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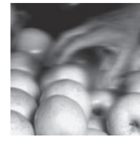

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Sport and prosumption

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Abstract

This article engages and extends understanding of the interrelated concepts of prosumption, the prosumer, prosumer capitalism, and McDonaldization in relation to the highly commodified and spectacularized world of professional sport. Developing an understanding of modern sport forms as having always exhibited prosumptive dimensions, the discussion focuses on the contemporary sporting context. The analysis highlights the increasingly intertextual and interactive nature of sport prosumption, as realized through Web 2.0 technologies, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and website comment pages, all of which provide a means of contributing toward (and thereby co-producing) the prosumer sport spectacle. Within this explication of sporting prosumption, we focus on empirical forms occupying the center of the prosumption continuum: those expressions wherein the productive and consumptive aspects of prosumption are “more or less evenly balanced.” In doing so, we examine sport spectatorship as a form of material prosumption – the digital-based prosumption implicit within “socialmediasport” and the enmeshed digital and material prosumption constitutive of eSport. Our aim is to critically explicate the prosumptive dimensions of contemporary sport culture and, in conclusion, to contribute to the wider dialogue regarding the nature and implications of prosumer capitalism.

Keywords

Sport, prosumption, prosumer, McDonaldization, digital media

Introduction: On prosumption and prosumers

As within other complex, multidimensional, and relentlessly multiplying commercial formations, the scale and scope of the global sport industry are impossible to discern with any degree of certitude. Journalistic projections of the financial size of

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the sport industry appear little more than speculative approximations: some analysts estimate annual revenues of the global sport industry to exceed US$1.5 trillion, whereas others suggest the figure to be between US$480 and US$600 billion (Anon, n.d.; Collignon et al., 2011). Whatever its precise financial magnitude, there is little denying the sport industry constitutes a significant element of economic and cultural life within advanced consumer economies (Smart, 2007). As a result, there is an established and diverse literature focused on the sociology of sport as a form of consumer culture (see Crawford, 2004; Horne, 2006; Newman and Giardina, 2011). However, with a few notable exceptions, such analyses have largely ignored the process, manifestations, and experiences of sporting prosumption (Dumont, 2015; Millington, 2016; Woermann, 2011, 2012). In looking to redress the commercial sport absence within the literature, this discussion engages and extends understanding of the interrelated notions of prosumption, prosumer, and prosumer capitalism (see Ritzer, 2015a, 2015b; Ritzer et al., 2012) within the context of the highly commodified and spectacularized world of corporate sport (Andrews, 2006). For despite being the subject of rigorous – yet, what we would consider generative – critique (Zwick, 2015), it is our contention that *prosumption* remains an important conceptual frame with which to examine contemporary capitalism and, more specifically, sport's form and function therein (Ritzer, 2015c).

In its most fundamental sense, the concept of *prosumption* refers to the interrelated processes of production and consumption. Despite attempts to parse them out as separate and somehow distinct processes, production and consumption are always mutually implicated within each other: "much production takes place in the process of consumption; there can be no consumption without some production" (Ritzer, 2015a: 2). Relatedly, *prosumers* are those whose lives are variously, and complexly, enmeshed in processes and practices of prosumption. Generally attributed to Alvin Toffler (1980) in his book *The Third Wave*, a Tofflerian understanding of prosumption considers it to be "the primordial economic form" (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010: 17). Despite his bold, and ultimately prophetic, assertions, Toffler's understanding was long overlooked by academics. The proliferation of new digital media technologies – and most pertinently, the enmeshed productive and consumptive roles and relations at their core – has, however, brought Toffler's notions of prosumption/prosumer to the forefront of contemporary cultural debates. There are even a slew of derivative, if not wholly duplicative, concepts informed by Toffler's understanding. These include the "produser" (Bird, 2011), the "working customer" (Rieder and Voß, 2010), and the process of "co-creation" (Zwick et al., 2008).

Since we are living in a "'new' world of prosumption" (Ritzer, 2015a), largely driven and defined by digital media technologies, there is an understandable tendency to concentrate on the role of digital media as the primary means of prosumption and on digital-based media involvement as the foremost mode of the prosumer (see Bruns, 2008; Fuchs, 2014, Williams and Marquez, 2015; Zajc, 2013). Nonetheless, as Toffler identified, the notion of the prosumer predates the technological convergences driving the new media universe (Jenkins, 2008). Whether

digital or pre-digital, capitalist or pre-capitalist, societies have always "been dominated by prosumption" (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010: 14). Within hunter–gatherer cultures ("first-wave" societies), individuals acted as both producers and consumers in the enactment of their very being. Subsequently, prosumption became undermined by the pressures of industrializing and urbanizing formations ("second-wave" societies), whose productive bias overlooked its reliance upon, and relationship to, practices of consumption. However, the emergent production–consumption couplet characteristic of "third-wave" post-industrial societies forcefully ignited the "rise of the prosumer" (Toffler, 1980: 265). As this periodization suggests, prosumption is a constant within human civilizations, although its contingency means it takes on different forms and inflections in differing socio-historic contexts. Moreover, even within the same moment, while there may be a dominant (i.e. digital media-based) mode of prosumption, there can never be a singular form.

Prosumption has evolved, if not in linear fashion, then back-and-forth, across the range of what Ritzer (2015a, 2015b) identified as the prosumption continuum. This schema encompasses the poles of "*prosumption-as-production (p-a-p)*" and "*prosumption-as-consumption (p-a-c)*," which equate to traditional notions of production and consumption but are interpretively superior to them due to their recognition of the consumptive elements within largely productive acts (p-a-p) and the productive elements within the largely consumptive acts (p-a-c) (Ritzer, 2015a: 3). Within this explication of sporting prosumption, we focus on empirical forms occupying the center of the prosumption continuum: those expressions of "*balanced prosumption*," wherein the productive and consumptive aspects of prosumption are "more or less evenly balanced" (Ritzer, 2015a: 2) and so graphically highlight the production–consumption interrelationships that characterize prosumer culture. Furthermore, the following three sections, respectively, focus on sites drawn from contemporary sport culture that illustrate the "material, digital, and mixed" dimensions of prosumption (Ritzer, 2015a: 4). Hence, we examine sport spectatorship as a form of material prosumption – the digital-based prosumption implicit within "socialmediasport" (Bowman and Cranmer, 2014) and the enmeshed digital and material prosumption constitutive of contemporary eSport. Our aim is to critically explicate the prosumptive dimensions of contemporary sport culture and, in doing so, to contribute to the wider dialogue regarding the nature and implications of prosumer capitalism.

Sport spectating as prosumption

Within the hypercommercialized and hypermediated world of late capitalist sport (Andrews, 2006), the diversified ranks of sport producers (athletes, coaches, managers, owners, and administrators) co-create sporting events in conjunction with sport consumers (those attending the event). Sport spectators are working customers (Rieder and Voß, 2010), at least partially responsible for generating the atmospheric backdrop against which the sporting drama (or otherwise) unfolds: sport spectators thus add to the surplus value of a sporting event – and pay for the

privilege of doing so – by positively contributing to the enactment of the live sporting contest. For instance, the English Premier League has been dubbed "the most saleable commodity in world football" due to "its noise, pageantry and atmosphere" (Gibson, 2013).

Within the American sporting vernacular, this collective expression of sporting prosumption is referred to as the "12th man": "a generic way to describe fans in a stadium, the idea being that the fans are so loud and engaged that they give the home team an advantage similar to an additional player" (Watkins, 2016). As Edensor (2015) described (albeit in relation to the English football context),

> football stadium serves as an enclosed theatre in which the sporting drama of the match unfolds, and it tends to house a *particularly responsive audience who are themselves part of the drama and can potentially influence what happens on the pitch*. (p. 82; italics added)

Such sporting prosumption, however, does not only occur during moments of heightened spectator involvement. Even the most passive and indifferent forms of sport spectating contribute to the co-creation of sporting events, albeit ones very different from those triggered by the affective intensity of an engaged and impassioned throng. In order to realize the latter, there is a general recognition within the sporting industry that spectators need to be educated in precisely how to act as "participative consumers" who positively "co-produce or shape" (Mermiri, 2009: 61) the sporting event.

In some spectator sport settings, particularly in the United States, the sporting event is primarily presented as a multifaceted leisure entertainment experience. Within this context, the entertainment generated by the on-field or "game-induced stimuli" (Uhrich and Benkenstein, 2010: 216) may be the pivotal factor shaping stadium atmosphere and spectator experience. However, the mercurial nature of sporting contests, and the unpredictability of the entertainment value derived from them, has prompted sport managers to adopt strategies and techniques designed to foster predictable levels of entertainment for sport spectators, regardless of the state of play in the "actual event" (Price and Palmero, 2014: 114). These "organizer-induced stimuli" of event atmosphere (Uhrich and Benkenstein, 2010: 216) – or orchestrated *atmospherics* – include music, in-game entertainment and promotion, mascot, and announcer cues (Price and Palmero, 2014; Shonk, 2011), all of which are designed to magnify the entertainment value of the sporting event and "enhance the experience for a spectator" (Shonk, 2011: 96). Spectator sport is thus effectively McDonaldized (Ritzer, 2011; Ritzer and Stillman, 2001): manufactured as a controlled and predictable (and, for that matter, efficient and calculable) prosumer experience designed to keep the sport customer satisfied (and hopefully recurring). As in the McDonald's restaurant, so in the McDonaldized sport stadium, the prosumer plays an integral role in the production of the commercial space and experience. By utilizing promotional strategies that seek to co-opt spectators into the co-production of the atmosphere of the very event they

simultaneously experience, sport managers – even if they do not name them as such – recognize the role of spectators as prosumers and the nature of spectator sport as a form of prosumption.

Far from organically emergent, the commercially inspired controlling and predictive techniques of McDonaldized sport delivery are centrally conceived and globally disseminated sport industry conventions, producing considerable standardization of product delivery, and uniformity of prosumer experience, across national and corporate sporting boundaries. As Lombardo and Dreier noted with regard to the dissemination of successful in-game entertainment strategies in professional basketball, "NBA Entertainment logs every timeout of every NBA game and makes a video reel available for all teams. If a promotion or new entertainment element plays well in Portland, for example, teams in other markets will quickly adopt it" (Lombardo and Dreier, 2011: 15). Extending Ritzer's neo-Augéan conceptualizing (Augé, 1995; Ritzer, 2004), and while perhaps not fully realized as of yet (see section "Conclusion: On capital"), within the age of sporting prosumption, we are approaching a situation in which spectator sport is reduced to being a centrally conceived and controlled form of cultural nothingness: the sporting contest is manufactured as a non-event; the sport stadium is rendered a non-place; and the spectator becomes a non-person displaying a lack of distinctive, unique, locally, and temporally specific human creativity.

Prosumer sport 2.0

Unsurprisingly, given social media's emergence as a "force in the sports industry landscape" (DiMoro, 2015), there exists a flourishing literature focused on the relationship between sport and social media (Armstrong, Delia, & Giardina, 2014; Benigni et al., 2014; Butterworth, 2014; Corrigan, 2014; Dart, 2014; Hutchins and Mikosza, 2010; Kassing and Sanderson, 2010; Leonard, 2009; Sanderson and Gramlich, 2015). Yet, within this "socialmediasport" (Bowman and Cranmer, 2014) literature, very little direct reference is made to its prosumptive dimensions (for two exceptions, see Norman, 2017; Santomier and Hogan, 2013). This oversight is rather surprising. As previously noted, digital-based social media are the primary means of prosumption, and the foremost mode of the prosumer, within the "'new' world of prosumption" (Ritzer, 2015a). As such, the widespread diffusion of social media technologies into sport has spawned the new sporting world of prosumption. Within this moment, if the material and largely orchestrated aspects of prosumption associated with the experience of spectator sport are characteristic of prosumer sport 1.0, then the interactive, mobile, and user-generated (new media and Web 2.0) technologies propelling the social media revolution have enabled the development of what we engage here as prosumer sport 2.0.

Social media sport prosumption represents the largely autonomous and unpaid process through which fans produce and consume the user-generated content (UGC), which powers (both in terms of substance and surplus capital generation) the social media universe. Such "sport chatter" (Whannel, 2009) is distinct from the

event coverage, statistical information, and formal reporting that provides the basis for the traditional sport media and provides occasion for fans to exchange real-time analyses and opinions of on-going events, tactics, players, and performances, blended with more general discussions, anecdotes, banter, and reminiscences (Blaszka et al., 2012). Sport fans using social media in this way unavoidably become prosumers, in that they are no longer (if indeed they ever were) purely consumers of media content: they actively produce social media content that shapes, however minutely, the meanings circulating within the sporting universe. Certainly, there is a recognition within the sport industry that social media is an inexorable force that needs to be harnessed. As National Football League (NFL) commissioner Roger Goodell noted (admittedly on the signing of the NFL's contract with Twitter to broadcast games on the social media platform), "Twitter is where live events unfold . . . There is a massive amount of NFL-related conversation happening on Twitter during our games" (Anon, 2016). The magnitude of these *conversations* certainly is astounding: during the 2016 NFL Super Bowl, 27 million event-related Tweets received 4.3 billion worldwide views, whereas 38 million Instagram users shared 155 million Super Bowl–related images and videos (Spangler, 2016). The Rio de Janeiro 2016 Summer Olympic Games generated some 187 million Tweets that were viewed 75 billion times and 1.5 billion Facebook posts (Akhtar, 2016).

The rise of social media sport as a sphere of prosumption relates to Jurgenson's (2010) notion of the de-McDonaldization of the Internet, specifically regarding social media's potential as a space of resistance to the McDonaldized system of media sport delivery. The formulaic qualities of mediated sport dehumanize the mediated sport experience by encouraging the passive reception of a rationally contrived sport product. Hence, rather like the McDonaldized sport stadium, the McDonaldized sport spectacle can lead to feelings of disenchantment among sport fans; the "magical qualities" that drew them to sport in the first place are compromised by the rationalizing logics underpinning the generic sport spectacle (Ritzer and Stillman, 2001: 100). Social media technologies and platforms afford their users the potential to influence the meanings associated with sport and thereby circumvent the discursive orthodoxies of established broadcast hierarchies (Dixon, 2011). In this way, social media sport is a potentially de-McDonaldizing space. This is, perhaps, most apparent during live sporting events where, as Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey identified – expressing, if unknowingly, the prosumptive nature of the sport–Twitter relation – the micro-blogging app is all about "Live commentary, live conversations, and live connections" (Anon, 2016). Whether a live spectator at the event, a remote television viewer or radio listener, or even someone simply following a game via a collaborative Internet technology (i.e. blogs, micro-blogs, message boards), sport prosumers contribute to social media discourse in a manner that potentially provides an alternative to the discursive framing of events offered by mainstream media broadcasts and sport organizations (Norman, 2012, 2017). Oftentimes countering the anodyne platitudes espoused by network sport commentators (centrally trained populist functionaries directed to engage

prevailing values and thereby cultivate and retain large viewerships), social media platforms are largely unregulated and volatile spaces enabling the expression of a range of viewpoints (from the progressive to the reactionary) and dispositions (from the demeaning to the supportive). Not limited to textual or image-based content, live video streaming apps such as Periscope expand the ability to offer alternatives to the mainstream sport media: "Whether separated by stadium sections or by thousands of miles, fans can access real-time sports content through a merged and mediated platform, as an even more 'refreshing' and live game experience is possible via their mobile devices" (Benigni et al., 2014: 226). Here, spectating consumers become media producers, delivering their non-authorized feed to a potentially global audience.

The de-McDonaldizing possibilities of social media sport are tempered by the encroachment of centralized interests into this "emergent media ecology" (Bowman and Cranmer, 2014: 214). The utopian idealism of early phases of the Internet age – which prophesied an open, accessible, and democratic revolution within media and communications technology (Butterworth, 2014) – has been regulated by the corporate colonization of social media platforms. Athletes, sport organizations, media interests, and both sport- and non-sport-related commercial brands have recognized social media users as an important constituency that needs to be engaged and employed through channels they inhabit (Sanderson, 2013). Thus, corporate sport interests have "responded by reaching out to fans on an increasingly intimate and social level – engaging them not only as customers but as co-producers of their respective messages, brands and identities" (Bowman and Cranmer, 2014: 213–214). For Hull and Lewis (2014), social media sport offers a level of two-way interaction, between the public and sport representatives, that traditional one-to-many platforms cannot offer. Similarly, Armstrong et al. (2014: 159) identify how social media occupies an important space of productive convergence between a sport organization (in their case, the Los Angeles Kings) and its consumers: social media becoming a "unique opportunity to build relationships with users and foster community," in a manner that simultaneously humanizes/de-McDonaldizes the experience of the brand. Athletes, sport organizations, media interests, and myriad commercial brands can (as much as the sport fan) thus be considered prosumptive actors within the interactive social media sport economy (each of them both consumes and produces social media sport content, for what frequently are indistinguishable personal, informational, and promotional purposes).

Prosumer sport 2.0 constitutes a co-produced space incorporating the productive interplay between Web 1.0 (top-down, centralized, provider-generated content) and Web 2.0 (bottom-up, de-centralized, UGC) technologies (Jurgenson, 2010). Speaking to the merging of traditional mass media and social media in sport communications, specifically television, Sutera (2013) noted the "trend of incorporating social media as a crucial part of almost all sports show programming" as "standard operating procedure in today's media landscape" (p. 76) Whether it be emailing a sports talk show, contributing to an online poll, or having one's tweet scrolled

along the bottom of the screen during game coverage, the contemporary sport prosumer is encouraged to feel like a contributor to the media sport landscape, rather than merely an observer. The sport media's widespread adoption of these de-McDonaldizing techniques means viewers (individually and, more importantly, as a collective) are no longer addressed as non-people upon whom a centrally conceived broadcast is summarily imposed. Rather, by incorporating social media content into programming, the perception is that the viewer is valued, listened to, and is shaping – however minutely – the mediated somethingess being consumed (Augé, 1995; Ritzer, 2004). This engenders a sense of intimacy and interactivity between broadcaster and audience that, it is hoped, will further the prosumers' loyalty to, and longevity with, the specific form of branded sport entertainment being consumed. Evidently, sport broadcasters view social media as part of an integrated ecosystem (Hanna et al., 2011) of *branded* content delivery that recognizes the need to engage the largely (but not exclusively) younger prosumers, for whom mobile technologies are often their primary mode of sport media engagement (Sutera, 2013). Hence, ESPN's or NBC's presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provides access to sport news, information, images, and video highlights that can act as standalone delivery platforms (Akhtar, 2016), but which also encourage migration to more traditional media outlets (particularly broadcast television). Similarly, sport organizations, and athletes (Kassing and Sanderson, 2010; Pegoraro, 2010), forge their intimate and interactive social media presence in order to capture the attention and interest of – and so cultivate as an audience among – the prized young adult demographic necessary for the future cultural and economic viability of a given sport.

According to Bowman and Cranmer (2014: 222), not only do sport fans utilize social media to play an "increasingly active role in the co-production of mediated sports content," they are actually "equal players" in this process. The intensifying corporate interest in social media platforms would question their egalitarian depiction. While social media sport continues to provide the means whereby individuals can express their views, attitudes, and experiences, not all social media voices are made equal. The leviathans (athletes, teams, organizations, media companies) of the sport industry utilize their established brand value within social media settings, often with the effect of suppressing – or at the very least, drowning out – the voices of individual sport social media prosumers. Doubtless some sport prosumers use social media to express their creative opposition to the contrived orchestrations of mainstream sport producers, "rather than merely experiencing it in a one-dimensional and top-down manner" (Mermiri, 2009: 83). However, these would seem to be increasingly marginal, if not in number, then definitely in influence. Far from being de-centralized, corporate sport's ever greater occupation of social media – vividly demonstrated by the contract signed between Twitter and the NFL to broadcast CBS game feed via the app (Anon, 2016) – speaks to a re-centralization of social media sport: its reconfiguring into a top-down, centralized platform of provider-generated sport content (Jurgenson, 2010). Pace Denegri-Knott and Zwick (2012) state the de-McDonaldizing impulses of the social media sport may only be a temporary state of being, before its seemingly inevitable

re-McDonaldization by the corporate sport leviathan. The days of prosumer sport 2.0 may well be numbered.

eSport convergences

When considering the complexity of prosumer culture, it may have been analytically useful to strategically separate the digital and the material. Nonetheless, it is also important to recognize that ‘‘material and digital worlds increasingly interpenetrate,’’ compelling us to ‘‘think in terms of ‘augmented reality’ in which the digital and material worlds complement one another (Jurgenson, 2012)’’ (Ritzer, 2013: 12). Hence, in this section, we focus on eSport as an exemplar of the convergence of the material and the digital that characterizes prosumer society. By eSport, we refer to ‘‘to an organized and competitive approach to playing computer games’’ (Witkowski, 2012: 350), such as *StarCraft II*, *League of Legends*, *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*, *Defense of the Ancients 2*, *Call of Duty*, and *World of Warcraft*. As Hutchins (2008) suggested, ‘‘Cyber-athletic competition cannot be thought of in terms of media or sport or computer gaming. The institutional and material boundaries separating them have imploded, leading to the creation of a new social form, e-sport’’ (p. 865). It is a global cultural and economic phenomenon, estimated to encompass more than 200 million annual participants and/or viewers and to have generated US$463 million in revenue during 2016 (Gaudiosi, 2016; Newzoo, 2015). For some, its perceived lack of physicality (Jenny et al., 2017, Jonasson and Thiborg, 2010; Şentuna and Kanbur, 2016) renders the concentration on eSport somewhat contentious within a discussion largely focused on the prosumptive dimensions of *traditional* sporting practices. Nonetheless, it is our contention that eSport represents a prophetic vision of a rapidly approaching future for sporting prosumption and the sport prosumer, one in which the boundaries between material and digital realms are blurred, as are the distinctions between traditional sport and eSport.

Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, appeared in the closing ceremony of the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic Games representing Tokyo, the host city of the 2020 games. Although there is nothing unusual about a premier featured in this way, what was perhaps unexpected was the role and appearance Abe adopted within the spectacular ceremonial. Following a formulaic, scene-setting promotional video for the Tokyo Olympic Games,

> The scene cut to Mr. Abe in a Toyota Century, fretting that he wouldn’t make it to Rio on time, followed by an animated Super Mario diving into a green pipe in Tokyo, emerging as a human figure from the green pipe on the field in Rio de Janeiro. When his costume fell off, the prime minister emerged, holding a red ball and waving a red cap, a shadow of a smile on his face. (Rich, 2016)

In his guise as ‘‘Abe Mario,’’ the Japanese Prime Minister was doubtless placing his not inconsiderable political capital behind the Japanese computer game industry

(Super Mario being part of the game stable of industry giant, Nintendo). He was also, perhaps, foretelling an increased role for eSport at the Tokyo Games whose slogan is "Discover Tomorrow" (Palazzo, 2016). The foregrounding of computer games within Tokyo's Olympic promotion should not come as a surprise to any observers of contemporary sport culture. Despite recurrent interrogation of eSport's credentials as a legitimate sport, over the past two decades or so, there has been an inexorable convergence between traditional sport and eSport universes. The structure and delivery of eSport – as both material spectating and digital viewing experiences – has mirrored the unabashed commercialization, celebritization, and mediated spectacularization that have enveloped traditional sport forms at the elite level (Hutchins, 2008, Perelman, 2012, Smart, 2007). Professional eSport athletes – sometimes referred to as cyber-athletes (Hutchins, 2008; McGrath, 2014) – are pivotal figures within the cultural economy of eSport and can be considered as embodied brands whose intertextually mediated persona helps fan audience interest in themselves, the games and tournaments they play, and the products they are sponsored by. Major eSport competitions are high-profile mega-events: featuring well-remunerated superstars of eSport, including prize money often in the millions of dollars, generating viewing audience figures in the millions, occupying large indoor venues housing spectators in the tens of thousands, and even generating their own purpose-built stadia (Draper, 2017). However, there are also significant differences between traditional sport and eSport.

While traditional sport may have been latterly awakened to its inherent prosumptive elements, prosumption has always been at the core of the eSport experience. From their inception, digital-based electronic multiplayer games, or e-games (the technologies upon which eSports are based), were unavoidably prosumptive (Ritzer, 2014). Each of the players of these games is a consumer through the very act of purchasing and utilizing the technology. He or she can also be considered a producer of the game, by "creating the action that is the game" (Ritzer, 2014). The Internet has magnified the scale and scope of e-games as a form of prosumption, with globally networked gamers now able to simultaneously consume and produce the e-game, within massive multiplayer online games (MMOG) of various types. However, the role and influence of the e-gamer as prosumer were amplified with the widespread use of digital content hosting sites, such as YouTube and Twitch, as broadcast platforms for individual gamers. According to Newzoo (2015), between 2005 and 2015, the widespread usage of these accessible broadcast-enabling platforms created a massive explosion in the amount of consumer-generated content being shared within the eSports economy:

> In the past ten years, how consumers "consume" content has drastically changed. People not only enjoy watching each other instead of professionally created content but they have the increasing desire to create, share and ultimately be part of the experience. (p. 3)

The growth of eSports provoked Amazon.com's purchase of Twitch in 2014 for US$1.1 billion, thereby providing access to its 55 million globally dispersed unique

viewers per month, who play and watch ‘‘billions of minutes of games per month’’ (Jeff Bezos, Amazon chief executive, quoted in Wingfield, 2014). Belying its understanding of the prosumer economy, Amazon was doubtless enamored by the ‘‘compelling’’ economics of Twitch ‘‘because it supplies its own content and audience, comparable to an *oven that produces its own food*’’ (Carr, 2014; italics added).

A prosumption-based, and prosumer-generated phenomenon, eSports incorporate different forms of prosumption. At the pinnacle of the eSport pyramid are those cyber-athletes who could be considered as operating in the realm of ‘‘*p-a-p*’’ (Ritzer, 2015a, 2015b), in that they may be consumers of particular technologies, but their primary role is to utilize them in producing the core features of eSport spectacle (including game play and their own mediated persona). At the base of the eSport pyramid are the millions comprising the gamer audience. They may well play (consume) multiplayer online games and even broadcast their own play (and thereby contribute to the production of the eSport universe), yet they are also likely to spend considerable time, and money, consuming the broadcast and social media output of high-profile professional gamers. Anchored more within the realm of ‘‘*p-a-c,*’’ these fans are crucial to the economics of eSports, in that their numbers generate capital (portions of which are shared with the broadcast platform) for professional eSport athletes, through the direct payment of fees for channel access, revenue from ads within broadcasts, lucrative product sponsorships, and licensed merchandising. In this manner, eSport evidences many aspects of the economics of corporate sport model (Andrews, 2006). However, there is growing evidence of the creeping infiltration of eSport and related technologies and logics into the realm of traditional sport (as attested by the explosion of computer-generated data analytics within professional sport over the past decade; see Baerg, 2016; Colás, 2017).

The active nature of prosumer involvement in eSports (‘‘creating the action that is the game’’ (Ritzer, 2014)) has precipitated a shift in the consumer expectations for many. The contemporary culture of prosumption has created a new generation of prosumers, no longer simply willing to obediently consume in a ‘‘one-dimensional and top-down manner.’’ Rather, today’s sport prosumers, raised on a diet of eSports, ‘‘expect to actively shape the nature, form and content of what they want to consume’’ (Mermiri, 2009: 83). Up to this point, traditional sport organizations – perhaps recognizing this as a key strategy for appealing to the ‘‘sponsor-tastic 18-to-34-year-old age demographic’’ (Gay, 2016) – have adopted various approaches designed to engage this constituency socialized into, and through, the interactive sensibilities of eSport prosumption. Hence,

> the NBA and MLS both accept all-star ballots via social media and the NHL encourages fans to share their all-star votes on personal Facebook and Twitter accounts. Some leagues have even allowed fans to influence game-related outcomes, as fans’ Twitter votes helped decide the winner of the 2012 NBA all-star dunk contest and music-sharing social media service Spotify was used by fans to determine the entrance music of some UFC fighters. (Bowman and Cranmer, 2014: 216)

This level of relatively superficial, and largely peripheral to the sporting outcome, interactivity within major sport leagues (i.e. National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Soccer (MLS)) is unlikely to satiate the contemporary sport prosumer for long. As such, it may be possible to discern the future of mainstream sport within a fledgling organization at the margins of the contemporary sporting economy, and hence more amenable to considering more radical forms of prosumer interactivity. For example, the Formula E racing championship for electric cars introduced a technology called FanBoost enabling fans to use social media to vote (using a website, Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram) in a poll for their favorite driver. The top three in the poll receive a temporary power boost in the upcoming race (Cave and Miller, 2015). Interestingly, the FanBoost technology encourages drivers to become more active in the social media in order to nurture their fan base, with the aim of augmenting their FanBoost. More importantly, the initiative generates a greater experience of interactivity for the Formula E prosumer. As Alejandro Agag, chief executive of Formula E Holdings, enthused, ''Through social media, fans are having a real impact on the result of a race. It's no longer 100pc about the skill of the driver and performance of the car. It's also about fans' input'' (Cave and Miller, 2015). So, in the prophetic guise of Formula E – and in Jenkins' (2008) well-rehearsed terms – sport is in the throes of becoming an illustrative part of convergence culture, ''where old and new media collide'' and ''where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways'' (p. 2). The future intensifying convergence of traditional sport and eSport realms would appear to be an inescapable corollary of traditional sport's concerted incorporation into – and eSport's very being as an expression of – the age of prosumption.

Conclusion: On capital

The complex and varying interpenetration of contemporary sport and prosumption outlined within this discussion unearths numerous interesting insights (social, cultural, political, economic, and technological) into the nature of prosumer society more broadly. Given the constraints of this conclusion, we have chosen to focus on prosumer sport as illustrative of particular facets of prosumer capitalism. As Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) noted in relation to the ''age'' of the digital prosumer, ''Abundance is everywhere in the number of people involved, the time they devote to the tasks, their output, and so on. Such abundance is in stark contrast to the realities faced by traditional capitalistic systems'' (p. 30). Similarly, the institutional structure and operations of prosumer sport 2.0 and eSports are characterized by conditions of product abundance: the post-scarcity sport prosumption marketplace is literally inundated with the contributions of sport prosumers. Within such conditions, the economic effectiveness of harnessing sport prosumer's voluminous digital output trumps issues of productive efficiency (Jurgenson and Ritzer, 2009).

Sport prosumers are monetized at virtually every level of their existence. By producing free digital content that helps constitute the social media universe – or even simply by clicking on a web page or *liking* a piece of social media – the individual prosumer contributes to the creation of surplus value for the platform being utilized and/or the sport entity being prosumed. Outlining the complexities of the sport prosumer economy, Cave and Miller (2015) noted,

> By engaging fans via social media, sports rights holders can open new communication channels with their audience that can be measured and valued as a new commercial opportunity with sponsors. Businesses that get involved through sponsorships and social media promotions, meanwhile, benefit from increased brand affinity and loyalty.

Of course, the vast majority of the prosumers of digital sport content are unpaid. Unsurprisingly therefore, "To the contemporary capitalist, the uncommodified labor time of the prosumer is preferable to the commodified labor of the proletariat" (Ritzer, 2015a: 10), which leads to the charge that the digital age mass prosumer is even more exploited than the industrial age mass producer. This would appear to be a reasonable charge. However, for the sport prosumer, there is perhaps an added twist. One would expect that sport prosumers are, at least in part, motivated by their interest in sport. So, would an active or passive presence in social media sport, one assumes, be a pleasurable experience despite the inherent economic exploitation associated with it? Similarly, the eSport exponent is an exploited and alienated functionary (Comor, 2010) within the digital gaming industry. Nonetheless, such individuals doubtless derive significant enjoyment from their eSport involvement. Hence, the sport prosumer, of whatever variant, can be considered to be involved in the conflation of play and labor known as "playbor": the generation of surplus value from non-necessary (and, most likely, pleasurable) labor for the benefit of digital capitalist class. Invoking Scholz (2013), within this world of digital sport playbor, contemporary sport culture can be considered both playground and factory and the sport prosumer both enchanted *and* exploited by sport prosumption. But for how long?

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