude and objective characteristic of simply sending money to the creator. Thus, the ideology of crowdfunding obscures its economic basis with a spectacle of involvement by deploying a culture of the arts in which money translates into self-expression.

The anti-corporate and even broadly anti-establishment ethos of a decentralised productive model also draws from an ethical framework intimately associated with the arts – in particular, this framework is closely related to the underground movements in music through the '80s and into the '90s. The ethic of 'D.I.Y.' creation emphasises independence and authentic creative expressions, contextualised by the domineering monolith of corporate sponsorship and major record labels. Today, such entities are waning in the face of the increased prevalence of digital technologies and new media, but this has not diminished the symbolic force of outsider and grassroots status, and crowdfunding allows for the consumption of this ethos as a symbolic good, even when it is attached to corporatist production, as in the emblematic case of *Veronica Mars*. The image of the "garage band" draws upon deep cultural commitments, and the threat to the consumer's construction of identity through expressions of taste continues to be threatened by the "selling out" and "going mainstream" of consumer-valorised artists. The rhetoric employed on the Kickstarter website reflects the same mores that have been central to underground movements through its discussion of ownership and control (Kickstarter, 2014b). Indiegogo similarly encourages donors to "fund what matters to you" (Indiegogo, 2014), reflecting the sense of empowerment the consumer receives through contributing.

These cultural commitments were evident in the existence of functioning social networks consisting of and dependent upon both fans and artists, which operated within their own framework of unwritten rules. These networks, initially consisting only of regional pockets of marginalised and

determined teenagers, evolved from small communities into a substantial creative and marketable force, interconnected yet still regionally identified. By the late '90s, these communities, or "scenes," were co-opted by larger corporate entities and major record labels. This was apparent, for example, in the market appropriation of the so-called "grunge" movement. The end result was the commodification of an organic cultural and ethical framework, which was defined and sustained through solidarity between the artists and fans in the spirit of free and purely motivated creative expression unified against the mainstream music and practice.

Adorno (2007: 99) states that "the entire practice of culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms." This succinctly explains a general practice in the monetisation and funding of the arts, but it should be drawn out in relation to our specific interest. By the time Kickstarter emerged in 2007, the music industry was already in the midst of a paradigm shift. Emerging technologies and new media presented new problems of monetisation for longstanding leaders of the industry. The increased access to content through peer-to-peer sharing, and the increased ability to contribute content (YouTube, Logic, Garageband), made it increasingly difficult to charge consumers for products that were only accessible via mainstream retail outlets. In addition, the stigma surrounding these major corporate entities regarding their treatment of art, the artist, and the music fan, was increasing, though it surely was not new. Since the cultural valorisation of artistic creation and consumption had long taken place in the ethereal realm of expression, identity, and genius – to each of which the material conditions of mechanical production, distribution, and sales had always been merely contingent and external necessary conditions – when new channels of access opened up, many fans immediately took advantage of market-unintegrated modes of consumption. Ideally, communication and exchange could now happen directly without the need of mediation by a third party. Following the trend, the artists themselves began appropriating these new technologies and accessing fans directly, leaving the corporate entities to reluctantly follow by attempting to find successful ways to control and monetise content. To be sure, the cultural and ethical framework that developed naturally within regional music scenes throughout the U.S. in the '80s and '90s was appropriated with a degree of success (through clever marketing and acquisition), although it was never completely free of its crude transparency. The accusation of "sell out" was hurled about frequently. This tension that exists among "authentic" artists and so-called "sell outs" is a symptom of the structure identified by Adorno. The industrial production associated with major labels and corporations began to appropriate the artist culture once it recognised its

economic potential. Kickstarter offers a way for the artist to circumvent the major label apparatus and communicate with, and depend on, the fan directly, thus facilitating a new mode of exchange. Still, this exchange is guided by a strong ethical implication that underscores the process. The employment of appeals to community and the inclusion of biographical narration in campaigns reflects an intentional emphasis on the pathos and ethos of creators. If this unwritten code is perceived to be violated in either model, it often breeds resentment, and this resentment indicates that the value the fan-funder receives in participation originates not only with the product, but with the mode of production itself.

This focused analysis of Kickstarter cannot be fully understood in isolation from these material conditions that emerged out of the developments of web 2.0, although elements of consumers' engagement with symbolic value certainly predate these conditions. As Baudrillard argued in *The Consumer Society*,

> The content of the messages, the signifieds of the signs are largely immaterial. We are not engaged in them, and the media do not involve us in the world, but offer for our consumption signs as signs, albeit signs accredited with the guarantee of the real. It is here that we can define *the praxis of consumption*. The consumer's relation to the real world, to politics, to history, to culture, is not a relation of interest, investment or committed responsibility – nor is it one of total indifference: it is a relation of **curiosity**. (1970: 34, original emphasis)

Here Baudrillard identifies the general mechanisms that undergird the crowd-funding process, which reposition consumption in a way that caters more specifically to those who engage in symbolic exchange. Despite the rhetoric employed in campaigns, it often happens that the fan-funder is only engaged to the extent that she or he offers financial backing. Indeed, any discourse between creator and donor regarding the creative process does not occur. In as much as these campaigns seek funds for an idea that has yet to be actualised, all rhetoric employed necessarily refers to the immaterial. Thus, the relationship of the consumer to the creator and the proposed idea is more akin to a curiosity than an interest in that the involvement of the consumer only extends so far as, and is defined by the amount, one is willing to donate. That interest is satisfied according to the will, and at the whim, of the creator. There is no reference against which to evaluate claims made by the donor. The exchange turns on an absence of material value in that the material product does not yet exist. That absence is accounted for with the symbolic value expressed in the rhetoric of the campaign.

The conceptual reduction of fan-funder interest to a relation of curiosity is paralleled by a legal and economic structure that shifts liability and speculation definitively from the producer to the consumer. In the midst of paradigm

shift in content industries brought on by new media, which simultaneously opens up opportunities for new ways of thinking and necessitates adaptation by those individuals and institutions dependent upon funding and monetisation, a space is created in which all prior foundations are now being re-imagined and new ideas are being conceived – and yet even in models like crowdfunding, which seem to be on the side of distributed control and fan empowerment, the new structures in place function in a manner that leaves fan-funders as excluded as ever.

There is much potential for the artist to reclaim control of the ways that her product can be funded and offered up to the public; ways that can avoid any intrusion by a third party that would hinder the process. Indeed, Kickstarter has emerged as a mechanism that offers the artist an increased degree, and new kind, of autonomy over both creative direction and appropriation of garnered funds. The positive value of artistic autonomy – a primary symbolic value offered for sale to the fan-funder by the very model of crowdfunding – not only entails but is actually identical to a lack of control, ownership, agency, and involvement of not only corporate but fan-funders as well. The very disempowerment of the consumer becomes itself an attractive good on offer in crowdfunding, and consumers have been glad to purchase it.

The model functions on the basis of the expression of an ideal that is both liberalist and consumer empowering. The amount of funding any particular project receives is based on the strength of the idea and the ethos and pathos behind it, and the whole process is indeed one characterised by autonomy, both for the creator and for the backer. It is this general front, and its storied successes, which shields the process from any thorough scrutiny. Much of the press coverage garnered by Kickstarter and its peers focuses on the immunity secured as a result of the model's transparency between donor and creator. But what must be emphasised is that fan-funder autonomy consists solely in the choice of whether and how much to pay, within terms set out unilaterally by the creator, with all other aspects of autonomy reserved only for the creator.

Because a predominant character of this model is ideational, any potential breach of this implied ethic or exchange (either in the form of a particular campaign itself, or in the undelivered "awards" promised by the creator) can remain largely overlooked since the economy of the exchange is not framed as the prime motivator for either fan-funder or creator. Indeed, while there have been particularly notorious cases where creators have violated the understood terms of the campaign, legal recourse remains difficult (Gera, 2012). The long-term effects of these transgressions are difficult to evaluate. As of yet, the crowdfunding model remains not only intact, but, in fact, in June 2014, Kickstarter loosened its restrictions for project acceptance (Etherington, 2014).

A key component in the success of the crowdfunding model is that these conflicts between fan-funder empowerment and creator autonomy go unappreciated, but as controversial campaigns and troubling incidents accumulate, the radical disconnect between the symbolic values of community and the actual political-economic power structures in place becomes increasingly clear.

In 2013 Kickstarter was used to raise money for a book that included "offensive" content. The project came under public scrutiny and Kickstarter was compelled to post a response in order to address their role in this project. Despite the actions taken by the website, the individual who started the campaign, which was overfunded by 800%, was able to keep the money raised. Addressing comments questioning why Kickstarter did not pull the campaign down upon hearing about the campaign, Kickstarter (2013) responded, "our processes, and everyday thinking, bias heavily toward creators."

In other problematic cases, the product is simply not delivered, as for example the platformer video game, *Super Action Squad*, on hold two years after being funded at 535% of their goal, due to the team of programmers having found developing a game more difficult than expected (Schreier, 2014). More dramatically, there is John Cambell's decision to burn completed and printed books produced in a 645% funded Kickstarter campaign, explaining in part (quoted in Moss, 2014) that "I will not be responsible for the manufacture of any more unnecessary physical objects," and offering to fan-funders these unilateral terms: "I shipped about 75% of Kickstarter rewards to backers. I will not be shipping any more. I will not be issuing any refunds. For every message I receive about this book through e-mail, social media or any other means, I will burn another book."

In yet other cases, crowdfunding seems to function as a kind of zero-cost research and development resource for corporations, which are able to remain uninvolved as risk and uncertainty is borne by fan-funders and creators, then cherry-picking successful products for integration into traditional capitalist production models by established industry leaders. For example, in the TidyTilt/Logitech case we see the re-injection of a crowdfunded product back into major retail outlets through large distributors, produced by an established major company in the field, which then accrue surplus value on the backs of initial funders (Gara, 2013). Large studios are also using the model, which simply transfers the cost of production onto fans, as in the much-discussed Zach Braff and *Veronica Mars* cases (G.F., 2013; Sherman, 2013).

The case of Oculus Rift provides a robust example of these dynamics, and one that exemplifies with particular clarity the sense in which the crowdfunding model is itself a product for sale in each particular campaign – but a product that is both deceptive and defective. Following a highly successful Kickstarter

campaign, the Oculus Rift company was sold to Facebook for 2 billion USD. As numerous commentators have pointed out (e.g. Leonard, 2014), while many funders were upset that they had contributed value to a large corporation while they were trying to support the dreams of indie developers, a significant additional concern had to do with the fan-funder's eventual user experience of the product, not with political-economic anti-oligopolist ideals or even the symbolic value of supporting DIY culture. Funders imagine how the device will be implemented by Facebook and despair. They imagine it being tied to Facebook's walled gardens, and the software allowed to work with it crippled, monetised, and ridden with advertisements and obligations to be subject to Facebook's massive data collection business model. Here we see a great many values placed on offer through the rhetoric of Kickstarter: (1) the use value of the object itself, constructed through the indie-developer ideals of the project developers, implying which and what kind of software would be available for use through the device; (2) the exchange value of the project, projected to be higher through indie development than through the economies of scale that Facebook will be able to bring, and in the absence of Facebook's interest to sell it with a thin profit margin in order to further integrate users into the Facebook network; (3) and the symbolic value of representing, supporting, and emerging from a grass-roots, user-centred, open-source based and remix/programmer-friendly, anti-corporatist community of common concern. Each of these values is strongly implied by the Oculus Rift campaign as well as innumerable other similar campaigns, each can be expected to be strongly motivating to fan-funders, and all are unsupported by any actually existing structure in crowdfunding.

The ideational force of crowdfunding obscures the problems that can and have taken place and the systematic manner in which its structures range against the very ideals that fuel its success. While crowdfunding's exchange is similar to the more traditional mode (money for material goods with use value, exchange value, or symbolic value), the salient differences reside in the absence of a finished product in the moment of expenditure, the particular mode of solicitation that it necessitates, and the contingencies that frame the model and the dynamic between creator and donor. These three aspects inform the exchange and provide a space of immunity for the creator against which the donor is left with little recourse in the event that the creator takes advantage of the good will of the donors. Crowdfunding, located in the hazy intersection of artist autonomy, economic potential, and the participatory functions of web 2.0, relies upon the offer of symbolic and experiential values that direct scrutiny away from the artist's utilisation of the autonomy provided by the model. If the larger goal of Kickstarter or Indiegogo is to encourage a new standard of both artist-fan relations, and means of funding artistic

projects without disruption from third party financiers, then the artist cannot take advantage of the donors through ideational rhetoric and vague promises.

Note

1. In order to make our case about the inadequacy of the community created through crowdfunding to crowdfunding's own stated ideals, we focus on the paradigm case where the funder is also a fan of either the creator or the project. We seek to focus on this case, since this is the case where the sense of community emergent from the crowdfunding relationship ought to be strongest, and the symbolic value of membership within that community most valuable to the funder. We do not, however, mean to assert that there are not other kinds of cases, including but not limited to funders who are friends and family of those running a campaign, and have no interest in the campaign per se, or funders who may support a campaign that they find simply amusing or silly. Since our purpose here is to assess the value and function of ideational community, we take the backer, supporter, or donor paradigmatically as a "fan-funder," with these other possibilities treated as deviations from this archetype.

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