

premaj and pressure over or control of the private. Today we are facing the problem of the current modernity, where private interests of the owners of great financial capital, have colonized the public communication sphere to the point of robbing it of its most important quality. It lost its key dimension – the field of discussion, where various opinions are confronted, constructing the social reality through communication processes in specific ways. The primacy held by the media affects the constructional processes of social reality, thus serving mainly to the interests of those who can afford its lease. Other characteristics of the current modernity, i.e. commercialization of everyday life, information satiation and a lack of information variety, further hinder the reflection of the media from the point of view of the individual and society.

Resumen

Junto con la comercialización creciente de la esfera pública y privada, así como vida diaria en general, el discurso dominante del marketing tiene nuevas prácticas de comunicación. Se basan en los conceptos de la comunicación, que se presentan principalmente del supuesto ambiente de los activistas de los medios, que fueron creados sobre todo en el campo del conflicto entre el marketing dominante² y el discurso crítico desafiador, entre la fricción, innovación, cambio y prueba práctica constante de los conceptos de la comunicación. Éstos fueron instigados principalmente por la colonización del capital sobre la esfera pública de la comunicación. La lógica exclusiva del capital obstaculiza el acceso a la esfera pública de la comunicación, para todos los .

² El problema en el cual nos enfocaremos en la marketing comunicación, es la generalización del consumerismo oculto en la lógica oculta del capital, comodificación del conocimiento anticipado y de la vida cotidiana.

CAMBIOS EN EL NEGOCIO DE LA INTERACCIÓN
(La rebeldía como condición para la subordinación contratada a la autoridad de la publicidad)

Palabras clave:
Comunicación, esfera pública, publicidad alternativa, marketing cultural.

contenidos e intereses, críticos de la lógica oculta del capitalismo, mientras que a la vez, expulsa de la esfera pública el resto de los contenidos, que no interesen al capital. El problema de la comunicación pública ya no yace en la supremacía y la presión excesiva o el control público sobre el privado. Hoy se está enfrentando el problema de la modernidad actual, donde los intereses privados de los dueños del gran capital financiero, han colonizado la esfera pública de la comunicación al punto de robarlo de su calidad más importante. Perdió su dimensión dominante—el campo de la discusión, donde se enfrentan varias opiniones, construyendo la realidad social con procesos de comunicación de maneras específicas. La primacía que sostienen los medios afecta los procesos de la construcción de la realidad social, por ende, estando principalmente al servicio de los que puedan permitirse su arriendo. Otras características de la modernidad actual, i.e. la comercialización de la vida cotidiana, el exceso de información y una carencia de variedad de información, obstaculizan más aun la reflexión de los medios desde el punto de vista del individuo y de la sociedad

Marketing communication, the largest part of media sphere, has its counterpart in communication concepts and practices, which we can refer to as critical communication. An extensive theoretical corpus, ranging from critical social and cultural theories, analyses of advertising manipulation, entertainment industry and consumer passivity, French Situationists' essays, to new mainly 90s media viruses concepts, tactic communication, tactic media, absolute media, Web communication concepts, culture jamming and communication guerrilla, offers a strong analytical base for reflection and theorization on emancipatory communication approaches.

The ability of critical co-optation as well as co-optation of new communication strategy and tactics, used by the neo-liberal capitalism players, i.e. commercial media, advertising agencies and public relations agencies, cultural intermediaries like journalists and designers, is the consequence of the adaptation to the newly created communication environment. All this creates justified doubts about the efficiency of the majority of current critical communication.

Critical communication has on the one hand to a great extent achieved the level of self-referential simulacrum as understood and described by Baudrillard, while in its practice it has on the other hand caught itself in the competitive consumerism's trap of being cool.

Due to the increased media literacy abilities, marketing communication has largely changed into ironic and (self) critical manipulation, which is firstly difficult to deconstruct and secondly, more and more difficult to respond to by critical communication, since the issues criticism should be addressed at, are growing more and more blurred and evasive. The public's reaction to critical communication is mainly cynical.

The described state calls for the necessity of reconsideration and a theory, which would anti-



(Culture jamming campaign, in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The Stencil graffiti says: "Stinging the Advertisement" The national branding campaign was made to improve the image of the biggest Slovenian Brands. Culture jamming by Memefest in 2002. Photo: Oliver Vodeb)



(Campana de exceso de cultura, en Ljubljana, Eslovenia. El graffiti Stencil dice: "Picando la publicidad". La campaña nacional de marcas fue realizada para mejorar la imagen de las marcas más grandes de Eslovenia. Exceso de cultura por Memefest en 2002. Foto: Oliver Vodeb)

pate this current state of critical communication practices, as well as their future development. At the same time, it has to learn from the past practical (non) successes and mostly lose its deliberation of replacing the existent system by a better and more just system, as a consequence of deliberate implementation and integration of something new as the new social state. Obsession with the final result is the past critical communication's big mistake. Spectacle by Debord is for example focused on final results and operates in the way of manifestation of final results, which are then transformed to the representation form.

Communication never ends, while results have to be found by introducing specific communication processes and not some final state. (Self) reflection can be reached by continuous, permanent communication activity on both, micro (interpersonal) and macro (social) levels.

In my opinion, critical communication has 'only' the power of subject authorization and their critical reflection on everyday life and activity. I think this can also be achieved by and through conscious use of specific practical communication concepts, while paying attention to the constantly changing communication social conditions, anticipating them and communicating with the awareness of social and cultural consequences of one's communication.

Interactivity of Advertising

Due to its structural classification in the tactical and not strategic field, systematic responsiveness to changes in the communication environment is at first glance inherent to critical communication. Representation and differentiation aspirations, cause the above described problems of self-reference, competitive consumerism and being cool, to drain out the pro-active potential of critical communication. In most cases, such communication remains a passive manifestation of temporary 'rebellious' fashion trends. On the one hand, the inability

of institutionalizing the practice of critical communication in the public communication sphere, outside the spectacular and trendy discourse of popular culture, museums and galleries, which would guarantee the conditions for continuous action, is a consequence of the powerless position, rising from the lack of financial, cultural and social capital and the censorship of the predominant commercial discourse.

On the other hand, this is a consequence of the inability of strategic incorporation of critical communication practices in the parts of marketing discourse intended for more responsible marketing communication, thus re-structuring the communication dynamics on the level that reaches larger masses. I believe that the purpose for this lies in the critical communication sphere, as well as in marketing communication. On the side of critical communication the justified reason of fear of marketing discourse's adopting and destroying the criticism is opposed by the above mentioned competitive consumerism and the 'battle to be cool'. While on the side of marketing communication the structurally defined battle for the market players' biggest possible profits is opposed by the self-reference and limitation of communication approaches to marketing communication and design, which in practice consciously abides by the social and cultural dimensions mainly in commodified form and in the way of spectacle.

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Therefore, along with autonomic communication practices, functioning outside and against the marketing discourse, I also see the necessity of responsibility implementation in the sphere of marketing communication as well as their mutual complementation. Implementation of (active) and (self) critical dimension in communication theories and practices, on both, strategic and tactic levels, is necessary for better efficiency in communication. And socially responsible communication also needs participation in the decentralized gift economy, which is at the same time faced with the problem of generating resources, ne-

cessary for a long-term sustaining of the networks of such economy.

Socially responsive communication affects both individuals and organizations, which use communication for critical purposes, as well as those, actively involved in the communication business, i.e. market players, individuals and organizations that receive media contents, as well as 'intermediary links', cultural intermediaries.

Nowadays, all social levels are permeated with spectacle. Economy is more than ever before dependent on its image, since either the image sells the products, or the image itself is the product. Entertainment industry's profits rise each year, permeating journalist reports (i.e. evening television news), education, politics, as well as everyday life. Graphic design, largely employed by advertising is gaining ground both, in university and professional spheres. I.e. in Slovenija, graphic designers, whether graduate or not, are one of the easiest people to find employment. Technological developments have enabled the omnipresence of spectacle, which places the spectacle always within the reach of our hand. The quality of movies and cultural events is measured by the number of visitors and the size of the production budget. Although mostly everyone can consume spectacle through the media, only those with enough capital can afford it. The object's



Fake fans of Lenny Kravitz in front of MTV's headquateres on Times Square, New York. The people were payed by MTV, for the "interactive" program called TRL (<http://www.mtv.com/onair/trl/>). Everyone gets payed 50 \$ to act like a fan, look cool and follow exact directions given by MTV stuff. (Photos: Oliver Vodeb, May, 2004).



domination of the subject, passivizing the consumers, i.e. television viewers, is the central topic with Debord, as well as Baudrillard.

Debord was an advocate of (agency), action, while with the concept of establishing situations, theorizing in the direction of reality, which is manipulated and mediated through spectacle and possible to re-authenticate. I believe this to be an important position, far more constructive than Baudrillard's nihilism.

I advocate for the necessity of socially responsible communication and deconstruction of media / communication environment, as well as for the participation in it. At the same time, the conflict between the dominant-marketing and challenging-critical discourse demonstrates the characteristics of the current media and communication environment, where spectacle and simulation merge.

Through technologically enabled *specific interaction* canalized by special communication approaches between the sender and recipient, the trademark and buyer, the corporation and consumer, the oil company and nature conservancy (n5m 3 Workbook, Evelline Lubers 1999), the mergence of simulation and spectacle takes place mainly in the field of criticism and its co-optation, which produces simulated quasi media literacy. A trademark's reputation is based on separate values, media related according to a product's use value. The spatial establishing of *controlled interaction, simulated dialogue* isolates the problematic from social reality, culture, class, nature, everyday life and places it in the simulation of the self-deconstructive marketing discourse, which is then in the spectacle-manner introduced in the public sphere. New advertising agency approaches show the tendency for abstract approaches, less tangible for the consumer. I.e. depicting only a part of a woman's body instead of the model's whole figure ensures over-all identification with the demonstrated part, while avoiding the criticism of beautiful models' bodies and thus the criticism of *media generated ideals*. In the advertising industry this method is also known as

abstract description, shown also in the (visually) interesting an attractive way of the advertisements' portrayal of the contents, the significance of which is mostly unclear. The trick supposedly lies in the insinuation, the unfinished story, the story with a vague message, which creates the need for creating meaning, understanding of the message. The psychological omittance of logical interpretation and understanding is supposedly the reason for the individual *buying* the message. (Rushkoff, 2000) Marketing communicational, mainly advertising campaigns respond to the current communication environment challenges with irony and self-irony techniques, (self) mocking the past media representations of their own trademarks, certain trends or the problem of media manipulation and consumerism, or more specifically the *selling act* itself.

As already mentioned, this is only done up to a certain point, (understandingly) never really directly and finally deconstructing their trademark or the add's message, and thus in a way 'connecting' to the relative 'media awareness' of a target group. (Rushkoff, 2000)

The rise of television (program) contents, ironically responding to problems of consumerism, globalisation, capitalism, media and advertising have the function of 'protecting' adds, which provide the television stations with a living. Mark Crispin Miller talks about circular cultural operation, stating: "Television 'defends' the adds from derision (deconstruction) by (using their contents in) being the one to deride" (Miller qtd. In Frank, 1997: 231). In its deconstruction the subject is active in the spectacle-mediated world of simulations. The latter represents the added market value, allowing the individual all the freedom they can imagine.

On the macro level, the friction between advertising and critics is manifested on the one hand in the increased consumers' media literacy, itself a consequence of information satiation, everyday commercialization, technology development

(mainly internet and mobile communication technologies) and the increased attention of education on deconstruction of media manipulation. On the one, positive, side, this is the case of actual, real increased media literacy, as the basis for criticism and rebellion. On the other hand, it is a 'half way' stage, a state where the consumer/media texts reader in everyday practice tries to deconstruct the act of media manipulation, but gets caught in the described interactive spectacle, practicing criticism, understanding it only on the surface, on its declarative level, on the image level, on the consumption level. Thus, this is simulated, quasi media literacy, which manifests itself in quasi criticism and quasi rebellion.

Moreover, the estrangement criticism and understanding life the individual is interpellated in by the current consumerist society have become the basis for consumer loyalty to certain trademarks. Nowadays, advertisers directly address the relatively media aware target group in a way, which shows an understanding of the consumer and even of his understanding of their marketing and advertising approaches. Information satiation and the consequences of several decade long education in media messages deconstruction in schools and at universities, the development of technologies, which enable a high degree of participation in communication processes, and the results of media activists' endeavours result in a relatively high public scepticism towards the media, especially advertising. Namely, with years, consumers have developed distrust of advertising and at the same time became a laic critic of media sphere. While in the 60s, a violation of advertising conventions stood for a violation of rigid business and social norms, today, a violation of conventions stands for

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Advertisement, for Slovenian Mobile phone operator SiMobil-Vodafone, following the rules of coolness, mocking rebellion, youthfulness and breaking social norms. The Campaign was launched in early 2005.

self-irony in sales, consumerism and media manipulation. Partly, it is again a natural development, since the former age critics have become the present age advertisers. Media contents mocking consumerism include books, music, movies, television serials and adds, and their effect has to in be understood with the context of their activity the circularity of cultural operations.

The described mechanism of marketing communications have adapted to the new times. Advertising campaigns respond to the challenges of the current communication environment with new approaches, which differ from the past ones mainly in their subtler sales mechanism. At the same time this is only done up to a certain point, (understandingly) never really directly deconstructing their own trademark or the add's message, and thus in a way 'connecting' to the relative 'media awareness' of a target group, gaining its trust, which is ideally finally manifested in buying a certain product or service (Rushkoff, 1999)

The development of advertisers' co-optation of cultural criticism and its integration into its own marketing discourse, which resulted in the ideological change "used by business to explain the domination over everyday life", (Frank, 1997: 229), needs to be interpreted within the context of connections between personal motivations, ideological justifications and complex social and technological functions of the new economical system (Holmes, 2001).

The applicability of rebellion

The latest advertising approaches combine different media, mainly internet and television. While doing



Dear student...you can throw Tomatos at your future bosses and Colegues at the Slovenian Advertising Festival... And since this advertisement is trying to trick you, you can trough Tomatos in to the Add too! Advertisement for Slovenian Advertising Festival in 2005. The Festival theme was interestingly "Advertising and responsibility".

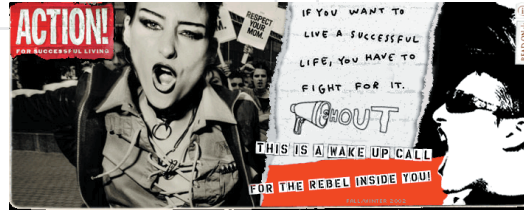
this, their address uses irony, in order to avoid the resistance to advertising as a consequence of information and satiation and advertising invasion in the everyday life, and of the target public's (message recipient's) relative media literacy. The innovative and extremely successful advertisement of the American company 'American Express', launched in the end of 2004, goes: "Luckily what you are looking at will not be interrupted by ads, since what you are looking at is in fact – an add". This is how Jerry Seinfeld, a popular American comedian addresses his audience. This four-minute long add is played mainly on the internet, while the 15-second long television add reminds the viewers what awaits on the internet, thus, as the add's creators say, not imposing the add on the consumer but rather providing them with a possibility. It basically suggests it would be nice to visit the corporate Web site of American Express, and see the Seinfeld adventures with Superman, who keeps Seinfeld company in all the campaign's ads. The internet-television combination is also the answer to the simultaneous use of several media, called 'multitasking', which became a daily (predominantly male) consumerist practice. But a closer look reveals that things are not that new. In such communication approaches we can detect the dynamics of advertising industry's assumption of criticism. Sales mocking in ads has already been used very successfully by the Coca-Cola corporation for the Fanta beverage in the 2nd half of the 90s. However, the irony, basically intended to hide the actual message and wrap it in a kind of a shell with the meme inside, has been a common practice of the media activists already from the end of the 80s on (Rushkoff, 1996). Good examples of the use of irony with a subversive message in mainstream media, are i.e. the 'The Simpsons' and 'South Park' cartoons. Social criticism, which is, as in these examples, wrapped in the form of a cartoon and the aesthetics of illustration and animation is brilliant for avoiding censorship and criticism. Internet, on the other hand, is not only used as the main medium for viewing ads, but also as the medium of free distribution, add replication, since anybody who finds the add amusing can send the link to their friends and acquaintances via electronic mail, which is,

though, a characteristic of media viruses, innovated by media activists. Such communication functions also because of the mentioned intimacy, caused by distribution inside an individual's social network, on the level of gossip. The agency Tribal DDB, which is the author of an American Express campaign is announcing campaign in the style of guerrilla, virus marketing (Delo, *ibid.*). Brian Holmes comments on such co-optation: "The best example of co-optation is probably 'guerrilla marketing'. Agencies have discovered the use of light, intimate, everyday material, like for example stickers, which are fun to circulate, by placing the distribution in the hands of the target groups themselves. That is why they look, and partly even are, homemade, spontaneous. The central idea of this approach is acting on the level of gossip, conversation, where public opinion is actually formed". (Vodeb, interview with Brian Holmes, Emzin, 2003).

Just like the advertising industry co-opted the criticism of its era and made it an inherent part of marketing strategies and advertising approaches, the today criticism of the manipulation act, selling ideas on certain service or product through media and advertising, is the point on which both, criticism and criticism co-optation are focused. Due to technological development of computers and multimedia, the development of worldwide Web and mobile communication technologies, however, the co-optation does not go on only on the address level, i.e. in the add contents. Co-optation and criticism do go on in the contents level, but also on the level of communication processes in use of various communication media. I see the main reason for such dynamics in the fact that it is a consequence of the marketing communicators' wish to exploit highly efficient communication approaches, used by media activists and progressive media and communication players, and of their need for criticism eradication by its co-optation by marketing discourse. However, the more such approaches are used, the more marketing communication becomes intimate, the more demanding grow people with time, when it comes to the meaning of communication. Such approaches are more and more difficult to deconstruct,

while as a rule this can be done by all who self-initiatively engage in inner motivated activity. Manipulation endeavours, thus, mainly focus on quasi media aware and semi aware masses in the middle, which could theoretically, with appropriate communication strategy be guided and lead to the purchase of a certain product or service. "For the advertising agency, and more broadly also for the established centers of power, for all those who want us constantly 'buying' modern society, the primary goal lies in how to maintain the predominant conviction that these co-optation attempts actually work - of course, on others". (Vodeb, interview with Brian Holmes, Emzin, 2003).

Instant rebellion



Advertisement for Diesel Jeans. The 2004/5 Campaign was titled "Action".

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However, freedom and free choice, promised by advertising through communication in the above described practises of criticism and rebellion are very deceptive. In most cases, criticism co-optation trivializes criticism to the level of commodity, although it is true that criticism penetration in general marketing discourse fades when criticism becomes a cliché, and critics stop the re-questioning of marketing communication in the public sphere. All this is a process, a never-ending and final state. To claim that marketing discourse always devaluates the power of its own criticism by its co-optation would be an over-simplification. We have to speak of cumulative effects. Through inter-subjective processes of creating the social reality of the changing background

knowledge³, which is potentially changeable and possible to re-question and reflect. Still, we need to ask ourselves about the condition of predominant communication practices, necessary for the mentioned re-questioning and reflection to become a wider social practice.

The co-opted criticism, changed into cool, and rebelliousness, which help to sell, symbolize freedom necessary for neo-liberal ideology with its inherent, socially acquired cognitive patterns to reach a paradoxical state. The state of subordination due to granted freedom.

Freedom, manifested in media sphere through marketing communication of rebellion, quasi criticism in the form of self-irony and freedom in the sense of the supply of various products and services, possible to be bought in package with attached values, on the level of the cool consumerism (dis)solves the opposition between everyday life, at the same time initiated in the system of control over supply and demand on the working force market, and values, mediated through communication networks of market subjects, especially multinational corporations.

Through consumerism, people symbolically break the norms⁴they are subjected to and disciplined by in their everyday lives, while the majority of individuals are not aware of the premises of their own actions, to which they in practice attach meaning, which are at a certain time quoted high on the social market of meaning.

In his lucid work “The debate on liberal slavery – analysis of subordination”, Jean Leon Beauvois describes the clear distinction between the premise of behaviour we have in rare cases access to, and the meaning we attach to behaviour.

³ Habermas defines background knowledge as an individual fund of knowledge, based on the social fund of knowledge. (Škerlep, 1997: 187)

I.e. social and social-psychological circumstances, which affect our actions and the meaning we attach to our own behaviour (Beauvois, 2000: 32-35). "We must find again the roots, which have luckily not been completely erased by the endeavours for 'the end of ideologies', and say that a social psychologist should with the help of ideological analysis of social action discover the meanings society puts in the place of certain premises" (Beauvois, 2000: 35). The author defends the idea that the processes involved in the everyday explanation of events, are more influenced by the social utility of offered explanations, than striving for validity, which would cause people to seek real explanations from the point of view of events' premises.

He defends his argument with the following four issues (Beauvois, 2000: 35):

1. In our societies, there is a norm of judging, a social norm of internality, which defines values to explanations that stress the casual weight of the player (the so-called internal explanations).
2. This social internality norm is connected with the democratic liberal authority implementation.
3. Social utility of internal explanations in personalized cognition originates in assimilation of a) people evaluation (their worth, their usefulness) and b) psychological diagnostics, referring to these people (i.e. men and women). This very assimilation seems important for the meanings, the democratic liberal authorities' implementation practices attribute to these events.
4. This utility can be put into action without the use of more vast cognitive resources, namely since internal explanations are easier to discuss than external. From the cognitive point of view the everyday course of events is easy to attribute meanings to, full of social utility, demanded by the democratic liberal

authority implementation. These meanings have proven to be efficient cognitive weapons for internalization of social utility”.

The actions’ meanings, which in practice replace the actions’ premises, must comply with certain socially created norms. Thus, the social internality norm⁴ will affect the individual in a way to make him project the rebellion mediated by the media and advertising on his own life context, while assigning a significance, in accordance with socially desired values⁵ of a current moment, to the attributes of a certain communication (rebellion) lifestyle. At the same time, he/she will take the credit for the rebellion, which in this case stresses mainly his difference, his individuality and is a product of a rebellious image life-style lived out mainly through goods consumption.

Thus created social value, which enables differentiation between individuals and an individual, is measured in connection with psychological ideals, inherent to the ideology of democratic liberalism (Beauvois, 2000: 93-100).

This social value, which possesses the ability of differentiation, is at the same time extremely useful for creating a distinction between products and services, for creating and replicating the so-called “unique selling proposition”.

This conclusion makes it necessary to turn our attention to the above defined dynamics of marketing communication. The enumerated psychological ideals, based on internality, can be found in the core of the marketing communication

⁴ The internality cult is based on the belief that all individuals’ actions are influenced by the individual him/herself, and not the environment. Due to the social internality norm we define values to explanations that stress the casual weight of the player. (Beauvois, 2000.: 57)

⁵ At this point we should stress that values, quoted highly in society, correspond to values, mediated by media and advertising. I believe both examples deal mainly with commodified background knowledge.

philosophy, especially in advertising. Even though communication, based on the standard mass characteristics has the power to mould and change these characteristics, the result will still be the standard. Statistically balanced communication breeds masses and changes individuals into masses. Yet, this in no way excludes the social-psychological differentiation based on individual value. Rebelliousness in the sense of declarative breaking of social norms or marketing communication's co-optation of criticism of the act of advertising itself or consumption, separates an individual consumer from another individual consumer within the same mass. It turns a consumer into an individualist in a standardized mass of individualists.

Apart from prestige, the goal of managing trademarks is loyalty. Affiliation with a certain trademark due to its attributes. Due to increased media awareness, satiation with information and advertisements, trademark managers, deal with problems of marketing communication efficiency, according to the costs, which arise also in advertising campaign production, market research, and media sphere leases. Competition by increasing the trademark number is rising. So is the number of media, as well as the number of communication channels, used in advertising. A great number of today's consumers do not wish to be manipulated by media and advertising.

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They have somehow lost their trust in advertising and commercial media. Even more, the selling act itself, communicated through advertising, along with consumer culture and globalization problems are causing negative response from a large part of consumers. When buying certain trademarks, a consumer seeks a meaning. In most cases, the trademarks have to stand for something in compliance with the consumer's lifestyle. Trademarks are presented to consumers through communication campaigns, which mostly communicate in public communication sphere. The whole communication network connected with a

medium, represents authority or (a great number of) authorities⁶ to the consumer. The concept of authority I will be discussing here originates in pedagogics and refers to the psychological relation between an individual and authority. A child's inner authority is built in relation to his parents. First in relation to the child's mother, later in his/her relation to the father. By surpassing the symbiotic connection with the mother in realizing the symbolically mediated demands of the significant third, a child is building his/her inner authority, which should ideally be independent and autonomous. However, since the process is far more complicated and does not exclusively socialize in the family, which some refer to as the agency of personality reproduction, the child is influenced by socialization, which takes place also outside of the child's primary sanctuary.

In this case, society with all its influences is the socializator and this is where constant reproduction of establishing outside authorities occurs. Marketing communication and commercial media operate in the way of hidden authority, which functions by allowing an individual the seemingly largest possible amount of freedom, while at the same time constantly controlling him and directing the operating of his mental environment.

The latter will have a role of limiting an individual's wishes and punishing his misdemeanours, and will, in combination with the above described relative

⁶ The term 'authority' originates in the Latin terms 'auctor', which means multiplicator, founder, consultant, dignitary, teacher, representative, ideal, and 'auctoritas' that stands for authority, worth, reputation, influence.

The contradictory contents of the term is explained in the following phrase: assistance, advancement, liberation by subordination. From the long list of meanings of the terms 'authority', 'authoritarian' and 'authoritative' we can deduct two basic characteristics:

The term signifies not only origin of power, but also the form and quality of relations, Semantic problems arise when we try to attribute positive (liberating) power to certain types of subordination, obedience or authority, and negative power (demand for unconditional obedience) to others.

Most frequently authority defines a special relation. Still, most relation definitions can be joined in the declaration, which defines authority as: unequal relation, where the superior side dictates the contents of the relation and strives for the subordinated side to internalize these contents premises and more or less consciously (freely) accept them as his/her own.

media awareness of a target group, manifest itself largely in the cynicism, used by the individual in everyday life, rather than in auto censorship. In the words of Virno: "The basis of today's cynicism is the fact that men and women learn by testing the rules and not the 'facts'..."

Learning the rules also means recognizing their groundlessness and conventionality. We are no longer playing a single "game", in which we participate with true conviction. We are now facing different 'games', each robbed of its seriousness and clarity, a pure self-agreeing, far more brutal and arrogant, far more cynical, the more we use, without illusions but with perfected submission, these very rules, the conventionality and inconstancy of which we have detected." (Virno qtd in Holmes, 2001: 13)

The duty of advertising strategists and creators is rather than successfully selling products and services, also successfully convincing the individual to buy without buying. To look, read or listen to the advertisement, which is not an advertisement, but communication in the sphere between the tolerance margin for marketing communication by an individual message recipient on the one hand, and the evidence degree of the sales motive, which lies behind the add itself, on the side of the advertisers. The use of above described irony on the example of the Fanta beverage add or advertising concepts, communicating with a narration, which actually has no meaning, since that has to be discovered by the message recipient himself, who definitely starts to do so after being exposed to a certain advertising campaign for certain period of time, are some of the answers to the current situation. Advertisers communicate their understanding of the target audience. But no too much! Too broad understanding would already look suspicious, making it seem like the advertisers were breaking into the intimacy, already knowing too much about their target audience. And this would have the opposite effect. But staying alert all the time is tiring. Constant deconstruction of tricks and add image messages takes time and effort, which

is too much, when we think about the number of obligations, an individual comes across and the problems he/she faces everyday. "Just be". Was the Calvin Klein slogan for the CK Be product line, relieving the consumer of the torment of "critical" decoding of messages. (Rushkoff, 1999: 191).

Granting freedom and engaged subordination

Due to the characteristics described above, media and advertising function as hidden authority. While following an individual's every move, they, with a touch of freedom, skilfully hide the evidence of authority and its suggestivity. The most powerful effect, apart from the suggestivity of the contents itself and the way it is mediated, is the consumer's awareness about the numerous other people exposed to certain advertisements or media contents. The important difference between a Website and i.e. a newspaper, radio or television is that in the first example the Website visitor does not know whether there are others exposed to the same medium. The awareness of communication also affecting others adds to the weight of authority. Authority is generally defined as: unequal relation, where the superior side dictates the contents of the relation and strives for the subordinated side to internalize these contents premises and more or less consciously (freely) accept them as his/her own (Kroflič, 1997). In the case of media and advertising, we are dealing with authorities, where the main characteristic is establishing an environment that would function in a desired direction (sales of products and services, lifestyles, political platforms, ideologies and world views), while keeping it concealed, as hushed as possible. Such authority must at the same time take care of consistent elimination of all factors that could prove a disturbing element, functioning contrary to set goals. Practice of course favours criticism of dominant discourse, but only in small dosage and in acceptable, appropriate moments.

In such environment anything goes. Since the individual will be punished by the environment's rules, set in the social matrix, or rather corrected by its minor 'reprimands'. This is symbolic authority, which constructs social reality through

specific institutionalized communication processes. In this case commodified background knowledge has the role of assuming the existent order of power, its legitimization and thus its 'naturalness'.

Therefore, I believe that media and advertising are a hidden authority, which through its specific relation-communication, with its inherent co-opted commodified and largely spectacle mediated cultural criticism, achieves consumer subordination.

Jean Leon Beauvois's analysis of several social-psychological experiments demonstrated that an individual, when put into a certain situation and addressed by authority⁷, will succumb to this authority and do what he/she is asked to do. Here Beauvois divides experimental situations into two very interesting variations. Though claiming that an individual can succumb to expectations, which can be contrary to his values, the difference lies in whether his subordination changes the individual's beliefs, he held in regard to the action he is expected to carry out. Beauvois discovered that an individual, who has been granted freedom, will rationalize his subordination and change his beliefs. Granting freedom, furthermore, carries two additional consequences. An individual will be engaged in subordination. He will be engaged in subordinating to authority and not necessarily the demanded task, while at the same time making his subordination a value. To Beauvois granting freedom is represented already in a single sentence, such as the following: "The choice is yours. If you do not wish to do it, you do not need to" (Beauvois, 2000).

As shown by Naomi Klein's *No logo* work a few years back, a trademark is the very signifier companies wish to implant into the consumer cognition, through advertising, or from a larger perspective, trade-marketing. All communicated

⁷ In his case, this was symbolic or institutional authority, while most cases dealt with professional-scientific authority.

values, all advertising efforts boil down to trademarks, which are present at practically all levels of everyday life (Klein, 2001). Trademarks rely on the intimate relationship with consumers. “Branding” turns strangers into friends and friends into buyers⁸. In a specific example then, symbolic authority becomes the result of the success of marketing communication of a certain trademark, since each of them fights for the attention of as many buyers as possible. Buyers can choose, but will in the end decide on the trademark, which best suits their wishes.

The combination of media awareness, free choice of media, types of media, trademarks, products and services, as well as rebelliousness, communicated through advertising as the constituent part of “branding”, establishes an environment, which is very difficult to deconstruct and to keep a (critical) distance from. Even though relative media literacy represents a part of everyday reception of media texts of an average individual, such individual is, due to its marketing discourse adaptation and new sign regimes, as a result of media and technology development, as well as world design, free to try and deconstruct the environment, where (media) spectacle and self-referentiality of (cultural) criticism of media space merge.



⁸ This motto is part of the “relationship marketing” approach.

Conclusion

Cultural criticism is inherent to marketing communication. It has become instant! Engaged subordination to media and/or advertising can be seen in the everyday life permeated through and through with commercial discourse, and in commodification of background knowledge. At the same time it is not really important which trademarks are being bought and how loyal to them people are. What is important is that people buy them and identify with the values, communicated in the processes of marketing communication. Throughout all this, it does not matter, whether it is youth that can be bought with facial cream, antiglobalist rebellion, as communicated by last year's "Diesel" jeans campaign, or aversion to advertising and the selling act itself, as is communicated by Spike Lee's ironic advertisement for a telecommunication giant "Orange"⁹.

The game between media and advertising on one side and consumers on the other, will go on. It will go on in interactive spectacle, fed byco-opted, commodified, spectacle-like, cultural criticism. For freedom that will not be merely a product or service selling trick, we will need better media awareness. Communication interaction and communication activity will have to be joined by (media multiliterate) activism, both in practice and theory, in production as well as reception of media texts. What we need is systematic and conscious participation in processes of communication.

Appendix: (A short real Story on how Advertising fails to understand the nature of interaction)

Du bist Deutschland

The idea seemed like a good one: an ad campaign to buck up the German spirit and remind the depressive citizens of Europe's largest (but struggling) economy that things really aren't all that bad. Ad agencies, newspapers and a number of

⁹ http://www.uvista.ru/rolls/spike_lee_orange.swf (5.3.2006)

celebrities donated some €30 million-worth of advertising space to the nonprofit Du Bist Deutschland campaign launched last September. Ads appeared on billboards and television, in German magazines and movie theaters, and they featured pictures of the German great and good. Beethoven and Einstein made appearances as did the boxer Max Schmeling and figure skater Katarina Witt - not to mention a luminous photo of a delicate human fetus developing in the womb. “Du bist Deutschland” was the motto on every picture. “You are Germany”. You are talented, beautiful, intelligent, strong. The aim of the campaign? “To fight grumpiness”, wrote Jean-Remy von Matt in an internal e-mail to his employees last October. Von Matt, 53, is the Belgian head of Jung von Matt, the prominent German ad firm that spearheaded the campaign. The e-mail was written after the “Du Bist Deutschland” campaign debuted to nationwide disdain. “The thanks: grumpiness” von Matt continued in the cyber-missive. Fortunately, he continued, the ill humor “came only from the groups you wouldn’t expect anything else from” While von Matt whined briefly about the bile his campaign generated among “intellectual journalists”, he reserved his vitriol for bloggers. Weblogs, he wrote in the internal memo, are “the toilet walls of the Internet.... What on earth gives every computer owner the right to exude his opinion, unasked-for?... And most bloggers really just exude. This new, lowest level of opinion-forming becomes evident when you search for ‘Du bist Deutschland’ on www.technorati.com”.



I am a toilet wall

Indeed. And when you did that over the weekend, after von Matt’s internal e-mail leaked onto the Web, “Du bist Deutschland” was Technorati’s most sear-

ched-for item -in the world- two slots above “bin Laden”. Technorati indexes over 25 million blogs the world over. Also among the top five search terms were “toilet wall” and “Jung von Matt” “Oh, now I get it”, read one blog comment. “I thought ‘Jean Remy von Matt’ was either some kind of pompous ‘nom de plume,’ or just some low-level moron at an ad agency somewhere. Now I see he’s really, truly the creative ‘genius’ behind ‘Du bist Deutschland’ itself” “Herr Jean-Remy von Matt”, read another scribble, which dared tell the man how to do his job, “if the ‘largest nonprofit ad campaign in history’ (sic!) hasn’t come off the way you wanted, the fault doesn’t lie with your target audience”. I “am a toilet wall”, read another sarcastic doodle. “And proud of it”. Catching a whiff of bad publicity Jean-Remy quickly moved to apologize. On Monday, he sent an earnest e-mail to a number of top German bloggers to say he was sorry.

“My mother taught me something”, he wrote. “If you make a mistake, apologize”. He admitted he was wrong to question the basic right of democratic self-expression by insulting bloggers. But, he wrote, I was agitated, and I wrote an e-mail to my colleagues, who had worked hard for months on the campaign and deserved some encouragement against the criticism, justified or unjustified. Maybe I sounded a little envious to you, since the form of self-expression I’ve engaged in for over 30 years as an ad copywriter must seem anything but free: Every word has to be weighed, negotiated with clients, and then tested later for effectiveness. “However! Even if most of the criticism of my e-mail was serious and constructive, I still see it as a breach of respect that an internal memo of mine could be sent scampering like a sow through Little Blogsville... Doesn’t the blogosphere” he wrote, “have a sense of privacy?”.

No improvement to the German mood

Had the man even read a blog before? “What strikes me”, wrote Jens Scholz, a Web designer who published the first von Matt e-mail on his blog last week

and published the apology Monday, “is that either he’s quite brave, or still in the dark about the effects of his words, and about what blogs really are... His attitude hasn’t changed; he’s still giving advice to people he doesn’t understand”. And the Du Bist Deutschland campaign? The ads have spawned so much criticism and satire that a Google search doesn’t even bring up the campaign’s Web site on its first page. People complain in English, German and Dutch -one rabbi in the United States criticizes the inclusion of Einstein. “Portraying Einstein as a paragon of German national culture should offend all people” wrote Rabbi Brad Hirschfeld in the Jewish magazine Forward. “Were it not for the safe haven that Einstein found in the United States, he, like most of Europe’s Jews, would likely have been murdered in the German-led Holocaust. “It also didn’t help the campaign that a photo from a Nazi convention in 1935 surfaced last November with a poster of Hitler’s face and the slogan “Denn Du Bist Deutschland” - which, if it’s real, would damn the current sentimental-kitsch campaign. Historians, though, have said the slogan wasn’t part of the Nazis’ usual propaganda repertoire, and would have been easy to overlook. And - if it’s any consolation for the beleaguered team at Jung von Matt -neo-Nazis loathe the campaign’s multiculturalism. “Seeing that made me want to vomit”, reads one comment on a white supremacist site.



The beginning of a German blogosphere?

Still, nothing’s better for the spirits of a blogging community than an out-of-touch media personality to kick around, and the von Matt affair may prove

to be a watershed for German blogs. Less than a year ago, a statistic made the rounds that Iran had more blogs (65,000) than Germany (42,000) - closely followed by an English top-ten list of the possible reasons why. Now, though, with a globally disdained whipping boy to pound on, German blogs might just be on the way up. "Our campaign, for a few days, reached not just Germany but the entire world", blogger Iris Bleyer wrote in an entry intended for von Matt. "If you want to achieve that kind of coverage with your ads someday, then pay close attention to what the toilet walls of the Internet have done".

"You ain't seen nothing yet", chimed in Jens Scholz. "This is just the beginning"

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