Remix Culture

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7–9 minutes

[Nine theses about Remix Culture by Felix Stalder](#)

1. Thesis: saturation of culture with medial objects is the condition for remixing to be possible

Felix Stalder argues that Remixing can only take place when people have access to "medial objects" without difficulties. The "status of saturation", as he calls it, can only be reached when three main things are guaranteed. 1. economical-organisatorical: they have to be cheap and widely spread. 2. cultural, meaning that everybody has to be able to use them (without getting into troubles). 3. material, meaning that it has to be possible to change the objects. Stalder says that the "status of saturation" was reached the first time in history with the spreading of the printing press. He continues to draw a historical abstract and mentions the development of the academical writing in which it was not only regarded positively that old and new material were interwoven very close, but even seen as essential part of academic research. He continues his historical abstract by advancing in the centuries, talking about for example: avantgarde, montage and Dadaismus (but I will not go deeper in here, as it is not relevant for my research topic).

2. Thesis: "Meta-Medium" of networking computers brings all media to the point of saturation

Felix Stalder starts his second thesis by pointing out that with the invention of computer and the constant improvement of the technology and on top of that the global networking via the internet the "status of saturation" has reached a new dimension. This change is not only one of quantity but also of quality. He writes that in the future almost every work will be available online. Most of the new

work is already "born digitally" and there are many initiatives to digitize old work for example google books.

3. Thesis: every new creation contains elements from already existing creations. Remixing makes this process obvious.

Stalder argues in this thesis that in everything new, there is already something old in there. He talks about Peter Burkholder who analyzed music in terms of reoccurring in different pieces of music. As example Stalder uses Mozart, who clearly was a musical genius. But even in his pieces you can find references to others such as Haydn or Gluck or sometimes to his own pieces. The interesting thing about this is, that both Haydn and Gluck lived during the same time and it is likely that the audience from back then heard those references more clearly then we do today! He continues to argue that this can be applied to other artists as well (which is important for me, as it can be transferred to Shakespeare as well!). He doesn't say it in such a radical way, but you could conclude that everything is a remix, as he says, that the idea of the solitary work is not only theoretically impossible, but – also considering superb work – empirically proved to be impossible. Our connected world makes an out-sight impossible, which also leads to the point that in everything new, there is something old in there. (he goes further into that, but it is not so easy to translate and summarize it, but I might go into more depth in my research paper there.)

4. Thesis: the productive Remix-Culture is cooperative / shared instead of individual / centralist

The classical picture of creativity is one of someone being inspired in his own self, receiving a vision from his inner self. Felix Stalder argues that this picture is not up to date anymore. And that especially in Remix creativity goes completely different ways. He says that in Remix not the individual is in the center of attention, but the tension between different positions which are being put into relationship with each other in a cooperative situation. He follows in his argumentation Peter Jaszi who differentiated between three types of cooperation/collaboration: 1. "synchronous collaboration" 2. "asynchronous collaboration" 3. "serial collaboration". The first one occurs in "real time" when for example musicians improvise together.

The second one occurs when B reworks something from A and A in turn will change that outcome again, as example he states the wikipedia. The third one, the "serial collaboration" is the most interesting one for me, as you could call She's the man a "serial collaboration". Stalder explains it by saying, that again B reworks something from A, but A doesn't change it anymore. The only thing required of A is his work, which makes it possible to have a long time between the work from A and the remix from B (as is the case from Twelfth Night and She's the man). This kind of cooperation is not meant to change the old work to the better, but to transform it in a way one wants for example modernizing the setting.

5. Thesis: the ontology of the Remix is flat

Everything can come in contact with anything, theoretically. This structural openness of the Remix results out of the fact that the new creation is not dependent on the summary of different old parts, but from their character and thus is unpredictable, argues Felix Stalder and to emphasize his point goes into the theories of Bruno Latour and Manuel DeLanda, something I will leave out, as it doesn't relate with my research topic.

6. Thesis: Remix reduces the barrier of production and enlarges the circle of producers

Earlier cultural production was something professionals did, as they had the means, knowledge and technology to do it. Everyday people were consumers only and asked to buy what was being produced by the professionals. With the invention of technology and the creation of pages like YouTube a change took place, so that now everybody can create art and share it in the world wide web (even though there are still specialists.) And thus the number of people creating something has increased steadily.

7. Thesis: the boundary between professional and amateur culture blurs

In the 7. thesis Felix Stalder goes deeper into the change from professional-only-culture to professional-and-amateur-culture. He argues that the communication practices blur the status between private and non-private. He sees one of the reasons in the fact that

personal communication is being mixed with mass media, which results – especially within Remix culture – in a difficulty to differentiate between professional and amateur culture. Cultural production is being "de-specialized". He explains this change through some examples.

8. Thesis: the boundaries between production, distribution and consumption blur

In the traditional cultural industry production, distribution and consumption were clearly separated from each other. In Remix Culture this is no longer the case, they start "melting together". The blurring of the boundaries between production and consumption can be observed in fan communities. A fan often is not only a consumer but also a distributor feeling part of the thing he/she likes and actively contributing for it. Stalder quotes Henry Jenkins about whom we talked ourselves, so that I won't go into depth there.

9. Thesis: attribution, control and payment differentiate each other

In his last thesis Stalder talks about copyright law. He sketches how new models could work in the future to do justice to Remix culture. But I won't go into depth here either as it is not exactly important for my research topic.

As I have translated those theses roughly from German into English they might sound a little weird at times. But I think that this paper is really interesting in terms of another definition of Remix and therefore important for my own paper as well.