

Innovation and the Post-Original: On Moral Stances and Reproduction

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This article represents an inquiry into the ontology of innovation, that is, the foundational issues of innovation and how we conceive of the nature of innovation and creativity. By juxtaposing the notions of novelty and copying, the article introduces the concept of 'post-originality' as a way to understand how time and reproductive acts can be understood in relation to the innovative. Looking at how innovation and creativity are hailed as the highest forms of economic action, while copying and derivation have often been viewed as somewhat lesser forms, the article thus discusses how moralizations affect the way in which we view the economic. Specifically building on the works of German polymath Walter Benjamin and his theories of time, ruin and redemption, the article connects with the philosophy of history, and by way of three mini-cases, presents three tentative modes of the post-original (derivation, knock-offs and remixes), showing how these can each in their own way raise interesting issues regarding the role of copying in creating the new. We end with a reflection on the notion of the event in innovation, inspired by the French philosopher Alain Badiou and his engagement with the truth of the event.

Introduction

Innovation and innovation management have commonly been seen as dealing with how the 'new' is brought into the world, and thus dealing with the creation of truly original objects. One of the authors of this article recently edited a special issue in *Creativity and Innovation Management's* June 2006 issue (15.2) with Christian de Cock, titled 'Explorations of the New', and the argument below might be understood as an extension of the discussions in it, as the fundamental issue in both is that of innovation and ontology. Although many researchers in innovation management have shown that there are epistemological problems with essentializing innovation, thus on the surface arguing for a critique of novelty in innovation management, the ontological element of innovation has received almost no consideration. A positivist understanding would of course conflate these, disregarding ontological issues as empty metaphysics, but we contend that this is a scientist fallacy, which serves mainly as a way conveniently to ignore criticisms that one is uncomfortable with. Thus, we will in this article posit a number of ontological questions regarding innovation. These questions may seem strange or

even incomprehensible to people accustomed to more 'pragmatic' approaches to innovation. They may also seem overly critical, or as an attempt to reduce the field into a straw man. At the same time, they should be understood not as a new model or a new theory, but rather as an intervention through which the field might probe the way it uses its concepts and the way in which certain moral presuppositions have become defining for the field. Consequently, our aim is not to make totalizing claims regarding innovation management, nor to reduce it to a set number of claims, but rather to invite an *engagement* with ontological issues in the field.

The innovator is in the common narrative of economic development a heroic figure, one who opposes old regimes and creates a rift in the weave of economic time, ushering in the new. In the chasm between the old and the new, standing there in the 'gales of creative destruction', the innovator is a herald and the creator without a primogenitor (cf. Elliott, 1980). Such creation has commonly been seen as both the primary process with which management studies should be concerned and the very foundation of market economy (Baumol, 2002; Edquist, 2004; von Hippel, 1988). However, implicit in this view of innovation and

economy is a notion of the original as being ontologically secure, stable in its position as a value-creating event. Furthermore, this specific event, based on a temporally delineated space as the singular origination of the production of value, implicitly positions reproduction and the post-original as bleak copies of the original, as mere echoes of value. This notion that an entrepreneur, seemingly through the sheer force of her personality, can conjure up something fundamentally novel and ontologically different into the world, may be politically expedient, but it is philosophically suspect. It builds on the fallacy of innovation being a break with history, and although for example the field of innovation management has flirted with the notion of innovation as processual and developmental, the ontological issue of novelty remains insufficiently explored and often conveniently ignored. Whereas the study of innovation has been inundated with epistemological frippery on historical linkages and the difficulty of stating when an innovation comes into being, the very problem of having a field that gets its legitimacy by assuming that one can talk about innovation in a sensible and ontologically grounded way has yet to be dealt with.

It is possible that the common view of innovation, and consequently innovation management itself, essentializes originality and oversimplifies the origination of value in the 'original'. Rather than studying such 'original value events', we argue for a more complex conceptualization of innovation, one that is less grounded in simple temporally grounded origination and that rather attends to the valorization thereof – that is, the way in which something is defined as valuable. Although the notion of an event in which value enters the world in a pure, non-contextual form might be expedient, it lacks in analytical rigour. It also hinders our thinking of how value is created through less grandiose breaks with the past, because the romantic fantasy of innovation management as controlled revolution has been the dominant narrative (see Christensen, 1997; Utterback, 1994).

Note that we are not referring merely to a more processual view of innovation, a move deployed quite frequently in for instance actor-network theory or science and technology studies. Admittedly, such approaches do tend to look at the problem of value events, and emphasize the unfolding of innovation as taking place over time. However, rather than fundamentally challenging the issue of origins, such approaches usually temporally extend the original value event, rather than challenging it. What we are arguing against is not the fact that innovation occurs, nor that

this can happen in many ways, but rather the moralization that takes place in the discourse of innovation. The moral stance of deigning to signify certain things as 'innovations' and other things as 'something else' is a necessary aspect of language, but the reification that occurs through this is a problem for innovation studies, and should be reflected on. Put somewhat differently, as innovation clearly is an abstract concept, it should be dealt with as one, rather than falling into the idealist fallacy that innovation can be treated as a locked ontological category.

This article is consequently an attempt to think innovation outside the essentialist framework, and thus an inquiry into the ontology of innovation, with a particular emphasis on issues of repetition and afterlives as inspired by Walter Benjamin (1985, 1998, 1999). Rather than conceptualizing innovation as belonging to a pre-set structure of old versus new, the article tries to position notions of reproduction and the post-original into theorizing on innovation. By problematizing the inherent essentialism in taken-for-granted notions of innovation management, the article thus attempts a recasting of our thinking of valorizing events.

Original Value Events and the Echoes of Value

Central to our argument is the notion of an 'original value event'. Although not in common usage as a term, we argue that this is in fact an important, if implicit and subconscious, foundational concept in innovation management, and one that has to be critically re-evaluated. Furthermore, it is the belief in such an event that makes traditional thinking of innovation essentialist. We will elucidate these claims in the following.

When does an innovation take place? The answer from traditional innovation management is neatly twofold: either when something new has been developed (the invention perspective) or when an innovation is successfully introduced on a market (the commercialization perspective). Even though there are some alternative positions to these 'solid' perspectives to innovation, with those that draw on the history of technology (see e.g. David, 1985, 2001; Van den Ende & Kemp, 1999) being perhaps most influential, there has been little problematization of the fundamental issue of the origination in discussing these. This fundamentally philosophical issue has perhaps been viewed as too abstruse and too metaphysical to be of practical interest, but at

the same time this lack of engagement has made us blind to a number of issues.

The view of innovation as an event, or the eventness of innovation, speaks to the feeling that we can clearly sense a before and an after when talking thereof, and is thus clearly tied not only to a linear view of time but also to a notion of ontologically secured positions in a time-value continuum. The first part is the least problematic. Although one can criticize management studies for depending too much on a simplified view of time (cf. Whipp, Adam & Sabelis, 2002) and for idealizing progress, these are simply symptoms of a much larger problem. What is problematic, and the main concern here, is the tendency to ascribe ontological certainty to specific processes of valorization, resulting in the fixation of value-production to specific instances in time. This creates a fallacious view in which value is seen as something that 'sticks' to a specific instant or a definable set of circumstances. It is this view that Joseph Schumpeter (1934, 1942) turns into dogma when he makes the entrepreneur and specifically his (*sic*) innovation into icons. This can be described as the ideology of origin or the desire for the event, and this is not negated by calls for a more processual view. A process view may on some level seem more 'fluid' than an avowedly static one, but will in fact mostly just extend the notion of the value event temporally rather than criticize it. Our concern is not to quibble about whether an innovation occurred on 14 November or whether it in fact occurred over a period of some weeks, months or years, but rather to question how something can be called an innovation, and what this reification rests on.

The event, as a specific phenomenon, has of late become central in philosophy and social theory. It is at the heart of the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (see Deleuze 1994, cf. *Creativity and Innovation Management* 15(2)) and Alain Badiou (see Badiou, 1988, 2002), and the actuality that can only emerge in the specificity of the event is of course a highly important issue for any social science, as it captures both the possibility for a lived ethic and the space within which the political can be actualized. What we are discussing here, however, is not that event within which Badiou has seen the potential for revolution and transfiguration, but rather the ascribed notion of there being a specific event of value that can be fixed, essentialized. This is in fact not an event of the kind a Deleuze or a Badiou are talking about, but rather its opposite (we will return to Badiou's understanding of the even in the conclusion to this article t). Whereas the event as an actuality cannot be captured and made into an edifice, as it can only be fully understood in its becoming (any

later retelling will by definition lose some of the energy of the 'being there' of the event), the idea of innovation as an original value event is one where value and action can be ascribed to a specific position and 'locked in', i.e. where actuality ceases to matter. In this thinking, regardless of what matters, innovation has always already taken place at a specific point in time (even though this can be an extended period), and this has positioned value as an eternal object. This is for instance the kind of thinking that drives much of the debate in intellectual property, where the 'creative moment' is seen as the sole or main value-producing event, and all manipulation or utilization of that which derives from this is seen as parasitic, as mere repetition. Thus, innovation as a dynamic of breaks and rifts is turned into a relation of ownership, where the unfolding of creative energies is turned, by way of valorizing reduction, into a claim of property. Innovation is here no longer an issue of creating, but one of recreating the property as the necessary condition of exchange-value – and thus removed from the very fact of innovating.

This can also be understood as a specific case of fetishism, structurally similar to commodity fetishism as this was discussed by Marx in the first volume of *Capital*. In this, the manifold of social relations that form the value of a thing are reduced to that of another thing, money. Thus, commodity fetishism essentializes one part of a network of relations – from which value emerges processually – and creates the illusion that value is something that belongs to this specificity through the mechanism of pricing (cf. Žižek, 1989). In a similar way, innovation management has fetishized the moment of innovation (the assumed 'original value event') as having an essential value that can be understood as freed from the process of valorization.

In order to investigate this thinking, we would suggest that the temporal nature of value needs to be highlighted and probed. As it stands, innovation management assumes that the value occupies a specific position in the flow of economy, and that the fundamental nexus thereof lies in the break between the old and the new (as postulated by Schumpeter) that we commonly signify by the term 'innovation'. This, however, fundamentally ignores the process of valorization, that is, the social and cultural act of ascribing value, and thus the political dimension of even using a term such as 'innovation'. Clearly, this could be investigated by studying how innovation management valorizes the New, and how economic discourse endlessly repeats and reiterates its praises of e.g. entrepreneurship (cf. Jones & Spicer, 2005; Rehn & Taalas, 2004).

Even though it is obvious that it is the valorization of the moment of the New that drives much of the theory of innovation, our interest lies elsewhere, specifically in what we call 'echoes of value'. One result of the valorization of the original value event is the corresponding disregard for that which follows from this. If value is assumed to originate in a specific instance of creation, unassailable and eternal, anything that postdates this would seem a mere continuation and an echo. A view of innovation that turns away from such essentialism would open up to understanding that which comes after the assumptive origin, and enable us to study some of the Others of innovation.

On the Status of the Post-Original

The valorization of the original has created a state where the post-original, that which is not part of the event of the object of value, has been viewed as generally uninteresting and specifically irrelevant to innovation management. Even though the latter might seem commonsensical, the former is clearly a fallacy. The question is whether the latter is too. At the heart of the issue is the question of how we should understand the role of reproduction in economy, and the forms that it takes. The possibilities that are opened by taking the copy seriously, by not being mesmerized by the original, is in our view of central interest when querying what innovation management can be.

Clearly, reproduction is not only an important part of economy, it is the central aspect thereof. On a very basic level, economy is reproduction, as even production in and of itself is a question of copying. The industrial revolution was little more than harnessing technology in order to reproduce things more efficiently, and the 'new economy' is built on the fact that digital goods can be perfectly copied almost without cost or effort. Without the possibility of reproduction – whether this is mass-production or producing single units as reproductions of an idea – economy becomes almost impossible to think. So the valorization of innovation can be seen as a dreamworld of sorts, one where the mundane aspects of economic life are hidden behind a continuous iteration of the primary fantasy, the origin of value as an event (cf. Žižek, 1989).

Still, copies are seen as intellectually uninteresting, or interesting merely as an optimization problem (as in 'how to copy efficiently'). The reasons for this are manifold. In part, we may still be wedded to a fundamentally male logic, where reproduction is deigned insignif-

icant because of its feminine connotations. In part, the production of the post-original seems to take less effort than producing the new, creating a hierarchy of production. In yet another take on the same issue, a copy may seem like a question answered – if copies can be made, what is the problem? Quite often, our strive to find 'significant' problems tends to turn us away from the subtle riddles of the mundane, and as there seems little actually to query in the copy, the post-original has been greatly ignored in discussions of economy and management, regardless of its obvious importance in the economy.

In innovation management, which fetishizes the original, this tendency has been elevated to definitional dogma. Innovations are assumed *a priori* to be original, and the condition of post-originality is seen as, at best, an afterthought. Although the notion of 'incremental innovation' is well known (see e.g. Henderson & Clark, 1990), as is the processual analysis of innovation, this is often presented merely as an assignation for a move that requires little analysis, and subsequently, incremental and processual innovation remains under-theorized. Furthermore, even though the discussion thereof has attempted to introduce tweaking and the post-original into the debate, it has never managed to free itself from the lure of the original value event, though it has tried to de-dramatize it.

What a post-original perspective attempts to do is different. Rather than conceptualize the problem of innovation and time by way of ever-minor value events, the post-original points us towards a way of understanding innovation where the problem of localizing the same is seen as unsolvable and possibly antithetical. We could, following the thinking of Ludwig Wittgenstein, state that there is no point in searching for the 'source' or 'meaning' of innovation, but that we rather should occupy ourselves with inquiries into the use of and family resemblances between different forms of innovative behaviour. But in doing so we must also rid ourselves of the notion that there would be some specific basic form that must be adhered to, some origination that must be present. Another way to state this would be to note that the moralization inherent in calling some things 'innovations' is at the same time a way to negatively categorize their Others, and that this moralization needs to be reflected on – and that although innovation studies has managed to discuss variations of innovation, it has paid less attention to what non-innovation might be and what such (often implicit) assignations would mean. A move towards the post-original breaks with the original as valorized original, even though it

acknowledges a history and a genealogy to the studied phenomena. In this way it follows the method of Michel Serres (see e.g. Serres, 1995), where analysis is seen as less of a reduction to essences, and more of a travel between modes of understanding.

Consequently, in the following we will introduce the thinking of German social theorist Walter Benjamin and then go on to analyse three specific modes of the post-original – derivation, knock-offs and post-production – and discuss how these relate to innovation.

Walter Benjamin and the Afterlife of Objects

The post-original is the unfolding of innovation. It is an unstable tuft of a concept, something that cannot be investigated in the case itself, but rather in the movement away from the case. It is the shadow cast by the light of the lamp as the real nature of light, or something like an echo. But not an echo as the lesser of a clarion call, but as that which signifies the impermanence of the assumed original. It is memory, scent, light (for any light is always removed from that which is illuminated). It is the afterlife of the object.

One of the main thinkers of such afterlives would be the idiosyncratic polymath Walter Benjamin. Obviously, this is not the place to summarize the thinking of a major European thinker, and we will not. Instead, we want to discuss some points in his thinking, his ways to detour traditional mores, and to show how this can lead us down new avenues in innovation studies. Much of his ambling, diverse oeuvre can be read as an engagement with a specific form of emergent creativity, namely the afterlife of objects and the way in which transformational forces actualize and reposition things and contexts. By way of a dialectic engagement with the movement of the world, Benjamin strove towards an emergent critique, one where the truth of an object could only be divulged by way of its life, the ways in which the thing in between constellations slowly accrued meaning.

Afterlife refers to the patient process of disintegration and ruination in which the object emerges from earlier contexts, shorn of some of its original features but with new accretions upon it. Afterlife is the period in which the pure but deceptive surfaces of the object are eroded, in which hidden meanings are unfolded and truth is ultimately disclosed. It is the time in which the object is subject to transformations and interventions which re-cognize its significance

and 'actualize' its potential: translation, transcription, imitation, criticism, appropriation, (re)construction, reproduction, remembrance, redemption. (Gilloch, 2001, p. 4)

For Benjamin (1985, p. 32), the 'art of interruption' is at the very core of philosophical, innovative thinking. But this interruption is not the fracture of Schumpeter, but a continuous, dialectical engagement not merely with the outside world, but also the tendency of thinking to limit itself to the deduced solution. What Benjamin thus, in his roundabout way, is talking about is creativity as it takes place both in the world and in thinking. Thus the afterlife, the life after our immediate act of valorization, is in his thinking the true space of innovation – the post-original. At the same time, Benjamin has been understood as a staunch defender of the original, and his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (Benjamin, 1999) has at times been read as a directly romantic defense of art. However, even though he begins his essay with some remarks on the difference between art and reproduction, he brilliantly follows this by showing how new forms of reproduction create new understandings of art, thus dialectically turning the question of reproduction into not merely a move that follows original creation, but which develops with it. What Benjamin thus does is highlight not only how the work of art changes by being subjected to the possibility of reproduction, but also how new forms of reproduction redefine what we can understand with art, or engagement generally. The age of reproduction (for clearly 'mechanical' represents just one age) is thus an age of redefinition, where innovative ways of replicating – recasting phenomena – create an innovation in the way we can understand the world. For instance, the invention of photography did not merely create a new niche, nor just a new way to copy the visual (think painting versus photograph) but a new way to relate to the visual, a new way to think what it means to see. These things, that develop in culture, out of reproduction, are not yet present in the invention of photography, but emerge out of the ways of reproducing it. What Benjamin thus presents is a way for thinking to break with simple commodity fetishism.

Specifically, we should pay heed to three modes of being that are central to Benjamin's work: ruin, remembrance and redemption. For him, the slow dissolution of the world is not a fault lodged in the world, but a natural progression, ruination as life. Also, in his thinking ruin is not merely a negative. Rather, it is the

way in which reality comes into being. By being turned towards ruin, empty metaphysics is turned into living things, an inversion of the Platonic ideal, and close in thinking to his friend Bertolt Brecht's *'plumpes Denken'* (a notion of how thinking that strives to create change in the world needs to be blunt in order to have an impact, see Benjamin, 1998). In relation to innovation this same could be posed thus: When we stare at the moment of innovation, we merely see a phantasmagoria of innovation, and implicitly read in our own dreams and hopes into the object. In fact, the innovation does not become itself until it has undergone a period of ruination, during which the shiny surface of an ideology of the origin has been stripped off of it, and an amount of the grime of lived reality has gathered in its place. It is this ruination that creates the possibility of talking of the innovation rather than the ideology surrounding it. Here, the art of interruption is central, for it is in the process of pausing, of giving pause, that things can develop. Innovation must, paradoxically, be interrupted in order to become meaningful. This process also brings in the importance of memory.

The implicit notion of the original value event does not require a memory. Assuming there to be an event within which value and creativity itself is crystallized means that remembrance is unnecessary simply because the moment will carry itself through time. However, reading Benjamin it becomes clear that he views memory not simply as a process of reproduction, but as active creation (the parallel here to Deleuze, and Jeanes (2006) in *Creativity and Innovation Management* 15(2) is obvious). It is in remembrance that we can find both actualization and the fetish of the commodity form, and it is thus in this mental recasting that we can find the path that an object's afterlife takes. Through this we are presented with a possibility to rethink the notion of innovation as commercialization, as Benjamin highlights just how the dreamworld of the commodity-form works as actualization. But it also opens up to the notion of redemption, for specifically by realizing the political power of remembrance can the forgotten and discarded – the scary Other of innovation – be brought back and thus enrich our understanding of the afterlife, life as a post-original state. An actively wielded memory can bring about redemption for the forgotten. And it is this, the care for that only half-remembered, which drives Benjamin.

What Benjamin, in all his works, drives towards is the development of a critique. Such a critique can never be fixed or ended, but must be understood as a continuous engage-

ment. Rather than accepting the state of the world, it will try to recast and recontextualize, never letting history be. It is always post-original, always following the echoes. Benjamin thus poses an alternative to the search of the original, by arguing that the way in which things become real is not, in fact, through innovation, but through their afterlives. Whereas innovation or novelty are important, the reality and truth of innovation is not inherent in the process of innovation but in the way in which the assumed original lives on. The truth of the innovation thus lies in the way it becomes post-original, in the way it realizes an afterlife. When Benjamin tries to formulate a critique of history, he engages directly with the extended view on innovation and value that we try to represent with the concept of the post-original. He shows how there is little point in searching for a primal meaning or truth, and that in order to fully comprehend the nature of value, we need to let go of our tendency to essentialize specific moments (or periods) of time. Rather, Benjamin argues for a dialectic engagement with the life of the object, one where there is no final point, nor any point that deserves valorization above another.

In order to exemplify such a dialectic move, we will now turn to three variations on the theme of post-originality. They all represent a remembrance and a ruination of sorts, but our reading of these three is fundamentally optimistic. Although one could condemn all three for 'not being innovations', we believe that they show us exactly the ways in which things that could be read as innovations are excluded primarily on moral grounds. In a way similar to that in which Benjamin reads the afterlife of the city, we want to highlight the way in which the afterlife of value can be read and probed, not to argue for a 'new' form of innovation, but to query the very ontology of innovation itself.

First Variation: Derivation – Bratz-Mania!

In later years, Barbie has fallen on hard times. Sales for this eponymous doll have suffered greatly, and Mattel has been forced to invest a lot of work into recapturing something of the lustre of the Barbie brand. Some have explained this stagnation by casting doubt on the virtue of Barbie, as she of late has dumped long-time beau Ken and taken up with a rather shady Australian by the name of Blaine, but the real reason seems to be the success of Bratz.



Figure 1. Five Bratz Dolls

Bratz are a series of dolls (Figure 1) produced by MGA Entertainment (and distributed by Hasbro), and they have been an immediate worldwide success. Fundamentally, Bratz are dress-up dolls with a bewildering array of accessories, clothes and similar add-ons. Characteristic for Bratz is their slightly anime-inspired look with oversized heads, lips and eyes, as well as pronounced makeup and almost non-existent noses. They are positioned as highly fashion-conscious (one of the latest collections is called 'Pretty 'n' Punk') as well as 'hip' and 'street', and flaunt their youth and wealth quite aggressively. They have further been attacked for being too sexualized, as their makeup and general demeanour is far removed from the comparatively demure and virginal Barbie. Regardless, the Bratz line has been fantastically successful, effectively dethroning Barbie as the queens of the hill.

Now, what are Bratz? One interpretation of these dolls is that they are, in fact, derivations of Barbie – the original doll, Barbie the innovation. They reproduce many of the central elements of Barbie: the recognizable basic form that can be varied by dress and accessories, the emphasis on theming (from Surf Party Barbie to Karaoke Kool Yasmin) and the aspect of collecting. Their look is slightly different, they are shorter, look younger, and have the aforementioned distinct 'anime'-look, but fundamentally they are dress-up dolls and belong to a very specific idea of 'girl's play' that was pioneered by Barbie.

The question regarding originality, derivation, and dependence in cases such as this has always been central to the discussion about intellectual property. Clearly, in order to be legal, derivation cannot be total – one can uti-

lize similar ideas but not the same expression of the idea. In order to be taken as a new product one has to show that one does not interfere with someone else's intellectual property, at least not to an illegal degree. At the same time, it seems obvious that the degree of innovation behind a Bratz-doll is limited. Although they have a different look, the logic is essentially the same, and a number of themes are shared between all similar dolls (Mattel has responded to the Bratz by introducing a series known as 'My Scene', a younger and more stylized interpretation of Barbie, and 'Shorties', which look like short Bratz with baby-fat, thus presenting us with a repetition of the repetition).

With regards to innovation management this all might seem fairly uninteresting. However, Bratz have been a major innovation in the toy business, clearly changing the playing field for selling fashion dolls. The 'actual' innovations here might be fairly small, even incremental, and we are referring to this as a derivation (a remembrance of Barbie, the after-life thereof) – a word normally viewed as a negative. What is important, though, is that this post-original move has had such an impact. Although not valorized by innovation management scholars, who would probably claim that 'real' innovation demands something much more, we can in such subtle, almost imitative moves, find aspects of analytic interest.

Rather than chasing the elusive perfect innovation event, we would like to propose that the various derivative moves that can be discerned when paying heed to the post-original would highlight innovation as an unfolding and an emergence rather than as

essentialized acts. Derivation is in such a view not simple mimetics, but rather a gradual re-inscribing on the social body of an innovation – innovation as palimpsest. What is important to note that such derivation is not mere mechanics, but an engagement that requires both an active performing of the post-original move, and a degree of creativity in repeating the already performed (cf. Deleuze, 1994). Bratz are in this light not just a recasting of Barbie, if we by recasting mean something removed from creativity and innovation. Rather, by actively re-performing the innovation of Barbie, the creators of Bratz have in fact made Barbie new again. Suitably enough, one of the ways in which the ‘original’ has been recast is by recreating an illustrious past by way of exorbitantly expensive replicas of the first dolls. Although clearly a post-original move, a specific derivation of the eponymous fashion-doll is not to be understood as unimportant for innovation studies. Instead, the way in which Bratz can be understood, as a repetition that is critical for the new to exist, may free us from the conflating of the innovation event with the value event.

By recasting the fashion-doll logic into a new form, Bratz can serve as an illustration of how the afterlife of an innovation takes many forms, and that there are post-original ‘returns’ to bear in mind in thinking about innovation. Rather than viewing the fashion-doll as a stable entity, the value of which is established in the first iteration thereof, a view of innovative derivation can help us conceptualize novelty as memory and innovation as something that has to be repeated.

Second Variation: Knock-Offs – Innovation in the Big House

One common definition of innovation is ‘an invention brought to market’ (see e.g. Baumol, 2002). The obvious problem of such a definition is that it assumes that the category of ‘market’ is a simple and homogeneous one, something which is clearly a false assumption (cf. Callon, 1998; Yang, 2000). Although the observation that what constitutes an innovation in one market might be something quite different in another is trite, it still opens up to thinking about radically different markets. Such as jail.

A lot of what would be considered commodities or even necessities in the outside world, are considered contraband or otherwise impossible to get hold of on the inside of a prison (NB: prisons vary greatly, both from country to country, and within a prison system. Our example is taken from a US context,

but could have been taken from any country.). Consequently, products that would otherwise be bought from stores may in prison be unavailable unless recreated. For instance, as prisoners clearly should not have access to weapons, and are thus denied, for example sharp knives, one can in a prison setting find quite remarkable improvised weapons such as sharpened toothbrushes or retrofitted metal shards (a.k.a. ‘shivs’). Clearly, such weapons are inferior copies of the exemplar upon which they are modelled. However, these knock-offs show an ingenuity that seems to be lacking in the original, starting our problematization.

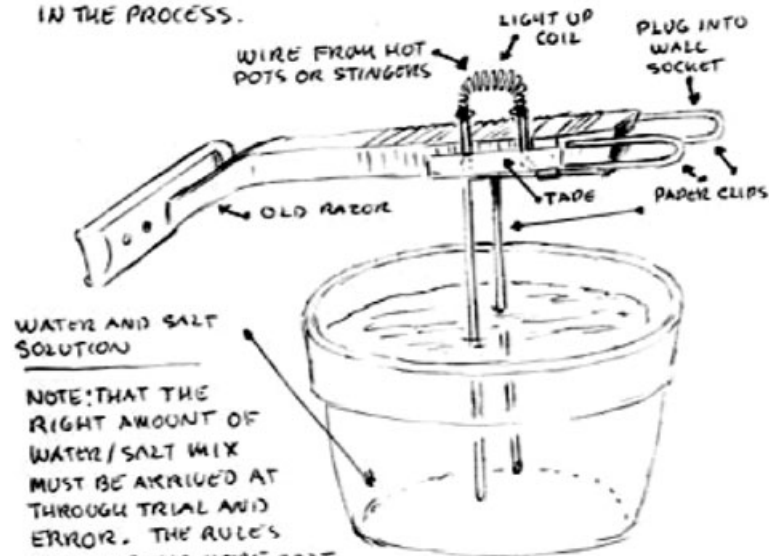
The pictured invention is a primitive cigarette-lighter (Figure 2). Built from a safety-razor, a wire filament, and paper-clips, with a saline solution acting as a resistor, it can serve as a replacement for a confiscated lighter provided the user gets it to work and does not electrocute himself trying. Quite clearly, this is not something one would use if better solutions are available – which is precisely the point. In the specific context where this innovation exists, this may well be the best available solution at a given time. Nor is it without economic value. In the very specific market that is established in the restricted confines of a total institution such as a prison, this contraption may well be valuable, even though it clearly is a jerry-rigged knock-off of a better product.

Knock-offs, that is, inferior copies of the existing, may seem like the opposite of innovation. But we argue this is a question of context rather than content. In the context of a prison, a knock-off of a lighter or a knife may well be an innovation of some importance. Innovation management has normally assumed the market to be homogenous, without friction, into which the new is entered. But all markets are not created equal. In the constricted circumstances of a total institution, other laws apply. Creative reinterpretations of the existing, imperfect variations of a ‘Platonic ideal’ may not fit the mold of regular commercialization, but this very fact is what should drive us towards more reflection regarding the cultural economics of innovation. (And, lest we forget, fakes are actually big business: according to *Business Week* 7 February 2005), the trade in knock-offs is estimated at around 7 percent of world merchandise trade, or approximately €390 billion.)

Clearly, a knock-off is a very specific form of the post-original. If a derivative product is an incremental variation of the original, the knock-off is a complete re-casting. It might be an inferior one, but this post-original move is not without interest. The ways in which reproduction can occur in less optimal circumstances, and *because of this* create innovative

WATER CIGARETTE LIGHTER

AN INTERESTING CIGARETTE LIGHTER OF UNUSUAL DESIGN. BASICALLY ELECTRICALLY OPERATED, IT USES A SALT WATER SOLUTION AS A RESISTOR TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF CURRENT ACTUALLY EMPLOYED SO AS NOT TO MELT THE THINNER WIRE FILLIMENT FUNCTIONING AS THE LIGHT UP ELEMENT, OR TO BLOW THE WALL SOCKET CIRCUIT BREAKER IN THE PROCESS.



NOTE: THAT THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF WATER/SALT MIX MUST BE ARRIVED AT THROUGH TRIAL AND ERROR. THE RULES ARE THAT THE MORE SALT USED, THE QUICKER THE FILLIMENT HEATS UP. ALSO THE CLOSER TOGETHER THE TRAILING PAPER CLIPS IN THE SALT WATER SOLUTION, THE QUICKER THE FILLIMENT HEATS UP, BUT WILL BLOW IF PUT TOO CLOSE TOGETHER.

PROBLEM

THE SALT WATER SOLUTION VERY QUICKLY CORRODES THE TRAILING PAPER CLIPS, NECESSITATING THEIR FREQUENT REPLACE MENT

Figure 2. A knock-off lighter, prison-style
Image taken from Angelo 2000

variations, is almost completely unstudied. Yet it is clear that quite a number of people live in circumstances – the developing world, ghettos, in a state of war – where such innovation is not only the primary mode (and the only possible one), it might well be a matter of life and death. To ignore the ways in which innovation occurs in circumstances where ‘original value events’ are not even thinkable would clearly limit the field, make it into an idealization.

This is also a mode that is becoming increasingly important in the contemporary global economy. While it is obvious that many businesses suffer from piracy and the counterfeit industries, it would seem an odd claim that these forms could not be studied by innovation management. For instance, what exactly is the analytical difference between creating a system for developing toys and creating a new

and more efficient system to counterfeit them? A lot of what is happening in the burgeoning industry of counterfeiting seems to open up new and interesting avenues for studying innovation management, yet these aspects remain unstudied. Arguably, this is a case of moralization, of preferring not to study things that one finds objectionable, but such limitations are against every scientific criteria and have to be challenged.

Third Variation: Post-Production – the Mash-Up

In 2004, an artist going by the name of DJ Danger Mouse created a ‘mash-up’ of two well-loved, but very different albums – ‘The White Album’ by the Beatles and ‘The Black Album’ by Brooklyn rapper Jay-Z. The result-



Figure 3. Cover of DJ Danger Mouse: *The Grey Album* See 5.

ing album, fittingly entitled 'The Gray Album', consisted of the lyrics from the latter and a cut 'n' mix version of sounds from the former. Effectively, the album features Jay-Z rapping over Beatles samples, and a number of promos were distributed (Figure 3). It was in all likelihood (the auteur is somewhat unclear on the matter) meant primarily as a showcase of Danger Mouse's mixing prowess. It was also the subject of a major legal fracas, as EMI opposed the album and sent a cease-and-desist letter, only to realize that it had already been widely distributed on the Internet and was practically unstoppable. As improbable as it sounds, the album is actually very listenable and it is considered a major work in the blooming mash-up movement.

A mash-up is a specific kind of remix, specifically a form of music in which two, seemingly incompatible pieces of music, are combined to create a completely new piece. For instance, a troupe called The Kleptones released an entire album of Queen's music laced with rap lyrics, called 'A Night at the Hip-Hopera', while the somewhat oddly titled 'Smells Like Booty' features an alternative universe where Destiny's Child sings lead vocals for Nirvana. In a sense this is merely a continuation of the sampling strategies of hip-hop, which has always depended on utilizing sur-

prising sources, only taken to another level. On another level, it is a ironic strategy made popular by punk rock, such as when Sid Vicious sang 'My Way'. On yet another, it is a movement made possible by increasing technological development, where complex musical production no longer requires a professional studio, but can be achieved with a laptop and off-the-shelf software.

The art of the mash-up lies in taking two well-known musical expressions, juxtaposing these, and managing to restructure them in a way that seems original. Simply taking two tracks and forcibly mating these does not a mash-up make, as quality in this genre is measured in how personal and natural one can make such a artificial combination. Listening to a mash-up is supposed to be the sensation of a new song, albeit one with surprising familiarities. In a very real way, the mash-up is taking the old and creating something new. But what is particularly interesting is the way in which it problematizes the locus of creation.

Post-production is a well-known and developed art in the field of e.g. film-making and popular music, and includes all those aspects that follow principal production (recording music, filming). It consists of things such as editing, cutting, adding and removing effects, running music of images through filters and

forms an important aspect of post-industrial production processes. What we now argue is that this can also serve as a powerful concept for problematizing innovation (cf. Bourriaud, 2002). What post-production shows is that there is more to finalizing e.g. a record than merely 'creating'. In the culture industries producers, who earlier were seen more or less as technical assistants, are the new superstars – the mainstream success of the Neptunes being perhaps the best proof. This also means that the value-creation in these industries has been recast. Hiring a superstar producer, that is, investing in post-production, is now seen as an important part of creating a hit. But what does this mean for innovation management?

Returning to 'The Gray Album', we can ask when the 'actual' innovative act took place. Was it in 1968, when the Beatles recorded their original album? And how does this relate to the recording of 'The Black Album' in 2003? And was the mash-up created by DJ Danger Mouse in 2004 an original, innovative act? EMI claimed it was not, that the original value event could be localized to 1968, and that anything stemming from this was merely an echo of that. Not surprisingly, Danger Mouse claimed that innovation can act long after the fact, and that we must tend to the ways in which new technologies creates new forms of innovative recasting, creating whole new possibilities for reproduction. Post-production thus stands as another example of how the eventness of innovation can be questioned, as a processual alternative to the fetish of the original in innovation management. Post-production assumes 'originals', but does not essentialize these. Rather, it sees the very notion of an original as merely a starting point, something from which the innovative can be coaxed out.

After-Thoughts

None of the forms discussed above are mere repetitions of some original act. Rather, they show us how the post-original must always be performed and understood as an afterlife. At the same time, this should not be understood as a concept 'at rest', but rather as a device for questioning the often dogmatically accepted concepts of innovation and creativity. Benjamin's concepts of ruin, remembrance and redemption could thus be seen as critical commentaries on the moralization of innovation and the way in which we laud those aspects of the new that fit best with our ideas about what should be accepted as 'new'.

What we have tried to show by bringing in such post-original concepts is that the valori-

zation of the non-actualized event which drives much of innovation management should at least be probed for weaknesses, and that the question regarding value needs to be revisited in innovation management. Most theories of innovation management still ascribe to a form of value fetishism, or assume that valorization is a non-problem in innovation management (see e.g. von Hippel, 1988; Slappendel, 1996; Van de Ven, 1986). What our post-original meditation thus tries to achieve is a return to the prime question of innovation, namely that of how value is created through juxtapositions, but to do this in a way that does not strive for essentialization of the networks and temporalities in which these unfoldings take place.

By studying ways in which innovation remembers and derives, such as in the case of Bratz, we could open up the debate about incremental innovation and for more subtle analyses of how the echoes of value function in the economic nexus. By studying knock-offs, which could be understood as a ruination of sorts, we can not only open up a new field of empirical study (such as analysing innovation in counterfeiting and creating 'look-alikes'), but also query the moralization innovation management represents. Lastly, post-production can help us study the continuous recasting and reproduction of value, turning every innovation into potentiality, and affirming creativity rather than property as what innovation management should deal with. All of these should be understood as attempts to break with preconceived notions in innovation management, as critiques of implicit moralization and as provocations, but our point should not be seen as an aggressive attack.

The importance of the post-original is not that it stands as an antithesis to the original, a new dogma, just as Benjamin did not try to overthrow history. Instead, it is a form of *plumpes Denken*, a blunt critique or even a naïve questioning regarding those processes of becoming that Deleuze and Badiou have tried to theorize, a way to play with the notion of the new/original and to query for ways to go beyond the rigidity of such ideas. In a very real sense, it is an ironic move, a way to pervert the search for the original. The post-original is not a theory, it is an attempt at the less grandiose form of thinking.

Returning to the way in which Alain Badiou (1988, 2002) has discussed the event as a moment of truth, it is important to understand how he in fact conceptualizes this. Truth, for Badiou, emerges in a break with the ordinary, in an event where the new – often understood as *truth* – can emerge as singular innovation. None of this should be odd or problematic for

innovation management, as in fact it coincides well with the normal way we understand the matter. But it is Badiou's next turn that changes things. The innovation, says Badiou, can never be proven in the event, as the event simply does not have any objective content. Rather, the event must be affirmed and repeated by those who believe in it, those who *stay true*. This is the way in which innovations come into being, by way of fidelity. What innovation management has tended to do, however, is to look for the provable content of the event – paradoxically the part of innovation that cannot be proven. By investigating a specific casting of the event, one where the value thereof is assumed to be part of some verifiable set of objective conditions that can be identified in the event, innovation management may in fact be locked into an eternal repetition of a fetish – the iconic original value event. What we suggest, by way of the lesser category of the post-original, is a way to study fidelities, the becoming of innovations. Rather than assuming that recasting, repetition and derivation are moves *away* from the innovation, we argue that they are ways to stay true to it, ways of affirmation. By repeating the truth of the innovation, this truth stays fresh, keeps its potential to change and reaffirm. The post-original would thus stand not as the enemy of innovation, but as its staunchest companion.

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