

openwear/
collaborative
clothing



BRAND MANAGEMENT MANUAL

www.openwear.org



“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”

Mohandas Gandhi

“No one can prevent us from having a vision of where we want to be, but my focus is very much on creating that new world right now, not waiting for a hypothetical alternative.”

Michel Bauwens

Introduction to Openwear Brand Manual

Openwear is a collaborative platform for fashion creation and continuous education based on co-making, skill-sharing and ethical branding.

Fashion, a basic cultural expression of our society, seems trapped by forces, powers and passions which prevent it from evolving in synch with society. On one side, you have the fashion system, made by actors (major fashion designers, multinational companies, media events, trade fairs) that compete and collaborate to attract customers, gain market share and access to resources and visibility.

On the other side, thousands of creatives and independent fashion producers are engaging with alternative practices of responsible design, aimed at building new types of relations between producers and consumers, more concerned about their impact on environment and society. This must be considered next to the growth of new tastes in people not really interested in “fashion” any more, but ready to wear smart clothes at convenient prices and wanting to know what’s the score: curious to know what’s their story, how they were built and be able to give their personal contribution to it.

Openwear wants to reconcile these emerging social trends promoting an alternative approach to fashion through an environment where you can benefit of:

- A public space where students, independent micro-fashion producers, creatives and social enterprises, educational institutions can present personal profiles and find collaborators for their creations/activities
- Online tools to discuss best practices, find common solutions to shared problems and discover learning opportunities
- A series of Collaborative Collections that freely downloadable, replicable, customizable and salable by users because under an open source brand

Openwear basic concepts

Before starting to understand how Openwear can be useful to us and to all the people participating in the production of a new vision of fashion based on micro-communities and sustainability, it's important we clarify some basic concepts of the Openwear approach.

From the commercial brand...

Brands develop as a commercial institution with the arrival of mass production and mass consumption in the late 19th century. In this first phase, to brand a product largely meant to add a symbolic meaning that conferred a distinctive identity on it and allowed consumers to choose between otherwise functionally and aesthetically similar products. Starting in the 1960s with the diffusion of modern consumer culture and a new, more complex media environment, centered around television, the practice of branding undergoes an important change. Now the aim is no longer that of creating a symbolic addition to the product, but instead that of fusing the product with a particular lifestyle that becomes inseparable from its materiality. A brand, in this more contemporary sense of the term, is to be understood as an ethos, inscribed in the product that affects, to varying degrees, the identities and social relations arising around its use. The goal of brand management becomes to ensure that this particular ethos is reproduced in consumers' everyday interactions with and around branded products.

“We live in a society that treats scarce and rival resources (i.e. nature and the biosphere), as if they were infinite, and artificially renders scarce what is infinite, since it can be reproduced for free. This is an illogical state of affairs that both destroys the biosphere and impedes the growth of social productivity.”

Michel Bauwens

To the open source brand...

“Open production models start from a different assumption as to how intellectual works are created. They do not see the creation of new works as the end result of the labour of relatively isolated authors, but as the end result of processing and altering already existing works”

Felix Stadler

In their contemporary form, brands rely heavily on consumers as co-producers. With the arrival of web 2.0 such forms of customer collaboration have advanced from the co-production of experiences and lifestyles to the co-production of content (as in the case of Facebook or YouTube) or even designs. However most brands that invite such extended processes have remained 'closed', that is co-producing customers have been treated as a 'free' resource and have, generally, neither been entitled to a share of the

value produced nor given any significant influence over the production process. An open brand is a brand that recognizes the productive role of customer co-production, engages in strategies that aim at redistributing the value thus produced and seeks organizational solutions that give co-producing consumers a say in determining the overall governance of the brand. The issue of redistribution can be addressed in essentially two ways. Brands can institutionalize mechanisms of revenue sharing through which co-creating consumers can benefit from the value that they produce. Alternatively, consumers can be involved in determining the overall social values towards the brand should contribute to.

I believe that the Internet, open source and a global culture of discourse and sharing will become the pillar of democracy for the 21st Century.

Joi Ito

Design vs styling and fashion vs clothing

“The aesthetic quality of a product is integral to its usefulness because products we use every day affect our person and our well-being. But only well-executed objects can be beautiful.”

Dieter Rams

Usually design is defined as giving shape to something focusing on the improvement of the social quality of life and individual and collective well being, and styling about shaping the objects without any real connection with its structure or functions, to make it more attractive and commercially oriented.

In the same way clothing is more about looking at the functional aspects of garments and fashion about looking at the expressive elements of what we wear.

We believe that a good approach is to combine human needs, beauty and technology, to produce something that we didn't have or to improve on something that already exists. Expression without content is too volatile for this moment in history when we need to rethink our lifestyles on the basis of lack of resources and historical points of reference. We need to rethink quality starting from an acquired environmental motivation which refuses the planned obsolescence of today's consumerism, aims to make technologies and tools work the way we want them to, and shares real stories about the people and the ideas behind the products.

“If design didn't have a social function there couldn't be communication between objects and people and worse communication between people. Designers give life and voice to objects, they tell our visions and aspirations for the future, as well those we can't have yet.”

Laura Antonelli

The networked artisan and a culture of makers

“‘Participatory culture’ is how we’ve started thinking about the intersection of all these phenomena like blogs, filesharing networks, wikis, and just the web in general. They all make it easier for people to create and distribute art/ideas and also let people act as filters and editors. But we’re really at the very, very beginning of all this. The shift that we’re going to see from the current top-down culture model will be absolutely revolutionary. As overused as that term is, there’s really no other word that captures the magnitude of what’s going on here.”

Nicholas Reville

There is a new practice of bottom-up social and economic networking and coordination, along with advances in small-scale, community-based manufacturing and design putting at the center a new type of worker/entrepreneur that has not yet been officially defined and framed. Some call them networked artisans.

They are active in small ateliers, labs, backyards, basements but they are also deeply connected with online communities and networks where they open up collaborations and share creations on the basis of common values.

“When intellectual problems become distributed, the search for solutions becomes collaborative and the research agenda is driven not by multinational shareholders but by the passions of the participants, you get not just better results, you get different results”

Alec Steffens

The local context is a hidden treasure

“All forms of art require a place where beginning artists can be bad, learn from their mistakes, and get better. A world of totally professionalized expression masks the apprenticeship process all artists need to undergo if they are going to achieve their full potential.”

Henry Jenkins

Each local context is different. In order to act respectfully in different places it’s important to understand the positive values of difference.

Often media tend to focus on single aspects of urban (and rural) contexts, trying to brand and define places in a restrictive way. People who live and work in such places know that reality is much more complex than this stereotyped images; at the same time, they often experience difficulties in finding informations about what’s going on. One of our main goal is to help people in local contexts to meet each other in order

to share both know-how and know-who about practical, inspirational, and bureaucratic topics. Places are filled with small laboratories and microsocial scenes. We want to open up such knowledge. Because sharing is caring.

“Localize production. Virtualize everything else.”

John Robb

Peer to peer as a new opportunity

“we saw large-scale projects developing, without relying on markets or clear hierarchies, but rather based on social signals and motivations to organize significant productive enterprises. I called these phenomena commons-based peer production.”

Yochai Benkler

Peer-to-Peer (p2p) is a concept derived from Internet file sharing that has inspired new visions of human relations based on egalitarian social networking enabled by Internet technologies.

According to many thinkers, it's an emerging “third way of production” (the p2p economy) which is different both from traditional capitalism and socialism; p2p economy is clearly visible in the fields of Open Source software and in DIY (Do-It-Yourself) communities. Participants in p2p economies produce creative value (a block of software code; a song; a clothing pattern) and share it with their communities believing that their benefits in terms of quality, knowledge and wealth will increase. This is exactly the vision that inspires our project.

We believe that creativity is everywhere, but we also know that it has to be shared and organized in order to become real innovation, which has to be communicated to be widespread. And to make a difference in our real lives.

“Work has been re-invented to satisfy the needs and demands of a generation who, ‘dis-embedded’ from traditional attachments to family, kinship, community or region, now find that work must become a fulfilling mark of self.”

Angela McRobbie

With Openwear you can

Benefit from the value collectively produced

The value produced by Openwear brand and Collaborative Collections will not be exploited only by some privileged individual actors, but will merge into a common pool of shared innovations and resources.

This process will not erase at all the individual contributions but will enhance them in a wider, ethical and sustainable design environment.

Openwear brings the users towards a collaborative frame instead of the usual competitive one for the growth of the whole.

Be creative and share your best practices

Openwear is interested both in individual creativity and collective innovation.

Individual creativity is a value at the core of the fashion system, it deals with the personal capabilities of designers, makers and crafters to create clothes that express imageries, individuality and identity.

Collective innovation is a shared attempt to change the mechanisms and processes into a given field of material, social and economy production. the community gives a voice to the ones who feel the urge to share openly innovation processes.

Understand the value you produce

It has become harder and harder to understand what is the value of our work, how much things should be paid, how much people should earn. That's because the supply chain has become fragmented and so much of the process has become invisible. We have the chance to experiment with the usefulness of online tools to counter the alienation of the contemporary work in creative industries and bring transparency back where it should belong.

Look at your community, your city and your planet with different eyes

We often feel alone and powerless in a complex world of deep, ongoing transformations.

In Openwear your individual action interacting with others could improve your community, a better community could improve the lifestyles in the city, and better lifestyles are the essential starting point for bigger changes in social, economical and ecological sustainability.

Local production, direct contact between producers and consumers, recycling and upcycling of local resources, networking and collaboration among microproducers are the necessary steps to live better and work better.

Benefit from a licensed open source brand

Licensing a brand means sharing all rights granted by the Law to the brand's owner. The true owner of a social process is the community who can share knowledge and experience, and thanks to this sharing is able to benefit from collective innovation. All creations of Openwear Collaborative Collection are licensed to be freely reproducible, wholly or partly, and derivative works are to be licensed under the same license (share alike!). All the members of Openwear community can download the Lookmaps of Collaborative Collections, produce the garments and sell the garments with Openwear label. What we want to nurture through Openwear brand is the viral, contagious character of responsible participation, as opposed to the often mindless deference to the fashionistas of style.

Become more visible and connected.

In the overload of communication is not easy to become visible to a broader audience and be able to show the value of your work. This platform will help you in promoting yourself and establish connection with key actors like peers, institutions, schools and local hubs. And it's not a matter of marketing, but a matter of how ethical relations being more powerful than empty messages.

Maybe you don't know it, but just around the corner there could be someone who's looking for things that you produce or create or would love to collaborate with you.

Engage, be empowered and continue to learn

The problems you experience with your work or activity are often the same that people in your line of business are experiencing. Sharing such problems, and we are not talking about only creative and innovative aspects of your work but especially about practical, managerial and institutional stuff that we all must deal with.

Sharing best practices and finding common grounds, interact with our local institutions collectively saves time and give us more chances to be successful in reaching our goals.

Wear stories not objects

People know that clothes are crucial to express their attitudes, their values and beliefs. Style is not simply a matter of aesthetics. We want to create clothes that are capable of telling stories; and these stories are not confined only to luxury and trendiness. These are stories of creative communities where people take care of each other; where each small personal project is the thread of a bigger tissue made by the efforts, the dreams and the abilities of all the others.

Our clothes will not be mere alienated objects coming from the other side of the world and produced by anonymous laborers exploited in ways that are hard to imagine. They will be produced in a transparent process where material production and meaning creation are tangled.

Be involved in the creation of a new production protocol.

Does it sound nerdy? Not to worry, by protocol, we simply mean the search for new ways of doing things.

We want to re-imagine the relationships between producers, users and consumers. And this is not because we are utopian, but because we are pragmatic. The present-day system of material production is increasingly unsustainable: it's polluting our planet and it's corrupting our lives.

Openwear wants to explore new paths for the making of goods of daily usage. Manufactured items that are put together in high-tech social networks with the implicit and explicit knowledge of the workers involved in their production. Simply put, it's time to stand up and claim back what we are making together.

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EDUFASHION

A collaborative platform for
ethical fashion creation, seduction
and continuous education




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