

Deptford.TV is an audio-visual documentation of the urban change of Deptford (south-east London) in collaboration with *SPC.org media lab*, *Bitnik.org*, *Boundless.coop*, *Liquid Culture* and *Goldsmiths College*.

The unedited as well as edited media content is being made available on the *Deptford.TV* database and distributed over the *Boundless.coop* wireless network. The media is licensed through open content licenses such as Creative Commons and the GNU general public license.

This reader problematises the notion of 'tactical media'. As McKenzie Wark and others stated already in 2003: 'can tactical media anticipate, rather than be merely reactive?' By calling for a strategic approach to media production and distribution, the intention is to overcome some of the structural paradoxes inherent to 'alternative' or 'oppositional' media, especially since much of the free / open culture dissemination on the Internet has become the new "mainstream" in itself (think of the casual defiance of copyright played out relentlessly and on a mass scale with file-sharing, social networking, and everyday media consumption).

The book is a compilation of theoretical underpinnings, local narratives and written documentation not only of the *Deptford.TV* project but of phenomena relating to this new situation of 'strategic media'.

Keywords: alternative media, strategic media, documentary filmmaking, piracy, file-sharing, digitization, media distribution, local regeneration, urban change

Deptford.TV diaries volume II: Pirate Strategies

Deptford.TV diaries vol. II



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Featuring:

Adnan Hadzi, Jonas Andersson, Ben Gidley, Duncan Reekie, Brianne Selman, Neil Gordon-Orr, Alison Rooke, Gesche Wuerfel, the University of Openness, Jamie King, Armin Medosch, Rasmus Fleischer, andrea rota, !Mediengruppe Bitnik, Sven Koenig, Jo Walsh, Rufus Pollock, Platoniq, The People Speak, Zoe Young, Mick Fuzz, Denis Jaromil Rojo, Lennaart van Oldenborgh

Deptford.TV diaries vol. II

For Paul Hendrich

This book is dedicated to Paul Hendrich, who died at the age of 36 in January 2008. Paul was a South London-based activist, youth worker, family man and scholar. He was doing an anthropology PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London, on cross-border activists on the frontier between the US and Mexico.

Paul's interest in borders permeated his recent projects, and resonate with the Deptford.TV project. Like Deptford.TV, his work was about transgressing the border between academia and the "real world," both in the local community of Deptford and New Cross and in the wider global public sphere. For example, he was one of the organisers of the Migrating University based at Goldsmiths in 2007. As part of the No Borders activist camp at Gatwick airport (campaigning for the freedom of movement across borders of the world's citizens), the Migrating University brought a motley crew of activists and refugees into the space of the academy, opening up a very different model of pedagogy. (You can see footage of the Migrating University, including of Paul busily helping to make sure everything hung together, on the Deptford.TV archive.) A similar project in which Paul was a moving spirit in was Lewisham '77, which commemorated the victory of local people and anti-racists over the fascist National Front in New Cross in 1977 – also documented by Deptford.TV as part of its commitment to recording the underground and alternative histories of the area.

Paul curated the Deptford Town Hall Pirates project, which similarly aimed to reconfigure the relationship between the university and its neighbourhood. The project focused on Deptford Town Hall on New Cross Road, transferred from Lewisham council to Goldsmiths as part of Deptford City Challenge on condition it retained community access. Paul's project was about making this community access meaningful. It also commemorated the histories of slavery and colonialism that made Deptford what it is – histories inscribed in the area's urban landscape in the form of the statues of imperial naval "heroes" on the façade of the Town Hall: four men who were involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

By emphasising the way these men acted as pirates for British mercantile capitalism, and by seeking to creatively re-appropriate the enclosed space of the Town Hall, Paul staged the tension and ambivalence in the concept of piracy. On the one hand, there is the robbery which Marx named 'primitive accumulation': the plunder of goods from the commons which forms the foundation of capitalism. As Paul wrote: 'it is remembered as only a footnote

in most histories that in 1568 John Hawkins [one of the figures in the statues], accompanied by his young nephew and protégé Francis Drake [one of the figures in the statues] and bankrolled by Elizabeth I, was able to ‘obtain’ between 400—500 West Africans and sell them in the West Indies. Such were the profits from this arrangement that they were soon repeated with Deptford and its renowned shipyards producing many of the vessels that were used in this commerce.’

But on the other hand, there is the piracy which Deptford.TV celebrates: the capture of social value back from the robber barons of capitalism for the benefit of the commons. In this spirit, Paul started a Pirate Society at Goldsmiths, temporarily capturing The Island (the traffic island at New Cross Gate) as an autonomous pirate republic in 2006.

In Paul’s memory, long live the island!

Ben Gidley, January 2008

Don't go to Thebes (# 2)
by Duncan Reekie, Exploding Cinema

Listen to me teenage Oedipus
You don't have to get married
And you don't have to kill your father
Don't go to Thebes

Really
I mean it
Forget the throne
Leave the Sphinx alone
The scars on your ankles were made
by the shackles you wore as a child
Will you now lock them back on yourself?
I'm warning you
Don't go to Thebes

Your adopted parents love you and I love you
In fact everybody fucking loves you
So don't go to Thebes

The Curse of the mummy
The temple of doom
In the country of the blind
The one eyed snake is king

Meanwhile
Out on the hungry snow road
Where nobody knows your name
It's so attractive
The spires and steeples
The night moth light
The blood
They want you for their king
The prophet king
With a white stick and a dark glasses
Don't go to Thebes

At the cathedral
The bishop is waiting
The congregation is embarrassed
Fuck the coronation
Let them wait
You have beautiful eyes
If you oppose the king
You will become the king
Don't go to Thebes

Anyway the city is quarantined
The baggage handlers are on strike
Beautiful soldiers at the border
Power cuts
Disinfectant mats
Books burning in the street
Electric laurel leaves
Swallows under the eaves
Don't go to Thebes

MEANWHILE

At the exclusive Research Academy
Set amongst lawns and ancient firs
The study group is considering the plague
Casting the runes
Decoding the script
The Secrets of the crypt
the supplement the imaginary
The Magnets in a vacuum
The vast accelerator looping out under the suburbs

During the day they walk as men at dusk it's back to four legs
Beneath their atomic microscopes they have isolated
many strange particles, rods and cones, visions, the mother father figure, the
tar baby, the slave trade, the male gaze, Plato's cave, Napoleon, Snowball,
Cancer of the mouth, the viral spiral, East of Eden, metonyms, metaphors,
penis envy, non-diegetic sound, froth, whiteness, night loss and false consciousness.

The blind prophet fumbles acetates onto the overhead projector
He's working in Greek later published in Latin

But the cause of the plague is the search for the cure
Born again with amnesia
We cannot return any of your pictures but there will be a prize for any work
that is shown

Really
I'm serious
Don't go to Thebes
Don't drink the Hemlock
Don't sign the contract
Don't go back

You don't have to go
You can come with me

We could build a city without kings and gods... City of super 8 voodoo love,
folk television, plagiarism, experimental gambling, friend swapping, car boot
bartering, pagan ritual, non-sexist porn, autonomous lotteries, free drugs,
polygamy, pet cemeteries, sex furniture, transvestites, conversation,
skateboard valleys..... whatever you want... I'm open to persuasion...

Really
We can make our own riddles
No more archaeology
No more lords
No priests
No prophets
I'm so bored of rebel angels
Really I don't think the messiah is coming
and you aren't even fucking close

So I'm telling you
Don't go to Thebes.



Table of contents

0.1.	<i>Introduction</i>	13
1.	Local strategies	17
1.1.	<i>Pirate heterotopias</i>	19
1.2.	<i>A century of the moving image in Deptford and New Cross</i>	37
1.3.	<i>Deptford? Regeneration?</i>	49
1.4.	<i>Mobilising knowledge</i>	56
1.5.	<i>Walking the Olympic Sacrifice Zone</i>	61
2.	Economic strategies	65
2.1.	<i>The future doesn't care about your bank balance...</i>	66
2.2.	<i>Paid in full</i>	73
2.3.	<i>Re 'Paid in full'</i>	98
2.4.	<i>The fantasy of cultural control, and the crisis of distribution</i>	101
2.5.	<i>Whose economy, which sustainability?</i>	109
3.	Technological strategies	121
3.1.	<i>Download finished</i>	122
3.2.	<i>Componentisation and Open Data</i>	125
3.3.	<i>Atomisation vs. community?</i>	129
3.4.	<i>The collaborative gameshow: Who wants to be?</i>	133
3.5.	<i>The Transmission metadata standard</i>	140
4.	Social strategies	145
4.1.	<i>Piracy & privacy</i>	147
4.2.	<i>The documentation of everything</i>	152
4.3.	<i>Involve me, and I will understand</i>	155
	<i>Bibliography</i>	167

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OWN — SPC Media Lab — Deckspace
Borough Hall
Greenwich
London SE10
United Kingdom

0.1. Introduction

by Jonas Andersson and Adnan Hadzi

Deptford.TV is an online media database documenting the urban change of Deptford, in south-east London. It operates through the use of free and open source software, which ensures the users continued control over the production and distribution infrastructure. It also aims at enabling its participants in the technical aspects of developing an on-line distribution infrastructure that they themselves can operate and control, empowering them to share and distribute production work both locally and internationally.

This book continues the debate raised in the Next 5 Minutes media conference (Amsterdam, 2003) regarding 'tactical media in crisis'; a conference which in many ways marked the "crash" of an online activism based on a merely tactical approach. As McKenzie Wark and others stated during the conference: *'can tactical media anticipate, rather than be merely reactive?'*

The aim of a strategy is to generate a form of social contract; not only by enunciation or discursive agreements, but by actual practice. Existing networks, applications, artefacts and organisations like *The Pirate Bay*, *Steal This Film*, Deptford.TV, the Transmission.cc network etc. in effect constitute strategic entities that re-write the rules of engagement with digital media on an everyday basis. The problem being, that many of these entities become deemed illegal, quasi-legal or illegitimate by the current copyright legislation, something which can only really be addressed through finding new ethical frameworks which can appropriate what is already happening but in terms which do not frame it in the old dichotomy of 'legal' versus 'illegal'.

As Michel de Certeau makes us aware of, strategies differ from tactics in that they are not reactive to an oppressor or enemy. Rather, strategies are self-maintained, autonomous, and – more specifically – spatially situated. If the 'temporary autonomous zone' (Bey 1991) of pirates, nomads and vagabonds is characterised not by permanence but by transience, still it might be seen as a means to generate short intermissions of stability; the establishment of momentary connectors, stable points, islands in the stream. The establishment of such islands is dependent on location and manual effort: different types of strategies that will become apparent throughout this reader.

The reader thus takes as a starting point the local strategies that make apparent the geographic specificity of Deptford. Neil Gordon-Orr's historical trajectory of cinema theatres and spot locations for cinema production in Deptford and New Cross apprises us to the urbanism, technological progressivism and cosmopolitanism of the area since early modernity; similarly, Ben

Gidley's account of the apparent drive towards regeneration makes an argument for authentic, already-existing forms of creativity and cosmopolitanism which are never-fully seized upon by property investors and marketing agencies, who proffer a view of the area which feeds on an imaginary notion of 'pacification by cappuccino'. The middle class aspirations of urban developers somewhat fall between the always-already upper/middle class consensus of Greenwich and the much more agonising mix of working class and "creative class" that is Deptford. This whole dilemma of regeneration will become even more apparent in the coming years, given the extensive investment climate surrounding the 2012 Olympic bid, something which is mirrored in the parallel history of Stratford, north of the river. Hence the inclusion also of an account of 'the Olympic sacrifice zone' by the University of Openness: a psychogeographic reappropriation of an area that is set to see some tumultuous change.

The dialectic of Greenwich versus Deptford is interesting in itself, as historically it has never been one of pure opposites: it has always been class-based, sibling-like rather than polar. Think of the dock workers of Deptford depending on the patrons of Greenwich and vice versa; take the long-running heritage of Deptford rag pickers ultimately supplying the select boutiques along the richer fringes of the Park; or take what is essentially the *cathedral* of Greenwich's royal naval quarters versus the *bazaar* of Deptford's docks and markets (cf. Raymond 1999), where hierarchical, official society never fully closed in on itself since it thrived on the much more loosely organised labour of privateers, slave traders and entrepreneurs. This dialectic can easily be transferred to the contemporary situation and its peripheral, creative "free agents" providing the cultural industry with fresh ideas and sometimes even dissent, yet without fundamentally rocking the status quo.

Brianne Selman's exploration of different conceptions of spatiality can here serve to open up for a renewed notion of politics, where the *pirate* (or the *nomad* in Deleuze & Guattari's accounts) is seen to operate on the fringes of the sovereign domain of the state. His/her labour is occasionally employed, and at other times ostracised: 'governments were perpetually at risk of attack from the same privateers they supposedly employed' (Selman, p. 28). This reverberates what Armin Medosch concludes in his chapter (2.2) – namely, that the 'free culture' of the anarcho-libertarian Internet pioneers has been usurped by corporate and governmental interests to foster a kind of deregulated and depreciated mode of employment.

Where the debate relating to Medosch's article in section 2 is in somewhat broad, abstract terms, andrea rota's as well as Alison Rooke's and Gesche Würfel's articles help to substantiate the ideals of sustainability and

inclusion in more manageable, organisational settings. Rooke and Würfel talk about the growing invisibility of the ageing population and outline how local projects like Deptford.TV can be employed to address this invisibility, whereas rota presents a viable ethos of 'agile projects' and the vanquishing of the old offline/online divide this entails.

Similarly, the technological strategies presented should be read not as entirely 'online' ventures but as projects that address everyday, concrete issues of access, privacy, and both political and creative mobilisation. The contributions of Jo Walsh and Rufus Pollock as well as the ones by Platoniq, Zoe Young and Mick Fuzz address the infrastructural problems of getting locally produced content "out there," by means of better metadata and better tools for collective distribution, whereas the enigmatic Jaromil presents a case for upholding individual privacy as a means to retain an autonomous media consumption, production and distribution in the face of an oppressive copyright regime. *Download Finished* by !Mediengruppe Bitnik and *Who Wants to Be?* by The People Speak constitute examples of fascinating new projects in the intersection of net.art and community involvement, where the boundaries of what is sanctioned and/or intentional are questioned: Is the manipulation of copyrighted content more tolerable when done by a machine, as an upshot of automated algorithms processing any material fed into the loop? How does the nature of the 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire' format change when being executed in a fully collaborative fashion?

The final section of the book sees a return to more general issues pertaining to the Deptford.TV project: in short, an overarching issue for this entire volume has been the concept of 'data spheres' and of strategies aiming to build, uphold and defend these generative spheres. Adnan Hadzi presents a case for the strategic use of copyleft licenses within the dataspheres of peer-to-peer networks by establishing data spheres: basically, acknowledging the need for a social contract which can uphold an ethical viability for those data spheres that have already emerged, but are currently branded illegitimate or at least non-sanctioned.

If this book constitutes the theoretical underpinnings of Deptford.TV, the filmwiki.org toolkit constitutes the practical side of the project. For those aspiring or aiming to put their media production into more strategic practice, look up <http://filmwiki.org/> in which the toolkit for how to use Deptford.TV is further elaborated. For those interested in continuing some of the more theoretical debates presented in this reader, Armin Medosch's site <http://www.thenextlayer.org> is intended to continue some loose threads. Additionally, the overall development of the project can be followed at <http://www.deptford.tv>.



I. Local strategies



1.1. Pirate Heterotopias

by Brianne Selman

Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development... but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and police take the place of pirates.

(Foucault 1986: 27)

Introduction

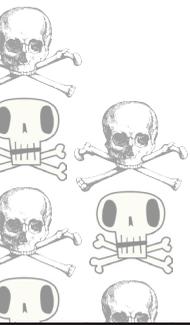
There is a certain romance to pirates. They show up everywhere in pop culture – the fantastic ride in Disneyland that spawned the recent movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*, novelty phenomena like “Talk Like a Pirate Day” (September 19), video game releases (such as Sid Meier’s *Pirates!*), card games (*Wiz-Kids Pirates of the Spanish Main*), and even band-aids with the Jolly Roger on them. Indeed, the Jolly Roger is probably more recognizable to most people than many national flags. And of course, anyone who has seen Disney’s *Peter Pan* cannot help but feel the same attraction as John and Michael to the life of a pirate (a pirate’s life for me) – the boat, particularly the pirate ship, is a place of great imagination.

This imagination lives on in Deptford. There is no doubt that Deptford has a history of piracy. The mythical inspiration for the Jolly Roger can be found in St. Paul’s church yard, the mutiny-bound *Bounty* was outfitted here, and infamous pirates sailed from its docks and were hung on its banks covered in tar as a warning to others. More recently DVD pirates [<http://tinyurl.com/2l13go>] and Pirate boats [<http://www.liquidculture.eu/piratebay/6.11/>] abound.

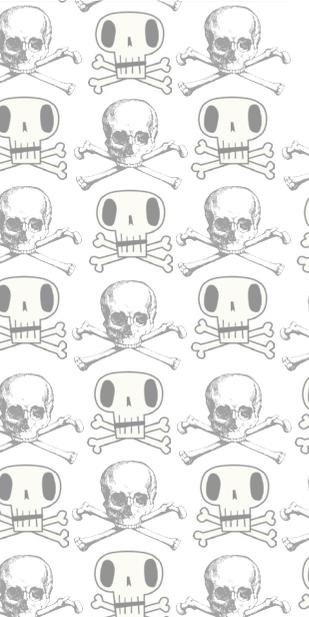
However, for the most part, not many of us are sea roving corsairs – though acts such as ‘copyright piracy’ are becoming more and more frequently a part of daily life. Still, by examining the *trope* of ‘pirate’, I would suggest that we can learn something interesting about a certain type of spatial politics, that politics which examines the fringes or the marginal – *liminal politics*. A spatial politics, these are also the politics of the edges and the borders, such a space as Deptford.



Edward England (who operated first in the Caribbean, then the Indian Ocean between 1717 and 1719) flew the 'skull and crossbones' in its pure form; combining the common death symbol of the skull with crossed bones. Both signs were common as *memento mori* on 16th and 17th century gravestones all over the British Isles.



Pirate Boat flyer, 2006



the Pirate Boat 
@Mindsweeper
Friday the 13th
of October
RSVP essential
Places are limited—
please book in advance!
email info@deptford.tv
how to get there? see map overleaf

strictly for true copy fighters & river bound culture vagabonds
YAARRR!

9pm-10pm: Steal This Film 10pm-midnight: DJ J-No 

As a starting point, we can consider Edward Soja's work *Thirdspace*. Soja examines a number of theorists who he sees as contributing to a new spatial imagination. He traces an alternative envisioning of spatiality, that

directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking. They are not just "other spaces" to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are also "other than" the established ways of thinking spatially. (Soja 1996: 163)

Through looking at these theorists, Soja develops his own theory of third-spaces, or thirding as othering. He explains his project as such:

I try to open up our spatial imaginaries to ways of thinking and acting politically that respond to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives, by interpreting an-Other set of choices. In this critical thirding, the original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of *restructuring* that draws selectively and strategically from two opposing categories to open new alternatives.

(Soja 1996: 5)

Thus, Soja's thirding draws on a post-structuralist tradition of problematizing binary oppositions, and deconstructing them in a way to show both what is included and normalized by the binary, as well as what is excluded or unsymbolized. This deconstruction, or "disassembling," highlights not just the power relations at play in the original binary structure, but also opens up spaces for new possibilities.

There are other (perhaps complementary, perhaps not) models for such possibilities beyond just Soja's thirdspaces. He looks at some of standards; I would like to examine some possibilities beyond the typical canon that he explores. The 'temporary autonomous zones' (TAZ) of Peter Lamborn Wilson (aka Hakim Bey), Deleuze & Guattari's smooth spaces, as well as Foucault's heterotopias can all help enlarge our understanding of this different type of politics, as well as spatiality (and contribute to a different, corsair canon).

I would like to examine places where pirates perhaps still take the place of police, and dreams have not yet altogether dried up. In some senses, this sounds like *utopia* – no place. However, I would suggest that we can take Henri Lefebvre's injunction to actually study such utopias 'on the ground' (or at sea):

Utopia is to be considered experimentally by studying its implications and consequences on the ground. These can surprise [...]. What are the times and rhythms of daily life which are inscribed and prescribed in these "successful" spaces favourable to happiness? That is interesting.

(Lefebvre 2002: 369—370)

For this reason, Peter Lamborn Wilson's study of *Pirate Utopias* helps point us in the way of one such "type" of space, with its own particular rhythms and times. This *trope* of 'the pirate' will be followed (trailed and tracked) throughout all of the thirdspaces, or other spaces, in this musing:

The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, *give them space*.

(Calvino 1977: 165, my emphasis)

Pirates

The popular image of pirates varies: on the one hand there is the image of absolute lawlessness – thieving, raping, murdering, plundering, pillaging, and of course, excessive drunkenness. On the other hand, there is also a romantic conception of those outside the law – those with their own particular ethical code, who are misunderstood by society for their propensity to enjoy themselves (at someone else's expense). It must not be forgotten, however, that these images, passed down through centuries of literature, do describe, in some shape or form, a real historical people who helped (whether for good or for bad) to shape the modern world. Whether pirates helped to build empires or destroy them, the difficulty remains that there is very little in the way of first hand information about pirates – whatever they were, they do not seem to have been a particularly literary bunch.

Thus this paper will not serve as a history essay. Instead, it is a rough sketch, in a surely amorphous manner, of what considering pirates can tell us about the world. That said, there does seem to be one thing that defines pirates: being in some way shape or form (usually by thieving) against the law. There are, however, distinctions in the pirate world: 'In a strict sense a pirate is a sea-going criminal, while a corsair operates like a *privateer* who is granted "letters of marquee" or a commission by one government to attack the shipping of another. A privateer is only a criminal from the point of view of the ships he attacks; from his own point of view he's committing a legitimate act of war' (Wilson 1995: 143). Privateers are a state-legitimated form of piracy¹, often used during the skirmishes and wars from the 16th to 19th centuries. Still pirates, they enjoyed certain protections under international agreements, and functioned more like warships aimed at merchants of enemy states. As



the slave trade fell out of favour, pirates often moved people illegitimately as well as goods, with states “overlooking” such actions in their own economic interests. “Regular” pirates enjoyed no such state protection, and were often explicitly aligned against nation-states.

Pirates were by no means a homogeneous group. They came from all different nations and all different backgrounds – tales of nobles turned pirate were just as popular as tales of slaves as corsairs. There can certainly not be said to be one, *defining* ideology behind becoming a pirate. For some, surely, it was a conscious decision to join the freewheeling community. Through these few, Wilson tentatively traces trajectories ‘which hint at the existence of a pirate “ideology” (if that’s not too grand a term), a kind of proto-individualist-anarchist attitude, however unphilosophical, which seems to have inspired the more intelligent and class-conscious buccaneers and corsairs’ (Wilson 1995: 52). Others, however, were certainly driven to it by lack of other option, or simply through capture, not through class consciousness.

However, it is also evident that there was, in some form, some sort of pirate community, or even society. There was, certainly, a type of ethics – one that laid stress on individual freedoms as opposed to servility. Wilson quotes the English Renegado, Peter Eston, upon being offered pardon from James

I: “Why should I obey a king’s orders,” he asked, “when I am a kind of king myself?” (ibid.: 52). And we have ‘Captain Charles Johnson’ (who was really Daniel Dafoe²) quoting the perhaps-fictitious character of Captain Bellamy, to point out the hypocrisy of such governments: ‘They vilify us, the scoundrels do, when there is only this difference, they rob the poor under the cover of law, forsooth, and we plunder the rich under the protection of our own courage. Had you not better make then one of us, than sneak after these villains for employment?’ (cited by Bey, no page numbers). This lack of concern for national boundaries, and in particular the lack of recognition of Europe’s monarchs, may indeed have been one of the most threatening aspects of the pirates to the burgeoning European states at the time.

As well, the pirates seemed to share a certain disdain for the rich. Some, though certainly not all, seemed to regard their plundering as a social project. Indeed, we have the case of John Ward, who was a somewhat infamous pirate in his time, playing at being Robin Hood: ‘Ward renamed his ship *Little John* – which offers us a precious insight into his ideas and his image of himself: clearly he considered himself the Robin Hood of the seas. We have some evidence that he gave to the poor, and he was clearly determined to steal from the rich’ (Wilson 1995: 57). Of course, just as many pirates pissed their profits away in port towns such as Nassau, but they were all united by a lack of deference to the conventions (and laws) that suggested that wealth was to be respected.

Though this does go against the grain of popular conceptions³, it also seems that pirates were not as bloodthirsty as we like to imagine. While they certainly relied on the *threat* of violence, out and out bloodshed was not their main purpose. Wilson, citing H. Barnaby’s “The Sack of Baltimore” (1969), points out: ‘Dead bodies have no value, and the Corsairs seldom forgot their commercial interests’ (124–125). Thus hullabaloo and commotion would be caused in order to convince a ship the seriousness of their intent, and there certainly were cases of entire crews murdered, but this was far from the norm, as the goal usually was to instil enough fear that very little real fighting was necessary. The other



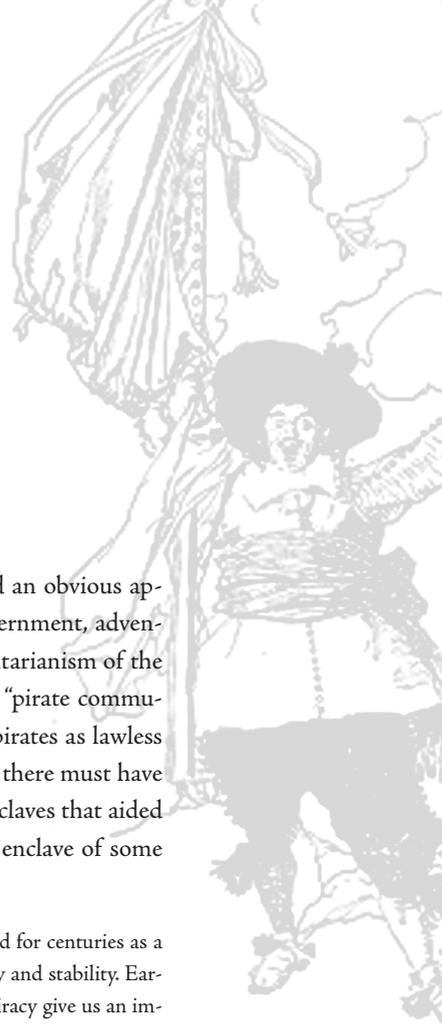
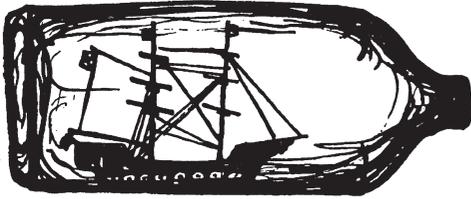
violence that pirates are commonly portrayed as perpetuating is that of rape⁴. Whether this can be substantiated or not in any way, it was certainly part of the stereotype. Referring to accounts from Icelanders picked up by a pirate ship, Wilson suggests that this may indeed be a reputation blown out of proportion. ‘The Turks of Algiers and their renegade seamen had a fearsome reputation in Christian Europe for savagery and lechery towards women and boys, and they retained this reputation until the last days of their existence in Africa. Yet neither the accounts of the Icelanders nor any other contemporary accounts of similar voyages mention women captives being molested in any way’ (Wilson 1995: 129). As first hand accounts are hard to come by, and conjecture and histrionics seem to be prevalent, Wilson notes this absence as striking.

But the biggest point in favour of there being a possible “pirate ethics” is the inclusiveness of pirate communities (and this shall lead us in the rough direction of “pirate societies” and “pirate politics”). Indeed, pirate communities were often multi-national, living together under the banner of the Jolly Roger instead of any one nation. Even in supposed pirate nations like Algiers, ships were mixed. ‘A huge proportion – some say the majority – of Algerian captains and crews were indeed “foreigners” of some sort or another’ (Wilson

1995: 39). Racial mixing, frowned upon in society at large at the time, was “allowed” on pirate ships – if such categories as race held much meaning at sea. Black pirates had the exact same status, and exercised the same right to vote and received the same division of booty. This tradition did not just end on the ships, and was carried forth in the port communities: ‘But the Buccaneer tradition lasted, both in Madagascar where the mixed-blood children of the pirates began to carve out kingdoms of their own, and in the Caribbean, where escaped slaves as well as mixed black/white/red groups were able to thrive in the mountains and backlands as “Maroons”’ (Bey 1991). Pirate communities for some, then, certainly offered a degree of freedom not found elsewhere.



Illustrations: Howard Pyle (1921)



We can see, then, why: ‘The Buccaneer way of life had an obvious appeal: interracial harmony, class solidarity, freedom from government, adventure, and possible glory’ (Wilson 1995: 191). The racial egalitarianism of the pirates points to something else – a deeper sense of what a “pirate community” or a “pirate society” could be. If we accept the view of pirates as lawless hordes, it is hard to imagine them as a social body. However, there must have been some sorts of sociality, both on ships and in the land enclaves that aided them. Thus, Wilson turns our attention to Algiers, a pirate enclave of some fame.

Some scholars have asked how Algiers could have survived for centuries as a ‘corsair state’ without some kind of intentional community and stability. Earlier Eurocentric historians and sensationalist writers on piracy give us an impression of Algiers as a kind of ravening horde in a state of perpetual arousal; while more recent and less chauvinistic scholars like William Spencer (1976) tend to emphasize the stability of Algiers and to seek for possible explanations for its successful duration. (Wilson 1995: 29)

There was a form of government in Algiers, in the form of the *Ocak*, a council of governors that rotated – not among those with a hereditary right, or among those with power and privilege, but among everyone. In this way, ‘the government of Algiers seems to have been neither anarchical nor anarchist – but rather, in a strange and unexpected way, *democratic*’ (Wilson 1995: 30). Indeed, this form of democracy seems to have been one of the most attractive features about a pirates life: “The lowliest Albanian slaveboy or peasant lad from the Anatolian outback, and the outcast converted European sailor, could equally hope one day to participate in government – simply by *staying alive* and serving the “Corsair republic” [...]. No wonder the *Ocak* never

The C



seemed to have trouble recruiting new members. Where else in the world was such “upward mobility” possible?’ (Wilson 1995: 35). And this was not just a characteristic of Algiers – other pirate communities such as Salé and St. Mary’s Island (off the coast of Madagascar) were far more democratically organized than the monarchies of Europe.

Indeed, a ‘democracy’ is evident in the Articles of pirate ships. The Articles, different for every ship, set out the “laws” of such a ship, and pertained to areas such as division of booty (which was normally far more egalitarian than merchant ships, with pirate captains only receiving 1½—2 times the share of the crew), voting for the captain and other matters, rules to make sure fires were not set accidentally (a prime concern with the amount of gunpowder on board!) and punishments for theft from the ship or any other action deemed unlawful by that particular ship (rape, in some cases, was punishable by death). As well, such Articles would often spell out compensation for pirates who were injured in the course of an engagement. Under these Articles, Wilson claims that it is indeed primarily the *ships* of the pirates that were the democratic societies: ‘Pirate ships were true republics, each ship (or fleet) an independent floating democracy’ (Wilson 1995: 191). The restrictions, however, were minimal – other than specific rules in regard to the ship and the booty, there was very little in the way of normative laws for the pirates. Thus, Wilson says of them: ‘In pursuit of booty, they were willing to live or die by radical democracy as an organizing principle; but in the enjoyment of booty, they insisted on anarchy’ (Wilson 1995: 192). The pirates are thus a different form of politics – they are democratic in their election of leaders and their inclusiveness, quasi-communitarian in their divisions of wealth, and apparently libertarian when it comes to everything else.

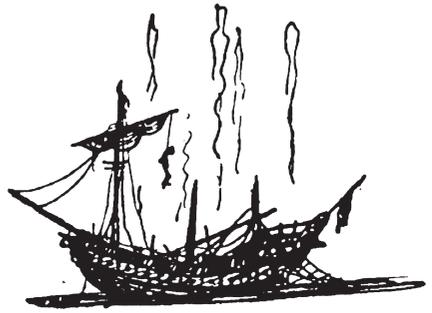
Nomads

The pirates existed on the margins of society – they sailed, quite literally, beyond national borders into the uncharted regions of the world. But they were not *unknown*, or even necessarily foreign, to the larger State society that rejected them. Instead, as with most marginal subject positions, the pirates were projected in some ways as the exteriority – the outside – to “safe” and “peaceful” (and properly capitalistic, instead of parasitic) society.

In this sense, they are in some ways that which helps legitimate the State: ‘the State itself has always been in a relation with an outside, and is inconceivable independent of that relationship. The law of the State is not the law of All or Nothing (State-societies or counter-State societies), but that of interior and exterior. The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 15–16). In the case of the privateers, the pirates get partially encompassed by the State form, and are used to serve its purpose.

However, the privateers are still *external* to the State. Indeed, the privateers closely resemble that form that Deleuze & Guattari call ‘the war machine’: ‘What we wish to say, rather, is that collective bodies always have fringes or minorities that reconstitute equivalents of the war machine’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 27). The war machine is fundamentally disruptive to State forms. The ‘warrior god’ is a radical exteriority to the State form: ‘Rather, he is like a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, the pack, an interruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis. *He unties the bond just as he betrays the pact.* He brings a *furor* to bear against sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, secrecy against the public, a power (*puissance*) against sovereignty, a machine against the apparatus’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 2). The State may attempt to reign in the power of the war machine, as it did with the privateers, but it can never encompass it – governments were perpetually at risk of attack from the same privateers they supposedly employed. While Sir Francis Drake and Captain Henry Morgan may have received knight-hoods for their part in war in supposed times of peace, just as many were hung for the same actions.

The war machine is linked to another figure in Deleuze & Guattari’s work – that of the nomad. The nomad is a figure that has not just a different relationship to the State, they have a different relationship to space. Rather than “inhabiting” space, as points or locations, the nomad moves *through* space. ‘The nomad has a territory, he follows customary paths, he goes from one point to another, he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). But the question is: What in nomad life is a principle



and what is a consequence? To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinate to the paths they determine, the reverse of what happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind, every point is a relay and exists only as a relay' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 50). Similar to the nomad's water points, the pirate moves from port to port not to settle there, but in order to get back to the sea.

It is this 'deterritorializing' movement of the nomad/pirate that makes it antithetical to the State. Rather than 'being' a certain form, the nomad/pirate retains a certain openness – a possibility, rather than a foreclosure: 'The model in question is one of becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 18). The nomad/pirate is thus very different from the migrant, who may not 'belong' to a fixed place; the nomad/pirate is constantly in a state of journey, while the migrant is looking for an end to the travelling. Thus, 'The nomad is not at all the same as the migrant; for the migrant goes principally from one point to another, even if the second point is uncertain, unforeseen, or not well localized' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 50).

The deterritorialization of the nomad/pirate is in many ways a model for a type of politics that is in some ways 'outside' of the State. Thus, while the state and the 'sedentary' always tend towards reterritorialization, re-coding of spaces and people, the nomad/pirate/war machine serves in some ways as Soja's 'other-than', a deconstructive outside that exposes the limit of the inside. They are, in some ways, the 'border'.

Despina can be reached in two ways: by ship or by camel. The city displays one face to the traveller arriving overland and a different one to him who arrives by sea... Each city receives its form from the desert it opposes; and so the camel driver and the sailor see Despina, a border city between two deserts. (Calvino 1977: 17–18)

Deleuze & Guattari's nomads inhabit the deserts; Bey's pirates live on the sea. However, in many regards, they traverse the same space: what Deleuze & Guattari call smooth space (contrasted against striated space). 'Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a particular type of multiplicity: non-metric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities which occupy space without "counting" it and can "only be explored by legwork"' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 34). This is a space of experience, not a space of language – perhaps similar to Lefebvre's *representational space*, a lived space that is also productive.

Deleuze & Guattari rarely discuss the sea; they seem to prefer the desert. But they do acknowledge that the sea has been a prime example of smooth space: "The situation is much more complicated than we have let on. The sea is perhaps principle among smooth spaces, the hydraulic model *par excellence*. But the sea is also, of all smooth spaces, the first one attempts were made to striate, to transform into a dependency of the land, with its fixed routes, constant directions, relative movements, a whole counterhydraulic of channels and conduits' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 61). This movement to striate the sea was *fundamentally* a movement against the pirates, just as the attempt to striate space by the State can be seen as an attempt to "displace" the nomads. Empires exercised their power to try to make the sea a "safe" place – to rid it of the wild, the deterritorializing, they attempted to carve it into routes and passageways of security. But the sea, and the pirates, in many ways seem to have escaped.

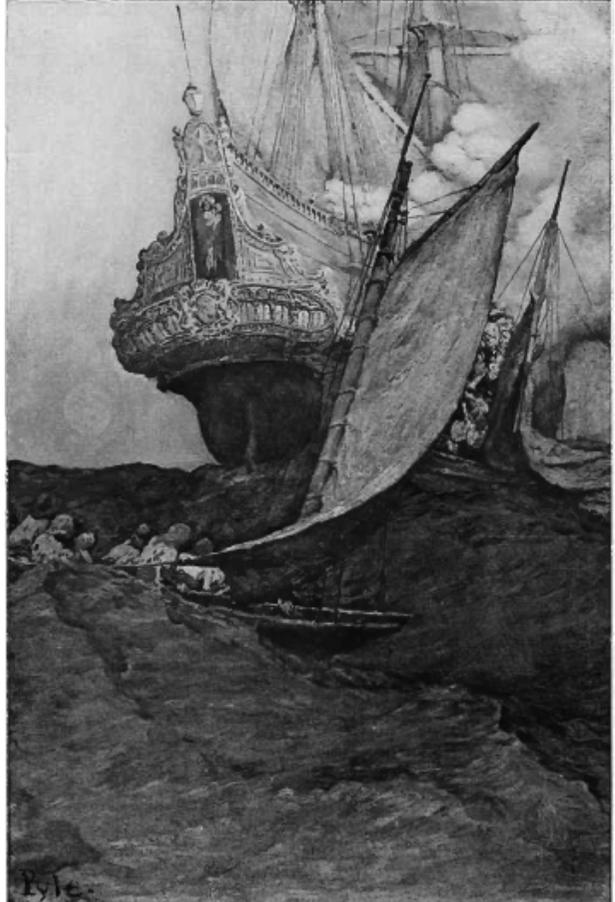


Illustration: Howard Pyle (1921)

TAZ

These nomads chart their courses by strange stars, which might be luminous clusters of data in cyberspace, or perhaps hallucinations. Lay down a map of the land; over that, set a map of political change; over that, a map of the Net, especially the counter-Net with its emphasis on clandestine information-flow and logistics – and finally, over all, the 1:1 map of the creative imagination, aesthetics, values. The resultant grid comes to life, animated by unexpected eddies and surges of energy, coagulations of light, secret tunnels, surprises.

(Bey 1991)

Nomads and pirates are not just historical entities. Indeed, Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (TAZ)⁵ could be seen as an attempt to theorize both in a contemporary political context. A riotous and sometimes rambling text that is more manifesto/poetry than theory, TAZ gained a great deal of currency with young activists, particularly those interested in new 'new social movements', such as social centres and hacktivist groups such as Electronic Disturbance Theatre.

Bey specifically invokes both pirate utopias and nomads as he pursues his project: 'we must realize (make real) the moments and spaces in which freedom is not only possible but *actual*. We must know in what ways we are genuinely oppressed, and also in what ways we are self-repressed or ensnared in a fantasy in which *ideas* oppress us' (Bey 1991). Bey's project similarly aims (albeit it in a different, perhaps "non-academic" form) to study utopia "on the ground," through tracing some examples and characteristics of TAZ.

Bey begins with a discussion of the 'uprising', in order to establish the different logic of *time* that TAZ seems to operate under. He distinguishes uprisings from revolutions: 'Uprising, or the Latin form *insurrection*, are words used by historians to label *failed* revolutions – movements which do not match the expected curve, the consensus-approved trajectory: revolution, reaction, betrayal, the founding of a stronger and even more oppressive State – the turning of the wheel, the return of history again and again to its highest form: jackboot on the face of humanity forever' (Bey 1991). Uprisings, therefore, are in some ways out of history, as is the nomad – 'It is true that the nomads have no history; they only have a geometry' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 73). Indeed, this lack of history, much like the lack of a pirate history, is due to a lack of interest in *permanence*.

This is the specific temporality of the TAZ – it is not aimed at achieving permanence, but is instead always in a process (like the nomad) of *becoming*: 'The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of im-

agination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the State can crush it. Because the State is concerned primarily with Simulation rather than substance, the TAZ can “occupy” these areas clandestinely and carry on its festal purposes for quite a while in relative peace’ (Bey 1991). The TAZ thus has a different rhythm to its “daily life” (and we must not forget the importance of music in pirate life, a favourite pastime to go with grog).

Its rhythm is close to that of the festival. Thus, Bey compares the TAZ to a party, partially because of its reliance on spontaneity – ‘it may be planned, but unless it “happens” it’s a failure’ – and also because it is not a lasting state⁶. However, the festival is not intended as a permanent state of being. This is not to say that they do not still have a meaning: ‘Like festivals, uprisings cannot happen every day – otherwise they would not be “nonordinary”.’⁷ But such moments of intensity give shape and meaning to the entirety of a life. The shaman returns – you can’t stay up on the roof forever – but things have changed, shifts and integrations have occurred – a *difference* is made’ (Bey 1991). The uprising changes the course of events – though it has a place “outside” of history in its state form, it can still impact upon it. Like the pirates, whose festivities were “outside” of the European norms, the borders impact the centre.

Bey’s TAZ occurs in a particular era of ‘spatiality’ – ‘The second generating force behind the TAZ springs from the historical development I call “the closure of the map”. The last bit of Earth unclaimed by any nation-state was eaten up in 1899. Ours is the first century without *terra incognita*, without a frontier’ (Bey 1991). Only the deepest parts of the seas have not yet been mapped. However, as Bey points out, this map (the ‘striated space’ of the State) can never be complete: ‘And yet because the map is an abstraction it cannot cover Earth with 1:1 accuracy. Within the fractal complexities of actual geography the map can see only dimensional grids. Hidden enfolded immensities escape the measuring rod. The map is not accurate; the map *cannot* be accurate’ (Bey 1991). TAZ finds the folds in the map, the waves on the sea that have not been graphed, and that is where it happens.

TAZs cannot “stay” there – they are fundamentally nomadic, and thus pass through points, don’t stay on them. But the TAZ, as uprising, as pirate ship, *does* occur somewhere in space. It is not abstract. “The TAZ is “utopian” in the sense that it envisions an *intensification* of everyday life, or as the Surrealists might have said, life’s penetration by the Marvelous. But it cannot be utopian in the actual meaning of the word, *nowhere*, or NoPlace Place. *The TAZ is somewhere*’ (Bey 1991). The TAZ, we may recall, is a ‘utopia on the ground’ (even when at sea), a study of forms that have existed, even if they no longer do so.

Heterotopia

The TAZ thus brings us back to the start of this paper, and to Foucault's heterotopias, so beloved by Soja. Heterotopias are also 'real', and in that sense, not utopic: "There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted' (Foucault 1986: 24). They are, like brothels and colonies, spaces that are heterogeneous, not fully mapped. And like TAZ, they have their own temporality. They can be 'eternal', or time paused, like libraries and museums. Or, like the TAZ and the pirates' party, they can be temporary:

Opposite these heterotopias that are linked to the accumulation of time, there are those linked, on the contrary, to time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival. These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal [*chroniques*]. (Foucault 1986: 26)

Like our other 'spaces', smooth space and the TAZ, heterotopias are spaces of *possibility*. If I keep repeating this phrase, it is because I want to stress that such spaces are not inherently "good" – pirates are violent, and heterotopias include places such as prisons. They are not necessarily open to anyone either. They are like membranes, like the borders patrolled by the war machine: 'Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications' (Foucault 1986: 26). Pirate ships are spaces that are somewhat open to anyone (women, blacks, homosexuals, the infirm etc.) but they are not by any means open to *everyone*. The border allows passage in – but it marks you, and changes you in some way through that passing.

Heterotopias highlight the differences (and the similarities) between inside and outside. "The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled' (Foucault 1986: 27).

They are space of deconstruction – they show the (necessary) fictions that the State is founded on – either by actually becoming the State’s mythology themselves (the perfectly ordered ‘colony’ is the example that Foucault uses) or by showing the underbelly, the excluded of the State (the brothel). Pirates inhabit the heterotopic space of their ships, and as such, sail the borders of the ‘rational’ and ordered space of the State. They disrupt the capitalist order through their non-productive pursuits, and disrupt the moral order through their pursuits of pleasure and freedom.

It is from this radical, destabilizing tradition that groups such as *The Pirate Bay* and the Deptford Town Hall Pirates emerge. The former sets up a space outside of capitalist economy and gain – it becomes parasitic but also a space of possibility. The latter, a group dedicated to highlighting the infamy of many of the figures atop the Goldsmiths-owned Deptford Town Hall Building⁸ uses strategies of carnival and disruption to destabilize the ordered space of the buildings and streets, as well as to highlight the violence of the State in the slave trade. More recently, we have the examples of the riotous (some would say shambolic) spaces of potential such as Prangsta and Café Crema, that exist on the borders of the ordered spaces of the Goldsmiths campus. The homogenous inside makes a move against the perilous threat sailing the edges.

In Chloe, a great city, the people who move through the streets are all strangers. At each encounter, they imagine a thousand things about one another; meetings which could take place between them, conversations, surprises, caresses, bites. But no one greets anyone; eyes lock for a second, then dart away, seeking other eyes, never stopping [...] meetings, seductions, copulations, orgies are consummated among them without a word exchanged, without a finger touching anything, almost without an eye raised.

[...] If men and women began to live their ephemeral dreams, every phantom would become a person with whom to begin a story of pursuits, pretences, misunderstandings, clashes, oppressions, and the carousel of fantasies would stop. (Calvino 1977: 51–52)

Pirates as a “trope,” then, offer us the image of not just licentious excess, but of a certain freedom – a community of inclusion and equality. Also, they fit well into a theory of the margins and boundaries, which problematize and destabilize the centres; ‘a disordering, deconstruction and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different’ (Soja 1996: 61). Pirates, like nomads, seem to represent a subjectivity that is ‘living their ephemeral dreams’ – and the ‘carousel of fantasies’ in some ways, if not permanently going around, seems to find form over and over again in ‘temporary’ eruptions of smooth space.

Endnotes

1. Certainly not the only one, but the one with the most similarities to our traditional sea-going pirates.
2. Apparently, although even this has been called into question. But really, does the veracity of the characters of the authors make the quote any less great?
3. *Narrator*: The pirate Yellowbeard captured many other galleons, killing over five-hundred men in cold blood. He would tear the captain's hearts out and swallow them whole. Often forcing his victims to eat their own lips, he was caught and imprisoned... for tax evasion. (*Yellowbeard*, 1983)
4. *Betty*: Well, it's been awhile since we had a little cuddle.
Yellowbeard: I raped ya, if that's what you mean.
Betty: Okay. It was half-cuddle, half-rape. (*Yellowbeard*, 1983)
5. I should acknowledge that (in this case) *Bey* is a pseudonym for Peter Lamborn Wilson.
6. *Bey* notes that for a year, in Fiume, the part never stopped. *Bey* claims D'Annunzio's Fiume as the last pirate utopia as well as the first modern TAZ, mainly because of this festal aspect.
7. As in Calvino's city of Sophronia, where the traveling carnival is permanent, and the banks and factories come and go: 'Here remains the half-Sophronia of the shooting-galleries and the carousels, the shout suspended from the cart of the headlong roller coaster, and it begins to count the months, the days it must wait before the caravan returns and a complete life can begin again.' (Calvino, 63)
8. From Paul Henrich's invitation to a march that took place June 4th, 2007: 'The statues are of three figures with disreputable histories: Sir Francis Drake was a pioneer of the slave trade making at least three royally sponsored trips to West Africa to kidnap Africans and sell them into slavery. Robert Blake was Cromwell's chief admiral and fought the Dutch to secure the trade triangle between the Caribbean, West Africa and England. Lord Horatio Nelson was a fierce advocate for the trade. He wrote from the *Victory* on the eve of Trafalgar that as long as he would speak and fight he would resist 'the damnable doctrines of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies.'

1.2. A century of the moving image in Deptford and New Cross

by Neil Gordon-Orr

More than a century has now passed since the birth of the cinema, a period in which both the production and consumption of moving images have undergone several transformations. This essay takes a brief overview of these changes in the context of the Deptford and New Cross area of South East London.

Deptford Electric Theatre, the area's first cinema, opened a hundred years ago in September 1908. It occupied a building at 133 High Street, between the railway station and the Catholic Church, which had previously been the home of the Deptford Mechanics Institute. The Institute had been established in the 1820s to promote working class self improvement through a library and lectures on scientific and other subjects. The success of the cinema was in some ways a demonstration that many people continued to prioritize entertainment over instruction, but that is not to say that the cinema had no educational content. Many of the first generation of cinemagoers had never seen what the world looked like beyond their immediate areas – the cinema really was a window on the world, albeit a world that was to become represented according to the needs of fictional narratives and the emerging film industry.

All the fun of the fair

The Electric Theatre was not, however, Deptford's first taste of the moving image. Occasional film shows had been held previously at the Broadway Theatre, which had opened on the corner of Tanners Hill in 1897. The first people to use the new technology of 'living pictures' in public though were fairground showpeople who set up film shows in portable booths as they travelled around the country.

The history of the moving image takes us back to an earlier popular culture of fairs with Punch-and-Judy shows, magic tricks, acrobats and performing animals. In the nineteenth century, Deptford Fair took place on Trinity Monday. The 1825 event was described as 'a very considerable fair' with 'dramatic exhibitions [...] a variety of dancing and drinking booths [...] besides shows in abundance' (Hone 1827). Later there seems to have been a regular fairground on Deptford High Street, at least up until the Second World War. An early twentieth century visitor to it describes spending 'many nights watching the illusionists, hypnotists, conjurers, thought-readers, for-

tune-tellers, “monstrosities,” fire-eaters, fakirs, quacks’ (Price 1942).

Visual spectacles using light and projections, such as magic lantern shows, had been part of fairground entertainment for many years. For instance, The Great National Xmas Fair held in 1884 in New Cross Public Hall included, alongside circus acts, ‘grotesque clowns’ and ‘giant ladies,’ phantasmagoria, or ghost illusions’. This was a kind of mobile magic lantern, first developed in France in the late 18th century, which projected images of ghosts onto smoke or semi-transparent screens.

As cinematography became available, some of these ‘ghost shows’ were upgraded to take advantage of the possibilities of moving images. From 1897 onwards these ‘bioscope’ or ‘cinematograph’ shows became an increasingly popular part of going to the fair – a new way of offering what the fairs had always promised – the unusual, the novel and the thrilling.

Among the early pioneers was Alf Ball, who from 1897 began touring with his ‘The Great American Bioscope Animated Pictures’ at fairgrounds in London and Oxford. Ball was based in the early 20th century in High Street, Deptford (National Fairground Archive).

Broadway Theatre, New Cross, ca 1909



Early cinemas

By 1914, the fairground cinematograph was on the way out as permanent cinemas proliferated. Partly this was a response to popular demand, as the temporary shows at fairgrounds and elsewhere had proved very successful. The US 'nickelodeon' boom was also influential, demonstrating that permanent spaces dedicated to the moving image could be profitable and also leading to the expansion of the industry producing material to be shown. London cinema historian Luke McKernan estimates that between 1906 and 1914 there were over 1000 identifiable film venues in London, of which a maximum of 475 were open at any one time (McKernan 2007).

The opening of the Deptford Electric Theatre was followed shortly by other cinemas in the local area including:

- Palace Cinema, 20a Tanners Hill (opened May 1909);
- Electric Empire, 182 New Cross Road (opened September 1909);
- Crown Cinema, 480 New Cross Road (opened 1910);
- New Cross Cinema, 153—163 Lewisham High Road (converted from New Cross Public Hall, 1910);
- Deptford Electric Picture Palace, 197 High Street (opened December 1910);
- Broadway Picture Palladium, 22 Broadway (opened June 1911);
- Mackesey's Picture Palace, corner of Giffin Street and Deptford High Street (exact date unknown);
- Broadway Theatre, 496 New Cross Road, was built in 1897 by W. G. R. Sprague and was converted to a cinema in 1911, renamed Granada Cinema. Demolished in the 1960s in favour of shops. [Not to be confused with the still extant Broadway Theatre, built 1932, on Catford Broadway in Catford, also known as Lewisham Theatre.]

(George 1987; <http://londonfilm.bbk.ac.uk>)

By the time of the First World War, the cinema had already become a centre of local social life in South East London as elsewhere. The attraction was not just the novelty of moving pictures but the wider cinema experience: 'Cinemas provided conviviality, warmth, music and entertainment at a price that was put in reach of all. They were readily accessible, and put no social constraints on those wishing to attend. The phenomenon of the continuous show, combined with the heterogeneous programme of one-reelers promising an ever-changing roster of comedies, dramas, travelogues, industrials and newsreels, offered not only space through the films' subject matter but through the very act of attendance. The metropolitan crowd of the early twentieth century was being offered something quite new: a time of its own' (McKernan 2007).

Electric Theatres (1908) Ltd, which managed the Deptford Electric

Theatre, was London's first cinema circuit and based its programme on a continuous show of short films, few of them more than ten minutes long. This meant that people could drop into the cinema when it was convenient, rather than at set times as became the norm later with the dominance of longer US style entertainment movies.

Deptford Electric Picture Palace was the scene of a tragedy in the war, when in 1917 four children were killed in a stampede to the exit, apparently in a panic that a bombing raid was in progress. More than 1000 children were being looked after by just four assistants (*The Times*, 2 May 1917).

Larger cinemas

The Electric Theatre was typical of the first wave of cinemas which tended to be located in converted halls and shops. As larger cinemas opened with better facilities, some of the earlier cinemas fell by the wayside. The Crown Cinema for instance only had a capacity of 187, compared with the Broadway Palladium's 535, and it closed in 1914. The Electric Theatre followed it in 1916, and the Electric Empire, on the corner of New Cross Road and Queens Road, closed in 1917 (London Project).

The area's largest cinema opened in September 1925. The New Cross Super Cinema had a seating capacity of 2,300. It was part of an entertainment complex that also included the Palais de Danse dancehall and a café, with a Wurlitzer organ in the cinema from 1929. Part of the building still stands on the corner of Clifton Rise (325 New Cross Road), where today it houses the Venue nightclub.

The New Cross Super Cinema conformed to a wider trend of 'massive investment in cinema-building, in America from the mid-1910s and in Europe with the boom after the First World War', predicated on the notion of cinema 'as a special event, as a particular conception of an evening's entertainment [...]. The buildings that were constructed were the "picture palaces" [...]. simple brick shells decorated in bizarre and rich styles, and usually of massive size to emphasise the grandeur of the cinematic experience'. The aim was to create 'an integrated social occasion'; not just show a film, but to present music and food as well as movies (Ellis 1992).

The star system was also in place by the mid-1920s, based around the marketing of individual performers and the films they were in. The opening of the New Cross Super Cinema was attended by Betty Balfour, the lead actress in the film *Squibs*, showing at the Cinema along with *Two Little Vagabonds* (starring Carlyle Blackwell) and *The Fast Set* (with Betty Compson). Balfour has been described as the 'only international star of the British silent

cinema, the most popular actress in Britain in the 1920s' (BFI Screenonline).

The cinemas of New Cross and Deptford co-existed with other major places of entertainment nearby, including the New Cross Empire music hall, Millwall football ground, speedway and greyhound racing at the New Cross Stadium and dances at Laurie Grove Public Baths. This was an era of collective social life, before the advent of television and domestic hi-fi.

To see this as simply mass entertainment catering for passive, atomised spectators would be to disregard how these venues were woven into the life of the community as spaces for courting, meeting friends, talking, eating, drinking, dancing and the whole gamut of human social activities.

Entertainment venues were also used for a wide range of community purposes. The New Cross Empire was used for strike meetings during the 1926 General Strike, and in 1930 the New Cross Cinema in Lewisham High Road hosted a reception for Betty Wadsworth, aged 11 from Deptford High Street, who had been crowned London May Queen. Betty's father was an international footballer who was playing for Millwall at the time (*South London Press*, 9 May 1930). During the Second World War, Deptford Odeon held benefits for the Distress Fund to help people made homeless in bombing raids. These featured performers such as the music hall veteran Harry Champion, famous for cockney songs like "Any Old Iron".

Political economy of the cinema

Cinema chains such as Electric Palaces Ltd. and Electric Theatres Ltd. (1908) had played a part in the development of some of the first cinemas in Deptford, but early cinemas were sometimes owned by sole proprietors. This was highlighted in a 1919 court case where Edith Mary Lowe, a professional singer, challenged a contract she had entered into to buy the New Cross Cinema in Lewisham High Road in 1916. The singer had sunk her life savings into buying the cinema, but had made a loss. She successfully claimed in court that the previous owners, Premier Circuit Ltd., had misrepresented how much income it generated by claiming that they made a profit of £33 a week (*The Times*, 22 March 1919)

By the mid-1930s cinema was becoming a business increasingly dominated by three large national operators – Gaumont, ABC and Odeon. The New Cross Kinema (as the Super Cinema was renamed in 1927) was taken over by Gaumont in 1928. Gaumont was a subsidiary of a major French cinema company and was an example of a 'vertically integrated combine' on the American model, that is a company integrating both the production of films and their exhibition by the ownership and control of cinemas.

The Palladium Cinema closed in 1933, its proprietors having filed for bankruptcy and becoming the first cinema to be prosecuted under the Sunday Entertainments Act (1932) for failing to donate 15% of Sunday takings to charity (*The Times*, 12 April 1933). Its place was soon taken by the Deptford Odeon which opened in 1938 at 23 Deptford Broadway. This purpose-built 1700 seat cinema – an imposing art deco building with a white tiled front – was designed by the architect George Coles.

Nationally the cinemas were now significant employers. In 1938 the New Cross Kinema was picketed during a national strike by members of the Electrical Trades Union for a 48 hour week. The strike was broken by the Cinema Exhibitors Association installing ‘scab’ labour to replace strikers (Tomkins 2001).

Some tried a more direct approach to redistributing cinema wealth. In December 1919 two brothers, George and John Pratt, were charged with being armed with intent to rob the Deptford Electric Palace. An accomplice was alleged to have said: ‘Hark, do you hear them counting it up? Let’s have the shooter, and we’ll show them what they do in the films’ (*The Times*, 19 January 1920).

Decline of the cinema

After the Second World War, cinema attendances nationally began to decline, with the increasing availability of television in the 1950s having a major impact.

The Electric Palace, one of Deptford’s first cinemas, closed in 1954 after 44 years of showing films. Like many similar buildings it continued for a while afterwards as a bingo hall.

The Kinema in New Cross was renamed the Gaumont in 1950, and saw some excitement in 1956 with the showing of the film *Rock around the Clock* when ‘slap-happy youths left their seats in the first six rows of the stalls [...] and started to jive while the screen showed Bill Haley and The Comets’. On the same night at Lewisham Odeon there were clashes between teddy boys (and girls) and the police, with hundreds dancing in the streets afterwards (*Kentish Mercury*, 14 September 1956).

Gaumont and Odeon cinemas were both taken over by the Rank Organisation, which closed its New Cross cinema on 27 August 1960. Its last programme included South London’s Charlie Chaplin in “The Chaplin Revue”. Incidentally Chaplin’s mother, a music hall performer, had made her last public appearance in New Cross singing at the Hatcham Liberal Club (Gordon-Orr 2004).

The Deptford Odeon survived being damaged by a V1 rocket bomb in 1944, although it was closed for seven years for repairs. The cinema closed for good in 1970, with the building being demolished in 1988. Other examples of art deco cinemas are now highly valued and in some cases listed, notably the Muswell Hill Odeon building, designed like its Deptford counterpart by George Coles.

In nearby Lewisham, the Odeon closed in 1981, being demolished ten years later. Opened in 1932 at the Gaumont Palace, its varied history included a major fire in 1962 and hosting iconic rock concerts by The Beatles (1963), The Rolling Stones (1964), David Bowie (1973) and The Clash (1980).

With the demise of the Odeons the area was left without its own cinema for the first time since the invention of the medium. During the 1990s the cinema experience in London and elsewhere became concentrated in large multiscreen complexes targeted at car owning cinema goers driving from wide areas. Today people from New Cross and Deptford must travel to multiplexes at Greenwich, Surrey Quays or Peckham to see movies in a cinema environment. The largest of these, Greenwich Filmworks (now the Odeon), opened in 2001 with 18 screens and 2800 seats.

Cinematic representations of New Cross and Deptford

Denied the opportunity to see films in their own area, local people who made the journey to cinemas elsewhere could still have the ambivalent experience of seeing their neighbourhoods depicted in movies by film makers looking for suitably gritty images of urban decay or just vacant space.

The earliest known film of the area dates from 1903, and shows cattle bathing at Deptford Cattle Market. The first movie I am aware of that uses a local location is *Once a Jolly Swagman* (1949) a speedway film starring Dirk Bogarde that was filmed at the New Cross speedway stadium, close to the present Millwall football ground.

The ship building and related riverine industries in Deptford had been in decline throughout the 20th century, so as early as 1955 a derelict boat at Deptford Creek featured in the Hammer horror/science fiction classic *The Quatermass Xperiment*. Derek Jarman likewise used a derelict wharf in Deptford as a location in his apocalyptic punk movie *Jubilee* (1977). The scene in question features Amyl Nitrate (played by Jordan) dancing in a tutu around a bonfire on which burn books and a Union Jack.

More recently David Cronenberg used the river at Watergate Street, Deptford, as a dumping ground for bodies in *Eastern Promises* (2007). His previous film, *Spider* (2002), also featured scenes shot in a Deptford pub, the

Crown and Spectre in Friendly Street, chosen because of its unmodernized décor.

South London poverty has long been a staple of British cinema; indeed it has recently been suggested that South London has a specific ‘cinematic role as a location for the ordinary’ (Brunsdon, 2007). Gary Oldman’s brutal *Nil by Mouth* (1997), was filmed on the Pepys Estate and in The Five Bells pub in New Cross Road. Oldman himself grew up in New Cross and went to Monson Primary School. Mike Leigh’s *All or Nothing* (2002) is a similarly bleak tale filmed on an empty estate facing demolition on the Greenwich side of Deptford Creek.

Patrice Chéreau’s *Intimacy* (2000), referred to in one review as ‘Last Tango in New Cross,’ features scenes in Alpha Road, New Cross and Deptford Market. The Market had earlier been a key location for the 1959 film version of *Look Back in Anger* with Jimmy Porter (Richard Burton) as the archetypal “angry young man” running a sweet stall by day and playing jazz by night. Deptford High Street also features in *Hide and Seek* (1972), a Children’s Film Foundation production starring the child actor Gary Kemp, later to be a 1980s pop star with Spandau Ballet.

Other films using local locations include Neil Jordan’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1994, St Paul’s Church Deptford), Shimako Sato’s *Tale of a Vampire* (1992, Lewisham Arthouse on Lewisham Way) and *Shaun of the Dead* (2004, using the exterior of the Duke of Albany pub in Monson Road, New Cross Gate). *G:MT*, a 1998 film based around the lives of a group of aspiring musicians in Greenwich included scenes shot inside the Venue nightclub – previously, as we have seen, the area’s largest cinema.

New forms of film production

If new TV and video technologies played their part in the decline of cinemas, these same technologies were to pave the way for some people in New Cross and Deptford to take control of making their own films.

Amateur film making took off with the increasing availability of 8mm cine cameras in the 1950s and 60s, particularly with the higher quality Super 8 film from 1965. To date no attempt has been made to systematically archive cine footage in South East London, but there is no doubt material lying around forgotten in people’s homes that would be invaluable to social and film historians.

The domestic video recorder became widely available in the UK from 1981. By 1991 it was a feature of 70% of households (Ellis 1992) and video cameras were also becoming more accessible.

A pioneering community video project was set up at the Albany Empire in Deptford as early as the mid 1970s. At its building in Creek Road, the Albany hosted a range of campaigning and radical cultural activities in this period, including South East London Claimants Union, Lewisham Family Squatters, socialist theatre and Rock against Racism gigs. The latter may have prompted a presumed far-right arson attack which gutted the Albany in 1978, prompting a move to a new building in Douglas Way, Deptford in the 1980s.

John White, with the support of the Combination theatre group, founded Albany Video as a project aiming to give access to film making to parts of the community normally denied a voice on screen let alone a role in the film production process. The population of Deptford had become more diverse since the Second World War, with the arrival of a significant African-Caribbean population. This was also a period in which new social movements of women, black people, lesbians and gay men were challenging their representation in mainstream media. For instance in 1980 Women Against Violence Against Women waged a campaign against Brian DePalma's film *Dressed to Kill*, throwing eggs and paint at cinema screens where it was being shown. A woman from Deptford was charged with criminal damage to a Lewisham cinema showing the film (*The Times*, 13 December 1980).

Albany Video productions included *August 13th* about the 1977 anti-National Front protests in New Cross; *Daisy and Bertha* (1978, directed by Mary Sheridan) featuring two elderly Deptford Women talking about their experiences of adolescence, marriage and childbirth; *Us Girls* (1979), a video version of a Combination youth theatre show about the experience of young women; and *Rough with the Smooth* (1984), made with young women training in manual trades at Deptford Skills Centre. In the mid-1980s Albany Video became a Channel 4 Franchised Workshop and produced TV programmes for Channel 4 from their community base, including *Beyond Our Ken* (1985), in which community groups from Lewisham and Greenwich argued against Thatcher's abolition of the Greater London Council. *Mixed Feelings*, a 1987 programme of performances by young Black women was followed in 1988 by a documentary about Reggae music.

Throughout the 1980s Albany Video also operated a national video distribution service to community and youth groups and schools, making available their own work including the above titles and *Being White* (a popular anti-racist education video), and a range of work by other groups. Albany Video's work was prolonged into the 1990s by Pax Nindi and Paxvison, also based at the Albany.

DIY cinema

The 1990s saw a new wave of do-it-yourself film production in London, using a mixture of new digital technologies and older forms such as video and Super 8. A key focus for this ever since has been Exploding Cinema, an “underground” film collective established in the early 1990s at the Cool Tan squat in Brixton. Their low-/no budget film shows staged in pubs, cafes and disused buildings have been described as ‘a hybrid fusion of projection, performance and social space’ (Szczelkun 2002). A founding principle was that of open access for film makers: ‘we have no preference as to the kind of work; drama, experimental, documentary, splatter, animation, true confessions, protest, pop promos, home videos, found footage’ (Exploding Cinema).

Exploding Cinema nights typically feature live performance as well as short films, in some ways a return to the practice of the early cinema which was less dominated by single movies. A series of Exploding Cinema events were held at the now closed Hatcham Liberal Club in New Cross (2004—2006), and at the Albany in Deptford (November 2006).

A similar group – My Eyes, My Eyes – ran from the mid-1990s through to the mid-2000s, and put on events at local venues including Mumford’s Mill (Deptford Creek), The Centurion pub (Deptford High Street) and The Montague Arms in New Cross. More recently Duncan Reekie, Caroline Kennedy and Clive Shaw have started Flixation, pooling their previous experience with Exploding Cinema and My Eyes, My Eyes. In August 2007 they held ‘a night of no-budget underground film, performance and music on board a floating cinema’ on the Minesweeper boat in Deptford Creek.

Regular film nights have also been held in the past three years at Café Crema in New Cross, including a series of radical movies promoted by Class Acts (linked to the South London Solidarity Federation). Lewisham Film Initiative, supported by the Council and other funders, facilitates film showings across the borough in community venues.

Like the vibrant local music scene, alternative film promoters have taken advantage of the plentiful venues in New Cross and Deptford including cafes, pubs, artist galleries/studios and squats. It remains to be seen how many of these spaces will be squeezed out by the regeneration of the area, and what impact this will have on the overlapping art, music and film scenes. In the past year, such spaces have been lost in the Distillery building in Deptford to make way for luxury flats and at the time of writing Café Crema is facing eviction by its landlord, Goldsmiths College.

Local film on the Internet

The recent development of Web 2.0 has enabled people to freely access and share video footage with people all over the world. Alongside this the increasing availability of mobile phones with video capability means that more people are filming than ever before, including many in New Cross and Deptford.

YouTube, currently the most popular video sharing site, was launched in 2005 and by December 2007 featured nearly 300 video clips shot in New Cross, many of them featuring bands at local venues but also a range of diverse material including a train journey from Hither Green to New Cross; wild birds in a garden on Lewisham Way; the Waller Road fire station; and vintage newsreel footage of cycle speedway on a post-WW2 bomb site.

The most significant web-based project for the local area is Deptford.TV, which has involved more than 50 film makers in an ongoing 'audio-visual documentation of the regeneration process of the Deptford area'. A database of more than 2000 clips is available in 'an open and networked project that employs methods of commons-based peer production and uses open source software to build a video database for collective film-making'.

Deptford.TV works closely with Goldsmiths College in New Cross, another major source of local film production through its Department of Media and Communications. A recent example of a successful community project has been Lewisham '77, a series of events to mark the 30th anniversary of the anti-fascist demonstrations of August 1977. Deptford.TV volunteers and Goldsmiths film students documented events including a conference and a walk involving Goldsmiths staff and students, local historians, activists and 1977 veterans, and also produced films for the conference based on a series of interviews.

Conclusions

Despite having been without a cinema for more than thirty years, it is clear that New Cross and Deptford still have a rich film culture. It is a long way from Deptford Electric Theatre to YouTube but there are some commonalities in the experience of the moving image over time as well as some differences.

The pleasure of optical stimulation remains and with it the fascination with the visual representation of movement, of human life and drama. Despite technological changes, certain themes remain popular. For instance, the clown of fairs, circuses and music halls was translated into the early cinema through actors such as Charlie Chaplin; today many of the most popular internet film clips draw on similar traditions of slapstick.

The cinema as collective social experience still exists but its concentration in fewer multiplexes means that it is no longer something that is an immediately accessible part of local life, certainly not in Deptford and New Cross. On a daily basis the more common experience for many is the individual accessing moving images through television and the internet.

On the positive side the division between producer and spectator is becoming blurred as more people are able to engage in film production. A potential loss is that much of the film that is produced is consumed in atomised environments (the home) at the expense of the wider pleasures of the cinema, which has always been about more than just the film. Nevertheless new communities around films are emerging through social networking sites, and projects such as Deptford.TV demonstrate that web-based film can help generate collectivities in the physical space of an area like New Cross and Deptford as well as on the internet.

Thanks to Tony Downmunt (Goldsmiths College) and Clive Shaw (Flixation) for comments.

1.3. Deptford? Regeneration?

by Ben Gidley

The regeneration of Deptford has been one of the main research topics of the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths University of London, since its formation out of the Deptford City Challenge Evaluation Project in the mid-1990s, one of the largest-scale single area-based regeneration evaluations in the UK. My own involvement in the Centre, and in Deptford, goes back to 1997, and since then I have been engaged in several research projects in the area.¹ This chapter is a personal take on some of the aspects of what I've seen of regeneration in Deptford over the last decade.

Or, perhaps, it is not so much about the regeneration of Deptford as the “regeneration” of “Deptford.” That is, not so much about the actual changes that the area has seen, as the stories of change and of place that have been acted out here. Deptford, to borrow the phrase Richard Sennett uses about Manhattan, is a ‘place full of time.’² Over the years, there has been a build-up here, a sedimentation, of memories and stories. Each building, each street corner contains countless narratives – public or personal, shared or jealously guarded, celebrated or repressed, invented or half-forgotten. Sir Francis Drake and the Golden Hinde, Joseph Conrad and *The Heart of Darkness*, Olaudo Equiano and his dream of freedom, the New Cross Massacre and the Black People’s Day of Action, Peter the Great and the shipyard, Jeremy Bentham and his panopticon, Samuel Pepys and his garden, John Evelyn and his diary, Sniffing Glue and Deptford Fun City, Dire Straits and Love Over Gold – all these stories jostle together here, making Deptford the place it is.³ Or, rather, they make Deptford the places it is. But similarly, the word ‘regeneration’ has many meanings for different people.

Regeneration is performative

A ‘performative’ speech act is one that *does* something by being uttered – a man and woman pronounced husband and wife, a war declared, a sentence pronounced on a criminal, a shopping centre declared open. There is something of this quality about phrases like “this is an up-and-coming area”. If you pronounce it often enough, sooner or later it becomes true.

In 2007, the BBC screened an eight-part documentary series, *The Tower*, set on the Pepys estate in Deptford, produced and directed by Anthony Wonke. The film, subtitled *A Tale of Two Cities*, follows the conversion of Aragon Tower, a former high-rise council block, into luxury apartments by developers Berkeley Homes. It strikes me, watching, how many times the word ‘regeneration’ is used – and in so many ways. In particular, it is used re-

peatedly, in two principal ways, by Berkeley Homes employees, and especially the three well-spoken blondes who market the luxury flats. First, they talk about the council's regeneration of Pepys and Deptford. When they do so, it is unclear whether they are referring to (or even aware of) social regeneration projects like Pepys Community Forum or Neighbourhood Renewal. More likely they are talking about the physical renewal of the area, particularly the demolition of some of the old council low-rise blocks and their replacement with more contemporary-looking housing association properties. At any rate, it is clear that the Berkeley people see this as positive for the area and specifically for new residents, who will benefit from the changes, not least in terms of increased property value. Thus the tax-payers' funding of regeneration in a deprived community is translated (at least discursively) into gains for wealthy private householders.

At the same time, and this is the second sense in which regeneration is used by these people, the very presence of wealthy householders is expected to have a regenerative effect on the estate. Broadly echoing government policy around "mixed communities", it is assumed that middle-class people with middle-class lives will inspire working-class residents to embrace middle-class aspirations and thus escape the culture of poverty that is thought to characterise residualised deprived areas – while their middle-class spending power will "trickle down" to deprived locals.

The dominant motif for this process, for the Berkeley employees in the film, is the chain coffee outlet. The area, the marketing ladies tell each other at various points, will soon be awash with Costa Coffee and Starbucks branches, providing the luxury flats' residents with the new necessities of middle-class life. Sharon Zukin (1995) calls this 'pacification by cappuccino'.

What we see in *The Tower* is the developers, by repeatedly enunciating a vision of an up-and-coming Deptford, populated by stylish professionals clutching skinny lattes in go-cups, summoning this new Deptford into being: the performance of regeneration. We can see the same performance at work on estate agents' websites which ritualistically repeat phrases like 'up-and-coming,' 'buzzing,' 'happening,' watching this translate into rapidly rising land values and home prices.

The local state and its "stakeholders" attempt to fuel and mimic this process in boosterist press releases, publications and websites extolling the area's coming status. In the 1990s, Deptford City Challenge paid the Thatcherite advertising gurus and art collectors, Saatchi and Saatchi, to come up with the slogan 'Deptford is coming'. Since then, it seems like Deptford keeps on coming, but never quite arrives.

Opponents of this process also make their own attempts to dream a new Deptford into being. The New Age neo-liberal faith in “vision” – the power to see what is not there – has been embraced by community activists, as they put forward alternative visions for the area. This was the case with the Creekside regeneration programme, subtitled ‘Building Bridges,’ which emerged from community sector proposals for the renewal of the industrial interzone between Deptford and Greenwich, symbolised by the proposed re-building of the old Ha’penny Hatch bridge across Deptford Creek. This vision – or an attenuated version of it – was endorsed by Lewisham and Greenwich borough councils, who used it to lever in central government Single Regeneration Budget monies to invest in the area, for example in the building of the new Laban modern dance centre on Creekside.

Indeed, the very location ‘Creekside’ was brought into being by its repeated enunciation by the regeneration programme. Formerly merely the name of a narrow road running alongside Deptford Creek, ‘Creekside’ came to be accepted as the proper name for the area by its residents, as in the Creekside Forum established to represent their interests to the regeneration programme. Regeneration, then, has the power to dream places into being.

People are machines for living in buildings

Architecture has been central to attempts to dream a new Deptford into being. Two examples of this are the Laban building on Creekside and the Seeger Distillery building on Deptford Broadway. The Laban, designed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, completed in 2002. Its colours were selected by Michael Craig Martin, then head of the Goldsmiths Fine Art department, and mentor to the Damien Hirst generation of ‘Young British Artists’ and also responsible for the band of coloured light around the chimney of the new Tate Modern on Bankside, opened in 2000 (highly symbolic for Creekside, as Laban was hoped to have a comparable effect on Deptford’s visitor economy to that provided by the Tate). If you read the cultural pages of broadsheet papers or the architectural press, the Laban building is figured as nothing short of miraculous, bringing culture to the desert that is South East London. For example, Gerry Robinson, Chairman of Arts Council England has said:

LABAN’s new home in Deptford is one of the marvels of the moment, and I am proud that the Arts Council was able to assist in its creation with a major lottery award. [It] is a towering example for the future, and a wonderful injection of life – not only for this quarter of London, but for the nation as a whole. This is a visionary concept which deserves the greatest success.’

In these accounts, new buildings magically bring new life: but what of the lives of those already here?

Whose culture? And why our quarter?

The local state's most persistent – and probably most successful – attempt to re-narrate the area through regeneration has been the idea of Deptford as a “cultural quarter”. This is part of a nation-wide trend to draw on the cultural industries to replace the declining manufacturing industries, and encourage investment in deprived locations through them.

There is no doubt that the badging of Deptford as a cultural quarter draws on older narratives circulating in the area: Deptford/New Cross was a key site in the story of punk (Deptford Fun City record label and *Sniffing Glue* fanzine), the post-punk pub rock movement (Squeeze, Dire Straits' *Love Over Gold*), the story of Rose Buford College drama students and Goldsmiths art students flocking to Pepys and Crossfields estates respectively when they were defined as “hard to let”, the YBA (Young British Art) and Britpop media circuses of the mid-90s (Goldsmiths graduates Damon Albarn, Damien Hirst, Tracy Emin et al, under the tutelage of Michael Craig-Martin, designer of the band of light at the top of the Tate Modern's chimney stack). So, there is no doubt that there is – and long has been – a wealth of grassroots cultural activity in the area. Cultural producers have pursued various strategies to seize the opportunities afforded by the rising curve of the cultural market, and the idea of the area as a creative hub has been a useful context for some of those strategies.

However, part of the success of the cultural quarter strategy has been to feed the narrative of Deptford as ‘up-and-coming’ in the sense of that phrase as used by property investors and middle-class gentrifiers, i.e. to feed into the pacification by cappuccino of the area. We can see examples of this in some of the media reports of the building of the new Laban sited on Creekside, and partly funded by public money (including Creekside regeneration money), which foresaw a revival of the area through the real estate boom that would follow.

Google the phrase ‘the new Hoxton’ or ‘the next Shoreditch’ and you get thousands of hits. Everywhere from Harlesden to Brockley, Crouch End to Bermondsey, Kensal Green to Borough, is heralded as the next urban frontier to fall to this version of the regeneration process. New Cross and Deptford have been badged as the Hoxton since Hoxton itself began to be gentrified, and yet never quite seems to get there. The presence (real or imagined) of a vibrant cultural economy is central to this badging: the area's “next Shoreditch” status is validated by the involvement of Charles Saatchi in the area, for example, while New Cross is regularly described as being home to a New Cross music “scene” also designated as ‘up-and-coming’.

About a decade ago, when the new Laban was still being “master-planned”, I interviewed a local resident and touched on the idea of Creekside as an emerging cultural quarter. ‘*Whose culture? And why our culture?*’ she replied. This was, I thought, an insightful answer. It points to the question of what types of culture generate economic value in official models of local economic development. For example, there are thriving cultural businesses in the area specialising in hair and nails for Caribbean women, and food outlets catering to African or Vietnamese customers. But these tend to fall out of the definitions of cultural industry favoured in boosterist policy. Similarly, the cultural traditions of white working-class Deptford do not feature prominently either.

However, it is wrong to see the cultural quarter idea and the arriviste arts scene as something external to Deptford, to be contrasted to some sort of heroic indigenous, “authentic” Deptford. The people who I speak to who most passionately defend the idea of an authentic grassroots Deptford often as not were not born in the manor. Deptford’s ability to absorb, adapt, recycle and reconfigure the people and cultures of other places that define “grassroots” Deptford, whether that is the Rose Buford College students seduced into staying, the peculiar take on the music of the American heartland that defined Deptford’s pub rock scene, or the presence here of migrants from every corner of the globe.

Ragpickers and magpies

This genius for recycling can be seen has a tradition in the rag and bone men, costermongers and mudlarks who populate the area’s social history, whose present day reincarnations include Leol and Nicky, central characters in BBC’s *The Tower*, men who make their living from crap metal and the contents of the rubbish skips and beaches of the Thames’ South shore, selling it on to the breaker’s yards on Pepys estate, breaker’s yards which older residents claim were once owned by notorious gangsters Richardson Brothers (South London’s version of the Kray Twins). Other reincarnations include the Pepys Recycling Project, a community-based scheme which collects organic waste for Pepys’ council flats and turns it into life-giving compost, or Chris Carey’s Collections, a company which inherited a rag and bone business and turned it into a global recycling empire, sending reconditioned goods from SE8 to places like Nigeria. It includes Rubbish Fairy and Prangsta, the clothes design businesses on the New Cross Road which use discarded items of dress bought in Deptford market, turning them into fabulous high art creations. It includes Onyx on the Pepys estate, a company which imports and processes

domestic waste from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on the more fashionable side of the river's waste.

Deptford, in short, has the ability to generate people who know both the price *and* the value of everything, even (or especially) that discarded by others. It is no surprise that when community activists came together to organise in the face of Deptford City Challenge, they picked the magpie as their logo, a scavenging bird which from a distance appears to be black and white, but viewed close up reveals an iridescent, polychrome glow.

Finally, it is worth pointing to another Deptford tradition, overlapping with the passion for recycling: a tradition of alternative urbanism. Fordham Free Festival, Use Your Loaf Social Centre, the Pepys Community Garden, the temporarily mass squatted Marlowe building on Pepys: Deptford has a history of finding alternative uses for the heterogeneous spaces of the city, both its buildings and its open spaces, and again in particular the spaces abandoned by others. Like the forms of recycling of goods, these alternative uses are sometimes, to use Deptford.TV terminology, part of "strategies of sharing" – collective attempts to socially appropriate value.

Write your own ending

If Deptford has an infinite number of stories, an infinite number of possible futures waiting to be dreamed into being, then I want to conclude this piece with an invitation to participate in the narrative process. Faced with the proliferation of performative utterances about Deptford, it becomes an urgent task to collect, record and preserve – to scavenge for – some of the more marginal stories and ensure they are not abandoned.

Endnotes

1. These include the evaluation of Creekside SRB (described by Heidi Seetzen in "The production of place: The renewal of Deptford Creekside" in *Deptford.TV Diaries* 2006), a Joseph Rowntree Foundation project on community involvement in regeneration in the Deptford and Greenwich waterfront (see Anastacio, Gidley et al, 2000), the evaluation of the Single Regeneration Budget on Pepys estate [<http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr/research/pepys-community-dev.php>], the development of a framework for Neighbourhood Renewal for Evelyn and Grinling Gibbons wards, and work with the Deptford Economic Development Partnership [<http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr/partnership-engagement/deptford-partnership.php>]. The Centre's style of work tends to be collaborative and all of these projects were collective endeavours. I have had the good fortune to work with Michael Keith and Marjorie Mayo, in particular, as well as Alison Rooke, Imogen Slater, Heidi Seetzen, Kalbir Shukra and others. This is perhaps also the place to thank all of the local residents, activists and workers who I've worked with over the years, in particular Malcolm Ball, Geraldine Blake, Barbara Gray, Anne Haxell, Lewis Herlitz, Lassell Hylton, Jessica Leech, Pete Pope, Trevor Pybus, Simon Rowe, Francesca SanLorenzo, Matthew Scott, Jess Steele, Jennifer Taylor, John Taylor and Brian Wagenbach.
2. Richard Sennett *The Conscience of the Eye* (1990)
3. Many of these stories are told in Neil Gordon-Orr's *Deptford Fun City* (2004).



Deptford Station, 1839



Deptford Station, 1968



Deptford Station, 2007

1.4. Mobilising Knowledge: Working with Lewisham's older population

by Alison Rooke and Gesche Würfel

Introduction

Our cities must deal with an increasingly ageing population but are ill equipped to tackle the needs of older people. As today's 'baby boomers' age and people live longer due to improvements in health and advances in medicine, older people will be an increasingly large percentage of the population. However, older people are often disconnected from the development process. They are often disadvantaged in their interactions with the urban environment and their valuable knowledge and experiences remain untapped by planners.

The *Mobilising Knowledge – Solving the interaction gap between older people, planners, experts and general citizens within the Thames Gateway project*¹ came about after considering the ways in which the age profile of London and the UK as a whole will change in the next twenty years and into the future. A summer school that was held in July 2007 critically explored future development of London, and especially the Thames Gateway from the perspective of 22 local people over 60. They got involved in making maps, debating with planners and policy practitioners, exploring the local area photographically, reminiscing about Lewisham in the past and imagining Lewisham in the future and exploring the sustainability of the Thames Gateway. These were some of the activities that made up the *Mobilising Knowledge Summer School*.

Guidelines, toolkit and findings

The results were compiled in good-practice guidelines which set out the findings of the workshops, a toolkit which sets out the workshop modules and guidelines for people in planning who wish to reach older people. This is accompanied by a 15 minute DVD that illustrates the process and can be used in future planning processes and that can be downloaded on deptford.tv. The results were launched in November and was attended by the participants, their families and diverse public and private policy-makers. The event was hosted to make the broader public as well as policy-makers aware of older people's particular requirements in the urban environment. We hope that the results of the project will lead to older people being listened to and planners taking older peoples need seriously.

Many planning consultation processes – for example sending out leaflets or e-mails, asking the public to look at plans online, and showing models

– do not fully engage a wide range of local residents. In particular, those residents who are not able to attend public consultations or who are unable to participate due to barriers such as mobility, hearing impairments, language, and access to the Internet often do not get their views heard.

Furthermore, many people find it difficult to read plans, cannot understand planning language and do not understand how abstract plans for the future may be relevant to their everyday lives. Using overly technical specialist planning language puts people off. The *Mobilising Knowledge* guidelines offer ways to overcome these barriers. They offer a useful instrument that helps professionals bring older people's experience of urban change and past regeneration projects into new attempts to regenerate cities. The guidelines establish clear and practical considerations for seeking the views of older people. Using the guidelines helps to interact with older people in local communities, explore their knowledge of the local area, and in that process work to ensure that planning and regeneration are sustainable whilst considering urban and demographic change.

A guiding principle: Active ageing

Just as cities are changing, people's experiences of cities change as they grow older. Their needs, experiences and ability to move around the city change profoundly; as does their ability to partake in everything that cities have to offer.

However, ageing should be considered a positive experience; especially when we bear in mind that ageing brings about many physical, mental and physiological changes that affect people's functional ability. Longer life should be accompanied by continuing opportunities for good health, participation and security. The World Health Organisation has adopted the term 'active ageing' to express the process by which we can achieve this vision: 'Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age' (WHO 2002). The word 'active' refers to continuing participation in economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. 'Active ageing' aims to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age (Hanson 2007). Involving older people also contributes to other strategic goals such as building sustainable communities, creating community cohesion, and involving communities.

Good design through inclusion

One of the themes that emerged early on in the summer school was the im-

portance of good design. Improving the design of cities and public spaces benefits not only older people, but the whole community. Together we identified our priorities for improving older people's experience of the city. This can be summarised as 'good design through inclusion'. Clearly good design of external space is important to a sustainable and inclusive society. This is not merely a question of aesthetics. It is crucial to safety, health and longevity of all. Poorly designed streets and roads have severe consequences for older people. Nearly half of all pedestrians killed on the roads are over 60. Furthermore, when injury is sustained, it is six times as likely to be fatal to someone over 80 as for someone of 40 (see research by Age Concern 2007). Other factors such as safety, affordability, lack of information, unhelpful drivers or unreliability of services are also important in encouraging older people to get out and about in towns and cities. Designing only for the young, fit and able discriminates against many people while designing with older people in mind unlocks access for all.

During the *Mobilising Knowledge* summer school the following themes emerged as local priorities for older people.

- ♦ **Liveable town centres** – How town centres can be amenable for older people and every other citizen,
- ♦ **Heritage and planning** – How to protect the heritage of Lewisham,
- ♦ **Housing** – How houses should be prioritised, the numbers and availability of affordable and sheltered housing,
- ♦ **Mobility** – How streets should be designed (paving, bus stops) and how to improve older people's movement through the city.

These topics were then discussed in groups along with participating professionals such as planners, local councillors and representatives from older people's groups.

Outcomes

In running the summer school, we found that many older people have an active interest in planning, regeneration, and design decisions that affect them. It was clear that older people would like to be involved in planning continuously and from an early stage, i.e. not after decisions had already been made. Furthermore, they prefer to be consulted as a community and as part of neighbourhoods rather than engage in the planning process as individuals, e.g. by writing individually to oppose planning applications.

The people who took part had been involved in park user groups, opposing and influencing planning applications and developments and had been part of neighbourhood watch schemes. While half of the group had been in-

volved in older people's social and campaigning groups, walking groups and local history groups, the other half had not been involved in such matters previously. They were also interested in the Thames Gateway developments, which will alter the east and south-east of London in the coming years. Participants discussed the impact of these changes on design, housing policy and local services such as transport, schools, hospitals and GPs.

Older people in cities

To some extent the summer school raises the question of the validity of the category 'older people' as a demographic group. It is important not to stereotype older people. The older people we worked with were a very heterogeneous group, made up of what we might call older older people, in their late 70s and over, and younger older people, aged 60 to early 70s. As we have discussed, ageing is often associated with physiological and physical changes which affect older people's experience of the city. However, quite a few of the workshop participants were limited in their use of space by factors other than age such as having limited financial resources (for transport or leisure). However, as this report argues it remains the case that there are structural and situational circumstances which demand that we consider older people's experience of the city. Clearly cities should be designed in a way that they do not become a trap for those 'who are unable to escape to a better life in later life, but a positive choice, so that older people can continue to reap the benefits of city living' (Hanson 2007). It became clear at the summer school that in order to make cities liveable for older people and to attract more older people, cities/councils need to provide:

- Affordable housing for all members of society
- Integrated and affordable transport
- Reduce people's car use and encourage people to walk to make the external environment safer and less polluted for all
- Accessible, high quality services
- Accessible, high quality health care
- An attractive, well designed, safe and accessible urban environment
- A holistic consideration and integrated funding of housing, social care, transport and health
- Sustainable lifetime neighbourhoods (sustainable communities are those that provide a good quality of life for all)

By implementing these changes now, there will be a lot of beneficiaries, and Lewisham will be equipped for the future. By working to incorporate older people's experiences and perspectives into the design of the built environment

now, older people may benefit from live independently in their homes and communities. This has the potential to bring older people and society in general many benefits, when we consider that so many older people live alone. It is important for older people to be able to enjoy the city with the opportunities to meet other people that urban life brings. Key benefits according to Burton and Mitchell (2006) include:

- Freedom and autonomy, feeling in control of life
- Dignity and sense of self-worth. Doing something useful like posting a letter, purchasing everyday necessities
- Fresh air and exercise. Walking outdoors is important to feeling good about oneself and reaping physical health benefits
- Psychological well-being
- Enjoyment, feeling happy, appreciating landscape and townscapes
- Social interaction. This affords opportunities for informal contact with others

Finally, we would like to emphasise that all of these measures suggested here contribute to strengthening the benefits that older people as active citizens bring to society as a whole. Living longer is 'a triumph of modern medicine that deserves to be celebrated' (Hanson 2007). It is worth considering that older people represent a significant economic and social resource, and will continue to do so, especially as younger cohorts shrink and the proportion of older people grows over coming decades. As the population ages, older people going on to work later in life is likely to become more widespread (Reday-Mulvey, 2007). Older people are a significant proportion of the many volunteers in the UK today. Approximately 3 million people over 50 take part in unpaid voluntary work (Age Concern England 2005). In this sense older people are 'the glue that binds society together' (ibid). Furthermore those aged 50+ are thought to provide over half of all informal care, worth about £57 billion in the UK (Carers UK 2005; 2007), while older people also provide support to young working parents (Wheelock and Jones 2002; Dench and Ogg 2002) and support young families through grand-parenting. Clearly considerate and informed urban design and planning should take into account the experiences and needs of older people, thereby enabling them to continue to be fully active citizens. We all need to see that the ageing society is not a problem, but that we can deal with it. And we all hope to grow old and live in an attractive environment.

Endnote

1. This project is supported by the UCLled UrbanBuzz Programme, within which UEL is a prime partner.

1.5. Walking the Olympic Sacrifice Zone ***by the University of Openness, Faculty of Cartography***



Saturday 12 December 2004, Bromley-by-Bow to Stratford.

A Sacrifice Zone is any area of land whose speculative value is outweighed by the costs of capitalizing on that value, ie. it costs more to make it saleable than would be gained by selling it. When a space achieves this state, it becomes a sacrifice zone. What is then necessary for it to be made valuable again is a sacrifice of value: energy, time, money, human life.

The Sacrifice is the production of speculative value in a way that expects no economic return or direct exchange, and which actually harms the producer. This is a sacrificial act, based on faith and collective imagination, a religious act of making something precious sacred by destroying it.

George Bataille calls this expenditure 'The Accursed Share', that portion of energy and human life that must be expended in order for the system that creates that value to maintain its structure. By his logic, Aztec mass human sacrifice maintained a sufficiently slow population growth rate to make it too costly for tribal wars to continue.

The construction of the pyramids were, according to Bataille, also an expenditure of the 'accursed share', a non economic investment of slaves energy in the production (or destruction) of value that allowed the structure of Egyptian society to survive its imperial growth. He considers the Second World War to be an example of what can happen when that value is not ex-



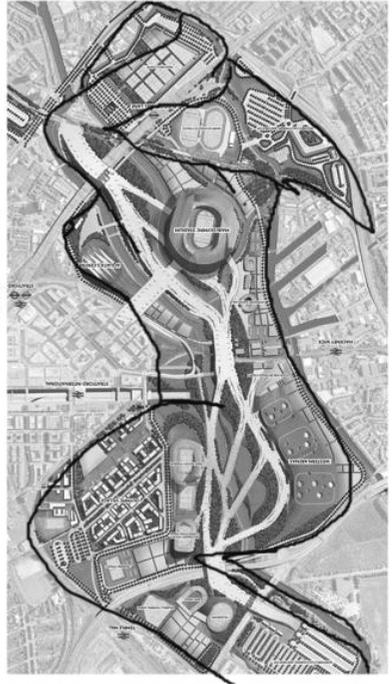
pendent; industrial production suddenly causing a terrifying expansion of value, and of the capacity for value creation, that then required an equally catastrophic expenditure of that value in two world wars.

This is what is proposed for East London in 2012. The 'accursed share' in this case is the overproduction of value of the London property markets. The sacrificial zone is the proposed site of the Olympic park, east of Bromley By-Bow, out along the Lea Valley to Stratford, and the sacrifice will be made by the UK State plc. on behalf of its

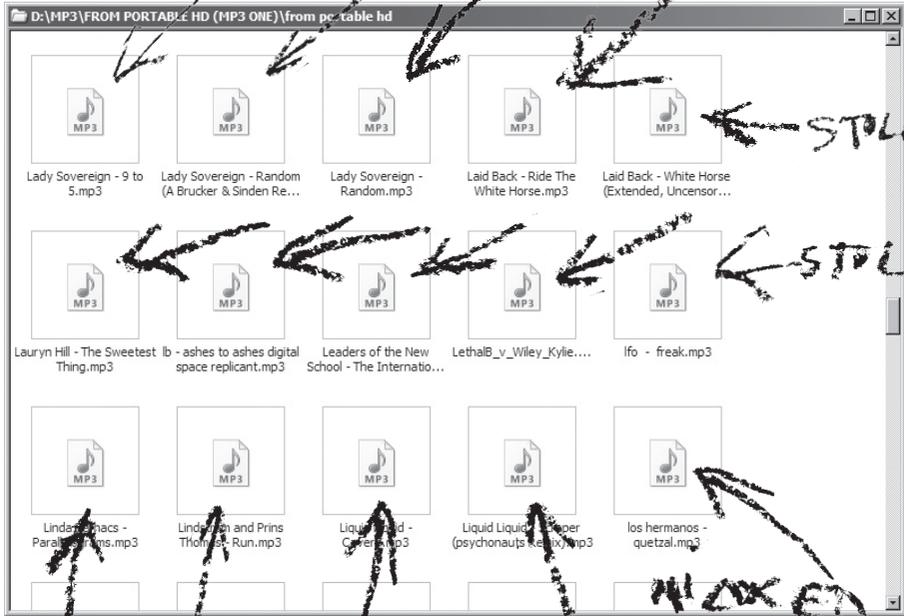
people. Their work, energy, life, money and crucially their attention will be demanded and expended in the production of a huge and purposefully wasteful spectacle: the Olympic Games 2012. This public sacrifice will open up the Olympic sacrificial zone to the private 'investment and return' model of value creation that produced its accursed share in the first place.

Speculations about the anatomy of the zone, that its voluptuous design is the intentional legacy of a rogue druidical landscape architect have been propagated by the same counter-subversives who gave temporary credence to the Temple/Monroe/Thatcher familial connection during the construction of the first Docklands imperial complex. This 'earth mother' theory distraction is compelling, because it purposefully insinuates a pornographic projection of the proposed Olympic landscape on top of the collective premonition of its post-apocalyptic topography (see right). Aerial photographs taken from orbit will pick out the unmistakable outline of a sheila-na-gig, giving birth to the Lea through the submerged labial curves of the collapsed stadium.

Hack the bid! Do not text 'accursed share' to 82012. Retrieved from:
<http://uo.twentiethcentury.com/index.php/WalkingTheOlympicSacrificeZone>



Images courtesy of University of Openness



STOLEN

KICKED

STOLEN

DOGGY

STOLEN

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THIEVING

2. *Economic strategies*

2.1. ‘The future doesn’t care about your bank balance’ ...but the 1/1000 do!

by Jamie King

Raw numbers can’t convey the excitement of releasing *Steal This Film II* at the end of 2007, but here they are anyway: in the first four days there have been approximately 150,000 downloads (we haven’t checked how many views there have been on BitTorrent, Stage6, Joox, YouTube, Google Video and everywhere else the film has been uploaded – hard, since there are multiple copies on each), around 5000 seeders at any one time on *The Pirate Bay*’s trackers; and approx. \$5000 in donations.

That last figure is especially pleasing, not just because it represents cash in the bank for our next project, *Ghost Shift*, part one of the Oil of the 21st Century series, but because each of these people has personally chosen to support us *completely voluntarily* – and in most cases, donated significantly more than they would have had to pay for a DVD or a cinema ticket. While a rough calculation (the numbers are rough, we’re not statisticians!) suggests about one in a thousand people seeing the film choose to support us, we are seeing an overwhelming proportion of donations in the range \$15-40.



The few, the generous few

This means we have solved one of the “problems” thrown up by the first *Steal This Film*, in which we asked for donations of \$1, and received thousands of them. PayPal took round about 30 cents of each of these, and after the cost of transferring to our bank account, that left not so much of the generous donations to work with in the real world.

We addressed this problem in *Steal This Film II*’s release by *suggesting* (but not *requiring*) donations of \$5 or more, and incentivising the already-existing generosity of the p2p community by offering a ‘mystery gift’ for donations of \$15 or more. (The mystery gift really is cool by the way.)

What we discovered is that (as one of my colleagues put it) *people want that gift*. Over 90% of people donating are deciding to go over the artificial

\$15 threshold we set. But I don't think people literally "want that gift"; I think they want an excuse to be generous!

Some comments about this. In *Steal This Film*, we envisioned millions of viewers of which a *large-ish proportion would donate small amounts of money*. What we actually got – and were delighted to get – was *millions of viewers of which a small proportion donated a small amount of money*. Even this early in the day, the *STF II* experience shows something that is obvious in retrospect: the people who are choosing to voluntarily support us are passionate about the *Steal This Film* project (not just about the documentary *per se*, clearly, but about the future it suggests). And quite naturally, those few people are prepared to go rather further than a \$1 donation.



Steal This Film II,
League of Noble Peers 2007

STEAL
THIS
FILM

STEAL THIS
FILM II



Steal This Film as disease vector

Who are the 1/1000: what characterises them and sets them apart from others? It's difficult not to be reminded of Malcolm Gladwell's 'tipping point':

Potterat [...] once did an analysis of a gonorrhoea epidemic in Colorado Springs, Colorado, looking at everyone who came to a public health clinic for treatment of the disease over the space of six months. He found that about half of all the cases came, essentially, from four neighborhoods representing about 6 percent of the geographic area of the city. Half of those in that 6 percent, in turn, were socializing in the same six bars. Potterat then interviewed 768 people in that tiny subgroup and found that 600 of them either didn't give gonorrhoea to anyone else or gave it to only one other person. These people he called nontransmitters. The ones causing the epidemic to grow — the ones who were infecting two and three and four and five others with their disease — were the remaining 168. In other words, in all of the city of Colorado Springs — a town of well in excess of 100,000 people — the epidemic of gonorrhoea tipped because of the activities of 168 people living in four small neighborhoods and basically frequenting the same six bars.

Who were those 168 people? They aren't like you or me. They are people who go out every night, people who have vastly more sexual partners than the norm, people whose lives and behavior are well outside of the ordinary.

Now, I'm not saying that *STF II* supporters are going around giving anyone gonorrhoea; but I'm interested whether there's any other relationship between the 1/1000 who donate and the 168/100,000 (basically the same ratio) who spread STDs in Colorado Springs. Perhaps it's a proportion of people who just really, really like *Steal This Film* — but as much as that would be nice to believe, I'm more inclined to think it's a group of edge-surfers trying to do what they can to help move things along.

ime Guanxi

ng to understand more about the relationship between The League Of
le Peers and the 1/1000, I came across the idea of *Guanxi* for the first
From the wiki linked to the book *Guanxi: The China Letter*, this defini-

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Guanxi is a Chinese term, generally translated as "networks" or "connections," [...] a useful reminder that trust, understanding, and personal knowledge can be vital components of economic relationships. Most guanxi relationships are based on individuals' having something in common [...] may be the fact of having attended or graduated from the same school, having the same place of employment, working in the same industry, or coming from the same village or region. In addi-

tion, guanxi relationships may sometimes be established through gift giving or personal favors [...]. Guanxi relationships often have a strong emotional element, something easily overlooked by outsiders.

The essence of guanxi is that each relationship carries with it a set of expectations and obligations for each participant.

Now, this isn't the first time someone has noticed the relevance of Guanxi to network culture. In *Guanxi: The Art of Relationships, Microsoft, China, and Bill Gates's Plan to Win the Road Ahead*, 'good' Guanxi is defined as:

- **trust** (respect and knowledge of others),
- **favor** (loyalty and obligation),
- **dependence** (harmony and reciprocity, mutual benefit), and
- **adaptation** (patience and cultivation).

The fact that Guanxi is considered key to Gates 'winning' 'the road ahead' might make it a lot less attractive on the face of it, but I still think it's an interesting way of understanding what is happening with our 1/1000. *Steal This Film* has helped to build what you might call an "affective bridge" between "us" (The League) and "them" (the viewer), a reciprocal relationship that can express itself in a variety of ways: copying and redistributing, recommending personally, blogging, donating, hosting a screening, and so on.

Through the act of knowledge-sharing, "they" are inspired to support "us," trusting us to make more (or at least another!) film and release it in a similar way. What we learn from the (not infrequently moving) messages that come with the donations we're receiving is that the 1/1000 are *passionate* about what they're supporting. This is why it was a mistake to *ask* for \$1: in fact, the 1/1000 were prepared donate *far more* to something they really cared about.

All in together now

One of the most important things to observe is that in the course of this interaction, the distinction between us and them breaks down to some extent. While there is a core group at the centre of the *STF* project, people really become part of it when supporting it, whether they're sharing it on BitTorrent or donating \$10. That's really how we're looking at it. There is no *STF* without those promoting it, advertising it, and distributing it. In this sense, we're already a million miles away from the distribution systems of the past, which never implied such a degree of intimacy, such a blurring of distinction, between what was once called 'producer' and 'consumer'.

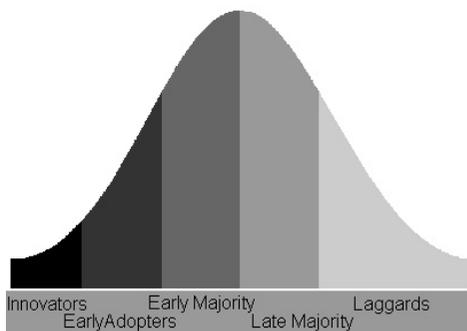
One of the questions that has been asked repeatedly since the file-sharing "revolution" is about how artists will get paid after the media-as-commod-

ity model is done and dusted. In *Steal This Film II* we (roughly) claimed that ‘the future doesn’t care about your bank balance’, and in a couple of senses that’s true: what’s going to happen is going to happen regardless how it afflicts those who bank on the current *status quo* in media – and we don’t think that being able to answer a business case for a thing is the most important condition for doing it, at all. Some people act like it’s all that matters.

That said, we’ve been personally involved in thinking about “remuneration” for some time. And what we think the *STF II* experience shows is that *there is hope after files sharing*. More than hope. It even seems possible at this point that *STF II* might go into *profit*.

There are caveats. We lost money on the third day of distribution because PayPal, pretty much the only game in town at the moment when it comes to accepting donations from users, unilaterally declared us to be ‘in violation’ of their ‘Acceptable Use Policy’ because we were ‘promoting illegal activity’. Of course *STF II* doesn’t do that and once we pointed out to them why, they restored our account. But we lost a few hundred dollars in the interim. The current state of taking online payments is just woefully unfit for purpose. The commissions are too high and the level of service too low. Someone needs to step into this arena with a new attitude, though whether that is possible in the laundering-obsessed post 9/11 world is another matter.

Secondly, while the 1/1000 are our future, and we’re infinitely grateful for their existence, we still think it’s possible for them to become the 1/500, the 1/200 or even the 1/100, given the right encouragement and cultural atmosphere. (If we were speaking of the 1/200 right now, we’d have already covered *half* what we spent on the film.) Fifty years ago, Everett M. Rogers developed a theory of ‘diffusion of innovations’, that is, how new things spread through a society. His 1962 book (*Diffusion of Innovations*) was based on Depression-era rural sociology, such as how Midwestern farmers adopted hardier corn.



Rogers found that 2.5 percent of people in society were what he called ‘innovators’ in their contexts: brave visionaries, pushing change forward, for whom trying something new requires little justification. This leads me to wonder if the 1/1000 we’re currently encountering is the “bleeding edge” of the ‘innovator’ group in media. Of course, we can’t be sure that the model we propose is the one that will prevail in the future, and the problem is that *until* we have a critical mass, other new potential innovators will not join it. (Other documentarists, for example, still see the *Steal This Film* model as ‘idealist’ and ‘interesting’ but fundamentally impractical: they are still betting the farm on traditional distributors paying them to show their works.)

After a critical mass is achieved, the benefits of using this model are clear. As my friend and fellow Peer Alan Toner writes,

there are nearly 5,000 seeds for the three different files containing [our] film, providing an effective speed equal to that obtainable by any motion picture studio employing global server co-location like Akamai and local caching services like Google, not bad for a bunch of amateurs working from the grass-roots!

Support your local pirate

Combine this with direct donations in which none of the viewers’ contribution is lost in defunct, superfluous, wasteful, physical product and *no middle-men* (!) and you have an overwhelmingly positive picture likely to prove exceedingly attractive to second-wave pioneers. What may surprise those who think that ‘we pirates’ against artists making money is that we’re working on ways to make this economy work right now. My friend Peter Sunde (Brokep), from *The Pirate Bay*, has been hard at work with his development team on an offering he hopes to roll out at the end of January: it will make it much easier for people to give donations and (hopefully) take some of the power away from PayPal.

‘I think that people will pay if there’s a simple solution,’ Peter says. ‘The payment solutions of today are not built for the new, network economy – they’re built around the old one. As we move away from the old economy, we’re here without a new payment solution.’

Brokep sees this, then, as a question of ‘payment models catching up with the distribution models.’ I couldn’t agree more. The League Of Noble Peers are also working on a parallel system, and after discussions with *The Pirate Bay*, *Mininova* and Bittorrent, we also think it will have some part to play in making it easier for us to support each other making cultural works. (Sorry to be so mysterious, but Peter doesn’t want to say more about their

project pre-Beta and we won't say more until we're at least past the first phase of development.)

What is also necessary is a spreading of the 'generosity virus,' not just for *Steal This Film* (although boy, could we use it!) but for all independent creators who've dispensed with the restrictive, punitive, retrograde commodity model and chosen to work with a new, more far-sighted paradigm. In these first days of distributing *STF II*, we have learned that by setting aside the artificial barriers of DVDs, cinema tickets and pay-per-download, the way is cleared to a new world of *voluntary, supportive donations*. The sooner we all stop moaning about how 'no one is going to make any money' after P2P, we can get on with encouraging each other to look after our cultural environments. No one is saying we're there yet, but like the man said, we're beginning to see the light.

Many "small" creators have protested that 'we can't all be *Steal This Film*' – that is, we can't all get sufficiently well-known to be able to garner enough donations to make a project financially viable. To an extent, this is true, although we suspect that a lot of creators make quite desultory attempts to market their works online. We can tell you that you can't rely on Digg (only 1,500 hits from a front page article this time), Reddit (ignored us entirely), Slashdot (ditto) to alert people to your work – and in a sense, why should you? They're just small interest communities that are artificially promoting stories into wider, temporary, public view. We have the feeling that these mechanisms are fairly brutal and subject to gaming, corruption and so on. 'Preference formation' – how we discover new stuff, stuff we like and will recommend to our friends, is *incredibly important*, because it precedes everything else, informs everything we may want to get involved with and support. Someone needs to get onto this *now*. As much as we need a better, (non-profit?) payment system, we need to think afresh about how to bring new material onto our personal and community horizons. No more Top 100s and Front Pages: these are just hangovers of mass media that *needed* massive numbers. We don't: if we get only 1.8% of our *current* viewers (that is, those we have had in four days) to support us at the current average, we break even with *Steal This Film*. If we get Rogers' 2.5% of 'innovators', we'll actually be able to put something in the bank. And then it's surely only a matter of time before others decide it's time to bet *their* farms; and then we will all be winners, infinitely culturally better off than we have been able to imagine until now.

2.2. Paid in Full: Copyright, piracy and the real currency of cultural production

by Armin Medosch

In this text I would like to reflect on the copyleft-copyright discussion that has been raging since the inception of Linux, Open Source and the Internet. After years of strong involvement in this area and then a couple of years of relative silence I felt the need to base a reassessment of the copyleft-copyright debate on my own biography as an artist and writer, to join the abstract argument from my own standpoint. I would like to pick out two main markers for this reassessment, one being my own background in and involvement with media art since the mid 1980s, the other one the much more recent history of my work with Kingdom of Piracy (KOP) and a re-evaluation of the copyright debate in the light of what happened since the last major KOP publication on the subject with DIVE in 2003. My core argument is that a situation which is already bad for cultural producers is made worse by radicals on both sides of the copyleft-copyright debate. I hope that through this reflection I can contribute to a more nuanced understanding which is at the same time more complex and more truly radical. I also hope that artists and cultural producers can recapture the initiative in this debate which currently seems to be with lawyers and extremists on both sides of a growing copyleft-right divide.

Appropriation in media art

Various types of appropriation have a deep history in the arts, from Duchamp's discovery of the readymade to the surrealists' bricolages. The latter also experimented with collective creation to undermine individual authorship and emphasise subliminal and subconscious connections between people, linking Marx and Freud. Appropriation returned after the Second World War with Warhol and other pop artists and has never stopped growing since as these practices become more common place in the art world and, more recently, available as new cultural techniques for much larger numbers of people¹.

I was involved in what in retrospect seems a rather big if fragmented movement of appropriation practices which were characteristic for a number of art forms in the 1980s. Working with the group Subcom (for Subcultural Communications) which I had co-founded with Oil Blo and Antonia Neubacher, we tried to pinch holes into the media Stalinism² of the cold war era. Our self-image was wrapped into a narration about a perceived dichotomy between the mainstream media and counter-cultural media. In this regard

our references were provided by the DIY culture of post-punk, new wave, hip-hop and street culture, yet at the same time also contemporary fine arts and particular directions and subthreads such as performance, video art, conceptual art. A subcultural and countercultural media context was created³ which found its common denominator in the critical analysis of and opposition to the mass media system by its proponents creating media systems of their own.

Working with ‘clichés’

Subcom experimented with nomadic living and working situations and archiving of field recordings of an ongoing project called Europe Report. Yet the main cultural technique was appropriation. In the early years, between 1985 and 1987, we created radio art pieces which were highly intricate collages of found objects, both textual and auditive (Radio Zitrone Comics). We called those ready-mades “clichés” (in a sort of Swiss German understanding of the word, which was introduced by my then best artistic colleague Oil Blo). A cliché was originally connoting a printing plate and later took on also the meaning of stereotype. We were convinced then that by remixing clichés we could create new meanings. In this regard we were influenced by the sampling aesthetics of hip-hop artists who worked with loops from audio vinyls. We also “scratched” but used audio tape and had very different aesthetic and political goals than these hip-hop artists. From 1989 onwards we also created scratch videos combining loops and computer manipulation of images. Both in audio and video we conducted an interrogation of the “clichés,” how they functioned in their own context, and how they could be opened up for entering new relationships. The commercial media world had become completely reified and its output unacceptable and we were trying to find different ways of playing its images back to audiences as a means for liberation. Rather than trying to overtly criticise these images we tried to over-expose their ideological content through a kind of magnifying glass technique.⁴

Although we did not think of it as that at the time almost all of our work was based on what is now understood to be copyright infringement. We were aware of this aspect but considered ourselves to be too economically marginal and also too much part of an avant-garde art context to have to be afraid of prosecution for those small transgressions. As we also started using the Amiga computer more, our remixes became new work which only in parts relied on the original sample for its artistic affect.⁵ To do what we did then one needed to make quite an effort in many ways – from getting hold of the equipment to developing artistic techniques. 20 years later the same

activity is apparently carried out by millions of young people worldwide yet without any reference to the art world.

Remix culture and its critique

In recent years 'remix culture' has gone mainstream. One of its most visible protagonists is the lawyer and Creative Commons co-inventor Lawrence Lessig. In his lectures he presents the culture of remix as a paradigmatic turn from a passive read-only culture to an active read-and-write culture. Lessig uses remix culture as an argument for the necessity of the Creative Commons (CC) licensing system for content [<http://creativecommons.org/>]. CC is the name of a licence scheme (and also of an internationally working non-profit organisation) which allows creators to choose and mix between different levels of freedom and protection. CC are saying that their licences would allow authors to safely share their texts and music yet still to retain 'some rights'. Like many people I initially supported the idea strongly. In 2004 the colleague and author Janko Röttgers and me convinced Heise Verlag, the publisher of our recent books *Mix, Burn and R.I.P* [<http://www.mixburnrip.de/>] by Janko and *Freie Netze* [<http://theoriebild.ung.at/view/Main/FreieNetze>] by me to undertake a test trial by allowing our books to be distributed freely as a PDF under a CC licence while the books were still sold as hard copies. This announcement was made in June 2004 in Berlin when the German version of the CC licence was debuted at the Wizards of Open Source [<http://www.wizards-of-os.org/>] conference.

Squeezed onto a panel I had to sit on the stage for about an hour during which Lawrence Lessig gave one of his rousing speeches delivered so acutely synchronized to his Flash presentation that this effect completely transfixed the audience. As I sat there I had an epiphany and scribbled some notes about how connected every art work was anyway because of the fundamental condition of humanity as social beings. So, even if a writer had to sit in a monks cell alone for a year to write a book, s/he was in a dialogue with everyone and everything. Through language and the symbolic realm, our creation was always co-creation already and "networked" so to speak. Lessig's continued emphasis of the Internet and digital technology as the causes of a switch from read-only to a read-and-write-culture had made me feel uncomfortable and had triggered this epiphany. The fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other through language and culture including the whole of the symbolic realm (which includes, for example, numbers and the signs that mathematics and logics uses) does not depend on the Internet and digital gadgets to make us co-creators. Lessig's take on remix culture seemed

to turn everything into a digital soup embossed with the CC logo.

Having had to listen to more such speeches at future events I started to dislike the way Lessig (re)presented remix culture (apparently he has stopped to do so now, has handed over the helm of the CC ship to other people). It was full of generalisations and seemed to have as its main point of reference the audiovisual production of children or teenagers – usually some cool teenagers in their bedrooms remixing Japanese anime. Of all the examples which he showed, the most politically “critical” one was that duet between George W. and Tony Blair which everyone had seen 10 times at least. The way audiovisual elements were used in Lessig’s lectures left no space for any real cultural difference or an interrogation of other symbolic layers than the most blunt and obvious ones. Lessig tried to sweepingly claim the whole of remix culture for his CC project, yet presented just a minute aspect of it in his lectures. While superficially similar to our remix practice in the late 1980s it had actually nothing to do with it. Back then, in our minds we fought an image war with the cultural bourgeoisie, working with the whole breadth of artistic remix and appropriation techniques. Compared to that, LL’s version of appropriation art was like decaffeinated coffee without sugar and milk. This wouldn’t be a problem if this was just Lawrence Lessig’s take on it but unfortunately the examples he showed appear to be quite representative for a lot of what actually happens today on the net. The conflict of the images does not happen on those Web 2.0 video sharing platforms, there is no danger for subversion, because this type of production is neutralized politically through its amateur character.⁶

Although it preceded Web 2.0, CC is ideologically closely linked to this new mass participatory culture. While it is fantastic that many amateurs now can enjoy diving into advanced cultural practices such as remix and appropriation, the Web 2.0 paradigm is the ultimate distortion of the values of a free (net) culture, using some of its slogans and concepts while enclosing user generated content into proprietary platforms. CC is aiding and abetting this tendency.⁷ Another serious flaw is that the whole concept behind CC does so far not take into account the professional who creates cultural and digital content as a member of a creative profession who has devoted her or his whole life to this. CC does not pay any attention at all to the issue of an economic model for supporting cultural production. In an interview in a recent film (which will be discussed later in this text) Lessig appears to regard this as a matter which will automatically resolve itself in the future. If CC continues to disregard concerns about revenue models for professional writers, musicians, photographers it does indeed play into the hands of venture

capital driven online projects such as Flickr or Youtube who make a fortune by harnessing user generated content. The way it has been promoted CC has been instrumental in establishing a paradigm which is based on a false moral postulate according to which every cultural producer has to put out their work for free.

Despite those serious concerns, when it comes to licensing my own work as a writer, CC is still an option. I must first point out that I have always been very loose with my copyright. Once a text is produced I am happy for it to be circulated widely, as long as this does not mean I get ripped off by some multinational publishing conglomerate. Money does not induce me to write a text, I write anyway. However, of course I need some form of funding, either by cross-subsidising myself through other activities or by being funded one or the other way directly to conclude longer writing projects and conduct research. While there is no direct causal link between creating a specific text and money, money cannot be left out of the equation completely. When it comes to licensing, in a less cut-throat capitalist world I would be happy for my texts just to be in the public domain, without any specific licence, or as I joke, under the “free and creative Armin licence”.⁸ However, CC is now widely adopted and the legal hawks of CC have gone to quite some length to adapt the licence scheme to legislations in different countries. CC is used in a benevolent institutional context which I interact with in various ways. Therefore it can be appropriate to use specific CC licences.

While in some cases I find it agreeable to use CC licences I cannot bring myself to see them as “the solution” for all licensing and copyright-copyleft issues. A thorny issue remains that by using a CC licence such as the ones above, I waive the exclusive rights for any collection society to collect and

As the Free Software Foundation, who still maintains the gold standard in what means ‘free’ in licensing through the GPL, points out on its excellent page about licences [<http://www.fsf.org/licensing/licenses/>] the CC licences are actually so different that it hardly makes sense to speak of them as one and the same thing. The FSF recommends in particular the CC Attribution 2.0 [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>] and the CC Attribution ShareAlike 2.0 [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/legalcode>] licences as free content licences. I have also flirted with the Free Artistic Licence [<http://artlibre.org/licence/lal/en/>] as at first sight it seemed more universal than the CC licence, yet at a closer look turned out to be quite complicated. If I wanted to contest abuse I would have to go to court in Paris which would complicate the whole thing enormously.

distribute mechanical reproduction and statutory rights in my name. Such mechanical rights can be a nice side income if radio or TV were to use your work. By signing away this possibility it feels a bit like consigning oneself to eternal poverty as public radio in Europe remains one of the last good sources of income for high quality journalism – or for writing of any genre, in the form of short stories and radio plays.

Kingdom of Piracy

When in 2001 Shu Lea Cheang, Yukiko Shikata and I curated a net art exhibition for Taiwan's Acer Digital Arts Centre (ADAC), we called it *Kingdom of Piracy* (KOP). Despite our cultural differences the three of us shared a very similar background in the 1980s appropriation art. Challenged with curating Taiwan's first major exhibition of net art, we thought that net art and the intellectual property debate were a uniquely suitable topic. The intellectual property question formed the looking glass through which, we thought, a Taiwanese audience stood a good chance of getting a grasp of net art. We speculated that the issue was as important for international audiences, should the show ever travel.⁹ The promised grant of 25,000 US\$ by ADAC gave us the opportunity to commission 15 artists and 3 writers to produce new work. As Taiwan had been identified as a 'pirate data heaven' in a 1994 Arthur Kroker essay, we took this a bit further by calling the exhibition *Kingdom of Piracy*. What would have been a one-off event became, through the special circumstances that arose, a project that still continues today.

The Taiwanese government, nudged on by US foreign policy shortly after the start of our work for the exhibition, declared a 'war on piracy,' arrested students who engaged in file sharing, put on show trials against them and even organised a "spontaneous" pro-copyright demonstration in the streets of the capital Taipei. The following is guess-work (there might have been other, internal reasons too) but we think it was this climate that influenced our main sponsor, ADAC, to withdraw its support (although we had already commissioned the artists and writers to create new work which they had already begun to create) and shut down our access to the server. From then on KOP became a floating, migrant kingdom. Our main sponsor had pulled out, yet thankfully Ars Electronica gave us the chance to premier the original KOP show in September 2002 in Linz. (After a prolonged email battle with ADAC and Acer lawyers we managed to finally get paid and reimburse commissioned artists and writers.) Shortly thereafter we were commissioned by FACT in Liverpool to create new works. This commission, received through Michael Connor, then in charge of FACT's digital arts program, enabled Shu

Lea Cheang to create the BURN installation [<http://kop.kein.org/burn/index.html>] and me to make the DIVE publication [<http://kop.kein.org/DIVE/index.html>].

DIVE

DIVE, as pointed out in my introductory ‘Piratology’ essay (Medosch 2003), marked a turning point. As much as I had enjoyed the provocations contained in the original KOP concept and show, I felt that the time for piracy was over. As I joked at the time, we had become converted into “good” pirates. Because of Linux and the free software movement there was no more need for the bloody old galore. Instead, we could now legitimately explore the universe of free software and add to an ever expanding public sphere of digital goods in an open commons. The thinking was as follows: The Free Software Foundation had given us a licence model, the GNU General Public Licence, which had been adopted by coders worldwide. Through the success of Linux and other GPL-based software packages the ‘copyleft’ ideas embodied in the GPL had found strong support not just by a bunch of creative software developers but had made it into the mainstream of software engineering. Multinationals such as Sun and IBM had started to support GPL-ed software, maybe as a remedy to Microsofts market dominance, maybe also because they understood that not just the GPL but also the collaborative model behind it offered an advantage in terms of enabling better and cheaper, i.e. more efficient software development – which is what an industry participant wants. Linux and other GPL-ed software as well as the open standards on which the Internet is based created a public sphere of legitimately “free” things that could be copied, used and modified. Adding to this was the Creative Commons project, which was still quite new in 2003 but maybe then at its most dynamic stage. Although other free content licences had existed before, the publicity offensive undertaken by CC and the high-flying Harvard lawyers behind it quickly proposed CC as the most advanced and widely known model for copyleft licences for content producers.

In this situation we thought that rather than fighting the copyright industry with little provocations and rebellions, it was much more promising to support this legitimate universe of free software and the collaborative ethos behind it. So we produced DIVE [<http://kop.kein.org/DIVE/index.html>], a combination of CD-ROM, booklet and website. The CD-ROM contained the Linux live CD Dynebolic [<http://dynebolic.org/>]. Through it, most PCs can quickly be turned into multimedia live production suites without having to make a full Linux install. But the CD had more space which allowed it to contain also many free software packages which would run on PCs and Macs

– things such as OpenOffice, the Gimp, Blender etc.; moreover, it contained other resources such as introductions to net art with working digital code, guides to online communities and wireless community networks.

DIVE was made for cultural producers and small organisations who had maybe heard about free software and copyleft but who were still sitting on the fence, not sure if they should get involved. The publication served as a manual for net culture offering practical and philosophical entry points into the area. It promoted the idea that content producers can also participate in the “free” universe by packaging their work with copyleft licences such as the CC licences or the GNU Free Documentation Licence. A particular inspiration and motivation for us at the time was the notion that there was no more need for fighting *against* somebody, but being able instead to create our own worlds, beautiful islands of free software, free media and participatory “social” media platforms.

The production of DIVE gave me also the opportunity to develop some more theoretic ideas, contained in the ‘Piratology’ essay. There I proposed that nobody is born a pirate but that historically piracy in the old sense developed in South East Asia when colonial powers created a monopoly or oligopoly which robbed people of their livelihoods and left them no other chance. This principle can be easily transferred into the contemporary cultural realm. Large international vertically integrated media corporations stifle local cultural production by completely taking over marketing and distribution channels, thereby destroying the businesses of local distributors who offer more culturally diverse and more local goods, as happened with the music and comic book industry in Taiwan.¹⁰

The lines of conflict are drawn much more sharply in those economies that capitalist media tends to label as “emerging”. Whereas the odd cracked copy of Photoshop has always been around in the West (be honest, do you know anyone who is not a business and who ever bought Photoshop or MS Word?) the real action is in Kiev, Bangalore, Delhi, etc. As our research trips with KOP confirmed, in the East every major city has its pirate market such as Bangkok’s Pantip Plaza. Despite occasional police raids, usually ahead of American state visits or WTO negotiations, the reality is that almost everything is available on CD, VCD or DVD for prices ranging between €1 and €5 (or dollars, when the \$ was still on a par with the euro). The picture here gets somehow muddled, depending on one’s moral criteria. From small family stores who make a few copies at the back of a store to organised criminal groups who copy millions of CDs, many different types of organisations are involved. People do it for financial gain and it would be a romantization to

portray them as champions of cyber rights and net culture. At the same time our research has shown that piracy fulfils an important role by giving access to cultural goods which otherwise would be completely unavailable to the vast majority of the people.

This is confirmed by the film *Pirated Copy* ('Man Yan' in Chinese) [http://thepiratebay.org/tor/3637238/Man_yan_aka_Pirated_Copy], which shows the daily life of sellers of pirated movie CDs on the streets. This excellent Chinese production, shot with many hand-held camera scenes and cheekily utilizing off-screen voices and contrasting images, using all of the European novelle vague repertoire updated for the age of the DV camcorder, does more than just exposing the effect of official crackdowns on street sellers – it also shows what a surprisingly strong interest the buyers of video CDs and DVDs have in “art movies,” a catch-all term for anything between Bergman and Almodóvar. And this is probably a realistic picture. In markets such as China, piracy not only serves to provide access to the products of mainstream commercial movie industries, may it be Hollywood, Bollywood or Korea, it also fills gaps in provision and provides access to art movies and more difficult fare which does not get official distribution for whichever reason. The pirate suddenly becomes a connoisseur who caters to sophisticated tastes and needs, epitomised in the scene when a seller and a policeman argue if *In the Realm of the Senses* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_the_Realm_of_the_Senses] is pornography or not.

To conclude this point, in regions that still suffer from the legacies of colonialism and imperialism as well as those of the neo-colonial world expressed through the TRIPS agreement,¹¹ piracy, despite being an entirely commercially motivated activity carried out in black or grey markets, fulfils culturally important functions. It gives people access to information and cultural goods they had otherwise no chance of obtaining. In a grossly distorted world of global “free trade” those who capitalism treats merely as cheap labour can use piracy as a counter-hegemonic force by giving them a chance to empower themselves through obtaining information, knowledge and sophisticated cultural productions.¹²

A recent research trip to Brazil confirmed how ‘pirate’ practices extended from software to hardware and bandwidth in the slums that the Brazilians call *favelas*. The favelas have a thriving small industry of so called LAN houses which are mixtures of Internet cafés, public gaming centres and computer hard- and software shops. Everything is pirated here, from water and electricity to bandwidth, which arrives through dangerously slung CAT 5 cables. The computers are imported through the black market, the software

is all pirated. In this way the slum-dwellers of Brazil get access to modern communication technologies. This does not only include pirated copies such as the recent hit movie *Tropa da Elite* [<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0861739/>], which was a hit on pirated DVD months before it reached the theatres, but also other advantages such as access to services and information which allow a long-marginalised population to realise their civil rights and get better chances on the labour market.

Let's be 'open'

Switching back to the situation in Europe and trying to assess what happened since the time KOP produced DIVE in 2003, on the positive side it is true that many people got infected by the FLOSS virus, got an interest in Linux and the collaborative principles behind free software and started to use CC licences for their own creative output. Since 1999 the Wizards of Open Source conference had been investigating how principles behind FLOSS could be applied to other areas. The seed had started to grow beyond software developers, academics and net culture intellectuals – circles traditionally concerned with such topics. Now also artists and broader circles in academia and civil society got involved. The middle class, or rather specific sectors of it, started to support things “open” and “free”. While in principle this was a positive development and a sign of success, it added impurities to an already complex picture. As the newcomers had not been involved with the thriving net culture and online communities of the 1990s they lacked a more intuitive knowledge of its values, which were derived from an earlier hacker ethics. This gradually led to a situation where an “open everything” hype started to create ever bigger waves. Increasingly “open” appeared to be conceptualised as a somehow undistinguished, generalized “openness” which was assumed to serve as an organisational principle behind the allegedly emerging global digital commons. The second major misunderstanding concerned the notion of ‘free as in freedom, not free as in free beer,’ which Richard Stallman had so tirelessly explained, yet still many people were unable to understand.

At this stage some groups and organisations tried to address those conceptual shortcomings by reassessing their own engagement with copyright and trying to deepen some of the notions that had formed the core of the discourse. The New Delhi-based research institute Sarai organised the conference Contested Commons, Trespassing Publics, [<http://www.sarai.net/about-us/events/conferences/contested-commons-trespassing-publics>] in January 2005 in Delhi. As one participant put it, this was an attempt at formulating a “commons 2.0” and creating a more mature debate which did not assume a global

arena of fair play but highlighted inequalities and structural differences in the global and local political economies surrounding the phantasm of a global digital commons. The Contested Commons conference opened up the debate beyond legal arguments about licensing and included topics such as urbanism¹³ as well as intellectual property in agriculture and biotechnology, where enclosures of public knowledge affect people often much more directly than in the area of culture and general “information”. Many of the contributions to this conference brought home the point that the real pirates are actually the capitalists, historically, as capitalism in its rough early stages fostered a culture where everybody pirated as long as they got away with it – something which currently happens, at this day and age, as indigenous knowledge and nature itself is getting privatised by pharmaceutical and agro-industrial companies.

In 2004 and 2005 *Kingdom of Piracy* embarked on a research project called *Commons | Tales | Rules* [<http://kop.kein.org/commons/tales/>] which was designed to give more substance to the notion of self-regulation or self-organisation of the commons. In the Anglophone debate about the commons Garrett Hardin’s “The Tragedy of the Commons” (1968) counted as a canonical text for a long time. Hard to believe now, but this relatively short ideological piece which argues with biologicistic metaphors of overpopulation was taken seriously enough to be the killer argument supporting “pessimism” about self-sustainability. Every commons, Hardin argued, would sooner or later be destroyed because all participants essentially acted as rational, utilitarian profit maximizers and the self-interest was higher than concern for the common resource. Research by the political scientist Elinor Ostrom (1990) however showed that Hardin’s findings were only true under specific conditions and that other conditions existed where collective commons management was indeed possible. With *Commons | Tales | Rules* we continued Ostrom’s thread as an artistic research project and tried, first, to find as many “tales” of successful commons management as possible, both in real life as well as in the digital domain. Subsequently, in the second part of the project we looked at rule-making as a process which is part of self-organisation. No resource can be held in a commons if there is not either an *a priori* ethic consensus or a process of communication about the rules to establish and enforce such a consensus. We tried to create situations of experimental “rule-making” in strongly decentralized power structures. We asked: how can we make rules if there are no rules and no leaders?

At about that time the media arts scene in London was preparing itself for two events: OpenCongress (Tate Gallery, October 2005; <http://opencongress.omweb.org/modules/wakka/HomePage>) and Node.London (March 2006;

<http://nodel.org/>). Both appeared at a very specific point in time when not only the media arts scene but also the arts in general started to get into things “open” and “free”. The “open everything” hype peaked, yet at the same time the political economy was as conservative as ever, not conducive to things really open and free at all. There was a danger that while “openness” was widely discussed, this happened in a very unfree overall situation with a neo-colonial war waged in Iraq against the explicit will of the majority of the British people. For those and other reasons we felt the need to make a point about autonomy. The idea was not to talk about the concept of “the autonomy of art” in the way this was done by romantic art movements 150 years ago, but to claim another type of more pragmatic, less esoteric form of autonomy – autonomy as a free space of action for artists, artist-run initiatives and net culture activists. Taking this type of autonomy as a starting point we asked how this related to the “open” paradigm. Using the “free” format of OpenCongress we decided on a format where we would ask people to make statements of the format *open* = ‘something’ on the wiki (whereby something can be whatever you make of it) which would then be discussed in a group workshop until people either accepted the term or ruled it out by making a lot of noise using props such as spoons and half full water glasses. *RULE OUT : Autonomy takes up on OPENNESS* [<http://opencongress.omweb.org/modules/wakka/Medosch>] turned out to be entertaining as well as productive and encouraged us to go further in the direction of format invention and discursive intervention.

As a result of this, *PLENUM* [<http://kop.kein.org/plenum/>] was launched half a year later at Node.London, March 2006. Our investigation of rule making in a commons had led us to the issue of agenda-setting and public debate. In any given public debate, the “commons” is the communicative space which is shared. Depending on the situation, people, issues and context, different protocols rule how an agenda is defined and who takes up how much space in a debate. Instead of assuming a shared practice and methodology between participants in the Node.London project, we wanted to make visible the many differences and hidden or even unconscious agendas involved. KOP decided to organise a *PLENUM* for the participants of the Node.London festival whereby we would provide a very strong structure but not the content. *PLENUM* was conceived and realized as a theatre play in 5 acts which altogether lasted 12 hours, from dusk to dawn. The overall task for the participants was to set the agenda for media arts in London. Each act had a prescribed structure and task, yet the content of the discussion – the agenda itself – was provided by the participants. This intervention on a structural level was reinforced by a feedback loop in the shape of Pure Data sound art-

ists led by Martin Howse who sampled and filtered the spoken word and played it back with the explicit goal of escalating the situation towards the final acts. Present were also two note-takers who penned notes on a chalk board and intervened when it appeared appropriate and thereby provided an additional element of self-reflexivity. Free alcohol and a free soup kitchen as well as a work-out area with a sandbag for boxing allowed participants to let out steam and the night duly escalated into operatic and performative extremes. *PLENUM* has so far been the end-point of our investigations of the tales and rules of the commons, confirming some of our ideas and leaving lots of space for further experimental research.

‘Open’ and the economy

Returning from the elites of media and fine arts to the bigger picture of social and technological development, it seems that the gap between copyright and copyleft is widening. From a certain point of view this could really be seen like a trench war between, on one side, the copyright industry and on the other one the pirates: commercial DVD and VCD pirates, file-sharers, downloaders and the stars of the scene such as the anarchist entrepreneurs of Sweden’s *The Pirate Bay* or the more business-minded people behind *Mininova*, as well as copyright liberals such as the CC lawyers, the EFF and similar groups. One of the central arguments of this text is that on both sides there are radicals who paint a grossly distorted picture which only serves their own interest but gets in the way of moving the discussion further and maybe even find solutions. A more nuanced thinking, freed from the spells of both copyright and copyleft radicalism, is capable of creating more radically different ideas. In order to make some progress in this direction I need to briefly open up this narrative onto a more general level.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution a market started to grow for cultural goods, such as books and magazines in the late 18th century. As culture became a commodity in early capitalism, this process accelerated alongside technological innovations in the 19th century. With the electrification of the world and the telegraph, telephone, record player, radio, industrialised newspaper, cinema and television, a multitude of channels for the dissemination of cultural commodities opened up. It was this process which provided the context for the introduction of copyright to give artists and artisans some level of control over their work and a financial incentive for its publication. As the tools of reproduction forms matured from mechanic to electric to electronic and digital, the old framework for maintaining control over distribution crumbled while the morality of the system had in itself long started to rot, as

the beneficiaries of copyright were no longer artists but publishing companies and holders of large stocks of copyrighted materials. The late 20th century was characterized by a huge cultural industry which wielded immense power, both economically and socio-culturally, and for which intellectual property was vital as a business model. Towards the very end of the 20th century two entwined but not causally linked processes happened. To begin with, there was what business people call a “consolidation” of the culture industry. In the overall neo-liberal climate of the late 20th century the culture industry kept expanding in volume yet concentrated on the most profitable areas. During this process many values which had long been guiding principles went overboard. For instance, while newspapers in the past were funded by their proprietors and kept alive during also those phases that were non-profitable, because they were more than just a business and allowed the proprietor to leverage political influence, all media nowadays seem to be under the same profitability criteria. Those and other factors led to a shrinking of the industry and a polarisation of its workforce between the heavily exploited and precarious freelance work of the commercial media and cultural industries and the few stars who still enjoy the old perks of being in a privileged area of cultural production.

Further, I would also like to refer to Marx’ (1957) distinction between the use value of a good and its monetary value. The link between the two is not always straightforward. In cultural production use-value and monetary value can even be opposed to each other, as Bourdieu (1993) has shown. Since the neo-liberal revolution of Reagan and Thatcher, the financial value has become the single dominant one, with increasing disregard for all other values. Completely disconnected from this is another process which has to do with the dynamics of techno-cultural development. This “dynamics” (which is a result of the interplay of many different agents, and not an anonymous technological progress, as a technological determinist would have depicted it) creates a situation which is favourable to the replication of information. As our whole intellectual production has increasingly become digital, the availability of relatively cheap computer hardware and memory as well as broadband Internet access means that the costs for reproduction and dissemination of digital files race toward near zero. Meanwhile, as it has become clear that file-sharing in p2p networks and via torrents is impossible to be stopped, the culture industry of old – particularly in the US, which enjoys a worldwide cultural hegemony – has panicked and started to pursue strategies contrary to the flow of this techno-cultural dynamics. The whole model of the cultural industry, based on individual objects as carriers of sellable units

of IP, is condemned to perish. To avoid this, the industry has started going to extreme measures. It tries to influence technological development and bend and tweak an unwilling technology as to force it to allow copy control (for instance through DRM, which the industry spells out as Digital Rights Management whereas critics call it a 'restriction' management) and it successfully influences politicians to make insane legislation which favours the copyright industry but harms almost every other area of human interest such as education, learning, innovation and creativity.

We are faced with a situation where the techno-cultural dynamic improves conditions for the distribution of works, while the economy of cultural production is in a deep crisis. The old cultural industries of television, radio, book publishing, record and film employ fewer people of which only a small percentage enjoy good conditions. As opposed to what these industries would want to make us believe, this is not caused by "piracy" but has, as explained above, other causes stemming from the industry itself. The contraction within the industry coincides with it being less open for unusual and critical forms of content. This conspires with an objective situation of a worldwide information infrastructure – the Internet – hungry for bits, but with no mechanism for the payment of small sums which would enable a sort of pay-per-view system directly rewarding content producers. The old model does not work anymore; a new model is not yet in sight. Those combined factors make the economic situation of cultural producers already very precarious.

Yet on top of that there is another "bug" which has affected the system, for which I blame the "open everything" paradigm. Over the last few years I have received many more "indecent" offers than ever before. I consider "indecent" an offer when a major institution which is obviously well funded asks me to write a text but fails to mention money. Since the "open" paradigm has become mainstream, an increasing number of institutions quite deliberately rely on content creators' willingness to contribute "freely," i.e. without pay, to their publications. It is one thing to be approached by a grassroots initiative with a strong political, activist track record to speak at their meeting for free or contribute a text to their publication, which is something I have always done with pleasure when I was satisfied that people's motivations and the context were right. It is something else to be asked the same by very wealthy, major institutions comprising well funded university departments, art festivals and research institutes linked to political parties alike. Sometimes they even go so far to openly say that I was known as an open source activist and therefore I *had* to contribute to their publication as it also promoted the

good cause. In the current climate the expectations have been turned around. Whereas in the past it was clear that asking a writer for a book contribution would involve some money offered, now the basic expectation is that everybody would contribute for free.

This sort of new voluntarism often presents itself in the shape of a (false) moral imperative. Experts in this type of copyleft Stalinism are people such as CC activist Cory Doctorow. He recently denounced American sci-fi writers for trying to defend their rights against a website which offered huge amounts of their books and short stories.¹⁴ Cory Doctorow, himself a sci-fi writer of sorts, continues to fan the flames with vitriolic language directed at professional writers who try to earn money from their work. Doctorow revels in controversy, and for good reason. As a publicly visible anti-copyright radical he has worked himself up on a high rung of the ladder of the reputation economy so that his income does not depend on revenue from the sci-fi stories which he writes. Through his skilled working of the reputation economy he has managed to become a sought-after speaker on the international business-class circuit of “activism”. And the more fanatic he becomes in his anti-copyright stance cheered on by his geek fan club on the Boingboing website, people who obviously have a bad taste in science fiction, the more famous he becomes and the more income he generates. But this type of creating profit from copyleft zealotry works only now and only for a small number of people.

While the culture industry contracts and consolidates, the European system of art funding also changes to the detriment of cultural producers. The situation is of course slightly different in each country. In the UK deep funding cuts have led to a signature appeal through which thousands of artists declare their dissatisfaction with the Arts Council. The capitalist rhetoric of EU governments steers all arts-related funding towards a ‘creative industries’ model with ever-closer integration between the arts and the needs of businesses or causes external to art such as urban regeneration and city marketing. At the same time in countries such as Austria, Switzerland and Germany the old art forms of the bourgeoisie – opera and theatre – get preferential treatment and are funded on a very high level, while contemporary art forms get this ‘creative industry’ treatment, i.e. are condemned to more precarious conditions. This has been addressed by the !Mediengruppe Bitnik art project in Zurich with their project *Opera Calling* [<http://www.opera-calling.com/>]. Bitnik placed bugs in the opera house which transmitted the performances via the telephone system to the outside world.

Besides the culture industry and funding there is also of course the op-

portunity for artists of joining academia. Having experienced this myself in a part-time position for the past five years, I can only say how happy I am to have left that apparatus which itself undergoes a capitalist restructuring that turns higher education into a commodity, with resulting collateral effects of squeezing staff, while offering less and less to the students.¹⁵ In Britain it is now appropriate to speak of an education-industry complex, which has less and less place for critical artists and dissenting voices. Last but not least, when artists start to occupy full-time academic teaching positions this often marks the end of their impact as a creative and innovative force. At the end one may be forced to make a compromise with the creative industry, but this often means to lose control over one's licensing terms and be forced to adopt strong proprietary copyright models against one's own will. For instance, if I wanted to publish a book with a publisher – any publisher basically, commercial or academic – I would be expected to sign a contract and hand over my rights and participate in the old-style copyright industry regime. In order to benefit from the distribution and marketing power of a publisher, my writing suddenly disappears behind a legal wall of “ownership”. Academic publishers are often in this respect the worst, charging vast sums for accessing a single article online. For all those reasons I have withdrawn myself from the whole machinery and launched my own online publishing platform, called *The Next Layer* [<http://www.thenextlayer.org/>] which is now my main outlet for writing besides occasional publications in a sympathetic context such as this book.

Open as in oligarch

There is a situation now where there is a deteriorating funding situation for artists' and writers' work, especially if their work is critically questioning social mechanisms and methodologically innovative, while at the same time institutions believe that it is not wrong at all to ask people to work for free. Sometimes this is added to by the notion that “authorship” was a somehow obsolete notion anyway. Everything writes itself just like the pages of the Wikipedia. It is easy to see how this creates a situation of negative feedback. Not only does it make it increasingly difficult to get funding for work of a certain complexity, and for work which needs long-term commitment, it also strengthens the hand of the copyright tsars and data lords as owners of the realm of commercial production where authors still get paid. The culture industry can present itself as the only “relevant” area of production vis-à-vis the amateur production on the Internet where everything is free as in gratis and therefore, in their worldview, without value. By establishing the financial value above the use value, only those who get paid are “legitimate” and “profes-

sional” producers. Not just me but many other “professionals” have returned to amateur-like ways of production regarding the financial aspect. To the same extent that independent thinking and free-spirited people are squeezed out of the culture industry, the Bertelsmanns and the Murdochs of this world benefit from a misunderstood “open” paradigm by cultural institutions who have become scroungers for free content.

Copyleft video discourse

A similar set of questions – the decline of the copyright industry and the new techno-cultural dynamics of file-sharing and p2p networks – has been addressed by two recent video productions, *Steal This Film* [<http://www.steal-thisfilm.com/>] and *Good Copy Bad Copy* [<http://www.goodcopybadcopy.net/>]. *Steal This Film II* is another production by The League of Noble Peers, a group of copyleft activists held together by Jamie King. *Steal This Film II* is a definite improvement on the first *Steal This Film* which was a quickly cobbled together montage of images and propagandistic texts about copyleft. The second film is a quite investigative documentary, featuring many interviews with (mostly white and male) key protagonists of the copyleft paradigm – the heroes – and at least one baddy, a representative of the Motion Picture Association of America who admits that file-sharing can’t be stopped but people get sued nevertheless. The narration links together a historic overview of the effects of print on society, drawing comparisons with the pirated production of books under censorship in France in the run-up to the revolution with today’s efforts of the industry to stop the flow of pirated copies. This historic section is quite well-illustrated with many pictures from old books and contrasted with today’s copyleft heroes, the people who run *The Pirate Bay*.

What I disagree with is the McLuhanite take on history that the film is premised upon. Human history is presented as the shift from one media technology to another with unavoidable consequences. The implicit message is that we cannot influence technologically induced change, only adapt to it. The result of this change is that the copyright industry is doomed and, as it fights for survival, it creates artificial and harmful barriers to the free flow of information. What we can do as cultural producers is to dance on its grave. But this also implies that we cannot expect to get paid for our production according to the old model and there is not yet a new one in sight. *Steal This Film II* employs an interesting self-reflective strategy insofar as the video has been made with donations received after *Steal This Film*; it is also self-reflective insofar as it is about *The Pirate Bay* while at the same time being distributed via this platform (and even gets a link on the front page which will

secure it a big audience); last but not least people can again donate to fund the next film.

The overall message of *Steal This Film II* is very similar to that of the Danish production *Good Copy Bad Copy*, with which it also shares some interview partners. *Good Copy Bad Copy* seems to have had the slightly bigger budget and was able to travel to Nigeria and Brazil and therefore was able to capture interesting insights into new models of production which have emerged there. The use of video for movie production, instead of film (which is more expensive), has made Nigeria the biggest film industry in the world in terms of numbers of films produced. In Belém in northern Brazil the Tecnobrega movement creates interesting remixes of popular “cheesy” (“brega” means cheesy) love songs with techno beats. The industry does not rely on sales of CDs, which are distributed by local dealers in markets at low cost prices, but finances itself through very large parties with big sound systems.

Both of these film projects are linked through ideology and people to yet another project called *Oil of the 21st Century* [<http://www.oil21.org/>]. Its title is inspired by a quote attributed to Mark Getty, chairman of Getty Images. While it is excusable for a heir of an oil dynasty to make such a comparison between intellectual property and oil one can only wonder what has driven the usually smart, Berlin-based artist Sebastian Lütgert to adopt this rather dodgy analogy. Of course oil (or maybe water) and not IP is the oil of the 21st century. Getty may dream of creating an industrial empire with his image database. Yet the paradox is that if the analysis of *Steal This Film II* and *Good Copy Bad Copy* is right (which I assume is what Lütgert believes), then the 21st century will be much less dominated by economics than the 20th century was. Then various forms of gift, exchange and solidarity economies will replace the model of forced collaboration within large hierarchical and bureaucratically led structures that capitalism offers. In that sense, there will be no more ‘oil’.

While Oil21C similarly reproduces some silly McLuhanisms, Lütgert, together with Jan Gerber, offers an interesting proposition with the more practical, database-driven project *Oxdb.org* [<http://Oxdb.org/>]. Thousands of downloaded art movies are offered for processes of collective gathering of meta-information, exploring links between different scenes, films and actors. This project shows that dealing with cultural goods can and should indeed go beyond the fetishization of the commodity character of the good in itself. The database offers a sort of art movie flaneur’s paradise exploring and making connections between the mental landscapes recorded on film. As users can annotate the scenes, this would theoretically result in a text-searchable

database of films scene by scene. This project, by emphasising the diversity of connections between films and their fans, rebuts some of the critique levelled against copyleft radicals.

The main message shared by all three projects is a critique of the greedy cultural industry. As the industry defends its revenue streams, it seriously interrupts the free flow of information. Like in the case of Lawrence Lessig, this critique is underpinned by examples of remix culture which would not have been possible if the copyright industry had had its way. Of course those examples are not nearly as naff as Lessig's remix children. *Steal This Film II* for instance shows some kids on the streets of London performing grime, a London-specific, contemporary evolution of various hip-hop and dancehall styles. Yet in the end this is the same populism as Lessig's, only with better taste. The two movies in particular have a tendency of fetishizing file-sharing technologies. Their narrations reinforce the copy-left-right gap by implying some sort of historic necessity where one can only chose to be on the wrong (old, tired, copyright) or right side of history (p2p, hip, young, future). The League of Noble Peers, by nonchalantly ignoring the question of a new economic model for cultural production, nurses a very aristocratic sort of habitus. By publicly extending their precarity, they imply that everyone who does not follow that example is a dinosaur from the old Fordist 20th century. This is, in short, a doctrinal form of leftwing McLuhanism which only underpins the reasons why more people should read Richard Barbrook's *Imaginary Future* (2007) that explains exactly why 'the net' cannot and should not be our inevitable future anymore.¹⁶

Let's (not) talk about money

Projects such as those described above serve a valuable role as propaganda tools but fail to fully address the question of economic conditions for cultural production. It needs to be pointed out that money or so-called business models do not form the exclusive angle from where to view such "economies". Cultural production, in a broader sense, is economically made possible in ways which go beyond money. It is indeed boring to ask "but how can we make money now?" but the link between cultural production and money is a fractious one under any circumstances. Culture can economically exist because in many ways it does not obey the laws of the economy – despite being, at the same time, a culture industry (Bourdieu 1993). Individuals create because they have to. As stated elsewhere (Gombrich 1971), creatives are 'sweating out' their creative output through their daily existence. I do not want to idealize this type of "driven" artist who will keep creating in order not to go in-

sane. There will always also be the cool professional who does not depend on creation for psychological survival. There are further incentives such as fame and the reputation among the peer group. But let's agree that people produce culture anyway. The argument of the copyright industry that their way is the only way of financing cultural production is a red herring. Culture exists because it serves many needs both on the creator's and recipient's side. Creation is supported by a fabric of social relationships. I would go further and say that culture exists *because* of that fabric of social relationships; it literally grows out of those. Within those networks of relationships there are also many forms of internal support which allow art to get produced and artists to get through. On top of that there are also immaterial relationships between artists and their audiences which allow work to get produced – such as shared psychological worlds, matching needs and desires. These thoughts are similar to what I felt when I was sitting on the Creative Commons panel watching Lawrence Lessig speak in Berlin in 2004. Human culture is networked in many ways, not just through the Internet, and those networks are also the source of complex economies enabling artists to be creative.

Art and culture rely strongly on intrinsic qualities – qualities which are values in themselves and do not need any external justification or motivation. The diverse practices in art are often simply things that people like to do because it is pleasurable doing them and because it feels as an achievement having done something. I am relating here also to the crafty aspects of the art, the work with the material, the engagement with the properties of tools. If we talk about the economy of cultural production and how to make it sustainable then we need to look at all those things together, those social networks which facilitate cultural production and the intrinsic qualities in which both artists and audiences have a strong interest and investment. Those aspects are either ignored or cynically exploited by the cultural industries and the 'creative industry' models proposed by the cultural funding departments of nation states. While the immaterial values of art and culture are invoked in Sunday speeches by politicians, they are trampled on by the same people the following Monday when they make their next round of funding cuts.

While money is certainly not the only problem, completely dodging that question is not a solution in the long term. The copyleft radicals are maybe still very young and live in a squat or have very rich parents or both. Radicals on both sides of the copyleft/right divide do not want a solution. The business people just want to go on as usual – no compromise. The copyleft radicals receive cultural capital by appearing as modern day Robin Hoods stealing from an evil industry. Leaving those extremes aside, how can socie-

ties afford to have a rich cultural life which also includes top-quality works of art and not only amateur-based mass production? Some quite sane and useful suggestions have been made in recent years. One would be a sort of digital Shilling (alternatively 'broadband tax' or flatrate system) collected by the collection societies and redistributed to everyone who visibly contributed to content online. I would have my reservations about that because of the deeply conservative nature of the collection societies who have not shown any understanding of the nature of digital and networked culture at all in the last 10 years and seemed to have been very willing to become enforcers of the copyright industry. Nevertheless, maybe the collection societies can be reformed through good legislation and a new regime be introduced which indeed rewards authors and other content producers.¹⁷ The other option would of course be the introduction of a basic wage for everyone. I am more sympathetic to this but it comes with its own problems such as creating an addiction to automatic hand-outs. However, both a digital Shilling plus a basic wage would be better than the status quo.

As we are looking at the economy of cultural production and its sustainability, I hope to have made it clear that this goes beyond money. Sustainability is also linked to social networks supporting or even enabling cultural production and is based on the intrinsic qualities involved in shaping those networks. We have to untie the knot between cultural production as such and cultural goods. The industry, of course, focuses on the products – cassettes, CDs, DVDs, files. Sometimes it is made to look as if only the product counts and this is what indeed the culture industry does, it fetishizes and favours the products, things to be sold and owned. However, cultural production does not always need to materialise in such things and is driven by many other factors than money and supported by diverse ecologies. It is important to make this distinction. If we look away from the product as a "thing," then the concept of ownership also opens up to different interpretations. Ownership then is not just possession of something, but also implies care and responsibilities. Similar relationships also exist between authors and their works and authors and their audiences, there are mutual responsibilities involved.

Conclusions

In the light of everything said I need to revise my position. I would have loved to remain at that position of 2003 where I said that being a pirate is not necessary anymore because we have free software and the digital commons. Both of those are endangered and problematic in various ways. Because of the development of recent years which I hope to have sketched out above, the situ-

ation has worsened. We are experiencing a widening of the copyright divide between the radicals of both sides. While solutions exist in principle, there is no social consensus around them because they would mean that some compromise needed to be made. In that situation I think it is important to highlight the values of cultural production and the importance of a diverse concept of authorship. Rather than denouncing authorship as a concept of the past as some copyleft radicals do (just to big up their own status as “activists”) cultural producers need to redevelop their various bonds with the social humus of their various arts. This means also to recapture the debate and bring it back to our home ground. We, as cultural producers, cannot allow ourselves to be represented neither by the stooges of the old order nor by the copyleft Jacobinites who are so eager to denounce authorship that one would fear to be hanged just for admitting to be one of “those”. As the situation keeps worsening we need to find ways of being radical without denying the complexity of the issues involved. As the oligarchy has tightened its grip, and everybody is worse off, we cannot rely on the legitimately “free” as in FLOSS world alone. Acts of piracy can be very necessary sometimes, in combination with a variety of methods of cultural resistance.

What in the age of cultural mass consumption is really in short supply is not money but respect for cultural production and the life-long commitment of people who happened to end up as professional artists because there is maybe nothing else that they can do or want to do. Knowing full well that this can be easily misunderstood I nevertheless insist on this distinction of professionalism and on the notion of respect as an expression of the appreciation of the various bonds between authors, their works and the publics supporting them. This is the real currency in the economy of cultural production. In this sense I would like to say from my best proletarian background and with all my writers pride, just like Eric B and Rakim in the seminal 1987 album I would like to be *Paid in Full*.

Endnotes

1. Felix Stalder maintains a short but good list of links relevant to appropriation in art. [<http://wiki.snm-hgkz.ch:8081/wiki/medienoekonomie/PZRTThemen>]
2. With ‘Stalinism’ I refer to a situation where in my home country Austria there were only two public TV channels on terrestrial television until very recently.
3. This context was formed by groups such as Rabotnik and DFM, Radio 100, Van Gogh TV, the CCC and other early hacker and mailbox groups. For this context the term media art offers itself as a largely suitable descriptor.
4. A loop is a magnifying glass insofar as it stretches one short moment in a film or video endlessly; freeze frame and slow motion are other magnifying techniques.
5. In 1990 and 1991 we produced a series of works which we called *Televisionwares*, collections of our scratch videos with hip-hop soundtracks ranging from NWA and EPMD to BDP; with this work Subcom was part of a mainstream of the underground of remix culture in the



Authentic copy of the Paid In Full LP, found in Deptford market. Photo: Li Jönsson

late 1980s and early 90s whose visual influences included B-movies as well as art groups such as General Idea, Dara Birnbaum's *Wongergirl* as much as Coldcut's scratch videos on MTV Europe. Only in retrospect the contours of such a movement become visible, with magazines such as *Vague Magazine*, *Re/search*, San Francisco and the Osnabrück Film and Video Festival providing scarce virtual and real meeting places.

6. Such a political neutralisation of amateur production was anticipated by Hans-Magnus Enzensberger who stated that that isolated amateur production would always be easily neutralized politically through its amateur character (cf. Enzensberger 1970)

7. As one of many critiques puts it: 'instead of creating the flowering alternative cultural space envisioned by many, they run the risk of creating the conditions for a new wave of privatisation of culture.' David M. Berry on OpenDemocracy [http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts-commons/tales_3668.jsp]

8. A more well formulated critique of the CC licences is offered by Florian Cramer in this posting on the nettime mailing list [<http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0610/msg00025.html>]

9. The original KOP exhibition concept, written 2001 [<http://kop.kein.org/KOP/html/proposal.html>]

10. cf. Whiteg Weng, "The Right to Copy" [<http://kop.kein.org/KOP/writers/html/wltexts.html>]. For the reasons Weng describes in her text, the midnight market in Taipei was at the time not only a place to buy cheap hardware and pirated software, but also specialized cultural goods such as specific Japanese anime and manga which were very popular in Taiwan but did not get high street distribution.

11. TRIPS: trade-related aspects of intellectual property are part of the agenda of the World Trade Organisation negotiations for multilateral agreements; through TRIPS the rich countries try to impose strong intellectual property protection on the rest of the world.

12. This is also a core critique levied by the Bangalore-based copyleft activist and lawyer Law-

rence Liang against Lawrence Lessig. According to Liang, Lessig creates a false dichotomy between the 'good' filesharers in peer-to-peer networks and the 'bad' commercial pirates who sell copies of copyrighted films on the streets. The situation in poor countries does not allow such a distinction, Liang says. (Interview with the author, unpublished)

13. Both Sarai and partner organisation ALF have a track record of rooting or *situating* "digital" topics in the real world experience, a thread common also to the series of Sarai Readers I—VI, cf. Sarai 2001—2007)

14. A good summary from a moderate viewpoint of this story offers this article [http://www.chaosmanorreviews.com/open_archives/jep_column-326-a.php] while Andrew Orłowski from *The Register* lays a bit more heavily into Cory Doctorow [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2007/10/13/boing_boing_license_abuse/]. Tracing the original sources of the dispute has become difficult as all evidence of it has been removed from *Boingboing* except for an apology by CD which does not really sound like an apology at all [<http://www.boingboing.net/2007/10/14/an-apology-to-ursula.html>]. Counter to usual practice on *Boingboing* the comment function has been disabled for this article. Special thanks for Adam Burns aka Vortex of <http://free2air.org/> who provided me with the URL pieces of this puzzle.

15. At the college where I worked management tried to apply a Fordist bureaucratic management style to higher education, by trying to make teaching measurable down to individual hours. The goal was to have fewer staff lead a higher number of students who receive less teaching to successful diploma completion.

16. There is a very beautiful scene at the beginning of *Steal This Film II* where a video wall of talking heads from the 'war on terror' is gradually replaced by the many-to-many connections of peer-to-peer society. If only it was that simple.

17. I do not fetishize individual authorship, other forms such as distributed authorship or collaborative forms of production and content filtering/moderation are as important as "authorship" in the traditional sense and also need to be supported.

2.3. Re ‘Paid in Full’

by Rasmus Fleischer, Piratbyrå

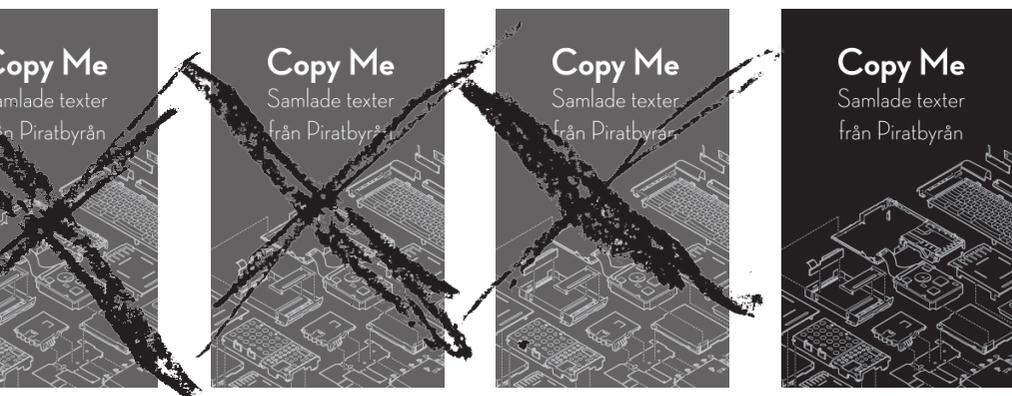
I find it very interesting to follow Armin Medosch’s way of personally historicizing these first years of the current century. He presents 2001, the year when he curated the *Kingdom of Piracy* exhibition, as a starting point for his engagement. As it happens it was the same year when I myself started to actively follow and write about the fights around piracy, in its online and offline varieties.

Then he presents the year 2003 as a turning point. That’s how I remember it as well: that year, we were a loose group in Sweden who initiated *Piratbyrå* (the Bureau of Piracy).

For Armin Medosch, on the other hand, ‘the time for piracy was over’. Instead of the ‘provocations’ inherent in the very use of the word piracy, Armin Medosch went on to affirm the existence of a separate sphere of ‘legitimately free things’. First *free software*; secondly *free culture*, a phrase which at that time got almost synonymous with the still quite young hype around Creative Commons licensing; if you added *free spectrum* you had a holy trinity. (Shit, now I suddenly realize: Stallman the father, Lessig the son, and the wireless spirit of 2.4 GHz...)

We never took part in this hype of a ‘legitimately free’ sphere. I don’t think anyone in *Piratbyrå* ever read a book by Lawrence Lessig, even if he was sympathetically mentioned in a few of the earliest texts published on our website, which were written by the Italians of *Wu Ming Foundation*. And while we of course saw free software as something essential and its spread as positive, the FSF crowd still tended to be sceptical if not hostile towards us when we frankly declared ourselves to be non-believers in copyright.

A decisive moment for me personally occurred in Berlin early summer 2004, as I visited the Wizards of OS conference which really dedicated itself to this trinity of free things. Coming from Sweden – a country which never really had had any ‘avant-garde of net culture in the 1990s’ – this must have been the first event in my life where this mixture of hackers, artists and academics met in a sometimes intelligent exchange of ideas. This became very stimulating for me exactly because I could *not* agree with some of the fundamental assumptions behind the two main reform proposals brought forward at that event. One was Creative Commons, which Sebastian Lütgert in one panel aptly characterized as a ‘social democracy for the digital commons’. The other was the proposal of a so-called ‘content flatrate,’ promising legalized file-sharing while somehow giving “compensation” to all kinds of copyright hold-



ers whose material was shared. I borrowed Sebastian's phrase for a criticism of the latter proposal, the first thing about this topics which I ever wrote in English, mailed it out on Nettime and found out that it became quite discussed and republished a number of times. I remember this as my entry into the international, or really mainly continental-European, critical discourse about copyright.

Piratbyrån became an interface between this discourse and the broader Swedish so-called 'file-sharing debate,' which really broke into the mainstream in the spring of 2005. (The stimuli were two: A very controversial anti-piracy raid against an ISP, and the implementation of sharpened copyright laws.) The following year this debate reached new levels of intensity after the raid against *The Pirate Bay*. At that time, *Piratbyrån* were no longer alone in pursuing copyright criticism in Sweden, at the contrary there had formed loose networks of bloggers and also politicians (from left and right alike) who strongly opposed the war against piracy.

Of course, after every escalation some new actors joined the debate by proposing the "compromise" of a flat rate compensation models. But every time, these proposals have practically soon been drawn back after being heavily criticised. And I think that *Piratbyrån's* long-standing criticism of this compensation discourse has really had an impact on the Swedish situation. Imaginary solutions have simply been kept out of sight, while we have kept

insisting – however hard that is – that there can never be *one* solution for all the problems affecting cultural production in the age of digital reproduction.

For every “event” – like a raid ordered by anti-piracy groups, or the proposal of even harder copyright laws – the public and political interest in these questions have been widened in Sweden. And every time it felt like the discussion had to start from zero again. The mass-medial discourse reproduced the conflict as “shall there be file-sharing or not,” as if file-sharing was something to maybe implement in the future and not an existing reality. This frustrated us, especially as we were perfectly aware that it somehow was Piratbyrå who once had started this whole debate some years ago. We decided to perform a symbolic action on Walpurgis Night in the spring of 2007, went up at a mountain and burned our own *Copy Me* book, a collection of texts from our website published in 2005. We declared the file-sharing debate to be over, that ‘the files have already been downloaded,’ and that ‘we are not about anti-copyright.’ The declaration ends, with a reference to a traditional Swedish Walpurgis song:

When we talk about file-sharing from now on it's as one of many ways to copy. We talk about better and worse ways of indexing, archiving and copying – not whether copying is right or wrong. Winter is pouring down the hillside. Make way for spring!

Going back to Armin Medosch's text, I can see a similarity to the break with piracy that he felt to participate in back in 2003: ‘...the notion that there was no more need for fighting *against* somebody, but being able instead to create our own worlds.’ However, while the ‘free culture’ movement of that time wanted to build ‘beautiful islands of free software [and] free media,’ our 2007 performance implied another kind of perspective shift. If anything is an island, it is the religion of copyright and its weirdly restrictive notion of “culture,” seeing it as nothing more than copyrightable “things”. Outside of this boring island there are vast seas and playgrounds. Let's go there instead and do something fun.

Well, there is more to be said about this text. Two things I would like to elaborate is the question of technological determinism (or ‘McLuhanisms’ as Medosch writes) and the common figure of finding a middle way between two imagined extremes which I find extremely problematic or sometimes directly dangerous.

2.4. The fantasy of cultural control, and the crisis of distribution

by Jonas Andersson

Often when I debate with Rasmus Fleischer or participate in events like the ones organised by Adnan Hadzi – events which I would characterise as quite “continental” in their intellectual tradition and largely “activist” in their political orientation – I find myself coming from a very Anglo-American approach, despite being Swedish. Probably this is due to my background in relatively mainstream ‘media studies,’ an area which has been dominated not only by the U.S. American imperialism of the mass media itself but by the way cultural studies has been formulated along largely Anglo-American debates.

Still, the point of encounter is fascinating; the ever-so-slightly different understandings of the same phenomena are inherently fertile. This is also something which we have seen in the academy at large during these early years of the new millennium, with an increased adoption of theory that ascertains decidedly material, non-human energies and ontologies (key names: Marshall McLuhan, Friedrich Kittler and Gilles Deleuze) among the previously human-centred and discourse-obsessed social constructionists.

How “freedom” turns into control...

What strikes me, when reading Armin Medosch’s fascinating account of the increasingly hostile downside to all the “free” culture hype of lately, is how different logics of control become layered upon one another and serve to re-inforce each other in rather nebulous ways. New technologies allow for freer exchange, but this becomes seized upon also by the cultural industries which then come to expect cheaper terms of trade for *everyone* involved, especially struggling artists. All this while we’re all applauding, because “free” is always good, isn’t it?

Despite talking about “freedom” as a concept, what is inescapable here is what Hong Kong-based theorist Laikwan Pang (2006) labels the ‘fantasy’ of cultural control. While for example German media theory has taught us to attribute this control also to non-human, machinic or code-derived factors, Anglo-American cultural studies have often kept insisting on placing either individuals or institutions as key forces. Either this social constructionism comes in the flavour of discourse-obsessed postmodernism stressing the inherent polysemy of texts and the freedom to make aberrant readings, or it comes as “mainstream” political economy, tracing cultural control in policy documents, NGOs and trade bodies. Pang attributes socio-economists like

Saskia Sassen to this latter group: Here, culture is engineered by governments or powerful institutions, instead of the scattered controls exercised and felt in the looser cultural domain. Here, legal documents are essentially what shape culture, and interestingly this is also in some way where we find the “big three” of the U.S. American copyleft literature: Lawrence Lessig, Siva Vaidyanathan and Yochai Benkler.

Because the Creative Commons ethos presupposes that culture follows law, and with the right laws implemented (i.e. CC), “better” or “freer” culture will follow. Like Rasmus Fleischer points out: Stallman the father, Lessig the son, and the wireless spirit of 2.4 GHz thus comes to gel to form a holy trinity of copyleft.

Funny thing, then, that this copyleft is not so different from its opposite: Compare on the one side the religion of copyright – the belief that WTO rules, restrictions and conventions can actually harness culture into preferable shapes – with this religion of copyleft; the belief that alternative rules, restrictions and conventions can harness culture, but differently. Two equally martinets, rule-obsessed approaches.

Now contrast this with the anti-transcendental, anti-dialectical urge of Deleuze, Kittler and McLuhan where technology has its own morphogenesis and rationale, distinct from human desires to harness it.

What is interesting is that depending on where one lays the emphasis, one sees different regimes of control, and ultimately different registers of *who is actually leading the fight*. Because this latter view – that code has a logic of its own – is what justifies the copyleft argument, while the old-school IFPI/MPAA/RIAA etc. copyright defenders tend to deliberately ignore this and instead lean on the earlier, human-centred approach.

If one understands the nature of code, through the ontological reasoning of Kittler, Florian Cramer, Norbert Bolz, the McLuhanists, the actor-network “ants,” and other theorists linked more to Deleuze and his postscriptum on control societies (Manuel de Landa, Alexander Galloway etc), one sees a dominant force of decentralisation through protocol, and unrestricted dissemination through the way the Internet is based on copying.

Yet, to *entirely* dismiss the role of human agency (policies, uses, appropriations) would be to somewhat miss the point as well. If one understands how policymaking, norms, and the way technologies do not develop by technical logic alone but by social and cultural conventions, one cannot but agree with Raymond Williams and a whole body of literature that serves to complicate the issue of pure technological determinism: STS (the ‘social construction’/‘social shaping’ of technology thesis), political economy (where

coincidentally both Lessig and the WTO fit in), sociology (Manuel Castells) and anthropology (Arjun Appadurai, Daniel Miller, Don Slater). Different theorists tracing the workings of the digital realm, in somewhat different ways.

It is all about “finding a middle way” between the temptations on either side of the extremes. Since file-sharing, p2p and ‘piracy’ involves exchange and infrastructure, a traditional media studies approach has to give way for a perspective that takes up issues essentially of human *and* machinic agency. Who or what drives the whole thing forward?

Where’s the room for escape?

What is common to all these academic accounts is that they can, after all, only debate those phenomena which are *traceable*. Either one could monitor the flows, movements and artefacts of online networks; or one could focus on the legal text, the lobbyist memos, op-eds and policy documents; or one could conduct participant observation, interview users about their everyday behaviour etc. The ways in which we can conceptualise these new phenomena are determined by or sensory instruments. For example Bruno Latour has presented a methodology for this in his more recent work (2005; 2007).

What I find riveting here, though, is the realisation of how much of our world that after all remains *outside* of these observed vectors: the ‘dark matter’ of the Internet, and of everyday life. There are so many uses out there that simply slip outside of our view, and – partially – slip outside of control. One-off file transfers, failed attempts, spontaneous exchanges. The whole phantasm of cultural control is a by-product of modernity, of Euclidian space, and yet it is our only tool to systematize what is going on.

The key, therefore, is to not remain blind to complexity, and to try seeing the strengths of each perspective – nationally, methodologically, epistemologically, politically – and further, seeing the connection points between perspectives that might appear different at first. Like Rasmus Fleischer says, there can never be *one* solution for all the problems affecting cultural production in the age of digital reproduction.

This is where decidedly local contexts like Deptford are important – once you spend some longer time in a local environment such as these neighbourhoods, you realize that there is so much cultural production going on, hidden from view, in the margins, simply unaccounted for, leaving few if any traces. This is in part a sad aspect of cultural meshworks like London, something I have seen especially in music production where plentifully more works are produced than is ever represented by record deals, releases or for

that sake MySpace profiles (think of each MySpace artist as the tip of an iceberg of already existing connections and work hours largely external to the Internet).

Similarly, this granular, spontaneous and specifically local production is what is cool with the case of the Swedish pirates, as they never aspired to take part in the 'hype' or in this martinet sanctioning of a "legitimately free" sphere that Armin Medosch describes, but instead kept on copying, kept on deriving, building quirky little controversial web pranks while a norm took hold in the broadband-heavy North of not even thinking twice, but to freely and casually file-share cultural products *before* considering buying them.

A crisis of distribution

A further reflection on Medosch's text is how the current crisis in the cultural industries appears to be one primarily of *distribution* and *marketing*. Much of the 'file-sharing debate' has in the mainstream press in Sweden and elsewhere been portrayed as mainly a problem of producer remuneration: the fact that cultural consumption as it moves into the digital realm equals less warrants for profit streams within the established guilds of cultural producers. However, the viewpoint that is embraced in this reader, thanks to its focus on strategies for alternative (that is, non-sanctioned, non-guild-based) media, presents a dilemma which all the more interesting; the issues pertaining to how to get your locally produced content "out there" in the first place – as a non-established, corporately non-affiliated producer – and how to be able to find revenue streams without violating or trying to stem the rising tide of ubiquitous file-sharing.

As it happens, cultural *production* takes place – in local settings, worldwide – all the time. Thanks to the radical cheapening and growing access to technical tools, it is arguably easier to be a cultural producer now than ever before; similarly, crude broadcasting technologies allow for a publication (as in literally "making public") of private life that was simply not possible before. Like Lennaart van Oldenborgh shows in chapter 4.2, blogs, vlogs, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook all allow for an extensive documentation of one's everyday reality.

Similarly, *consumption* is something which the youth of today excel in; as citizens of the Western world, this is arguably the primary area of cultural expertise for all of us, being knowledgeable, demanding yet highly casual and picky consumers. In media and cultural studies, the term 'consumer' is largely interchangeable with 'user' since with cultural consumption, nothing is really "consumed" (as in exhausted and/or ingested). There is a dimension of disposal inherent to cultural use and consumption though; Michel

de Certeau (1984) points to this ephemeral, transient dimension of everyday cultural consumption, which he defines as largely 'quasi-invisible,' played out in the margins. When *not* accounted for, or concretely materialised, the traces of consumption and use are very short-lived. Maybe the 'datascape' of social networks and p2p-based technologies allow for an increase in this traceability, as Bruno Latour has recently argued (2005; 2007), but what I find as our everyday lives are increasingly permeated by these technologies is that these traces are inherently restricted to the micro level. They are *short-lived* – like the IP address temporarily logged in an IRC or p2p exchange, or the textual exchange maintained only during the duration of a chat session – and they are *local* in that they are visible and/or overseeable only to the agents directly involved. The topology of MySpace or Facebook does not stretch itself out as a vast landscape from which I can oversee it in panopticon-like ways – it rather takes the shape of several interconnected but exclusively segmented rooms, only overseeable through the local, myopic interaction that Latour (2005) rightly labels 'oligopticon.'

The problem with distribution on the Internet is that it is granular, and dispersed in a way that is in fact antithetical to panopticon-like overview. Instead, it favours an accessibility that primarily operates through a search function.

The online topology thus overlays the offline topology of naturally segmented producers, or *occasional acts of cultural production*.

In local, creative environments like the London hotspots of Deptford, Hackney, Brixton etc. the problem has become one of improving the connections in-between such acts of production – essentially, making them aware of one another, so that they can start feeding off each others' creativity, and generate those collective sums that exceed the individual parts – but also to improve the visibility, communicability and relevance of these acts to the wider world, *in an economically viable way*. (Hence the pressure on urban redevelopment that Ben Gidley presents in chapter 1.3.: a lot of societal benefits, and a lot of pure profit can be found in effective interlinking of such creative hotspots.)

This economic viability is precisely what also Armin Medosch's article comes down to: once the damaging expectancy has taken root that culture is to be produced with very little economic gains or incentives to these producers, the table does turn towards a mode of production which is more sanctioned the more transient it is. Effectively, what is favoured are amateur forms which do not require much involvement in terms of personnel, time, capital investments etc.

This favouring of transient, agile, mobile, lean modes of production is not exclusive to the corporate sponsors, but is found across the board among new media sympathisers – this book included! Hence the common fascination among us all for anything “grassroots,” and hence the active support among copyleftists and activists for typically minute, D.I.Y. musical forms such as grime, dubstep, laptoptronica and punk rock over more traditional, multi-vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, studio-intensive, dare I say ambitious ones. One might say that these latter forms are dismissed for being too “polished” – not “polished” as a formal property, since a purely stylistic surface thanks to Logic, ProTools, Ableton etc. is increasingly accessible to all – but rather because they embody a mode or *ethos* of production that is accomplished, the opposite of minute, and comparatively investment-heavy.

What is presented to the poor struggling artist or musician who is bloody-minded enough to pursue these latter, more unweildy, more ambitious forms of expression is a double burden: a climate favouring opportunist media creation above anything else, on top of the crisis of distribution that I have already outlined. The key is to become known, to find avenues to get one’s productions recognised by the wider public in the white noise of millions of competing cultural messages. The easy route is of course to put on a funny hat and perform a YouTube mime to any given pop song, but if your aspirations are somewhat more labourious than this, what is the right outlet?

Further, even if finding an initial outlet, one can expect to be copied, appropriated, pirated to degrees that are simply beyond one’s own control. Is the luxury of public discovery something which can no longer be afforded without accepting vast degrees of free use and consumption of one’s work? Perhaps so, but in order to become pirated to begin with, one needs to have a name which is recognised and – ultimately – respected.

A concrete example of this is presented by the London-based burntprogress collective, which this spring presents their second CD compilation *burntprogress 2.1* to the world, highlighting some of the artists who feature at the burntprogress monthly club night *CDR – A night of ideas and tracks in the making mixed from recordable CDs and other digital media*. Here, an avenue to potential recognition is provided, from starting blocks which are essentially noncommercial yet providing the potential to capitalise on one’s own production. The first compilation, *burntprogress 1.1* (2006) was (besides its legally available forms) for a long while available as a ripped torrent, something which burntprogress co-founder Tony Nwachukwu welcomes as a living proof of the actual popular acclaim of this music. The illegal dispersion of the compilation, parallel to its legal dispersion, here



burntprogress 1:1
Marshmello Blackbird The Week Syndicate
Rex Spence Sproage Debbie feat. Holly Palmer
Daisuke Tambe A.E.B feat. Kate Dwyer
Paul Fresh Drea Parks Sound Species
Phoenix Black The Maciente Quartet
Michael Feather Aaron Jerome Richard Brown

becomes perhaps not complimentary, but in any event an unavoidable side effect which affirms some sort of success in the first place.

What is more, we see here how instances of production that might otherwise have been separated by space and time become apprised to one another – CDR very much serves as a real-world hub or community for a long list of artistic collaborations – and how an initiative like burntprogress acts as a *connector* or *aggregator* of talent.

Unlike the fragmentary, jungle-like worlds-in-their-own of MySpace and/or Facebook, who surely help to showcase creativity yet do nothing to comprehensively promote noncommercial acts in an orchestrated way, connectors like burntprogress and Deptford.TV work against the grain of the transience and de-territorialisation outlined above. They essentially *re-territorialise*; something which requires intentionality, the possibility of failure, and ultimately some form of political agenda. Strategy rather than tactic. Orchestrated ‘data spheres’ amid the amorphous ‘datascares’.

Surely MySpace, with its specific disposition towards pop music, has helped many artists gain increased visibility despite its primary intention to lure unsuspecting eyes to increasingly narrow-cast marketing – but its entire mode of operation does nothing to steer away from the ultimately neo-liberal agenda of leaving ‘each to his own abilities’. Its economic externality of allowing potential collaboration and discovery can be seen as an economic subsidy to struggling artists, but it is a subsidy which is intended only as a “trickle-down” effect ultimately benefiting the hugely popular, already-established over the multitudes of unknown talent, prompting a model of society where these lesser-known artists should count themselves lucky if ever reaching the mainstream.

(Temporary) conclusion

Cultural production and consumption takes place everywhere all the time; the problem is when these instances remain discrete, muted, and soon-forgotten. The digital ameliorates this, it helps making known that which is unknown, but only to a degree:

Any Internet-mediated cultural production, no matter how banal, becomes textually instantiated and searchable. As Clay Shirky recently, rather provocatively stated, most user-generated material is actually *personal communication in a public forum*, and hence not actually “content” at all, since it is not designed for an audience in the first place (Shirky 2008). All this conversational material drowns out the potentially audience-orientated, adds to the noise.

So the common word that digitisation makes it easier to access stuff is in fact only superficially true. Once again, on the raw, jungle-like networks this accessibility is directly determined by the search function. Mesh-like spheres like p2p and Web 2.0 networks might help to heighten the visibility of individual acts of consumption/production, but only in a way which is temporary, never fully overseeable, and ultimately statistical, where a panoptic view can only be attained by means of a search. And searches, as we all know, require prior knowledge.

Precisely because of this, well-maintained and comprehensive meta-data is not enough. Active and deliberate connectors are still needed, especially since one of these primary connecting practices is the one linking the online with the offline, a gap which should not be seen as a barrier but which becomes exacerbated by the purely online ventures of social networks and torrent archives. Here Piratbyrån, Deptford.TV and burntprogress share similarities, despite the decidedly different practices of these three examples. They re-territorialise and by doing so, compel everyone into opinion or at least awareness. They shed light. They editorialise. They redistribute, or at least help users organise themselves to privately re-distribute in more orchestrated and thus more meaningful, potentially profitable ways. That can only be a good thing.

This thread (chapter 2.2—2.4) is republished and open for comments and continuation on Armin Medosch's site The Next Layer [<http://thenextlayer.org>]; an environment for collaborative research, documentation and publication about issues relating to arts, politics, free and open source software and peer-based commons production.

2.5. Whose economy, which sustainability?

by andrea rota, *Liquid Culture*

Developing a cultural project with positive outcomes for a specific group of people or for society at large, while being able to make the project self-sustaining and financially viable seems to be a very desirable goal for those who manage such projects. In current mainstream discourse, however, even when social and cultural outcomes are considered important, the obsession with *economic sustainability* often prevails, leading to widespread concerns about monetization of goods, such as knowledge and information, that once used to be freely available.

As long as sustainability is considered mainly an issue related to inefficient distribution of capital, rather than to unjust distribution of resources, we are bound to reproduce patterns of scarcity and poverty that we inherited from times when mankind was more dependent on availability of material resources.

In the first part of this article, I outline some current problems in the wider availability of information and knowledge when these are not supported by a strong critical attitude. In the second part, I discuss a few examples of spaces for the development of critique within *agile projects* (these are defined in more detail at the beginning of the second part of the article). In the third and final part I suggest that only by making critically-informed social responsibility the core concern of organizations we can hope to let these operate as positive actors in the development of societies that foster human potential and freedom, respecting both human beings and nature.

The “Marcuse koan”

For media practitioners and information workers, collaborative projects aggregating heterogeneous and possibly distant people and organizations are nothing new: as soon as needs arise to produce, transform and distribute information in ways that formal and highly structured institutions cannot easily allow, opportunities for informal, low-hierarchy collaboration are developed; these focus on specific aims, building flexible organizations, processes and infrastructures around these needs rather than forcing teams to work within set and often rigid organizational boundaries.

Through the years, more or less informal collaborative projects have helped both increasing diversity and cross-pollination in the development of cultures and making more information readily available to wider publics through non-traditional channels.

However, the increased availability of information has complex consequences (Kallinikos 2006) which go way beyond the widespread assumption that expansion of knowledge is ultimately linked to positive outcomes for societies; it is actually becoming increasingly evident that sensational information growth, when not supported by a clear awareness of information sources, values and consequences, is often an hindrance to development of knowledge – in fact, this growth typically results in an increase in time spent *managing* information itself (and its over-abundance) rather than in a net increase in the use made of information in support of research, planning, development, decision making, evaluation and so on.

In the post-dotcom-bubble-burst era, moreover, the naive enthusiasm for “new possibilities” supposedly opened up by the widespread diffusion of the Internet has been reinvigorated with a new enthusiasm for user-generated content, participation, access to knowledge: after all, the experience of almost instant gratification when we search for and retrieve information from home at any time of the day and across time zones, without having to wait for the local library to open its doors, for a local services office to retrieve information for us or for a music CD to be delivered to our door is increasingly becoming part of everyday life for Internet-connected people (Dutton and Helsper 2007).

Substantial quantitative changes in the availability of information and of new and accessible means to use, develop and apply it to practical issues, however, have not been translated into equally substantial positive qualitative changes in our lives. Actually, the closer we get to the opportunity to end poverty on a global scale and to free human beings from humiliating and wasteful kinds of labour, the farther we seem to get from this ideal possibility of qualitative change.

Indeed, the issue of the relationship between technical rationality and societies is probably one of the most complex and urgent problems for contemporary thought; a detailed discussion of these issues would fall outside the scope of this article – however I find it useful to suggest a name for the intuitive unease in front of the stark contrast between the development of knowledge and technologies (by which I do not mean only “machines” or tools, but also institutions, processes, interpretive frameworks and so on) on one side, and, on the other, the increasing lack of ability to address effectively the persistence of poverty, wars, violation of nature and human beings, lack of freedom.

Among the many approaches proposed by influential philosophers in recent years, I find it particularly useful to reference Herbert Marcuse’s work: on one side, his thorough analysis is one of the most lucid denunciations of

the dyscrasia between development of technology in a broad sense and our failure to translate this into positive outcomes for society at large; on the other side, he never ceased to maintain and to hope that a radical reconstruction of modern technology, engaged in a positive relationship with human beings and nature, is possible (see Marcuse 1964, Marcuse 1972, Feenberg 1999 and Feenberg 2005 for detailed accounts of the evolution of Marcuse's thought on technology and society).

A seemingly unsolvable paradox, on one side, and the affirmation that solving this paradox is possible, therefore inviting to work on the paradox to seek a solution: this could probably constitute a *kôan* in Zen Buddhism, and as such I find this – the Marcuse *kôan* – to be a particularly fruitful background reminder for any discussion of the relationship between technology (in the broad sense outlined above) and society, as the one developed in this article. The permanence of the *Marcuse kôan* is not inherent to the way human activities are run – rather, it is a political choice over which priorities we set in the balance between the individual good and the common good.

Sustainability of agile projects

Agile¹ projects like Deptford.TV serve as extremely interesting examples of open playgrounds for a balance between individual and common good: they deal mainly with information rather than with material resources, they try to model a flexible and simple organizational structure around the project's goals, they typically aim at optimising the use of resources so that less is spent in running the project and more is used to achieve the project's goals.

These projects typically operate under tight financial constraints, with the option of minimising waste in operations, or raising more funds (either from external funders or through internally generated value), or a combination of the two, to sustain their operations.

If the small scale and the lack of corporate backing can be a hindrance to the growth of these projects, these can also be factors of strength – making the organization more agile and less dependent on market whims and pressures: therefore, these projects can experiment with more open ways of doing things. Often innovation of methods actually becomes one of the main goals of these projects, with the aim of streamlining needs analysis, processes, tools and evaluation methods so that these can be applied elsewhere in similar contexts.

I will outline here four areas in which agile organizations could provide examples of excellence in sustainability through best practices that push ethical concerns at the forefront of the organization's values.

Sustainable operations

Agile projects making use of free software for their IT infrastructure are increasingly providing leading examples of sustainable operations: when little time and resources are available but a project needs to be efficient over time, with minimal disruptions from the inevitable IT failures, it makes much more sense to make sure that the IT infrastructure is designed to be scalable without a significant increase of the resources that must be spent in running it. Although bigger enterprises with larger budgets can afford to waste money and human resources to fix problems as they occur along the way, agile projects often lead the way in automated deployment and distributed operations: tools for infrastructure management, software deployment, service monitoring are available as free software, making it possible to commit human resources to initial planning, configuration and deployment and ongoing upkeep rather than having to manually configure and deploy every new bit of IT infrastructure or to manually reconfigure entire sections of the infrastructure whenever needs change, software or hardware has to be updated, or an emergency response to failures is required.

Similarly, resources can be pooled between different projects run by different groups and organizations, while preserving confidentiality through encryption, making it possible to share resources by distributing operations across organizational borders – an organization can make its resources available to another organization overnight, for example, when usage of internal resources is lower, while it might be higher for the other organization in a different time zone. Or many small organizations working in different ways with video could pool their storage resources to make it possible to store huge quantities of video data in a distributed way, something which would previously only have been possible for large companies able to afford massive storage data centres.

These are obviously just simple examples out of a multitude of possibilities; what is important to stress here, however, is that the technical side (free software, open data formats, efficient routing and pooling of information etc.) is only – and ultimately a rather simple – part of the picture: what is really needed to make things happen is the ability for decision-makers in small organizations to break free of the mainstream representation of highly structured and centralized information systems, and above all the ethical will to design projects, processes and organizations with sustainability as a core aim rather than as a nice-to-have set of additional checks on top of the core organizational aims.

Sustainable information life

Although one of the main issues with today's information systems is the disproportionate growth of information, on the other hand it is increasingly evident that huge amounts of potentially useful information is routinely wasted when information is not deliberately disposed of but prematurely killed as a side-effect of bad information management; most often, these restrictions to distribution of information are due to technical or to policy constraints.

Poor or non existent backup and restore policies, information stored in proprietary formats, or duplicated for no reason, or unavailable to be exported or reused in other contexts are all too well known problems in projects of any size. Obviously in many cases information *must* be kept private, for confidentiality, security or privacy reasons, but way too often it is just produced without any real consideration of its life-cycle: it might serve the purposes of the single project in which it is generated, but even when the knowledge developed would be reusable in other contexts, or even just used as an example of what has been done somewhere else, if its potential reuse has not been incorporated in the way information is produced, it won't be available to other organizations, and will perhaps even disappear within the organization or project that generated it.

One could think, for example, about documentation or promotional materials developed around a local urban regeneration project, or about services provided by a local authority in support of the poor or of a disadvantaged group within the local community: the local action might be very successful and enhance lives in the local community, but even if this might serve as an inspiration to decision-makers wishing to address similar issues in another community maybe far away, the initiative will most likely pass unnoticed beyond the local community, and fail to support a successful initiative somewhere else.

Although the problem of information growth is clearly very complex and multifaceted, best practices in agile organizations show that trying to limit information production is only a partial answer to this problem: a positive approach would entail more careful consideration of the entire information life cycle as a vital part of organizational cultures, therefore enhancing quality and reusability of information.

Sustainable offlinefication

If the Internet has increasingly become part of everyday life, more recently also the opposite can be considered true – everyday life has been invading the Internet as many more people than ever before use Internet-enabled de-

vices and web sites for everyday communication, alongside existing practices. The everyday perception that users have of the Internet is increasingly that of something that is *being-made-offline* ('offlinefication') by everyday practices and use patterns, more than that of technologies increasingly invading their everyday lives. If the early domestic Internet user often had a clear awareness of the act of going-online to communicate with other users, this clear-cut distinction between the online and the offline environment is perceived less by many users in today's mass Internet culture.

The *offlinefication* approach stresses the ultimate relevance of everyday material life: people use websites or Internet-connected device for aims and relationships that are mainly performed offline and use the Internet only as a part (albeit often vital) of the communicative practices, in a way appropriating the tools available to them and their features rather than explicitly "using the Internet" to do something.

Social networks and the many opportunities to link information from one website to others (*mashups* is one of the common buzzwords for this in Web 2.0 jargon) are increasingly supporting this offlinefication trend. But beyond the layer of the tools (websites and data exchange protocols between them), what is really making offlinefication happen are users' needs to communicate, and the representation of identities and connections through software: people create accounts on social network sites, set up links to their friends or acquaintances, bring in photos to their profiles, maybe from an external website dedicated to photo sharing (such as flickr.com), connect other information they might store on yet other websites, and so on. However, all the major social network sites in use today don't let users be in full control of their own data – one can't just export her own friends network from Facebook and import it into Last.fm, for example. Each social network is disconnected from all the others, and information can be leaked from one to the other only if and when the developers of the underlying web applications allow this to happen – and even then only to a certain degree.

This usually happens because users, their links to other people and the traces of their activities within social network sites and within sites linked to them are seen as an important assets in a consumption-driven economy: tastes and connections can be analysed in order to better target advertisement, trying to make the connection between sellers and potential buyers as efficient as possible.

The administrators of social network sites treat their users purely as consumers: they can play as far as they wish within each social network site, as long as they accept to be restricted to an information "silo" from which they

can only break free by deleting their account and recreating from scratch their connections (friends network, links to external web applications and so on) typically within another, competing information “silo” whose appearance and policy might appear very different from the previous one. Still, the underlying assumption that users are ultimately pure consumers means that this difference is not in any way fundamental.

Sustainability of offlinefication would require, instead, that users are in full control of all the information related to their (real or fake) identities, and that they could move or delete their personal information at any time without being dependent on the artificial limits to access imposed by many of the companies and organizations operating social network sites.

After all, although the mainstream media run rants every day on how people like to connect through technology, a closer contact with people through research methods that allow to explore users’ individual feelings, wishes and choices seems to be showing that there is a genuine need to communicate, which happens to be conveniently facilitated by technology – however, only within the limits of the protocols available in each “silo”. Any technology that lets people do things while limiting their freedoms is not supporting communication but only the interests of the providers of that technology, and enforcing coherence to the designed aims and features of tools, without acknowledging the importance of improvisation and adaptation (Ciborra 2002) as a vital component of any modern information system.

Sustainable education

With a large part of mainstream representations of the interactions between human beings and technologies still heavily skewed towards various flavours of technological determinism, education has a vital role to play in current debates around technology and information.

Organizations like Deptford.TV put education, development and sharing of knowledge at the core of their activities, rather than aiming at building a competitive advantage through secrecy of their knowledge assets. In a way, they aim to develop competitive advantage, but for the society at large rather than for a single organization.

Whether being able, as an example, to shoot video footage, edit it and distribute it online is as important to inclusion and empowerment in a local community as what can be offered by a solid foundation of the kind that can be learnt in schools is a separate issue: what is important here is that new knowledge and skills can be developed alongside the traditional curriculum, that they are more easily accessible to adult learners, and that not only

learners but also teachers are trained, therefore making it possible to transfer knowledge and skills to other communities elsewhere.

To follow up on the example given in the ‘Sustainable information life’ section above, it is also important to note here that traditional curricula often fail to bring students closer to the everyday reality of the processes they typically study only at a higher level of abstraction: usually textbooks can only provide a general framework, while teachers – for example when they are training prospective managers of projects for development in local communities – are the ones to provide examples, from their own experience, of how the general principles can be applied mindfully in practical everyday operations. This is a good way to offer both practical advice and an interpretive framework to students, but the practical experience embodied by teachers often exists only as knowledge that is communicated orally, therefore making its sharing beyond the local classroom extremely difficult. Agile projects engaged in the development of documentation of everyday processes may effectively address this shortage of material life in traditional curricula.

Moreover, if agile projects like Deptford.TV are able to catalyse resources from public sector organizations, NGOs and educational institutions, links between projects and groups that would normally not even be aware of each other can be built, and lead to exchanges of knowledge and opportunities for development that could benefit not only the organizations involved but, ultimately, the people involved in the learning process (Crossick 2006).

By acting as agile mediators between the dynamic needs for updated and ethically-focused knowledge by young and adult citizens alike, on one side, and the educational expertise and quality control at the core of academic institutions on the other, projects like Deptford.TV offer education opportunities parallel to formal learning. Like educational pirate ships (Foucault 1967), they carefully and mindfully select the best resources and make them available to people and institutions while engaging them in new opportunities for debate.

Whose economy, which sustainability?

One of the most popular concepts when discussing the economy of the information age is Chris Anderson’s *Long Tail* (2004). He first outlined in clear terms the trend in sales enabled by Internet-based indexing, storage, logistics and sales processes, through which even single individuals can have easier access to products, services or knowledge that a few years back would not have been available at all unless when economies of scale made it possible for

vendors to produce and distribute these. What Anderson also pointed out is that although sales of niche products to tiny groups of buyers are almost negligible when taken individually, cumulatively they can sustain viable commercial enterprises, especially when individual transactions are freed from those processing overheads (administration, distribution costs, etc.) that are not strictly necessary.

Great news for entrepreneurs, some would say for consumers alike – and in fact many companies have been trying to follow the Amazon example (Amazon was one of the case studies mentioned in the original Long Tail article); some succeeding, many failing as is expected in any highly competitive and quickly changing market. If well managed, small organizations serving niche markets can exploit new marketing, distribution and logistics tools and methods to make economically sustainable businesses that would not have even been thinkable before the mass Internet, while still making customers happy.

In other words, the Long Tail has mainly been seen as a solution to issues of inefficiency in business processes. So what about unjust distribution of resources, healthcare and educational opportunities? After all, the smooth running of some businesses and the satisfaction of some customers of niche products in the Western world should be considered somehow less vital than making sure that many millions of poor parents across the planet could adequately feed and dress their children, take care of their health and give them better educational opportunities than those they had².

The Long Tail doesn't seem to help much here: sustainability has a very different meaning according to which context one is analysing. And even the examples of sustainability discussed in this article are mainly focused on projects developed in the western world. However, this is where almost all of the planet's waste and unjust distribution of resources is originated, through market pressures, mindless business practices, greed, and a good deal of incompetence. It somehow makes sense to focus *also* on the many opportunities to make all-round sustainability a vital component of how things are run in the western world.

The Long Tail needs to become a *Reverse Long Tail*, in which there are no products to sell to niche markets, but very specific and often vital and urgent needs of individuals to be made clearly known to policymakers and to be met with sensible, sustainable and timely policies and allocations of resources. One might question the assumptions and methods behind Yunus' microcredit approach, but the basic concept underpinning this idea is that of a Reverse Long Tail in which the needs and existential struggles of each poor

individual are worth the consideration of an organization, not as a simplified abstraction built on averages and trends, but really based on the traceable, real-term needs of single human beings.

On the other side of the Reverse Long Tail there most likely won't be companies (busy as they are in pumping their wasteful products and processes to a liquid market), as it would be in the Long Tail – nor would there be well-off individuals trying to exert influence on companies through responsible and ethically-aware consumption. Consumer choices and responsible approaches to consumption are clearly important and desirable behaviours to be promoted, but individuals can't influence much through their choices in an economy with very uneven balance of resources and power.

Enterprises, being able to manage huge assets, have much greater responsibility than individuals in their management of these assets – and within enterprises, it's mainly the managers who have the greatest responsibility to make sure that every single process within the enterprise is not simply geared towards maximum economic profitability but sustainable in the widest sense.

A real strategy of *rupture* requires that ethical concerns are put at the very core of any enterprise, rather than considered as a set of checks to pass in order to make sure that a business is somehow complying with the wider public's expectations about what is acceptable and what is not in a trade-off between the (economic) profitability of a business and respect for the workers and the environment (Sapelli 2007). A concept of sustainability that can go beyond the differences between economies and fulfil the potential of every human being needs to cross organisational boundaries and ultimately become sustainability of the *human enterprise* as a whole. In a world in which material scarcity could become a memory of the past, it would be a real shame to keep building artificial barriers to the development and sharing of knowledge that could enable decision-makers and ordinary people alike to make the sustainability of the human enterprise the main aim of our society.

I would like to thank Giovanni Biscuolo, Mattia Gallotti, Sonja Grussendorf and Adnan Hadzi for many interesting and insightful discussions on these (and many other) topics, and Francesco Rota for letting me realise, before the pay-per-view era even started, that we were about to willingly give up a good deal of our ability to freely share culture. I could not have written this text without the many opportunities for sharp, lively and witty debate with my fair friend Diana Chény and without her constant encouragement. A Diana this text is dedicated.

Endnotes

1. In the context of this article, I am using the adjective “agile” mainly to describe projects that are highly focused and able to react quickly, efficiently and responsibly to changes in the internal and external environment. Indeed, their ability to react to changes in the environment is the reason why I have chosen to focus on agile organizations for the examples discussed here, while I do not mean to suggest in any way that organisational structure per se (i.e. independently of critically-informed social responsibility) is causally linked to the opportunity to develop sustainable practices.

2. I am simply describing a strong asymmetry of priorities, without necessarily implying in this context that non-vital needs should be actively hindered per se.

FACE
IN
FULL



3. *Technological strategies*

3.1. Download Finished: The art of file-sharing
by !Mediengruppe Bitnik in collaboration with Sven König



Download Finished [<http://www.download-finished.com>] transforms and re-publishes films from p2p networks and online archives into new originals. For the transformation of the found footage *Download Finished* exploits a characteristic unique to online films: Before films are fed into filesharing networks, they undergo a series of structural transformations and their data structure is completely reshaped for the purpose of compression. *Download Finished* uses the new data structure for the transformation of the visual layer: What usually appears as a compression error becomes the aesthetic form of the new originals thus showing the underlying data structure of the films on the surface of the screen. The original images dissolve into pixels, making the usually hidden data structure visible.

The project poses the question of the relation between original and copy in a digital environment. It explores into the cultural practice of file-sharing (and the cracks and fissures which this practice uncovers in copyright regulations).



HOW TO BE AN ARTIST | HOW TO BE A CUT-UP ARTIST | HOW TO TRANSFORM FILMS FROM FILE SHARING NETWORKS INTO NEW ORIGINALS | HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR P2P DOWNLOADS | HOW TO TAKE FILE SHARING FURTHER | HOW TO MAKE ART OUT OF FILE SHARING

You are a file sharer? You keep downloading stuff, but then you don't watch it? Want to get more out of your downloaded films? Here you can find out how to re-interpret your favourite films by processing them through DOWNLOAD-FINISHED. You can even send the processed films off to video festivals! – It's as easy as one – two – three!

■■■ CHOOSE FOUND FOOTAGE AS AN INPUT-FILE

- **Step 1:** Goto <http://www.download-finished.com>
- **Step 2:** Enter a search term into the P2P-search interface. From the hit-list choose the film you want to use for an input. Then click on the name of the file to start downloading.

■■■ TRANSFORM

- **Step 1:** Enter your name, or any pseudonym you want to be the author of the transformation.
- **Step 2:** Enter your email, so you can be notified, once the film is produced and in the archive, ready for you to watch.

■■■ WATCH

- **Step 1:** Watch your film online or download it to enjoy it full screen. Feel free to edit the film, send it off to video festivals, mash it up, extract stills.
- **Step 2:** Invite your friends and screen your film. We have observed: The bigger the screen, the better!

FAQ

■■■■■ WHAT IS DOWNLOAD FINISHED? ■■■■■

The website **DOWNLOAD-FINISHED** transforms and re-publishes films from P2P networks and online archives. Found footage becomes the rough material for the transfiguration machine, which translates the underlying data structure of the films onto the surface of the screen. The original images dissolve into pixels, thus making the hidden data structure visible. Through **DOWNLOAD FINISHED**, file sharers become authors by re-interpreting their most beloved films.

■■■■■ WHAT HAPPENS IN THE INSTALLATION EXHIBITED AT THE CABARET VOLTAIRE? ■■■■■

The installation translates **DOWNLOAD FINISHED** from the web, where it is actually situated, into the exhibition space. Light bulbs represent the constant downloading of input materials, which, as soon as they are 100% downloaded, are transmogrified into a five-minute film. The downloading halts and the output is shown on the video projector.

■■■■■ WHY USE FOUND FOOTAGE? ■■■■■

Found footage is a filmmaking term which describes a method of compiling films partly or entirely of footage which has not been created by the filmmaker, and changing its meaning by placing it in a new context.

Found footage refers to the term *objet trouve* – found object – of art history. The *objet trouve*, introduced by Marcel Duchamp into the art world in 1917, continues to arouse media and public hostility, even though today it is an accepted practice in fine art. Through various further developments from Dada to Surrealist, Fluxus and Pop Art, the *objet trouve* or readymade continues to pose the question of what is art? And what makes it art?

The actual transformation process used in **DOWNLOAD FINISHED** also makes reference to the Cut-up technique and the Structural Film movement. Using the Cut-up technique, originally an aleatory literary technique in which a text is cut up at random and rearranged to create a new text, **DOWNLOAD FINISHED** transforms the data structure of the input footage to bring the material shape of the film to the surface. The material shape of the film becomes crucial, the content peripheral.

■■■ WHAT IS THE CHARACTERISTIC STRUCTURE OF P2P FILMS? ■■■

Before a film, originating either from a camera take or a DVD, is digitized and fed into a file sharing resource, it has undergone several transformations. It has been digitized, encoded and compressed, applying complex mathematical transformations to the original data. A film found in a filesharing network is the sum of [>1] the original film, [>2] the work of the mathematicians who laid the theoretical foundations for [>3] the programmers who designed the encoding software and the codec and [>4] the file sharer who finally uses all that software to intentionally make the [>5] film widely available. The processes behind [2] – [4] usually stay invisible, leading to the wrong assumption that [1] = [5]. **DOWNLOAD FINISHED** transforms [5] such, that the processes behind steps [2] – [4] become visible and show that films found in file sharing networks are actually collaborative works. The transformation process in **DOWNLOAD FINISHED** shows the collaborative effort behind the sharing of cultural contents and clearly shows that [1] ≠ [5].

■■■ HOW EXACTLY IS THE FOUND FOOTAGE INPUT TRANSMOGRIFIED? ■■■

For lossy video compression several techniques to save space are applied. The one **DOWNLOAD FINISHED** exploits is that of delta frames. Unlike the original film, an encoded film does not consist of 25 full images per second: The amount of full images is reduced to save space, and the parts in between full images (key frames) are calculated on the fly. The frames generated from the differences between key frames are called delta frames.

By simply deleting the key frames of a film the file data is transmogrified to reveal the nature of the found footage files as a collaborative work with a very complex data structure.

■ ARE THE PROCESSED FILMS MINE? ■■■

Yes. And for that matter: They belong to everyone else, as well. After processing, you are free to save your film (or anyone else's, for that matter) to a DVD, write a nice exposé and send it off to a filmfestival of your liking. Or cut the film up and insert parts into other filmworks. Make a music video. Extract stills. ■■■

Exhibitions:

- + *appropriate - manipulate - feedback*
(Part II)
- Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich
02 June—25 August 2007
- + *Sie nennen es Realität*
Hardware Medienkunst Verein,
Dortmund
05—21 October 2007

Film screenings:

- + *Resuscitate*
The Distillery, Boston
09—10 June 2007
- + *Dorkbot SWISS*
Walcheturm, Zurich
11 May 2007
- + *Late Night Multimedia Show*
Dock 18, Zurich
08 December 2006
- + *Peer-2-Peer Cinema*
The Pirate Boat, London
24 November 2006
- + *Cinematics*
Mediaruimte, Brussels
18 November 2006
- + *Netlabel Festival*
Rote Fabrik, Zurich
17 November 2006
- + *Wizards of OS*
Berlin
15 November 2006
- + *Zoom Festival*
Brno
15 October 2006

3.2. Componentisation and Open Data

by Jo Walsh and Rufus Pollock, Open Knowledge Foundation

Componentisation and Open Knowledge

What is meant by Open Knowledge? Anything – it can be said – ‘from genes to geodata, statistics to sonnets’. Collaborative production and distribution of data is gradually progressing towards the level of sophistication displayed in software. Data licensing is important to this progression, but is often over-examined. Instead we believe the crucial development is *componentisation*. By focusing on the packaging and distribution of data in a shared context, one can resolve issues of rights, feedback, attribution and competition. Looking across different domains for “spike solutions”, we see componentisation of data at the core of common concern.

For those familiar with the Debian distribution system for Linux, the initial ideal is of “a Debian of data”. Through the *apt* package management engine, when one installs a piece of software, all the libraries and other programs which it needs to run are walked through and downloaded with it. The packaging system helps one “divide and conquer” the problems of organising and conceptualising highly complex systems. The effort of a few makes re-use easier for many; sets of related packages are managed in social synchrony between existing software producers.

Code got there first

In the early days of software there was little arms-length reuse of code because there was little packaging. Hardware was so expensive, and so limited, that it made sense for all software to be bespoke and little effort to be put into building libraries or packages. Only gradually did the modern complex, though still crude, system develop. These days, to package is to propagate, and to be discoverable in a package repository is critical to utility. What makes distribution of data the same; what makes it different?

The size of the data set with which one is dealing changes the terms of the debate. Genome analysis or Earth Observation data stretches to petabytes. Updates to massive banks of vectors or of imagery impact many tiny changes across petabytes. At this volume of data it helps to establish a sphere of concern – distributing the analysis and processing across many sets of users, in small slices.

Cross-maintenance across different data sets – rebuilding aggregated updates – becomes more important. Having cleanly defined edges, something like an Application Programming Interface (API) for *knowledge* is envisaged.

Each domain has a set of small, concrete common information models. To distribute a data package is to distribute a reusable information model with it – to offer as much automated assistance in reusing and recombining information as is possible.

Licensing clarity is important because without it one is not allowed to recombine data sources (though there is still a large gap between being allowed and being able). Code got a long way with the legal issues, and differently flavoured Free Software definitions have gained a good consensus. The state of ‘open’ data is more uncertain, especially looking at the different ways of asserting the right to access and to reuse data in different legislative regions. Open data practise should demonstrate value, utility, thus it becomes a natural choice, and not an imposition. The Open Knowledge definition is an effort to describe the properties of truly open data.

Knowledge and data ‘APIs’

Open knowledge research projects are carried out in an atmosphere of “fierce collaborative competition”. The Human Genome Analysis project was a shining example: slices of source data were partitioned out to a network of institutions. Near-to-realtime information about the analysis results led to the redirection of resources and support to centres which were performing better. In the context of open media, people are also “competing to aggregate”, to compile not mere volume but more cross-connectedness into indexes and repositories of common knowledge.

Progress on the parts is easier to perceive than on the whole. In the parts, the provenance is clear – who updated data when and why, and how it was improved. The touchstones are to improve reusability, accuracy, and currency of data. Working with subsets of datasets, in the absence of significant hardware or bandwidth barriers, anyone can start to carry out and contribute analysis from home. Knowledge is given back into a publically available research space, becoming easier to build on the work of others. The more people who access and analyse data, the more value it has to everybody.

As open source software has shown so well, “openness” is complementary to commercial concerns, not counter to them. As the GPL encourages commercial re-use of code, open knowledge is of benefit to commercial activity. Providing a “reference system” and a common interface, more “added value” applications are built on a base layer. The ability to monitor and report in near to realtime on the basis of package development can be useful to more than the “funded community”; it provides real validation of a working (or non-working) business model.

What do we mean by componentisation?

Componentisation is the process of *atomising* (breaking down) resources into separate reusable *packages* that can be easily recombined.

Componentisation is the most important feature of (open) knowledge development as well as the one which is, at present, least advanced. If you look at the way software has evolved it now highly componentised into packages/libraries. Doing this allows one to 'divide and conquer' the organisational and conceptual problems of highly complex systems. Even more importantly it allows for greatly increased levels of reuse.

The power and significance of componentisation really comes home to one when using a package manager (e.g. *apt-get* for debian) on a modern operating system. A request to install a single given package can result in the automatic discovery and installation of all packages on which that one depends. The result may be a list of tens – or even hundreds – of packages in a graphic demonstration of the way in which computer programs have been broken down into interdependent components.

Atomisation

Atomisation denotes the breaking down of a resource such as a piece of software or collection of data into smaller parts (though the word 'atomic' connotes irreducibility it is never clear what the exact irreducible, or optimal, size for a given part is). For example a given software application may be divided up into several components or libraries. Atomisation can happen on many levels.

At a very low level when writing software we break things down into functions and classes, into different files (modules) and even group together different files. Similarly when creating a dataset in a database we divide things into columns, tables, and groups of inter-related tables.

But such divisions are only visible to the members of that specific project. Anyone else has to get the entire application or entire database to use one particular part of it. Furthermore anyone working on any given part of one of the application or database needs to be aware of, and interact with, anyone else working on it – decentralisation is impossible or extremely limited.

Thus, atomisation at such a low level is not what we are really concerned with, instead it is with atomisation into *packages*:

Packaging

By packaging we mean the process by which a resource is made reusable by the addition of an external interface. The package is therefore the logical unit

of distribution and reuse and it is only with packaging that the full power of atomisation's "divide and conquer" comes into play – without it there is still tight coupling between different parts of a resource.

Developing packages is a non-trivial exercise precisely because developing good *stable* interfaces (usually in the form of a code or knowledge API) is hard. One way to manage this need to provide stability but still remain flexible in terms of future development is to employ versioning. By versioning the package and providing 'releases' those who reuse the packaged resource can stay using a specific (and stable) release while development and changes are made in the 'trunk' and become available in later releases. This practice of versioning and releasing is already ubiquitous in software development – so ubiquitous it is practically taken for granted – but is almost unknown in the area of open knowledge.

Conclusion

We are currently at a point where, with projects such as Wikipedia, we have powerful examples of the first three principles in action but little or none on the fourth.

In the early days of software there was also little arms-length reuse because there was little packaging. Hardware was so expensive, and so limited, that it made sense for all software to be bespoke and little effort to be put into building libraries or packages. Only gradually did the modern complex, though still crude, system develop.

The same evolution can be expected for knowledge. At present knowledge development displays very little componentisation but as the underlying pool of raw, "unpackaged" information continues to increase there will be increasing emphasis on componentisation and reuse it supports. (One can conceptualise this as a question of interface vs. the content. Currently 90% of effort goes into the content and 10% goes into the interface. With components this will change to 90% on the interface 10% on the content).

The change to a componentised architecture will be complex but, once achieved, will revolutionise the production and development of open knowledge.

3.3. Atomisation vs. community?

by Platoniq

We are platoniq.net, a group of cultural producers, software developers and social researchers. Ever since 2001, we have tried to spread and analyze a different model of culture, based on technology but also on social interaction – free of charge – although not very widespread yet. We work on the development of tools for different communities.

All our projects can be considered “tools” in the sense that they are tailored for very specific purposes; be they distribution, archival, research, or process-visualization. Most of these projects generate media, although that is not usually the goal, but merely the result of a collective research process. All of these contents are published on the Internet under copyleft licenses.

Our main goal is to bring the Internet to the streets, drawing inspiration from diverse networking strategies to develop collective pilot experiences in urban contexts. We are interested in building bridges between the public spaces in the Internet and the new media, and the physical public spaces. That’s why we work on pilot experiences in which we go from information theory to strategic practice.

Currently we have three working tools, each with different and specific functions:

OpenServer for **broadcasting**,
Burn Station for **distribution**,
and the *Bank of Common Knowledge* for **sharing**.

OpenServer and *Burn Station* deal with audio, while the *Bank of Common Knowledge* is based on video. The latter two (*Burn Station* and BCK) only make real sense when they involve social dynamization activities in physical spaces. I want to emphasize this because this is, in my opinion, one of the things that differentiates these applications from many of the other ones out there.

OpenServer

OpenServer is a streaming server and an online radio collective management tool. Users share a channel as well as bandwidth, and they administer the program schedule and a common archive. Everybody can book a time slot to broadcast live programs or make the server stream recorded content, generate program series and provide podcasts for their content.

[<http://openserver.cccb.org>]

Burn Station

Our second tool deals with distribution: *Burn Station* is a copyleft music distribution system. It is a GNU/Linux-based client-server system, but above all, it is a strategic project based on diffusion and distribution actions in physical spaces where visitors can browse, listen to and legally burn copyleft music from a wide range of European and South-American net labels. If you would like to know more about this project, there is a documentation video here: <http://www.platoniq.net/burnstation/doc.html>.

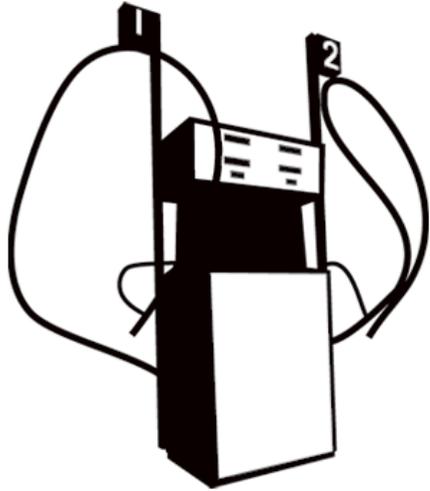
Bank of Common Knowledge

The third tool is what we call the *Bank of Common Knowledge* (BCK). This project is an attempt to implement the copyleft philosophy to the knowledge transfer process.

We would like to see the concept of “learning” as a network that offered every individual the chance to share their current interests with other, similarly motivated peers. Right now we are working on several strategies to lay the foundations of this meeting point and mutual education network. We are also testing various transmission and communication formats, from games to demos, workshops, challenges or theoretical dissertations. These practices are the basis for the video manuals currently being produced in the *Bank of Common Knowledge*.

However, the goal of the project is not to build a video portal, even if that ends up being one of the consequences. The real challenge for the *Bank of Common Knowledge* is to build a model of transmission and free exchange whose social organization and self-training strategies can be easily replicated.

Let us elaborate on this using an example which is complementary to the concept of atomisation. In one of our early BCK experiences, we tried to apply the BitTorrent model to the knowledge transmission between individuals. You all know how the BitTorrent protocol works. Basically, you have three different kinds of computers with different individual functions. These are: trackers, seeders and peers.



BURN STATION
FREE AUDIO CULTURE!

Trackers are servers that keep track of every single user in the Bittorrent network, as well as the contents these share. They track metadata about content, not the content itself.

Seeders are peers that provide the complete file to other users. They do not download nor get information from other computers, they just send it. Seeders must also ensure the integrity of the content they are providing, making it possible for peers to recover chunks of the file that might have got lost during the download process.

Peers are computers that receive and send parts of the content. They share data chunks they obtain from seeders and other peers. The more they share, the faster they will eventually gather the whole file they are downloading. Once they obtain the whole file, they become seeders.

We implemented this system in a few self-learning sessions with groups of individuals interested in learning about video streaming. We were the trackers in the system, as we knew both about each of the individuals (the peers), and the people with the necessary know-how (the seeders). We spent quite a long time breaking down the information that the experts (or seeders) had, into independent pieces that could be used individually. This proved to be the hardest part, but in the end it was extremely useful, because each and every one of these pieces are in fact reusable and easy to apply to other related workshops. The total sum of these pieces equals the knowledge an individual actually needs to be able to do video streaming on his or her own.

We then split the group of interested individuals (around 30) into subgroups of two or three. Seeders taught different parts of the whole process to each subgroup. The next step was to organize sessions where only peers would meet. Each subgroup would teach whatever they had learnt to other peers. The amount of distributed knowledge increased as more subgroups learnt other parts of the whole that they could share, transmit and debate upon. Finally, when all the pieces were distributed, we held a joint session involving the original seeders in order to make sure no pieces had got lost along the way.

In conclusion, attendants not only learnt about video streaming over the course of the experience (both theory and practice), but they also gained the necessary knowledge to teach that to others. That is, peers eventually became seeders, just like in BitTorrent.

Lastly, we would like to pose a few questions:

1) Regarding atomisation:

Would atomisation cause the loosening of community, or of the notion of a community?

2) Regarding the “open media” concept:

It is clear that the resource optimization of atomisation makes for more effective media download and distribution.

- ✦ But does that benefit narrative language, and in that case how?
- ✦ Can the content become more rigorous as a result of a more democratic assembly process?
- ✦ Could this have a negative effect on information reception, due to the change in how previously disconnected counterparts now are connected?

Other questions relating to this:

- ✦ When we mention “open media,” what are we really talking about?
- ✦ Is it really the idea that all content providers are media users, and vice versa?
- ✦ Does it mean that we all want free, open access to media (file, information, knowledge)?
- ✦ Does it mean that we want access to the very sources or “raw materials” of the media, as opposed to access to the results of interpretations or extrapolations by the media providers?

3) Finally, our last question has to do with licenses:

Functional atomization and collective content distribution lead us, once again, to intellectual property issues. Today, intellectual property is still strongly linked to the notion of individual authorship.

So the real questions are:

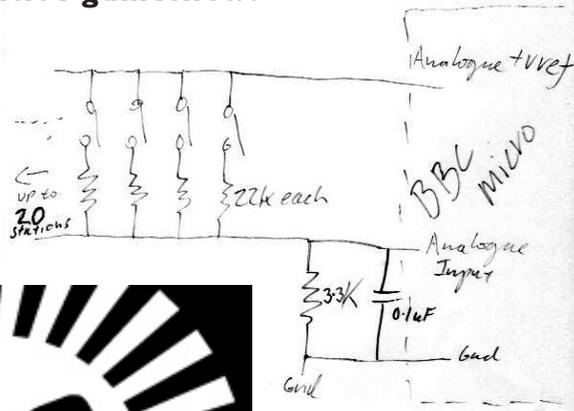
- ✦ What happens when we assume authorship is no longer an individual but a collective thing? And how do we license this growing reality?
- ✦ Do we really need a specific license for this, or should we rather modify the current legislation, so that this new kind of collective production becomes part of public domain?

Platoniq, a Barcelona-based collective, devised a series of projects designed to combine open media distribution with public spaces, such as Burn Station. Their Bank of Common Knowledge project adapts the techniques of p2p media sharing to p2p education, allowing discrete chunks of information to be broken down and passed on via a network of volunteers.

3.4. The collaborative gameshow: Who wants to be?

by The People Speak

Who Wants To Be sketches and logo



Introduction

What follows is an explanation of a particular set of methods developed since 2004 by The People Speak to help large groups of people with highly diverse ideas, opinions and points of view to make important decisions as a group, to come to creative compromises, and to have fun in the process.

This explanation may serve as a guide for others wishing to facilitate decision making in related situations. It is likely that the methods will require adaptation in each instance. If you or your group choose to use these strategies and techniques and have observations or improvements to suggest, please contribute them to the project wiki at http://wiki.thepeps.net/index.php/Category:Who_Wants_to_Be.

Spontaneity

Who Wants to Be? is a spontaneous, democratic gameshow where the audience makes up the questions, has all the answers and sets the rules. The basic premise is that every member of the audience has a vote, and that they can propose ideas from the floor, discuss them with the rest of the audience, and then vote on any decisions that come from the discussion, moving towards a conclusion within a 1.5 hour time limit, unless they vote to extend that limit and keep the game going.

Gameshows are fun, and the key to a successful *Who Wants to Be?* is making sure that it is enjoyable for all participants. Because the timing, structure and really every part of the game is malleable and subject to audience adaptation, it can be difficult to plan and predict.

One of the crucial elements to The People Speak's approach in all of our projects is to be as open as possible as to what content or direction of the event can be. We want the people themselves to decide what the important questions are rather than making any assumptions about what topic or approach will be relevant.

The instability of what will occur when people come to one of our events becomes an entertaining factor, as does the free and spontaneous contribution of the participants. The techniques which The People Speak employ are designed to engage people creatively in the drama of an undecided outcome while maintaining a coherent structure.

Timing

Too short, and everyone will feel short-changed and rushed, too long and people will be frustrated and start to leave. We've found that a good starting point is 1.5 hours, approximately the length of a feature film – split into two 45-minute halves.

The two-part structure is useful because it allows a dramaturgy to develop. The first half can be about brain-storming and ideas generation. The





second half can be about whittling down, reality-checking and making creative compromises.

It helps to have a clock clearly visible, counting down to the end of the half, to make sure that everyone understands the scope of the discussion and (if necessary) vote to extend it.

Voting

There are many different voting systems, and this is often an issue that audiences spend a while debating before they find something that feels comfortable. The starting point is as simple as possible, without the simplicity being too restrictive. In our experience, this is a useful starting point, which can be modified to suit the audience's needs:

- Three clear choices are presented,
- The audience votes on one of the three,
- Majority wins.

The three choices are important because they can be configured to be:

- Choice A
- Choice B
- Neither A nor B (go back to discussion)

In our experience, most audiences are happy to compromise with this system – simple but potentially expansive.

Stake-holding

It is vital that the decision is important to all participants. If people feel that they are playing without having some stake in the outcome – financial, emotional, or social, they won't be inspired to take part and contribute creatively.

So far *Who Wants to Be* has been used successfully to decide:

- ♦ What audience-suggested images to collage onto a mural in a community play area.
- ♦ How to develop and improve a much-loved public space.
- ♦ What to do with a £1000 cash pot of the audience's £10 donations.

See the project website at <http://whowantstobe.co.uk> for more examples, videos and write-ups.

Hosting

Hosting the gameshow requires quick thinking, mediation skills, improvisation and humour. It is the most public facilitation role, and potentially the most powerful – so the host has to be careful to facilitate, rather than dominate the discussions.

The audience will be coming up with suggestions thick and fast, and will often need some help to group those suggestions into a decision that can move towards a vote.

For example, the audience faced with a decision about how to spend £1000 might make the following three proposals:

- ♦ Let's have a dancing competition to decide who gets it!
- ♦ Let's give it to Cancer Research UK!
- ♦ Let's rent a flat for a month and cut everyone in the audience a key!

If this is the beginning of the show, the host would be working these into categories, encouraging the audience to come up with more ideas on similar themes, which can be returned to later in detail if necessary. The host might then say:

'Ok, those are some great ideas, so do we want to:

- ♦ A: compete for it,
- ♦ B: donate it to a worthy cause, or
- ♦ C: spend it on an activity for all of us.'

The audience can then come up with more ideas in categories A, B, or C. By voting on increasingly specific suggestions, or combining ideas to create interesting compromises, the host can help the audience to work their way towards a final decision at the end of the show.

Visualisation

It helps tremendously if the audience can refer back to suggestions during discussion. Even if it's just someone scribbling down what people shout out on a white-board, having a visual record of the live discussion can generate a wonderful response from a crowd.

Having a visual record of which decisions have been made can also help – especially to prevent sudden reverses or changes of direction that contradict previously made decisions.

In past games of *Who Wants to Be?*, audiences have changed the rules to incorporate an 'adjudicator' role: someone who can watch new votes and refer back to previous decisions to make sure that no contradictions are introduced and the momentum of the process is maintained.

Dramaturgy

The dramaturgy and visual style of *Who Wants to Be?* borrows from many TV gameshow formats. Of course any style or theme could be adopted, but the TV gameshow is instantly recognisable to many and helps to maintain everyone's excitement.

The seating or standing areas should resemble a small amphitheatre so that people see each other. Also everybody needs to see the visualisations (see below). There must be enough space between chairs so that the host or hosts can get to each participant.

The lighting should be dramatic, picking out the host and the member of the audience that is currently speaking – focusing all attention onto them. It also helps to amplify everyone's voices, adding to the gravitas of the situation. There should be enough ambient lighting so that participants can see each other's faces.

Having theme tunes, jingles and tension-building background music, particularly warming up to a vote is a great way to focus the audience's attention on the decisions to be made, and a crescendo when the decision is announced helps to emphasise the conclusion reached.

Technology

PA systems, projectors, computers, voting systems, visualisation engines and lighting rigs are very useful – but not essential. All the techniques above can be achieved adequately without any technology at all.

We are developing a range of open-source technologies for discussion, voting and visualisation, but they are all designed to carefully avoid getting in the way of the techniques described above.



One technology to avoid would be those voting systems sold by conference technology companies. Designed for shareholder meetings and secret ballots, these gadgets are usually hideously expensive and almost always too complicated for use in public space.

Evolution

One of the wonderful things about the *Who Wants to Be?* game structure is the capacity for refining and evolving through suggestions from participants. New ideas are constantly generated on how to do the show. The conclusion of our latest show in October 2007 was particularly dramatic because there were three almost equally popular competing ideas of what to do with the money. The decision came down to the final vote which was a dramatic climax. Next time we will incorporate a structure which generates three equally popular proposals which can be decided on in the final vote.

Authority

There are many potential problems and pitfalls in helping a diverse group of people make a decision – which is an inherently divisive and therefore political act. So far, the only serious problems we have encountered are with absent authorities. If a group of people comes together to make a decision, it is absolutely necessary that civic authorities who have a vital stake in the outcome of the decision are involved in the same decision-making process as everyone else. This means that there can be no censorship of any views of any participants, no exclusion of groups with a stake in the outcome of the decision, and no manipulation of the decision outside of the game. Essentially, the group must become the authority, and if the game is to be worth playing, it has to be as serious as it is entertaining.

Credits

Who Wants to Be? is inspired by an unlikely mix of sources:

The game-play is a form of *Nomic*, A game of self-amendment in which changing the rules is a move, invented by Peter Suber in 1982, [<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/nomic.htm>]. It borrows its dramaturgy from many wonderful TV shows – especially the ‘ask the audience’ feature of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. The decision-making and facilitation are inspired by years of participating in Talkaoke [<http://talkaoke.com>] and many consensus-based decision-making groups [<http://seedsforchange.org.uk/vcs/consens>].

Who Wants to Be was developed by The People Speak [see <http://thepeople.net/people.html> to meet the team].

3.5. The Transmission metadata standard

by Zoe Young and Mick Fuzz

Have you tried YouTube, Google Video, archive.org, blip.tv, Narrowstep, current.tv and the rest, but still can't find all the independent, underground, critical and ecological video we really kinda need in days like these?

Do your own independent films barely reach their potential audience?

Is most online video available only in some crappy format, not easy to download, with some corporation making money instead of the filmmaker? Why is video on the net, which is so clearly full of potential, still somehow just kind of failing? What we are missing may be the deep satisfaction achievable only with -

VIDEO METADATING!!!

Good, clean metadata connects people with video, video with people, video with video and people with people...

Why are feeds with clean metadata important?

Torrents and cheaper video hosting now enable large video files to flow around the net. Information wants to be free, and give or take the odd struggle, it probably will be. But how to sort through all the dross to find the films you actually want to watch?

What is metadata?

Metadata is "information about information". Think of the tagging involved in mp3 files that makes the iTunes software so convenient: *artist name, track name, album name*. In this particular case what interests us are the details that describe video files. Categories like *video title, video producer, date created* can all be considered metadata.

A metadata standard for online video will allow the creation of search and importation tools for content management systems (CMS). Open source examples of these are Drupal, Wordpress, Plone etc. Good, open metadata will allow CMS to easily search across the data contained in other video websites that use the standard. The standard will ensure common definitions for basic information such as title, date, author and language and (free) tags. This standard can facilitate both video upload forms and video feeds of data coming from each site.

What are media feeds?

If you are not sure what a 'feed' is and why it is useful then just look at the example of RSS feeds; instead of having to actively peruse a blog, looking for

possible updates, the RSS feature automatically feeds new updates to your RSS reader so that less effort has to be spent looking for updates. RSS has interesting effects in terms of generating new media “enclosures” through the tools and impact it has enabled.

- Miro [<http://www.getmiro.org>] is a video player that shows you a selection of channels. These channels are actually created from RSS media feeds.
- Podcasting – iTunes reads podcasts from wherever they are published and allows you to play the audio and video files downloaded from these podcasts. It also automatically checks back for new files as they are published. A podcast is another word for a RSS media feed.

Creating video with our own Transmission feeds and tools

We are starting small. Once the concept and technical aspects are proven, the more video publishers that adopt the standard, the better the existing sharing tools will work.

Why use the Transmission metadata standard when RSS already exists?

The range and detail of the information that any portal can search or republish is limited by the number and clarity of details provided in the feeds produced by online video publishers. With more extended feeds, the information can be detailed enough for users to be able to make more specific searches than the data in most existing RSS feeds allow. *Transmission* is a means to generate a more specialised, qualitative search.

Search tools

Sites using RSS media feeds should be able meaningfully share data about video files. So rather than going to one, probably corporate video website and searching for ‘oil,’ ‘climate change’ and ‘Africa,’ and coming up with mainstream news reports, porn ads and maybe some traders getting drunk on a beach, you can search across the independent, grassroots media projects that participate in the *Transmission* network for the real deal info.

This is already possible with RSS media feeds. With the *Transmission* feeds, it will offer more and better search facilities. The idea is to create tools so you can click on a keyword or enter a search term on any one participating site, find the video you seek, wherever in the network it is hosted.

Republishing tools

Using RSS media feeds, a site can search media feeds being imported into the site from its partners and other video sources.

Let's look at the example of <http://www.ifivatch.tv>. Zoe Young, the site co-ordinator, decided to use RSS feeds to update the database automatically, instead of having to hunt the internet regularly for new independent films about International Financial Institutions like the World Bank. Ifivatch.tv is now a Drupal content management system which imports relevant media feeds into the site's database, complete with links to the original video file (enclosures). The information is then pulled out of the database to display a page on the site for each video including title, description, keywords, a thumbnail image and links to where you can watch the film online. A search of this Drupal site sorts the lists of videos to present them according to keyword, source etc. Users are enabled to create new feeds of video data based on their particular interests, and thus source information for their own video re-publishing site.

This page outlines how Drupal-based media feed aggregation works: http://wiki.transmission.cc/index.php/Drupal_aggregation_of_Media_feeds.

Again, with the *Transmission* metadata feed, we will be better equipped to suck, share and display more data about relevant videos on each others' websites.

How does this relate to Deptford TV?

Say you're looking for video on Deptford's local history. What do you do today?

OK, start. Search YouTube for 'Deptford' – what is there? Someone's new-year party video, stations passed on the Docklands Light Railway, a local talent show... Where to go for more? Maybe www.archive.org, a little bit worthier? There's existing Deptford.TV stuff here, plus a pan across the high street and a bit of military history. Maybe www.clearerchannel.org, Beyondtv.org or Visionontv.net, for more politics? Hmm, interesting, but no obvious way to search. Current.tv? Nuffink at all. Blip.tv? There's an induction to the local library... BlinkX, a bit more stuff there, but it's mainly corporate media, and oh those ads are annoying... How long can you go on for?

Once the standard is up and implemented, Deptford.TV can be sucking media feeds from one search for 'Deptford' in all the web video databases connected through *Transmission*, and displaying all the videos thus found on its own website. Hence, it can become a free and open source local channel for the area, free from any one source of corporate or political control. And this new model Deptford.TV could be just one of a million issue- or region-specific portals, each channelling specific media to existing communities with certain interests in common.

Is there more to this project than the standard?

The *Transmission* standard is fully open source; its code is in the public domain, it is completely free to use and anyone with enough experience to be constructive can have a say in its future development. The standard is only part of the equation. For it to be useful there needs to be a fair degree of take-up by video distribution websites, and clear utility to users. That's where the www.transmission.cc network comes in.

The *Transmission* network emerged as a network of citizen journalists, video makers, artists, researchers, programmers and web producers, developing online video distribution tools for social justice and media democracy. The network is social as much as technical. The network aims to help video distribution sites realise the potential of media feeds, translation and subtitling tools, of aggregation and to help them implement them in their systems.

In this way we can use decentralised hosting, aggregation and distribution of online video to avoid the risks of commercial or political control.

Corporations will never share like this. They offer free hosting to build their brands and somehow sell us as their own. They centralise, enclose and decide what happens to our video, they sell their ads on the back of it. *Transmission*, by contrast, is bottom-up, connecting media that needs a voice from grassroots movements and projects and networks. Insofar as we promote the projects, processes and tools reached through www.transmission.cc, we are 'building identity round online community' – rather than 'building community round online identity,' as the multifarious brand builders on the net have decided it is their job to do.

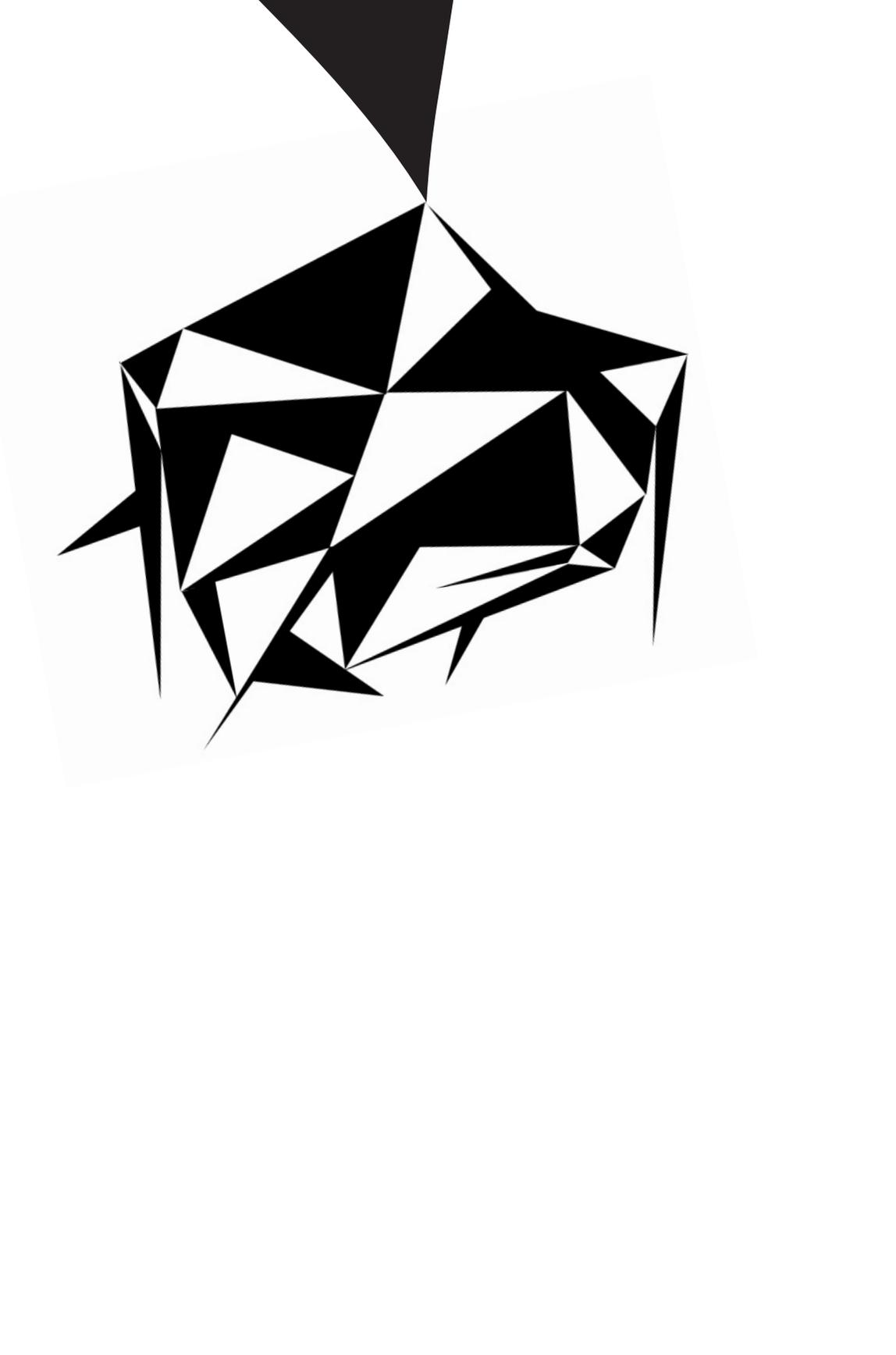
What you need to do to implement the standard

If you are a video distribution site interested in implementing the standard please get in touch with the Transmission Metadata working group:

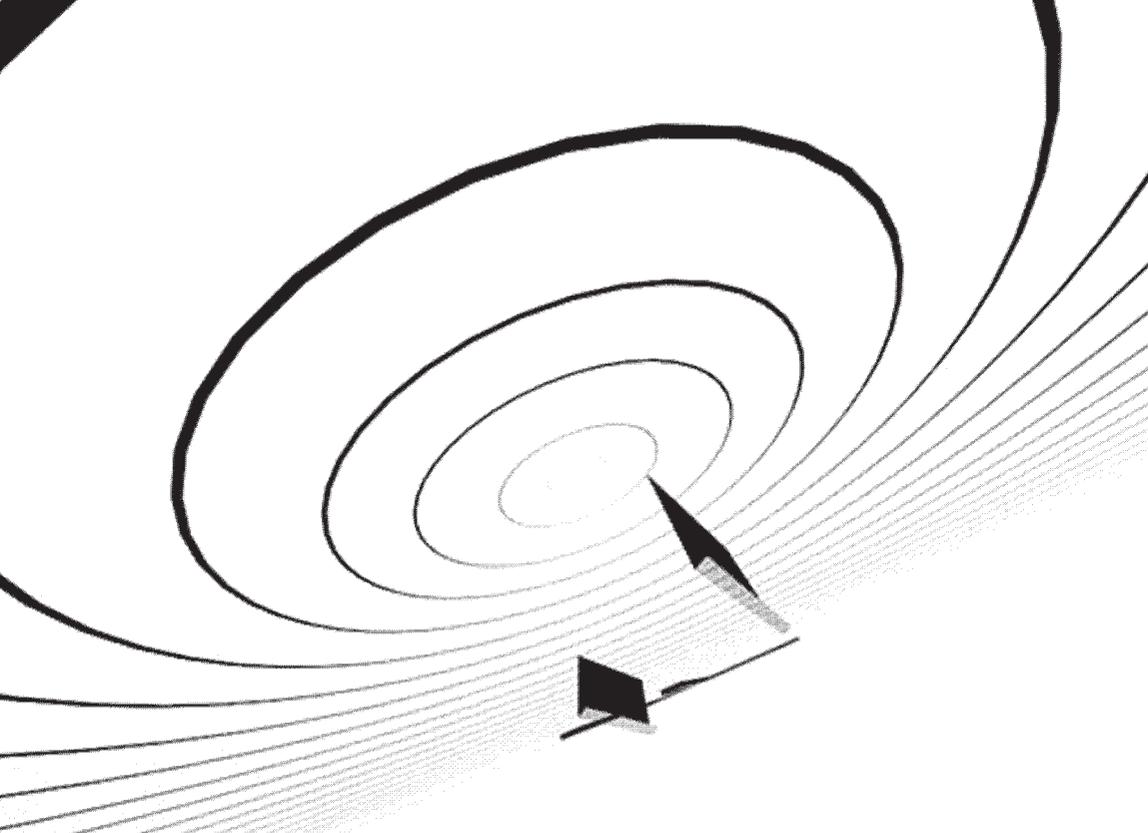
transmission-metadata@lists.transmission.cc

We will put you in touch with the help you need to update your input forms to produce feeds that meet the standard. The blogs on www.transmission.cc will offer occasional news updates, and the public face of the project will be <http://transmission.cc/metadating>.

And that, folks... is what online video metadating is all about!



4. *Social strategies*



IPRED

Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive 2

Proposed on July 12, 2005 by the Commission of the European Communities.

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4.1. Piracy & privacy

by Denis Jaromil Rojo

‘Piracy’ or ‘recycling of objects’?

Can piracy be seen as a social phenomenon of natural recycling of objects and as a global phenomenon of redistribution of welfare? This brief theoretical analysis focuses on how real situations can help poor people to make a living of their practices. As a utopian horizon for this speculation we argue that software and hardware should be open. We ask to stop calling digital piracy spontaneous development practices.

The laws of free trade dictate that when you exchange money for the purchase of any item, that item belongs to you without strings attached.

Although in our contemporary times the business market is betraying Adam Smith’s openness at its roots when confronted with the dynamism of digital developments. Hardware corporations build restricted objects for which software development and redistribution to the masses is accessible only for business partners. It is not an open market, it is not even competition: it is a colonizing monopoly of information technology.

The video game industry is the most developed branch of the contemporary electronic industries. In such a context technologies like ‘trusted computing’ have been already implemented (while in fact failing to work reliably) since several years. As a result of the impossibility to enforce control on the employment of devices by their legitimate owners, the game industry ended up putting the ‘piracy’ stamp on any activity of re-deploying devices for purposes they were not originally built or licensed for, nor licensed to the users.

As a matter of fact, such ‘pirate’ practices are firmly widespread across the world, especially the throughout the southern hemisphere, as underground economies which support weaker areas of society and their development. In a wider historical perspective, consider Ben-Atar (2004):

During the first decades of America’s existence as a nation, private citizens, voluntary associations, and government officials encouraged the smuggling of European inventions and artisans to the New World. These actions openly violated the intellectual property regimes of European nations. At the same time, the young republic was developing policies that set new standards for protecting industrial innovations. The American patent law of 1790 restricted patents exclusively to original inventors and established the principle that prior use anywhere in the world was grounds to invalidate a patent. But the story behind the story is a little more complicated – and leaders of the developing world would be wise to look more closely at how the American system operated in its first 50 years. In theory the United States pioneered a new

standard of intellectual property that set the highest possible requirements for patent protection-worldwide originality and novelty. In practice, the country encouraged widespread intellectual piracy and industrial espionage. Piracy took place with the full knowledge and sometimes even aggressive encouragement of government officials.

Congress never protected the intellectual property of European authors and inventors, and Americans did not pay for the reprinting of literary works and unlicensed use of patented inventions. What fueled the 19th century American boom was a dual system of principled commitment to an intellectual property regime combined with absence of commitment to enforce these laws. This ambiguous order generated innovation by promising patent monopolies. At the same time, by declining to crack down on technology pirates, it allowed for rapid dissemination of innovation that made American products better and cheaper.

We are not advocating ‘piracy of content,’ we ask that ecological re-use of devices in real-life situations is not deemed illegal, so that future network developments can take advantage of generic infrastructures already available worldwide. Modifying a Playstation to run homebrew software is necessary in order to recycle the device. Several exemplars of game devices are available on the second-hand market as cheap toys, made obsolete by more recent versions – so much that it is possible to have an artisanal economy growing around the refurbishing of such technologies.

Privacy is important. Keep it with you.

The distinction between what is public and what is private is becoming more and more blurred with the increasing intrusiveness of the media and advances in electronic technology. While this distinction is always the outcome of continuous cultural negotiation, it continues to be critical, for where nothing is private, democracy becomes impossible.

(<http://www.newschool.edu/centers/socres/privacy/Home.html>)

The Internet offers plenty of free services, especially so after the Web 2.0 wave and the “community” boom – while ironically, all this private information is hosted on servers owned by global corporations and monopolies.

We urge you to reflect on the importance of keeping privacy for personal data. Our present world is full of prevarication and political imprisonments, in addition to latent conflicts worldwide where media is mainly used for propaganda by the powers in charge. Some of us face the dangers of being tracked by oppressors opposing our self-definition, independent thinking and resistance to homogenization.

People need the possibility to protect their legitimate privacy as much

as their freedom to express themselves.

It is important to keep in mind that no-one else than *you* can ensure the privacy of your personal data. Server-hosted services and web-integrated technologies tend to gather data into huge information pools that are made available to established economical and cultural regimes.

Since version 2.4 of our free operating system *dyne:II* we introduced support for strong encryption of your home/private data (with Linux dm-crypt i586 optimized Rijndael hashed SHA256), to provide an efficient and user-friendly tool to protect your bookmarks, address book, documents and emails by carrying them with you, protected with a fairly strong cryptographic algorithm.

A passkey to read your data is stored inside a file, which is also protected by a password. It is possible to keep everything with you on a small USB stick, still being sure that the data won't be easily recovered in case you lose it. You can also give the passkey protecting your data to a friend, to make the data inaccessible until you meet again, which can be useful in the case of tricky transports.

A public presentation of our privacy protection mechanism was held at the Ars Electronica Symposium 2007 [slides: http://bricolabs.net/directions/goodbye_privacy] tackling controversial issues such as anti-piracy restrictions, privacy invasion and more. See also Dmytri Kleiner's & Brian Wyrick's "InfoEnclosure 2.0", warning about the centralization of information [<http://www.metamute.org/en/InfoEnclosure-2.0>]. Some other people raising awareness are *Po-litech* [<http://www.politechbot.com>], *Quintessenz* [<http://www.quintessenz.org>] and *European Digital Rights* [<http://www.edri.org>].

Why privacy?

The distinction between what is public and what is private is becoming more and more blurred with the increasing intrusiveness of the media and advances in electronic technology. While this distinction is always the outcome of continuous cultural negotiation, it continues to be critical, for where nothing is private, democracy becomes impossible.

(<http://www.newschool.edu/centers/socres/privacy/Home.html>; stated one year before the 9/11 eschatological brainwash)

Piracy does not simply exist because there are bloody-minded people who don't care for the rules and laws of the civilised world. It tends to emerge whenever there is a hegemonic power that asserts itself by establishing a trade monopoly. A monopoly, by its very nature, cuts out competition by other traders and destroys existing means of trade. People deprived of their traditional

way of making a living resort to criminal activity. The hegemonic power, itself not averse to using violence to force others into submission, considers itself to be the law and defines others' activity as piracy. (Medosch 2003)

Tony Onouha died in August 2007 trying to escape undercover cops chasing him for selling copied DVDs in an internet café in Athens [<http://thecaravan.org/node/1326>].

IPRED2: Intellectual Property Rights Enforcement Directive 2, Proposed on July 12, 2005 by the Commission of the European Communities:

This directive moves towards the 'privatization of justice' delivering to copyright holdings a direct role in investigations for copyright violations. Following IPRED2, information about citizens can be collected and used by private corporations in marketing surveys even without explicit authorization of the subjects, in contrast with the article 8 of the EU convention on human rights. (Excerpts translated from the Italian analysis by Giuseppe Corasaniti)

Urgency

Context is crucial. *Imagine: jailed bloggers in Cairo... investigative journalists in Palermo... self-determined women in patriarchal environments... native communities in Oaxaca... citizens demonstrating at the G8... file-sharers being issued thousand-dollar fines for uploading some songs*

Building autonomous networks in extreme conditions is exposing nodes to a risk that is directly proportional to the size of the network. The risk grows higher as more digital communication systems pervade societies with centralized architectures.

Solutions

- ✦ Build peer to peer communication architectures
- ✦ Leave private individuals store their own data
- ✦ Build autonomous, intuitive and embedded security systems
- ✦ In extreme cases, scale security from personal to collaborative

Dyne:II GNU/Linux live CD (easy to employ)

- ✦ Nomadic architecture
 - ✦ Mobile personal data storage system
 - ✦ Fairly strong encryption
 - ✦ Easy and intuitive, no extra operations required
 - ✦ All of your home directory stays in an encrypted file
 - ✦ Operations are done *live on the file during usage*
- ... more on <http://dynebolic.org>

4.2. The documentation of everything: More notes on the continuing search for the real in representation

by Lennaart van Oldenborgh

What is meant by the term “reality” has, of course, been at the centre of philosophical debate ever since philosophy was invented, which hasn’t made the discussion of “reality television” or, for that matter, documentary filmmaking any easier. Yet, as the majority of TV producers will tell you, “reality sells”, which is to say that somehow there is a discernable demand among audiences for the uncontrived, for the shocking and the mundane, or whatever makes it feel more “real”. Chasing this quality of “realness” is an extremely precarious occupation of course: whatever made something feel “real” the first time around will usually look contrived the second time – so throwing in, and then managing factors of unpredictability is the stock in trade of reality television.

The content of our fascination with this “realness” was the main subject of my previous article, ‘Performing the Real’ (van Oldenborgh 2007). In this examination, I repeatedly referred to the Lacanian formulation of the Real as the not-yet-represented and therefore traumatic, ‘impossible real’ (that which in the Lacanian symbolic/imaginary order is not part of the realm of possibilities). This has a lot in common with the ‘transcendent real’ of the Platonic tradition: both are beyond direct human perception, both have a blinding (Plato) or traumatic (Lacan) effect on the subject who is exposed to it. In representation, this is the “real” we look for in the first instance in porn and snuff (you can neither fake a human death or a come-shot), and which drives a lot of our fascination with “reality content” on television as well as the Internet. (Top of the hit list in youtube right now is “battle at Kruger park” which can legitimately be called animal snuff; as for porn, well...)

This time I would like to identify another realm of our fascination with the real in the urge to *document everything*. The expression of our fascination with a real-time quotidian reality can be seen in webcams, real-time reality TV shows like Big Brother and even comprehensive personal blogs and vlogs. The documentary database is potentially the ideal form for such wall-to-wall mediation of everyday life, and with ever-cheaper data storage it is difficult to see where the limits would be.

But the first implication of real-time documentation of everything is of course that nothing becomes visible: the sheer scale of the data generated means that it becomes wholly inaccessible without the work of processing,

selecting and editing, all of which are quite labour-intensive.

The most obvious example of the exploitation of the quotidian real in television is of course the crushing ennui that is *Big Brother Live*. In my everyday role as broadcast video editor I have had the dubious privilege of working on almost every series of BB since 2004, and have been able to experience the vast logistical and editorial machinery to produce its realness first hand. At any given time there is a crew of around 150 people at work monitoring, documenting and processing every detail of what goes on in the house. Around six live cameramen, backed up with a bank of remote-controlled cameras follow the action in two teams, each producing a live switched video stream, and an 'iso' stream for cutaway shots. In the control gallery there is an 'on-air director,' a video switcher, a logger and an audio mixer on each of these main streams, all in all about 25—30 people involved in merely the capture and registration of the "everyday life" in the house.

All the material is continuously recorded, with backups, by seven Beta-Cam SX decks and a central video server. The volume of the data on the server (5 continuous streams) means that it is limited to the full-resolution footage of only the last 24 hours at any given time: for any earlier footage you have to refer to old-fashioned videotapes in a library that quickly fills up a couple of portacabins. All this raw footage can be seen as a "database" for the producers to draw on when they construct their stories of the BB house. So-called story-producers, editors, edit assistants and other technicians form another day-to-day crew of around 30 to process and edit this material for public consumption. Beyond that, senior producers, production staff, 'house producers' (who plan and execute activities for the housemates), security, set building and maintenance make up the rest of the BB army. The sheer scale of the operation gives an indication of how labour-intensive such comprehensive documentation really is, although there is plenty of experimentation with less intensive forms of documentation.

Low-tech documentation of the quotidian real occurs mainly on the Internet, for obvious reasons. The webcam tradition is a case in point, the most recent example of which is the 24-hour 'point of view' webcam strapped to Justin Kan's head which is the source of a YouTube 'live' channel [<http://www.justin.tv>]. The immediate question that presents itself here is one of archiving: is all the footage going to be kept somewhere? If so, how will it be organised?

The first question is one of technology, and relates to the usual chicken-and-egg: does the demand create the exponential increase in capacity, or is it the other way around? In any case, it is not inconceivable anymore that someone's every waking hour "point of view" could be registered and stored

somewhere as the ultimate documentation of his/her life. This leads us to the second question: simple common sense proves that to examine someone's fully documented life-time would take a life-time, so how would it be organised?

If my experience on BB is anything to go by, the editing process is extremely labour-intensive: every 24 hours of BB documentation takes at least three times that many man-hours to boil down to a one-hour summary that is in any way watchable and representative.

Any logarithm-driven, automatic editing process is bound to be suspect, and could only be used for reductive statistical analysis useful for governments or very large corporations [ed.'s note: or as an experimental art-form; see *Download Finished*, chapter 3.1.]. Alternatively, the material could simply be stored in chronological order, ready for any researcher to access a relevant date, but this means an enormous amount of built-in redundancy: billions of hours of footage that no one will ever get to see.

Human narcissism will get the better of common sense in this and we can be sure to see exhaustive digital mausoleums in the near future: people building their own memorials, monuments in Second Life or Facebook specifically designed for a digital "after-life".

Back to the original question: does any of this bring us any closer to a representation of the real?

The dilemma here is reminiscent of that of the Cartographer's Guild in Jorge Luis Borges' short story *On Exactitude in Science*: they produced a map of the Empire so precise that it was exactly the same size as the empire itself, but later generations quickly realised the uselessness of this map and gave it up to the elements. This story not only expresses the Taoist principle that nature can never be completely described (for such a description would have to duplicate nature), but it also raises the question of the purpose of representation: if representation can only ever *approximate* the real (as it seems to), it surely is because it relies on selection and condensation for it to be useful for anybody, indeed for it to *mean* something. By itself, reality is meaningless; in fact when we fetishise the instance of reality in representation, what we are really fetishising is the instance *reality becomes meaningful* in representation. In fact you could say that this is precisely the instance that reality becomes symbolic, i.e. the moment that it ceases to be reality, and can be recuperated for the realm of representation.

What we are fascinated by in reality television – and indeed in documentary – is not reality itself, but the death of reality.

4.3. *Involve me, and I will understand: Introducing the data sphere*

by Adnan Hadzi

Tell me, and I will forget.

Show me, and I may remember.

Involve me, and I will understand. (Confucius, BC 450)

We are in many ways living in times of slavery of the mind. Through Intellectual Property, our culture is owned by a few. As parts of this reader take up the fraught issue of how Deptford's history is entangled in slavery I want to elaborate upon this idea of slavery, extending it to our ideas and our minds through referring to Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762/1968).

Thus, however we look at the question, the "right" of slavery is seen to be void; void, not only because it cannot be justified, but also because it is nonsensical, because it has no meaning. The words "slavery" and "right" are contradictory, they cancel each other out. Whether as between one man and another, or between one man and a whole people, it would always be absurd to say: "I hereby make a covenant with you which is wholly at your expense and wholly to my advantage; I will respect it so long as I please and you shall respect it so long as I wish." (Rousseau 1762/1968)

The Debian Foundation, one of the biggest platforms for the Linux operating system, coined the 'Debian Social Contract' for the free and Open Source software community reflecting many of Rousseau's thoughts:

Our priorities are our users and free software. We will be guided by the needs of our users and the free software community. We will place their interests first in our priorities. We will support the needs of our users for operation in many different kinds of computing environments. We will not object to non-free works that are intended to be used on Debian systems, or attempt to charge a fee to people who create or use such works. We will allow others to create distributions containing both the Debian system and other works, without any fee from us. In furtherance of these goals, we will provide an integrated system of high-quality materials with no legal restrictions that would prevent such uses of the system. (Debian, 2004)

In this chapter I will extend the idea of the Debian Social Contract to media, suggesting similar principles that can be applied to free and open media and define these as a pre-condition for peer-to-peer database documentaries such as Deptford.TV. In the field of media, so-called Open Content licenses have been created over the last decade in response to how copyright laws have changed in favour of huge media conglomerates. A famous example is the copyright-term extension act of 1998 – often labeled the 'Mickey Mouse

Protection Act', due to the extensive lobbying by the Walt Disney corporation that ensured that Mickey Mouse's absence from the public domain.

Another, more recent example of the battle over social contracts and the sharing of rights – and its connected wealth – is the Writers Guild of America Strike which took place in Hollywood in 2007: more than 12,000 writers went on strike from November 2007 until February 2008. The strike was against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers which cares for the interests of the American film and television producers. The strike started because the two sides could not agree on how to handle the revenues from digital media sales such as DVDs and, more importantly, the increasing revenues from Internet-distributed media. The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers refused to negotiate an increasing share for the digital media sales.

On the 8th of January 2008 the strikers had a symbolic victory with the shutting down of the Golden Globe TV gala and it looked likely that also the Oscar Award Ceremony would be cancelled for the first time in its history. The writers decided to compete with the studios by collaboratively producing and distributing their own shows online and *The Independent* went so far as to state that the strike could 'potentially [...] revolutionise the way television is made and consumed in the online area' (Gumbel, 2008).

With social contracts such as the Debian Social Contract in place one can decide how to produce, distribute and share media. But these alternatives are quickly corrupted if the issues, especially in regards to author's rights, are not looked at in a sincere way as once defined by Rousseau and rewritten by the Debian Software Foundation.

I ask: are FLOSS (Free / Libre / Open Source Software) and other, related open and free content licenses likely to develop further in the future providing a platform for alternative media practices? I argue that the development of computers and microchips with built-in copy control technology, and the current changes in the Intellectual Property legislation endanger the sustainability of such alternative practices and licensing schemes. Worryingly, the social contracts that relate to copyright and intellectual property tend to breach the current privacy protection of consumers: in order to enforce new copyright laws, control needs to be tightened by surveying the computers consumers use in their private sphere. Unfortunately these new control mechanisms can also be used to silence critical voices.

These are ultimately issues of legislation. I know that I am now digressing into the legal terrain, but I do so in an attempt to outline a possibility practiced with the Deptford.TV project. The concern was how to move

from an abstract idea of social contracts to a concrete legislation which could enable a cultural production that is not deemed antithetical, or oppositional. This can be done through defining the independent terms and conditions, namely free and open content licenses. At this point I would like to offer the reader a link to the video clip *Staking a Claim in Cyberspace* from Paper Tiger TV, in order to involve you into the practice of media production. Unfortunately this is not legally possible within the academic context: one can only get hold of a copy or link to the file through the more nebulous file-sharing networks...

Social contracts

Yet in spite of this broad spectrum of possibilities, there is no place where one can prepare for a collective practice. At best, there are the rare examples where teams (usually partnerships of two) can apply as one for admission into institutions of higher learning. But once in the school, from administration to curriculum, students are forced to accept the ideological imperative that artistic practice is an individual practice. (Critical Arts Ensemble, 2000)

With the concept of social contracts, the assumption that all individuals are sovereign changes. With social contracts the people give up sovereignty to a system that will make sure that individual rights are protected. A portion of each individual's sovereignty is given up for the common good (in anarchist terms one would speak of solidarity). Rousseau believes that the sovereignty stays with the people. If the people are not content with the governing force they rise up. Rousseau's social contract was therefore one of the main references for the French Revolution.

In the 18th century Rousseau published *The Social Contract* (1762/1968). Rousseau thinks that there is a conflict between obedience and people's freedom. He argues that our natural freedom is our own will. Rousseau defined Social Contract as a law "written" by everybody. His argument was that if everybody was involved in making the laws they would only have to obey to themselves and as such follow their free will. How could people then create a common will? For Rousseau this would only have been possible in smaller communities through the practice of caring for each other and managing conflicts for the common good – ultimately through love. He imagined a society of the size of the city of Geneva, where he came from, as an ideal ground for the implementation of the Social Contract theory. Ironically it was France through its revolutionaries (amongst whom Robespierre was a great admirer of Rousseau's writing) which implemented the Social Contract theory. Nevertheless France read it differently, imposing Social Contracts to the people.

In this chapter I outline the concept of social contracts in terms of freedom and ownership through a form of coalition as defined by the Critical Arts Ensemble. I explain how one can have an ad-hoc coalition to implement a strategy in order to achieve a common aim. Therefore the coalition only needs to function until the strategy has been implemented. Then a standard is created which can be adapted by society.

In other words, for peer-to-peer film-making the extension of copyright legislation is an important social contract. As argued below, copyright laws are not in effect functioning anymore in regard to digital distribution. Consequently, artists, programmers and activists have been looking for alternatives and extensions of these laws. According to the Critical Arts Ensemble (CAE), collectives can configure themselves to address any issue or space, and they can use all types of media. The result is a practice that defies specialization.

Solidarity is based on similarity in terms of skills and political/aesthetic perceptions. Most of the now classic cellular collectives of the 70s and 80s, such as Ant Farm, General Idea, Group Material, Testing the Limits (before it splintered), and Gran Fury used such a method with admirable results. Certainly these collectives' models for group activity are being emulated by a new generation (Critical Art Ensemble, 2000)

In the Deptford.TV project the groups doing a documentary film together often share a similar political and/or aesthetic approach to the film but different levels of technological know-how. I borrow the term 'cell', used by the CAE to describe the organism of their group, to refer to the Deptford.TV collective. In these cells, solidarity arrives through difference. Because the individuals bring in different knowledge into a cell, the possibilities of endless conflicts are reduced. Film teams are ideally built up with participants specialised in directing, editing, producing, operating the camera etc. When a cell decides how to produce the film/project those members with the most know-how in their special fields are becoming authoritative in the sense of deciding how to film, direct, edit etc. CAE argue that solidarity based on difference creates functional and more powerful groups. They compare this to the dominant approach of solidarity based on equality and consent democracy, which was adopted by many tactical media groups such as the Ant Farm collective. Such groups had a fear that hierarchy would lead to stronger members becoming dominant over the weaker members within the collective. The Critical Art Ensemble does not follow the democratic model.

Coalitions, not communities

The collective does recognize its merits; however, CAE follows Foucault's principle that hierarchical power can be productive (it does not necessarily lead to domination), and hence uses a floating hierarchy to produce projects. [...] Consequently, there has always been a drive toward finding a social principle that would allow like-minded people or cells to organize into larger groups. Currently, the dominant principle is "community." CAE sees this development as very unfortunate. The idea of community is without doubt the liberal equivalent of the conservative notion of "family values." [...] Talking about a gay community is as silly as talking about a "straight community." The word community is only meaningful in this case as a euphemism for "minority." The closest social constellation to a community that does exist is friendship networks, but those too fall short of being communities in any sociological sense. (Critical Art Ensemble, 2000)

In Deptford.TV people are coming together from different backgrounds but share similar concerns. We deliberately try to group together participants with different skills. These participants choose to document specific topics that fall within their personal interests thus accepting that conflicts could occur, while approaching these as positive for the overall production of the documentation process. CAE explain that this kind of alliance, 'created for purposes of large scale cultural production and/or for the visible consolidation of economic and political power, is known as a coalition' (Critical Art Ensemble, 2000). Those who take responsibility within a Deptford.TV cell are also those who are most involved in decision-making in the spirit that, in order to keep the coalition together, what is important is *tools, not rules*.

Similarly, theorists of the online world like Howard Rheingold increasingly acknowledge that notions of 'community' with all its *gemeinschaft*-like connotations (close-knit, familial, based on mutual solidarity etc.) are often overstated. Steven Jones (1995) notes how 'community' is generally conceptualised as (1) solidarity institutions, (2) primary interaction or (3) institutionally distinct groups. Only really the third of these, Jones argues – community as institutionally distinct groups – makes sense in the context of computer-mediated-communications. While I would diverge from Jones's argument in that this mode of communication is not only socially produced, but equally technically constituted, it is notable how it still challenges the idea of community as being based on geographic proximity to the extent that one could, like Jones, talk about computer-mediated communities as 'pseudo-communities'.

Communities formed by CMC have been called "virtual communities" and defined as incontrovertibly social spaces in which people still meet face-to-face, but under new definitions of both "meet" and "face". (Jones 1995: 19)

With the recognition borrowed from Miller & Slater (2000) and effectively repeated by Andrea Rota both in this reader and our previous one (2006) we must not assume an insurmountable gap between the alleged 'online' and 'offline' worlds: Deptford.TV is a local, situated practice *as well as* one which stretches into the online world. Nevertheless, it is one which should not be mistaken for a permanent, tight-knit community; rather, it is a temporary, tool-based (technological as much as social), if not occasional coalition.

Open Content Licenses

Open Content Licensing schemes, as outlined in Lawrence Liang's book *Guide to Open Content Licenses* (2004), help to create an understanding of a shared culture – culture as a communication medium rather than a commodity. Culture and creativity very often build upon previous works, through reusing, remixing and reinterpreting works; often this is a fundamental part of any creative practice. Therefore the academic and journalistic concept of 'fair use' could be an important part of social contracts for creative practices. But fair use and even 'public domain' is under threat. New digital copyrights such as the Millennium Copyright Act (1998) were written in order to tackle file-sharing, illegalising this new technology in many countries without considering any of its benefits.

This is a recurring discussion that tends to take place around any invention of new communication technologies. An example is the invention of VCR recorders: at the time it became clear that those trying to stop the distribution and production of VCRs, especially the big studios, made huge profits from rentals and sales in the new home-video market. The same could prove to be the case in regards to the file-sharing technologies.

The original intention behind copyright laws was to support a vibrant production of culture through the protection of producers and artists. As the current copyright legislation cannot be fully implemented when it comes to practices of online distribution and file-sharing, new copyright laws are proposed by the lobby of media giants which violate the private sphere of the consumer and threaten the existence of a democratic public sphere. The irony behind the attempt to create a more strict copyright through eliminating fair use is that this original intention to support cultural production might come to a stand-still, as the artists will not be able to access and use cultural materials they need in order for them to produce new work. As a result, stricter copyright laws disadvantage artists and small producers while they work for the benefit of the already powerful media conglomerates.

For the most part, copyrights are not held by individuals, but by corporate entities who are part of the content industry. The content industry would argue that strengthening their position allows them to provide greater incentives to individual creators, but many creators vociferously challenge that notion. Strengthening copyright laws does improve the position of the content industry by giving them a relatively untempered monopoly over content, but it does so at the expense of the public good. (Besser, 2001)

The public sphere has traditionally been determined by law. Here I coin the term *data sphere* as an extension of the public sphere following Fenton & Downey's (2003) argumentation on 'counter-public' spheres, in order to describe a digital and networked public sphere where practices such as peer-to-peer networking cannot possibly adhere to traditional copyright laws and cultural content is made available in complete disregard of current legislation. This happens largely through processes that are wholly machinic: automated, self-emergent, governed by protocol rather than direct human intent. Consequently, these copyright laws are, for the first time, being breached by a critical mass of technology; technologies which are mainly in the hands of consumers. When observable coalitions arise out of this mass, they resemble a 'data sphere' more than an intentional, human-centred 'public sphere' in the traditional sense, since the coming-together need not be by personal volition but by the ways the actual infrastructures are configured. If the 'dataspaces' of Latour and others (which Jonas Andersson writes about in chapter 2.4 of this volume) make possible a tracing and documentation of how existing social structures come together and become constituted, 'data spheres' are the more particular instantiations that form through an actual mobilisation *within* these dataspaces.

Social contracts and laws will eventually be defined for these data spheres, but until then the big 'user-generated' platforms such as YouTube, MySpace and Facebook try to get their hands on every uploaded piece of content in accord with the old, non-efficacious, copyright legislation. Reading the terms and conditions of those mega-platforms makes one wonder how it can be that so many artists and independent producers hand over the rights for their content to these platforms. This is an excerpt from Facebook's own terms and conditions:

By posting User Content to any part of the Site, you automatically grant, and you represent and warrant that you have the right to grant, to the Company an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, transferable, fully paid, worldwide license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, publicly perform, publicly display, reformat, translate, excerpt (in whole or in part) and distribute such User Content for any purpose, commercial, advertising, or otherwise, on or

in connection with the Site or the promotion thereof, to prepare derivative works of, or incorporate into other works, such User Content, and to grant and authorize sublicenses of the foregoing.

(Facebook Terms & Conditions, 2008)

These platforms present themselves as open-content providers that host a democratic discourse by offering members of the public freedom of speech. In reality they hold the contributors as slaves to advertisement which is, at the moment, the only real means of income generation and profit-making for these ventures. Investments in this field can be on a grand scale: Google bought YouTube in 2007 for \$1.65 billion. These companies need to see a quick return on their investment so they become a “wolf in sheep’s clothing,” marketing themselves as providers of free and open content while in fact implementing strict proprietary rules.

Consciousness of desire and the desire for consciousness together and indissolubly constitute that project which in its negative form has as its goal the abolition of classes and the direct possession by the workers of every aspect of their activity. The opposite of this project is the society of the spectacle, where the commodity contemplates itself in a world of its own making.

(Debord, 1994)

I suggest that the only use of these platforms should be tactical – as when publishing content on YouTube one can benefit from higher visibility, but this comes with abandoning one’s rights. The use of file-sharing technologies on the other hand is strategic – as the participants do not need to abandon their rights and can bypass the draconian terms and conditions imposed by platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. Michel de Certeau defines ‘strategy’ in *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clienteles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.

(de Certeau 1984)

Often strategic models depend on the building of infrastructures and the production of laws, goods, literature, inventions, etc. Through this production process a strategy aspires to sustain itself. I argue that Internet is such an infrastructure and is, by its very ontology, a file-sharing technology. As such, use of the Internet through file-sharing is almost impossible to restrict

by enforcing non-realistic copyright laws. This use is a strategical utilisation of an infrastructure that is already anti-hierarchical. This strategic utilisation generates data spheres, which have to be moderated through social contracts since the anti-hierarchy and openness of the dataspheres does not lend itself to restriction in the traditional sense.

Adding Open Content licensing schemes to the file-sharing distribution technology enables audiences to become active not only in the process of viewing and criticising content but also, and more importantly, in its production process. Open, free content licenses are often referred to as ‘copyleft’.

In the online hacker lexicon jargon.net, copyleft is thus defined as:

copyleft /kop'ee-left/ /n./ [play on 'copyright'] 1. The copyright notice ('General Public License') carried by GNU EMACS and other Free Software Foundation software, granting reuse and reproduction rights to all comers (but see also General Public Virus) 2. By extension, any copyright notice intended to achieve similar aims.

In 1983 Richard Stallman, a software programmer, started the GNU Project, creating software to be shared with the goal to develop a completely free operating system. For this, Stallman invented the General Public License (GPL) which allows for the freedom of reuse, modification and reproduction of works.

Copyright asserts ownership and attribution to the author. Copyright protects the attribution to the author in relation to his/her work. It also protects the work from being altered by others without the author's consent and restricts the reproduction of the work. Copyleft is not, as many think, an anti-copyright. Copyleft is an extension of copyright: it includes copyright through its regulations for attribution and ownership reference to the author. But it also extends copyright by allowing for free re-distribution of the work and, more controversially, the right to change the work if the altered version attributes the original author and is re-distributed under the same terms.

For the “copy-paste generation,” copyleft is already the natural propagation of digital information in a society which provides the possibility of interacting through digital networks. In doing so one naturally uses content generated by others, remixing, altering or redistributing this.

Simple “public domain” publication will not work, because some will try to abuse this for profit by depriving others of freedom; as long as we live in a world with a legal system where legal abstractions such as copyright are necessary, as responsible artists or scientists we will need the formal legal abstractions of copyleft that ensure our freedom and the freedom of others.

(Debian, 1997)

One of the main current Linux platforms is the Debian Project. Debian describes itself as ‘an association of individuals who have made common cause to create a free operating system’ (Debian, 1997). Debian, as a group of volunteers, created the Debian GNU Linux operating system. ‘The project and all developers working on the project adhere to the Debian Social Contract’ (Debian, 2004). In this social contract Debian defines the criteria for free software and, as such, which software can be distributed over their network.

The Deptford.TV project is strategically building up its own server system with the goal to distribute over file-sharing networks rather than relying on YouTube or MySpace, thus distributing the files over the Free Art License in the spirit of the GPL and the Creative Commons ‘Share-Alike’ attribution license. Nevertheless, Debian reviewed the Creative Commons licenses and concluded that none of the Creative Commons core licenses actually are free in accordance to the Debian Free Software Guidelines, recommending that works released under these licenses ‘should not be included in Debian’ (Debian, 2005).

Creative Commons (CC) was critically discussed in the first Deptford.TV reader by rota & Pozzi (2006), specifically criticising the ‘Non-Commercial’ clause of the CC license. This Non-Commercial (NC) license forbids for-profit uses of works. Despite that, it is often used by content creators who want their media to be distributed and find useful the exchange of information and critical opinions about their work. In this way, a common pool is created. For commercial use of material distributed under the the NC license, one would have to contact the original author for permission. Nevertheless, the definition of ‘Non-Commercial’ is, strictly speaking, very difficult. Many producers use CC licenses to distribute content cheaply via the Internet in order to raise attention to their works. It is interesting that through this attitude we see more artists relying on revenues coming from higher visibility rather than sales of their work. For musicians, for example, this can be live concerts; for photographers, ad-hoc commissions. According to rota, ‘the Non-Commercial clause would only limit diffusion of their works, as well as limit the availability of freely reusable work in the communal pool from which everyone can draw and contribute back’ (rota & Pozzi 2006).

Unfortunately these uncertainties in the Creative Commons system made it corruptible. This is the reason why YouTube, MySpace etc. are often referred to as “open” user-generated content platforms. They provide tools which merely *make it seem* as if there’s real sharing going on, whereas in reality these sites are about driving traffic to one single site and controlling this site.

Deptford.TV uses the General Public License (GPL), the Free Art Li-

cense and the Creative Commons Share-Alike attribution license as a statement of copyleft attitude. The basic reference for the Deptford.TV project is the General Public License, a Free Software license, which grants to you the four following freedoms:

0. The freedom to run the program for any purpose.
1. The freedom to study how the program works and adapt it to your needs.
2. The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour.
3. The freedom to improve the program and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits.

You may exercise the freedoms specified here provided that you comply with the express conditions of this license. The principal conditions are:

- You must conspicuously and appropriately publish on each copy distributed an appropriate copyright notice and disclaimer of warranty and keep intact all the notices that refer to this License and to the absence of any warranty; and give any other recipients of the Program a copy of the GNU General Public License along with the Program. Any translation of the GNU General Public License must be accompanied by the GNU General Public License.
- If you modify your copy or copies of the program or any portion of it, or develop a program based upon it, you may distribute the resulting work provided you do so under the GNU General Public License. Any translation of the GNU General Public License must be accompanied by the GNU General Public License.
- If you copy or distribute the program, you must accompany it with the complete corresponding machine-readable source code or with a written offer, valid for at least three years, to furnish the complete corresponding machine-readable source code.

Michael Stutz (1997) describes how the GPL can also be applied to non-software information. The GPL states that it 'applies to any program or other work which contains a notice placed by the copyright holder saying it may be distributed under the terms of this General Public License,' so according to Stutz this 'program,' then, may not necessarily be a computer software program – any work of any nature that can be copyrighted can be copylefted with the GNU GPL (Stutz, 1997).

The Free Art License as well as the CC Share-Alike attribution license follow the attitude of the GPL. As the Creative Commons 'SA-BY' license states, you are free to Share (to copy, distribute and transmit the work) and to Remix (to adapt the work).

In many ways, the GPL provides a de-militarized zone. Everyone agrees to leave the big guns at the door. Period. The non-commercial CC license, on the other hand, is a pledge not to use the guns, if you play nice. And, to be on the sure side, being nice means to consume, but not to build upon works

in a serious way. [...] essentially (and to daringly simplify) GPL comes from an ethical conflict/dilemma, while CC comes from economic/jurisdictional observation. (Princic, 2005)

These licenses are unfortunately not entirely compatible with each other, however they carry the same attitude. Like with the discussion between free and open-source licensing schemes and the resulting labeling of FLOSS (Free / Libre / Open Source Software) I argue that alternatively the same can be done with media to represent the same attitude. Therefore one could perhaps speak of “FLOMS” (as in Free / Libre / Open *Media Systems*), since the discussions and differences in the open media field between GPL and CC are like the ones in the software field between free software and open-source software. To use file-sharing as technology and to apply the attitude of copyleft is a possible strategy for alternative media practices with the aim of creating a social contract, a legal model in which the culture of sharing becomes valuable. Therefore concentrating on a copyleft attitude for media production might be a better way forward to bring social contracts into the data sphere and with it a new discussion around the meaning of the public sphere and the shared cultural heritage of the file-sharing generation.

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