

This is the first chapter of *'Making is Connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0,'* by David Gauntlett. The book was published by Polity Press in March 2011.

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1. Introduction

This is a book about what happens when people make things. I hope it will add to the conversation about the power of the internet and the World Wide Web – a place where we have seen everyday creativity flourish in recent years. But people have been making things – and thinking about the meaning of making things – for a very long time. And the power of making, and connecting through creating, extends well beyond the online world to all kinds of activities in everyday life.

I hope to pull some of these things together, in ways which are hopefully not too obvious as we start. You may reasonably wonder, for instance, how a commentary by Victorian art critic John Ruskin on medieval cathedrals can have affected my understanding of YouTube videos. And you may be surprised when the nineteenth-century socialist and tapestry-weaver William Morris dispenses a blueprint for the making and sharing ethos of 'Web 2.0' in general, and Wikipedia in particular, 120 years early. We will note how the former Catholic priest and radical philosopher Ivan Illich outlined the necessary terms of human happiness, 40 years ago, see how it lines up with the latest studies by economists and social scientists today, and then connect it with knitting, guerrilla gardening, and creative social networks. But not necessarily in that order. We will encounter the 1970s feminist Rozsika Parker, explaining embroidery as a 'weapon of resistance', and several knitters, badge-makers, and bloggers, and they will help us to think about how making things for ourselves gives us a sense of wonder, agency, and possibilities in the world.

Making is connecting

This brings us to the title of the book: ‘Making is connecting’. It’s a perfectly simple phrase, of course. But having spent some time thinking about people making things, and people connecting with others – making *and* connecting – I realised that it was meaningful, and more pleasing, to note that these are one and the same process: making *is* connecting.

I mean this in three principal ways:

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

Of course, there will be objections and exceptions to each of these, which we may consider along the way. But that’s my basic set of propositions.

Three reasons why I wanted to write this book

This book came about because of a number of things I had been thinking about, which I hope are worth listing briefly here.

First, I started out as a sociologist interested in the place of media in people’s lives. That was ok for a while, but 15 and even 10 years ago, the main media that people were usually dealing with was produced by big professional organisations, and it seemed somewhat subservient to be exploring what people were doing with their products. Some of the activity was quite active, thoughtful and imaginative, some of it was mundane, and none of it could score very highly on a scale of creativity because it was all about creative works made by *other people*. Thankfully, the World Wide Web soared in popularity, becoming mainstream in itself, and opened up a world of diversity and imagination where the content itself is created by everyday users (as well as a growing number of professionals). This opportunity to make media and, in particular, share it easily, making connections with others, was unprecedented in both character and scale, and therefore a much more exciting thing to study.

Secondly, this exciting world of participation was, therefore, an exciting thing to participate in *myself*. I’ve always liked making things, but they didn’t have an audience.

With the Web, making writings, photographs, drawings – and indeed websites themselves – available to the world was so easy. It was also rewarding, as people would see your stuff and then send nice comments and links to their own. So I experienced the feeling that making is connecting for myself.

Third, and stemming from the academic interests mentioned in the first point, I was meant to be doing research about what people did, and why, but had always been uncomfortable with the idea of just speaking to them, taking them through an ‘interview’ for my own purposes, without giving them anything very interesting to *do*. Therefore, for several years, I have been developing ‘creative research methods’ where people are asked to *make* something as part of the process. The idea is that going through the thoughtful, physical process of making something – such as a video, a drawing, a decorated box, or a Lego model – an individual is given the opportunity to reflect, and to make their thoughts, feelings or experiences manifest and tangible. This unusual experience gets the brain firing in different ways, and can generate insights which would most likely not have emerged through directed conversation. I have found that the process is especially revealing and effective when people are asked to express themselves using metaphors. All of this was discussed in my previous book *Creative Explorations*¹. In these studies it was clear that thinking and making are aspects of the same process. Typically, people mess around with materials, select things, experimentally put parts together, rearrange, play, throw bits away, and generally manipulate the thing in question until it approaches something that seems to communicate meanings in a satisfying manner. This rarely seems to be a matter of ‘making what I thought at the start,’ but rather a process of discovery and having ideas *through* the process of making. In particular, taking *time* to make something, using the hands, gave people the opportunity to clarify thoughts or feelings, and to see the subject-matter in a new light. And having an image or physical object to present and discuss enabled them to communicate and connect with other people more directly.

Maybe in the end that’s more than three, but for all these reasons I wanted to explore the idea that making is connecting.

Web 2.0 as an idea and a metaphor

This book does not suppose that creative activities have suddenly appeared in the story of human life because someone invented the World Wide Web. However, the Web has certainly made it easier for everyday people to share the fruits of their creativity with others, and to collaboratively make interesting, informative and entertaining cultural spaces. This process has been boosted by the emergence of ‘Web 2.0’, a term which I’ll be using quite a bit in this book. So we should pause here to clarify what ‘Web 2.0’ means. It’s not simply a particular kind of technology, or a business model, and it

certainly isn't a sequel to the Web as previously known. Web 2.0 describes a particular kind of ethos and approach.

I normally explain it using a Powerpoint slide showing gardens and an allotment, that I made using Lego (fig. 1). In the first decade or so of the Web's existence (from the 1990s to the early to mid 2000s), websites tended to be like separate gardens. So for example the NASA website was one garden, and my Theory.org.uk website was another garden, and a little-known poet had made her own poetry website, which was another garden. You could visit them, and each of them might be complex plots of creative and beautiful content, but basically they were separate, with a fence between each one. There's nothing *wrong* with this model, as such; it works perfectly well as a platform for all kinds of individuals, groups, or organisations, big and small, to make stuff available online. But this model is what we might now call 'Web 1.0'. By contrast, 'Web 2.0' is like a collective allotment. Instead of individuals tending their own gardens, they come together to work collaboratively in a shared space.

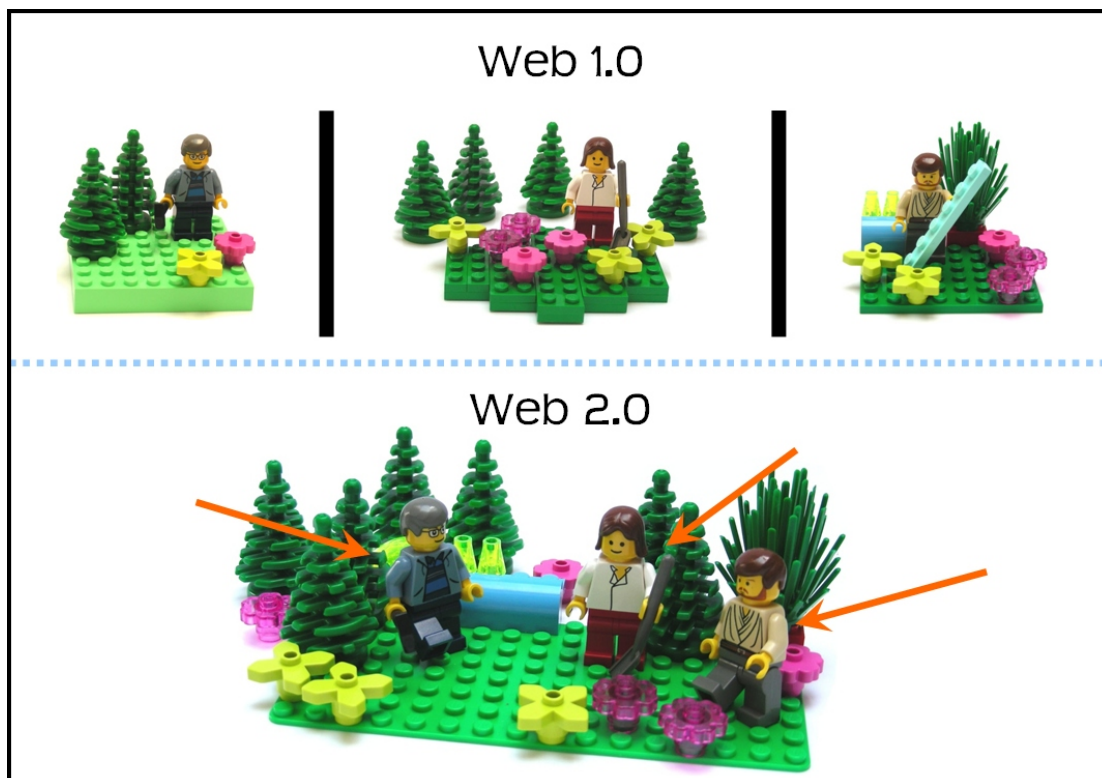


Figure 1: Web 2.0 as a communal allotment

This is actually what Tim Berners-Lee had meant his World Wide Web to be like, when he invented it in 1990. He imagined that browsing the Web would be a matter of writing and editing, not just searching and reading. The first years of the Web, then, were an aberration, and it has only more recently blossomed in the way its creator intended. As an illustration of this, I clearly remember that when I read about this read/write model in

Berners-Lee's book, *Weaving the Web*, when it was published in 1999, it seemed like a nice idea, but naïve, and bonkers. How could it possibly work? I didn't want to spend hours crafting my lovely webpages only for some visitor to come along and mess them up. But of course, my problem – shared with most other people at the time – was that I had not learned to recognise the power of the network. We still thought of everybody 'out there' as basically 'audience'.

At the heart of Web 2.0 is the idea that online sites and services become more powerful the more that they *embrace* this network of potential collaborators. Rather than just seeing the internet as a broadcast channel, which brings an audience to a website (the '1.0' model), Web 2.0 invites users in to play. Sites such as YouTube, eBay, Facebook, Flickr, Craigslist, and Wikipedia, only exist and have value because people use and contribute to them, and they are clearly *better* the more people are using and contributing to them. This is the essence of Web 2.0. The man who coined the term, Tim O'Reilly, has drawn up four levels of 'Web 2.0-ness' to illustrate this². In this hierarchy, a 'level three' application could 'only exist on the net, and draws its essential power from the network and the connections it makes possible between people or applications', whereas a 'level zero' application is the kind of thing that you could distribute on a CD without losing anything. (Levels one and two are mid-points in between).

So Web 2.0, as an approach to the Web, is about harnessing the collective abilities of the members of an online network, to make an especially powerful resource or service. But, thinking beyond the Web, it may also be valuable to consider Web 2.0 as a metaphor, for any collective activity which is enabled by people's passions and becomes something greater than the sum of its parts.

In the books *We Think* by Charles Leadbeater, and both *Here Comes Everybody* and *Cognitive Surplus* by Clay Shirky, the authors discuss the example of Wikipedia, noting the impressive way in which it has brought together enthusiasts and experts, online, to collaboratively produce a vast encyclopedia which simply would not exist without their millions of contributions³. These contributions, of course, are given freely, and without any reward (apart, of course, from the warm glow of participation, and the very minor recognition of having your username listed somewhere in an article's history logs). Both authors then go on to consider whether the Wikipedia model of encyclopedia-making can be translated across to – well, everything else. In these cases, Wikipedia becomes a metaphor for highly participatory and industrious collaboration. However, most of the time they're not *really* thinking of 'everything else' – it's 'everything else online'. Wikipedia becomes a model of highly participatory and industrious *online* collaboration. But the really powerful metaphorical leap would be to go from Web 2.0 to real life – the social world and all its complexities, not just from Wikipedia to other internet services⁴.

So, in this book we will, in part, be taking the message of making, sharing, and collaboration, which has become familiar to the people who enthuse about Web 2.0, and seeing if it works in a broader context – in relation to both offline and online activities – and with bigger issues: real social problems rather than virtual online socialising. This connects with the argument – or the hope – that we are seeing a shift away from a ‘sit back and be told’ culture towards more of a ‘making and doing’ culture. The ‘sit back and be told’ position is forcefully introduced in schools, and then gently reinforced by television and the magic of the glossy, shiny, and new in consumer culture; the ‘making and doing’ is what this book is all about.

The ‘sit back and be told’ culture

Since the historical point at which education became institutionalised in a system of schools, learning has become a process directed by a teacher, whose task it is to transfer nuggets of knowledge into young peoples’ minds. It has not always been this formulaic, of course, and some teachers have always sought to inspire their students to produce their own perspectives on art, poetry, or science. Nevertheless, and in spite of some innovative pedagogical thinking in the 1960s and 70s, school education has tended to settle around a model where a body of knowledge is input into students, who are tested on their grasp of it at a later point.

In the UK, for example, this became especially embedded through the introduction of a National Curriculum (from 1988), with tests for children aged 7, 11, and 14, as well as the qualifications examined at 16 and advanced levels up to age 18, intended to record student performance across the country and therefore to enable the production school ‘league tables’. Teachers would therefore support their students best by preparing them for tests and stuffing them full of the ‘right’ answers. The limitations of this approach to learning were, thankfully, not lost on teachers, journalists, and others – even though conservative newspapers seemed to be both delighted that ‘standards’ could finally be monitored and compared, but also appalled by the falling quality of education which seemed to accompany the introduction of these tests and tables, even though the test scores seemed to get better and better. (The tests for 14-year olds were scrapped in 2009 – but more to reduce the administrative burden on the examinations system, rather than the burden on students⁵). In the United States, the ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation introduced in 2001–02, despite its pleasant-sounding title, similarly made regular testing mandatory in US schools, with similar results: test scores might seem to rise, but many critical groups argue that the quality of *learning* sinks⁶. In 2010, an overhaul of the system proposed by President Obama appeared to include significant changes to funding formulas, but no change at all to the system of regular student testing, which

(6) – Extract from ‘Making is Connecting’ by David Gauntlett – see www.makingisconnecting.org

would remain at the heart of what the *New York Times* described as a renewed ‘drive to impose accountability for students’ standardized test results’⁷.

Meanwhile, the twentieth century was emphatically the era of ‘sit back and be told’ media: especially in the second half of that century, leisure time became about staying in, not going out, and remaining pretty much in the same spot for long chunks of time, looking at a screen. This isn’t a gloomy view, it’s the facts: in 2010, Americans watched on average over four and a half hours of television per day, much as they had done for several decades⁸. In the UK, it’s just under four hours per day⁹. This is, of course, a lot, and since it’s an average, you know that for everybody watching less than this, there are as many other people watching more.

Marshall McLuhan’s famous statement that ‘the medium is the message’ can be taken in various ways, but fundamentally it points to the way in which the arrival of a medium, such as television, in our lives, can affect the way we live – not really because of the content of the messages it carries, but from the generally less noticed ways in which it causes us to rearrange our affairs. This is a very good insight. Media ‘effects’, when we are talking about media *content*, are notoriously hard to measure, generally inconsequential, and mixed up with other influences¹⁰. But the overall ‘effect’ of the introduction of television – assuming that the broadcasters offer some reasonably enjoyable or informative programmes – is clearly *massive* in terms of how people spend their lives.

Four hours of viewing, as an *average*, and *every day*, is an astonishing transformation in how human beings spend time, compared with the pre-television era. This doesn’t mean that television is full of rubbish or that people are idiots for watching it. It’s not hard to find four hours of informative and entertaining things on telly every day. But it would be difficult to argue that this was a highly creative or sociable way for people to spend their time, or that this is not an extraordinary change in the way that human beings spend their non-working hours, compared with the preceding few thousand years.

This relatively passive orientation to time outside work is further reinforced, as mentioned above, by consumer culture. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer observed in the 1940s, and as many critics have noted since, modern capitalism succeeds not by menacing us, or dramatically crushing our will on the industrial wheel, but by encouraging us to enjoy a flow of convenient, cheerful stuff, purchased from shops, which gives us a feeling of satisfaction, if not happiness¹¹. Few of us are immune from the appeal of attractively packaged items, with the sheen and smell of newness, which help us to forget our troubles, at least for a moment.

The notion of the *fetish* might be useful in understanding this. The fetish has sexual connotations, but these are not (necessarily) crucial here. In Freud, a fetish is basically about unconsciously overcoming anxiety through attachment to particular objects¹². In Marx, the fetish describes the way in which we forget that the value of a commodity is a

social value, and come to think of it as independent and real¹³. Somewhere between these two related ideas, we might see the fetish as the common, everyday way in which we find pleasure in the purchase of consumer goods, and acknowledge that it may be silly or irrational, but still a pleasure; and then consistently forget how temporary this diversion is. Between them, television and consumerism draw people into a dully ‘satisfied’ reverie in which – as we will see later – it may not be especially surprising that environmental pollution and other societal problems are generally seen as troubling, but distant, and basically ‘somebody else’s problem’.

Towards a ‘making and doing’ culture

More optimistically, however, we can see a growing engagement with a ‘making and doing’ culture. This orientation rejects the passivity of the ‘sit back’ model, and seeks opportunities for creativity, social connections, and personal growth. Guy Claxton’s 2008 discussion of education, *What’s the Point of School*, highlights ways in which some teachers are beginning to reject the ‘sit back and be told’ school culture described above, and instead are setting their students challenges which are much more about making and doing¹⁴. Students are encouraged to work together to ask questions, explore different strategies of investigation, and create their own solutions. This approach is open about the fact that learning is an ongoing process that everyone is engaged in – teachers themselves might show that they are engaged in a learning project, such as starting to keep bees, or learn a musical instrument. Rather than displaying laminated examples of the ‘best answer’ on the walls, these classrooms show works in progress, experiments, even things that have gone wrong. They encourage a ‘hands on’ approach to learning, and a spirit of enquiry and questioning.

In the case of the media, there is obviously the shift towards internet-based interactivity, which has had a genuine impact on the way that people spend time and on the ways in which they can connect with each other. Today, at least three-quarters of the population of the UK and USA are regular internet users, with almost all young people using it regularly¹⁵. A large-scale study of young people across the USA, published by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2010, found that 74 per cent of 12–18 year olds had created a profile on a social networking website, 49 per cent had read blogs, 28 per cent had written a blog, and 25 per cent had posted a video¹⁶. In the UK, online social networks are just as popular, with more than a third of the whole population having an account on Facebook, for example¹⁷. Every year, more and more people are writing blogs, participating in online discussions, sharing information, music and photos, and uploading video that they have made themselves¹⁸. The desire to communicate and share via social networks such as Facebook has also been the key driver in the growth of internet access on mobile phones¹⁹. The popularity of Web 2.0 is especially

significant here, as easy-to-use online tools which enable people to learn about, and from, each other, and to collaborate and share resources, has made a real difference to what people do with, and can get from, their electronic media. The *range* of collaborative things that people do online is extraordinary. Academics, to some extent, have tended to focus on the more ‘serious’ uses, such as political activism, and the ubiquitous Wikipedia. But of course there are online communities about absolutely everything.

In the non-virtual world, there is a resurgence of interest in craft activities, clubs and fairs²⁰, and their DIY technology equivalents involving machines and robotics, as celebrated in *Make* magazine²¹. Environmental concerns have encouraged people to reduce the amount of stuff they consume, and to find new ways to re-use and recycle. The Transition Towns movement has encouraged communities to work together to find sustainable ways of living²². And as we will see, the Web has played an important role in offline real-world activities, as a tool for communication, networks and organisation.

Defining creativity

I will use the word ‘creativity’ – and the phrase ‘everyday creativity’ – quite freely in this book, in relation to the activities of making which are rewarding to oneself and to others. Attempting to produce a clear-cut and simple definition of creativity can be a diverting and sometimes frustrating task, but we’ll start thinking about it here and then come back to it later.

Let’s start by looking at how other people define ‘creativity’. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is perhaps the best-known of today’s creativity researchers. His *Creativity* study was based on interviews with people who were at the highest end of observed creativity – famous creative names, several of whom had won Nobel prizes for their inventions or creations. This seems to put him at the old-fashioned, or at least the elite, end of the scale, but there are perfectly good reasons for this. Csikszentmihalyi has pioneered a sociological approach to creativity, which is actually not at all old-fashioned or traditional: it rejects the classical notion of the creative ‘genius’ and instead observes how the thing we call creativity emerges from a particular supportive environment. Rather than being a lightning-bolt of unexpected inspiration, he argues, creative outputs appear from individuals who have worked hard over many years to master a particular ‘symbolic domain’ (physics, poetry, architecture, or whatever) and are encouraged by other supportive individuals, groups and organisations. Csikszentmihalyi is interested in the sociological question of how these things come about – surges of creativity which make a difference to culture, science, or society. He writes:

Creativity, at least as I define it in this book, is a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed. New songs, new ideas, new machines are what creativity is all about.²³

This is high-impact creativity, and importantly, it is creativity which is noticed and appreciated by other people:

According to this view, creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate the innovation.²⁴

So the inventive individual is only one part of this triad. Creativity in Csikszentmihalyi's formulation needs a particular established context in which to happen, and also needs to be recognised as something significant by other key people working in that domain. As he puts it:

Just as the sound of a tree crashing in the forest is unheard if nobody is there to hear it, so creative ideas vanish unless there is a receptive audience to record and implement them.²⁵

This approach to creativity sets the bar very high, of course. First you have to produce something brilliantly original, that has never been seen before in the world. Then, as if that wasn't hard enough already, it has to be recognised as a brilliantly original thing by other people. Furthermore, they can't be just *any* people, but have to be the movers and shakers, the well-known thought leaders, in the field where you hope to make an impact. (This makes life especially difficult since the established people in any particular area are often very attached to their own high status, and are not necessarily likely to give a warm reception to promising newcomers).

That's one way of looking at creativity, and it is the right lens for Csikszentmihalyi's analysis of the social conditions which enable recognised, significant innovations to emerge. Other writers on creativity have also followed Csikszentmihalyi's definitions and approach, sometimes in a bid to illuminate 'lower level' creativity. But the lens which is helpful for asking 'How do major cultural or scientific innovations emerge?' is not necessarily the right lens for studying the much more everyday instances of creativity which concern us in this book.

After all, we do typically think of creativity as something which can happen quite routinely, whenever any of us does something in an unexpected but striking and inventive way. We don't *only* say that something is 'creative' when it has been recognised with a Nobel prize, nor do we limit the label to the kind of thing that each of us only does once or twice in a lifetime. Because we are inventive human beings, creativity is something we do rather a lot, and understood in this broad sense it includes everyday ideas we have about how to do things, many of the things we write and

produce, acts of management or self-presentation, and even, of course, witty or insightful speech.

When taken down to this everyday level, the edges of what we might call creativity become rather fuzzy, of course. If I managed to bake and decorate a birthday cake which looked like a dinosaur, for instance, I would feel really ‘creative’. And you might agree. But if you had been told that I was a professional birthday cake-maker who had been producing the same dinosaur cake for ten years, you definitely wouldn’t. Between these two poles, my creativity rating might also be affected by, say, whether or not you thought it was ‘cheating’ to use shop-bought sweets to represent the eyes and scales, and whether or not you suspected I’d looked at pictures of other dinosaur cakes on the internet. It’s easy to get bogged down in this kind of thing. But as I said in *Creative Explorations*:

You could argue endlessly, if you wanted to be rather trivial, about whether one thing ‘is’ and another thing ‘is not’ creative. But that’s not really the point. The point is that creativity is widely dispersed and, more importantly, is one of the most central aspects of being human.²⁶

Most of the research literature *about* creativity, however, does not really take this view. A reasonable summary is provided by Charles Lumsden, who considered a range of definitions from leading figures, and found that ‘the “definitions” of creativity I have seen in the literature... carry the unique imprint of their progenitors while suggesting some mild degree of consensus: creativity as a kind of capacity to think up something new that people find significant’²⁷.

The trouble with this approach, though – as I’ll go on to say in chapter 3 – is the strong emphasis on the end product, and the judgement of others. Creativity might be better understood as a *process*, and a *feeling*. In this way of looking at it, creativity is about breaking new ground, but internally: the sense of going somewhere, doing something, that you’ve not done before. This might lead to fruits which others can appreciate, but those may be secondary to the process of creativity itself, which is best identified from within.

Hold onto these thoughts for now. In a section at the end of chapter 3 I’ll be wheeling out a gleaming new definition of creativity which hopefully overcomes these problems.

What this book is and what it is not

This book is a discussion about the value of everyday creativity, taking in handmade physical objects and real-life experiences as well as the recent explosion of online creativity. Indeed, it seeks to make connections from one sphere to the other, in the hope that we can learn about recent ‘Web 2.0’ creativity by looking at what people have said

about the values, ethics and benefits of more traditional craft and DIY activities, and perhaps also vice versa. This is generally done through the use of some relevant theories and philosophies – quite grounded and earthy ones, nothing very abstract – and knitted, I hope, into the reality and experience of particular creative activities.

This is *not*, though, a set of case studies about particular craftspeople, artisans, bloggers and YouTube-makers. That wasn't meant to be the point of this book – you can get such material elsewhere, and I didn't want the discussion to be based around a sequence of meetings and anecdotes. Nor is it one of those books which weaves together autobiography with more general insight – although if you want that kind of thing, happily I can now recommend two very good books which came out around the time I was finishing writing this one: *The Case for Working with Your Hands: or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good* by the philosopher and motorcycle mechanic Matthew Crawford (published in the US with the slightly shorter title, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work*), and *Made by Hand: Searching for Meaning in a Throwaway World* by Mark Frauenfelder, the Editor-in-Chief of *Make* magazine²⁸. Those two books, along with Richard Sennett's excellent *The Craftsman* – which I also recommend – primarily concern the values, applied intelligence, and feelings associated with making things *by hand*, as well as the need to understand how our material world works so that we can engage with it, fix it, or transform it²⁹.

This book is about those things too, to some extent, and includes a few autobiographical bits, but it's more about the value of making stuff more generally. In particular, it's about making and sharing our own *media* culture – I mean, via low-fi YouTube videos, eccentric blogs, and homemade websites, rather than by having to take over the traditional media of television stations and printing presses – which isn't quite 'by hand' in the literal pottery-making, woodcarving sense, but which I feel is still basically a handicraft which connects us with others through its characterful, personality-imprinted, individual nature, as well as because it's a form of communication.

And the *real* point of the book is —

The other reason why the book mostly doesn't pick over lots of examples of creativity, one by one, is because I wanted to address the broader question of 'Why is everyday creativity important?'. Because I feel that it's incredibly important – important for society – and therefore *political*. And, to be frank about my motives, people don't seem to get this. Presenting this kind of thing in front of academics who see themselves as 'critical' and 'political' scholars, I get the definite feeling that they think I'm doing, at best, a sweet kind of sideshow. Whilst they struggle with 'real' issues such as government regulation of broadcasting, or something to do with political parties, I am enthusing about everyday people making nice objects or clever little videos, which may

be pleasant but is an irrelevance in terms of political or social concerns. If it's any kind of issue at all, it's a 'cultural' one: and who cares really if people watch silly entertainment on television or if they make their own silly entertainment; if they grow their own flowers, make their own toys or gloves, or buy them from a supermarket; or if people write their own songs, or buy someone else's.

But I think it's absolutely *crucial*. Even if each of the things made seems, to a grumpy observer, rather trivial. You may note that my examples just above are not the absolute essentials of life – people can survive without silly entertainment, flowers, gloves, or songs, if they have to. But it is the fact that people have made a *choice* – to make something themselves rather than just consume what's given by the big suppliers – that is significant. Amplified slightly, it leads to a whole new way of looking at things, and potentially to a real political shift in how we deal with the world.

One example of how the idea of everyday creativity can be scaled up into something significant, political, and vitally important, is the Transition movement. The Transition movement stems from the idea that – although we are likely to face really huge challenges as climate change grows, and as the oil that we rely on so much runs out – human beings are *creative* and can work well together to do great things. And therefore, if we think imaginatively together, and make plans and ideas for a new enjoyable way of living which doesn't rely so much on the environmentally damaging things, or things we're running out of, then we might be OK. This is an approach based on optimism and creativity, and it could actually work. The movement is taking off, and you can read about it in the books, *The Transition Handbook* by Rob Hopkins and *The Transition Timeline* by Shaun Chamberlin, or at the website, www.transitionnetwork.org³⁰.

The Transition movement is a great illustration of what I'm talking about, then, but so is the less obviously 'political' content of online video and craft sites, and everyday homemade events, untrained attempts at art, humble efforts to make a knitted owl with solar-powered eyes, and anything else where people are rejecting the givens and are making their world anew. This helps us to build *resilience* – one of the key Transition words – and the *creative capacity* to deal with significant challenges.

Outline of the book

The book begins by forgetting about the internet at first, and exploring some philosophical, political and practical explanations of the human drive to make things. In chapter 2 this is mostly centred around two Victorian makers and thinkers, John Ruskin and William Morris. In chapter 3, we look at more recent craft and DIY ideas, activities, and motivations. By chapter 4, we arrive at the internet again, and consider 'making is connecting' in online environments. Then we turn to the value of having social

connections, and collaborative projects, in everyday life: chapter 5 looks at recent research into happiness, and chapter 6 considers ‘social capital’ – the community glue made up of friendly connections with others. Chapter 7 is about having the tools for creative expression and making a difference, and features quite a bit of the philosopher Ivan Illich. Chapter 8 takes on some of the criticisms of Web 2.0 and its enthusiasts, and finds reason to disagree with some, but concur with others. Finally, chapter 9 pulls things together in a conclusion, where we set out five key principles of ‘making is connecting’, and consider their implications in terms of the media, education, work, politics and the environment.

For other material, videos, links and more, see: www.makingisconnecting.org

NOTES

¹ David Gauntlett, *Creative Explorations: New approaches to identities and audiences* (London: Routledge, 2007).

² Tim O’Reilly (2006), ‘Levels of the Game: The Hierarchy of Web 2.0 Applications’, 17 July 2006, <http://radar.oreilly.com/2006/07/levels-of-the-game-the-hierarc.html>

³ Charles Leadbeater, *We Think: Mass Innovation not Mass Production* (London: Profile Books, 2008). Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organising Without Organisations* (London: Allen Lane, 2008). Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age* (London: Allen Lane, 2010).

⁴ I expect Charles Leadbeater is doing some of this, implicitly if not explicitly, in some of his other work, such as his ideas on education reform – see www.charlesleadbeater.net.

⁵ See coverage such as BBC News, ‘Tests scrapped for 14-year-olds’, 14 October 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7669254.stm>. ‘Children’s Secretary Ed Balls... said that the decision to stop Sats tests for 14-year-olds was “not a u-turn” – and that the wider principle of the need for testing and accountability remained.’

⁶ The Wikipedia article, ‘No Child Left Behind Act’, includes a lot of referenced information about the arguments of the Act’s advocates and opponents.

⁷ Jackie Calmes, ‘Obama Defends Education Program’, *New York Times*, 29 July 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/30/education/30obama.html>

⁸ For the latest data, see www.nielsen.com. Summaries of television viewing appear in ‘Reports’ in the ‘Insights’ section.

⁹ For the latest data, see www.barb.co.uk. Summaries of television viewing appear under ‘Viewing figures’.

¹⁰ David Gauntlett, *Moving Experiences, 2nd edition: Media effects and beyond* (London: John Libbey, 2005).

¹¹ Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1979).

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- ¹² Sigmund Freud, 'A Case of Hysteria', *Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works* (London: Vintage, 2001).
- ¹³ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (London: Penguin, 2004).
- ¹⁴ Guy Claxton, *What's the Point of School?* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).
- ¹⁵ See data in chapter 6, pages [TBC].
- ¹⁶ Victoria J. Rideout, Ulla G. Foehr, & Donald F. Roberts, *Generation M²: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds* (Menlo Park, California: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/8010.cfm>. Note that time spent online cannot be simply subtracted from time spent with conventional media, as an ever-growing ability to multitask meant that these young people managed to pack more media use into their time than before.
- ¹⁷ Alastair Jamieson, 'Facebook's 500m users include one in three Britons', 22 July 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/7904103/Facebooks-500m-users-include-one-in-three-Britons.html>
- ¹⁸ Some detailed data appears in Steph Gray and Rebecca Jennings, 'How are young people using social media?', Forrester and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, September 2008, <http://www.slideshare.net/diusgovuk/how-are-young-people-using-social-media-presentation>
- ¹⁹ *The Guardian's* Digital Content Blog, 'Facebook leads rise in mobile web use', 8 February 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/feb/08/facebook-rise-mobile-web-use>
- ²⁰ For instance, the resurgence of interest in craft activities is one of the key findings of the 'Living Britain' report, an independent study by The Future Laboratory, commissioned by Zurich, published 2007. Although commercially funded, the study draws on a wide range of data and expertise, and Zurich has no apparent vested interests in this kind of finding. <http://www.zurich.co.uk/home/Welcome/livingbritain/>. Similarly, Joanne Turney cites a number of statistics which suggest that significantly increased numbers of people are taking up knitting, in *The Culture of Knitting* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), p. 1.
- ²¹ This is a physical magazine, but also has a comprehensive website at <http://www.makezine.com>.
- ²² See note 37.
- ²³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997), p. 8.
- ²⁴ Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*, p. 6.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Charles J. Lumsden, 'Evolving Creative Minds: Stories and Mechanisms', in Robert J. Sternberg, ed., *Handbook of Creativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 153.
- ²⁸ Matthew Crawford, *The Case for Working With Your Hands: or Why Office Work is Bad for Us and Fixing Things Feels Good* (London: Viking, 2010). Mark Frauenfelder, *Made by Hand: Searching for Meaning in a Throwaway World* (New York: Portfolio, 2010).
- ²⁹ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Allen Lane, 2008). And for a particular focus on doing things by hand, see Frank R. Wilson, *The Hand: How its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1999).
- ³⁰ Rob Hopkins, *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (Totnes: Green Books, 2008). Shaun Chamberlin, *The Transition Timeline: for a local, resilient future* (Totnes: Green Books, 2010). For an introduction, see Rob Hopkins' TED talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_hopkins_transition_to_a_world_without_oil.html