



I shop
therefore
I am

COMS 370

WINTER 2014 WEEK X

Magdalena Olszanowski

consumer culture

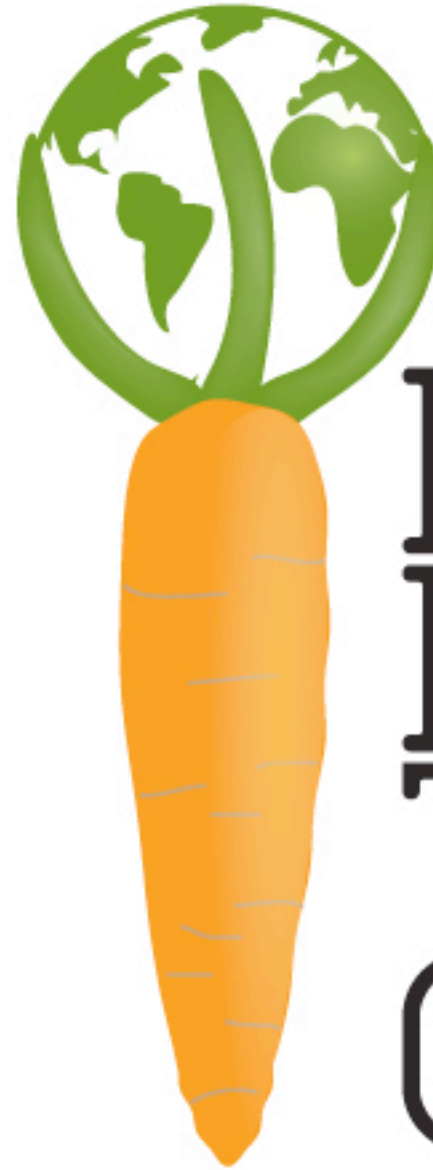
- (1) the organized interpretation of economic and everyday life
- (2) the increasing importance of the exchange of commodities, that is, objects and services appropriated or produced for exchange on the market within an increasingly global capitalist division of labour, driven by profit
- (3) the development of a series of ongoing relationships between different systems of exchange. These changes have created a situation in which activities are linked through a whole set of interlinking cycles of production and consumption, associated with, but not necessarily determined by, the organization of commodity exchange
- (4) the growth of a range of different forms of consumer politics, which seek to mobilize consumers to influence the state, producers and other consumers
- (5) the active role of the state in organizing collective & individual forms of consumption
- (6) the use of goods in contemporary societies by specific social groups or cultural intermediaries leading to form of expertise and the creation of subcultures or lifestyles
- (7) the political identification of freedom within individual choice



I eat local



because I can



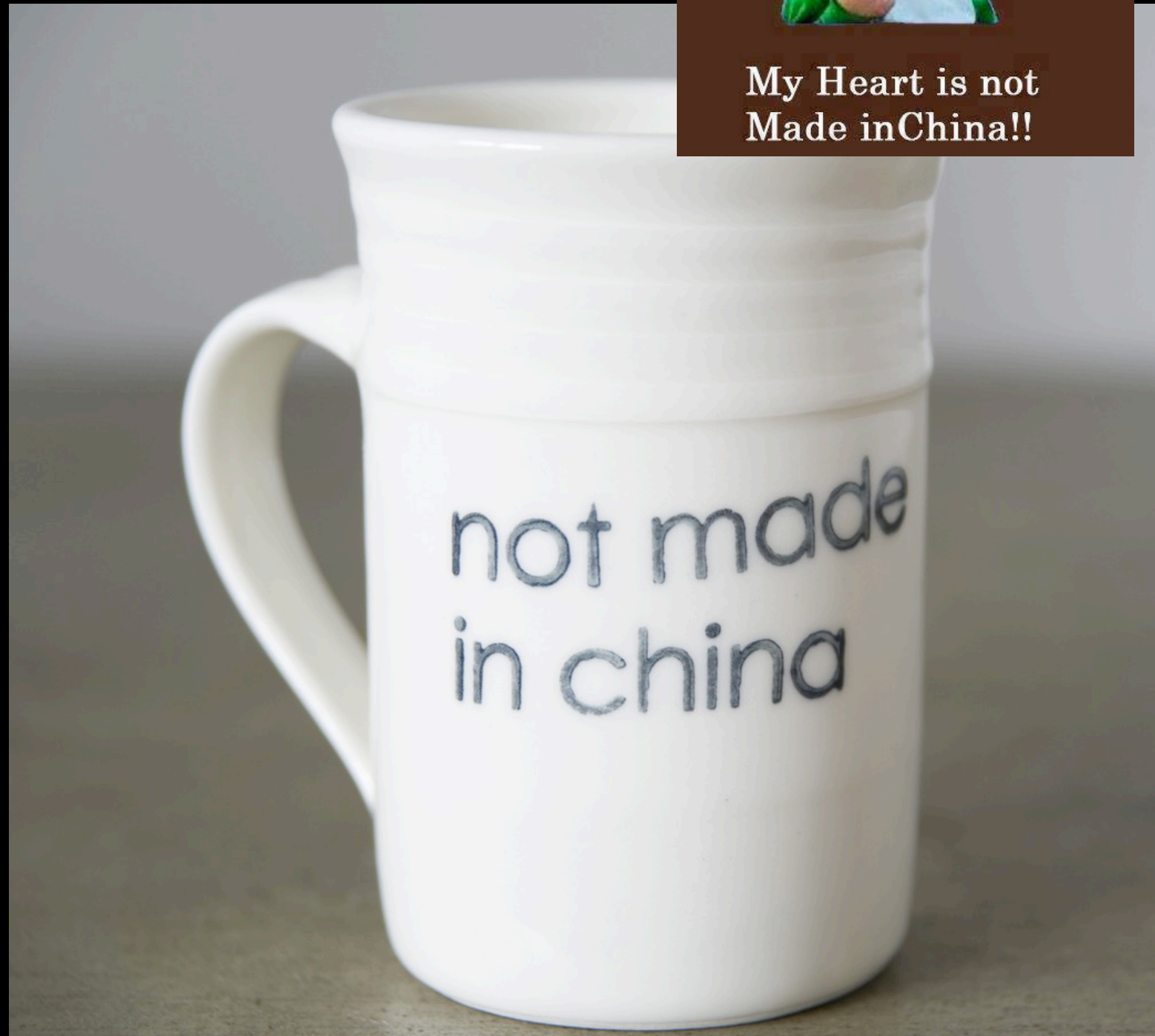
**EATING
LOCALLY
THINKING
GLOBALLY**



Girlfriend Left but my Heart is not Broken...



My Heart is not Made inChina!!



consumer

Raymond Williams:

from beginning of usage: consume had an unfavourable sense; it meant to destroy, to use up, to waste, to exhaust.

It was from 18th that consumer began to emerge in a neutral sense in descriptions of political economy.

Yet the unfavourable connotations of consume persisted, at least until 19th c.

only in 20th c that the word passed from specialized use in political economy to general and popular use.

The relative decline of **customer**, used from 15thc to describe a buyer or purchaser - implies some degree of regular and continuing relationship to a supplier

consumer indicates the more abstract figure in a more abstract market.

consumption

consumption is the ensemble of sociocultural processes in which the appropriation and use of products takes place.

Consumption is a process in which desires are converted into demands and socially regulated acts.

- Canclini

Manuel Castells: "Consumption is the site where class conflict, rooted in unequal participation in production, continues in the distribution and appropriation of commodities."

To consume is to participate in an arena of competing claims for what society produces and the ways of using it.

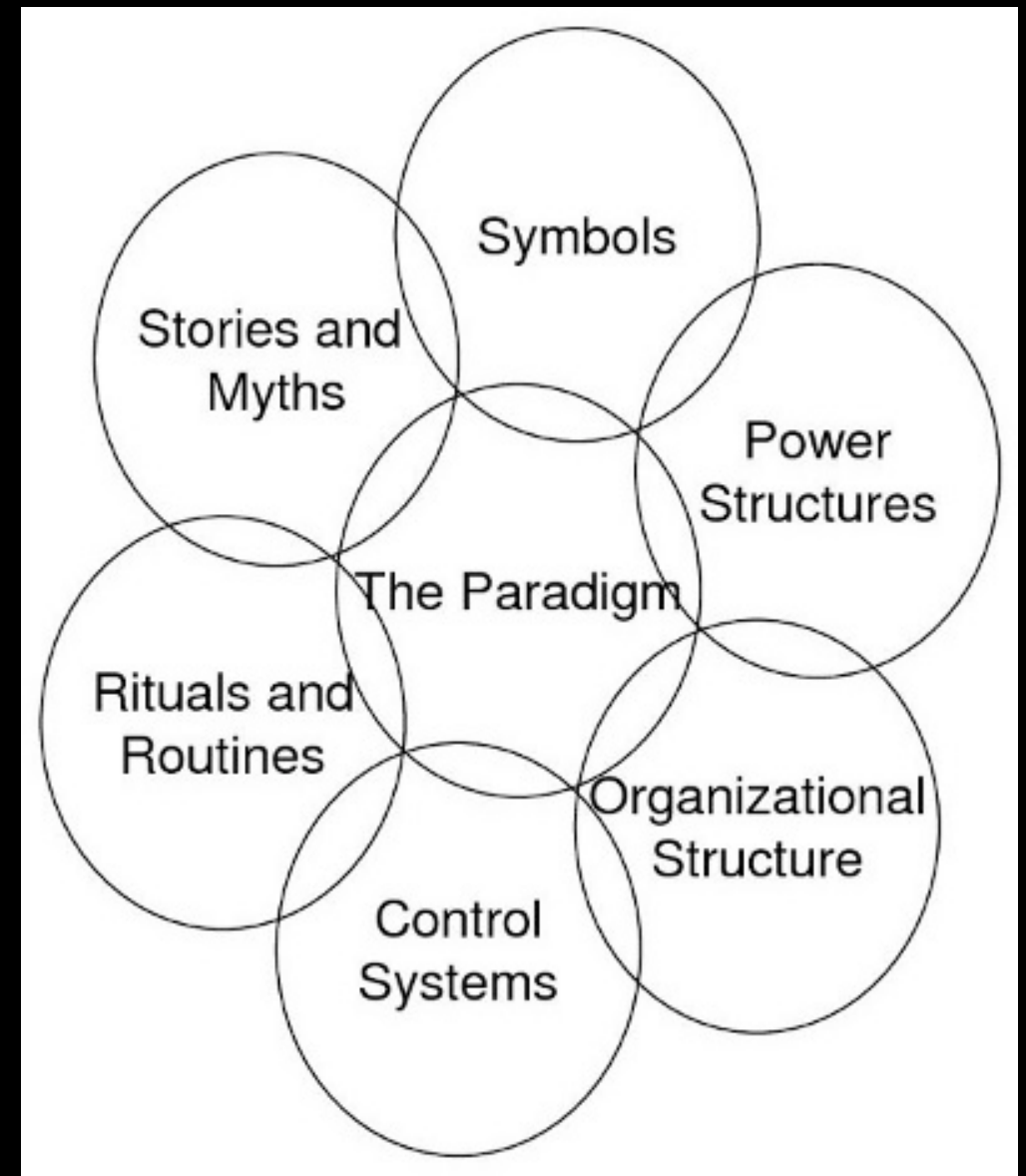
culture

Raymond Williams:

- (i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from 18th c;
- (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general.

But we have also to recognize

- (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.



material

stuff,
things,
objects

Social lives have things (cultural significance)
Things have social lives (they have narratives)

culture

values,
practices,
norms

appropriation

Marx:

the critical site where human societies develop their distinctive characters.

Material culture is the objectification of human consciousness.

But in capitalism this objectification is turned against people.

This occurs when we produce goods for an exchange market that we often don't have access to understanding the object and its use - aka alienation.

So production of goods becomes production of goods as **commodities**.

— Lury, *Consumer Culture*, 2001

commodities

“Commodities are... a unity of what is revealed and what is concealed in the processes of production and consumption. Goods reveal or ‘show’ to our senses their capacities to be satisfiers or stimulators or particular wants and communicators of behavioural codes. At the same time, they draw a veil across their own origins.” (Leiss et al, 1986).

Marx: in market societies, commodities not only hide but come to **stand in for** or **replace** relationships between people.





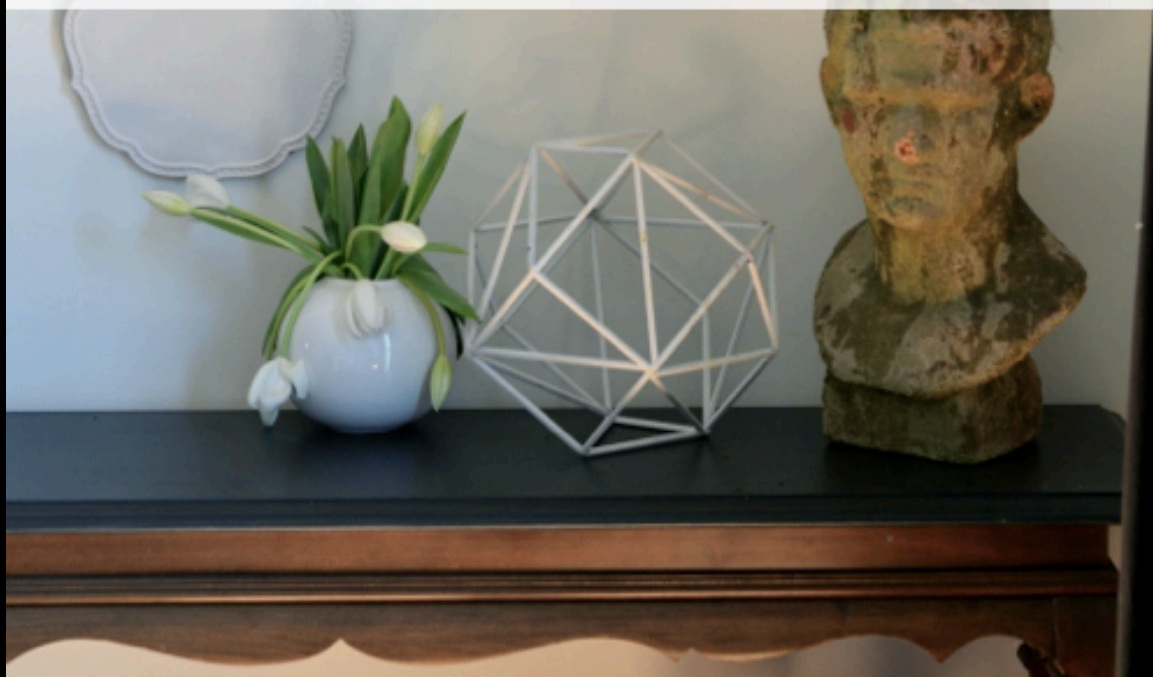
Baudrillard: Consumption must be understood mostly as the consumption of signs and not be understood as the consumption of use-values, a material utility.

The logic of signification > logic of production

the game of sign consumption is an integral part of Debord's '**society of the spectacle**' .



how to hang plates



HOLIDAY
GIFT GUIDE



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-H_ZnC203Wo

4 factors:

(1) importance of circulation of commodities

(2) Changes in the interrelationships of different systems of production and consumption

(1) industrial/informational division of labour is growing / economic exchange is more and more controlled by big corporations

(2) creates indie sites of consumption/production

(3) Relative independence of practices of consumption from production -> alienation <-> commodity fetishism

(4) importance given to consumption or use of certain objects or goods by specific social groups and/or hegemonic ideologies and/or by cultural intermediaries



stylization

“Communities of resistance are replaced by communities of consumption” - bell hooks

A choice of brand is a gateway to sociability.

We constantly engage in a consumption of identity-creating goods.