

- About PB och Sverige

Let me begin by saying a few words about Piratbyrå, as I'm sure not everyone is familiar with it. Piratbyrå is a bunch of people from Sweden. Internationally we are most known for creating the bittorrent tracker - The Pirate Bay.

But in Sweden, we are mostly known as one of the dominant figures of the file-sharing debate. Not at least because of The Pirate Bay, and the controversies surrounding that, we have a rather active debate on file-sharing and copyright in Sweden - in the press, on tv, in blogs, in seminars, in the academia and in everyday lives.

This was not the case when we first started out back in 2003.

First we must understand that Sweden was and is very proud of cultural industries. From the present idea of the Swedish music export (branding and income) to the film history with Bergman (a golden age they hope to re-create). There is an almost arrogant pride to it.

What you had in the mainstream press at the time was the antipiracy-lobby portraying piracy as the anti-thesis of a healthy cultural climate. (reduce income, prevent re-bergmanisation)

Provocative to see potential in file-sharing. We saw it as a good thing. It created a dynamic cultural climate and the free sharing as something future society would have to build on.

So who is in Piratbyrå? Depending on how you define it you could say we are anything from 5 to thousand of members.

Piratbyrå does not consist of a given group of people, but the links and exchanges between people - it works as a network. And in a network, some links are strong. These create the necessary trust needed to keep the consistency of the network. They hold it together. There needs to be some sort of core. This would be to view Piratbyrå as an organization.

Most links are weak. They create the necessary links to other groups, networks, cultures and scenes. Without them, Piratbyrå would only be an internal matter for a group of friends. This would be to view Piratbyrå as an ongoing conversation.

We have different degrees of nearness and distance. Nearness allows for exchange of ideas.

Distance allows for independent development and fresh outlooks. The oscillation between these is what creates a dynamic network.

This way of working clashes with the mass media logic and their perception of us, social movements and politics.

The mass media and others influenced by that way of thinking often ask....opinions, goals, solutions, for or against, representing the Other side.

....We work through networks. The object is not an opinion, a program - like a political party. But experimentation, development, activity, production. For our self and for others.

This also calls for a new kind of ethic that is not based on formulating a goal or a common moral ground.

Therefore it is useless to be for or against file-sharing. A copy is immoral - if it has good or bad consequences can only be decided on a case by case basis. We avoid these generalising claims. The network is not just a way of organizing people or information but also the ideas themselves. There is no output outside of the network, it can't be represented. What we do today is not me representing Piratbyrå but we create an instance of this network here today. So ideas have to begin at one point in the network and then spread, not try to grasp the whole thing at once. (So there is not a solution to the question of "how will artists make a living in the future?", only different cases of artists making a living and ideas and concepts you can extract from those cases.)

Our focus has not been critique of copyright laws or reforming laws but show how we already in many ways are beyond copyright.

Despite the law, despite what is being done to enforce it - habits are changing, culture is changing, economies are changing.

The interesting things seem to happen in the grey zones. Between private and public, legal and illegal.

Not what the law says, but what is socially, technically possible. The law, or at least the enforcement of the law, obviously have a strong impact on what is possible, but an investigation of it can't begin from the perspective of the law.

- Abundance

Thinking “after copyright” means abolishing the dream about the One solution, as a singular model replacing copyright that will work for all kinds of artistic practice. Such a model has never existed and will never exist. The conditions for different cultural practices are too different.

But there are tendencies.

If you are interested in the future of the cultural industries -

The more pressing issue than the economical impact of file-sharing is the general impact of the abundance of information, the surplus of information we have today and what to do with it.

How to find ways to create meaning from a situation of cultural superabundance. We have access to more information and culture than we can ever digest.

Within 15 years or so, we will have reached the point when every cheap pocket-size storage device will be able to hold all recorded music ever released – ready for direct copying to another person's device.

[Bill Drummond] Ex-klf and music business hacker. The 17 - a performance that is forgotten.

We have a paradox here.

On the one hand - Copyrighted material is our world, our memories and our environment. Someone owns them and controls them, yet through file-sharing we have access to them. They are already downloaded, out there in the network. And as Bill Drummond says - this is a good thing.

On the other hand - These works are unable to create meaning on their own. Simply because of their accessibility. They are fragmented memories - that needs to be completed.

- Anti Piracy

But let's hold that thought for a moment.

Even if this is a more interesting and pressing issue than the economic impact of file-sharing and it's meaningless to talk about imaginary losses of profit due to file-sharing if you don't grasp this - we still have anti-piracy. We still have a copyright industry, concerned with short-term profits, protection of immaterial resources. Still those who want to conduct business the same way they did before the internet. In fact it's more aggressive than ever.

ACTA:

- incriminates facilitation of copyrighted material - Pirate Bay killer - but affects all services that provide sharing of files.

- Border searches of storage devices.

Anti-Piracy is about more than a business model. To some extent - piracy seems just as an excuse. The war on piracy being a sort of micro-version of the war on terror, where all sorts of enforcements are created in their name. But it's also a matter of control. The copyright industry of course wants people to be creative and do what they want - otherwise there wouldn't be any new music or lifestyles. But they also want to control this creativity, make sure the value that it creates ends up under their control and is turned into profit for them. They want to make culture and communication manageable.

So what is it that they're trying to do?

Reduce culture to content.

They want to define "creativity" as the ability to create as many reproducible end products as possible.

Any performative aspects are seen only as neglected, viewed as marketing or only secondary. Any positive impact file-sharing might have on them are ignored.

That perspective is not only boring and sterile, it is also dangerous for the very idea of internet as a communication medium. Internet is only distribution.

Not simply about money but about controlling desires. Content is manageable, quantifiable, predictable - easy to own.

But this is not what is heard from them.

No matter what question is posed to them - "Does Anti-Piracy really work?" - "Aren't your business models obsolete?" - The answer is always the same:

(All I know is that...Maybe, but...)The rights holders must be compensated for the workeffort they put into making the works.

First of all, the answer is problematic in itself. Do they really mean that anyone that create something should be compensated? No, it must only apply to some. Is a free download enough to qualify?

And should it really be the amount of work they put in they should be compensated for? No, the value of a work of art can not be measured by work hours.

Even more problematic is when this answer is linked with tougher laws and harder enforcement. Because they haven't understood the problem om information abundance, they can claim that harder enforcement will lead to better compensation for artists. When studies show that the most active file-sharers are also the most active media consumers and when the most important thing for business and brands today is that they can gain the trust of consumers or users, that they can build relationships, to make people want more than a digital copy - it is clear that another strategy is needed. Anti-piracy destroys trust. Trust in the media corporations and trust in the legal system itself.

On the other hand if you have trust, you can do what Nine Inch Nails did and both give their new album away for free downloads and at the same time release - and sell out - a \$300 limited edition box of the album.

But although anti-piracy is an absurd response, what is the problem they are trying to get at although they fail?

I believe it can be formulated like this:

Certain people, or rather a lot of people, generate value - things, knowledge, communication, culture, software, in a way that we, our society, recognize as valuable, as important, but have no way of measuring and compensating - no way of valuing individual efforts.

Market economies fail to measure it. (It's too fast, too distributed, too complex, too micro) There can't be a monetary transaction with every exchange.

Equating them with analog counterparts can't measure it. (Saying that a song distributed for free equals a loss of the market value for that song)

Work hours can't measure it. It's too dynamic and non-linear.

Distribution systems can't measure it - either state program or initiated otherwise.

- Archive

Right now we are in a phase, maybe a transition phase, where the economy around these activities - digital information - are centred around complementary activities. The immeasurable value generates measurable value in traditional markets. For example, the a song being distributed in file-sharing networks (which can not be said to be the same as if it would be purchased.) generates extra value for live concerts. Blogging lead to advertizing or presentations, lectures. So the digital content is not end products but hyperlinks to other markets. This is the attention economy.

- exclusive grant of access to archives is their business model. Prevents attention.

- archives loose in importance.

I have many of my favorite movies stored on a hard drive. I never watch them. I open the drive, look at the files, and say: oh, so much to see. Oh, so little time. What to do?

The liberating feeling of loosing an mp3 library. the importance of forgetting when you can store everything. The importance of the present when you have access to the entire past. The importance of context when you have access to content

Meaning is not created by the data, but the Metadata. Remembering linked to experiences, the present, context. In news media, a blurry picture from a mobile phone taken at the instance an event happens is more valuable than a high-quality, moving image taken half an hour later.

But maybe complementary activities is the wrong way to put it. First of all, it presents it as if the archived content is the primary activity and the real-time event the secondary. For example that music is really about recorded music and live music is only a complement to this. This is not the case. In fact such an idea has only a recent history. Earlier it was recorded music that was seen as a threat to the employment of musicians.

But calling it complementary activity also presents the two as separate. As if a failure to create a market in the digital domain creates an economy that return to traditional markets, such as live music that remains unchanged by the digital transformations (as Drummond suggests, that which can't be listened to everywhere). But that live, direct, un-copyable experience is not the same as it was before the digital came. What we're saying here today does not stay here. It is not to be seen as an analogue event separate from the digital archive.

This is important to remember because at first they seem disconnected. The archive is about remembering, storing, filtering out what is to be remembered. The event is about forgetting, letting go, wasting time. But today they incorporate a memory as well.

All of these events are always archiving. To take part in them is to take part in the primal scene of archivization, of the establishment of a new archive, or of a new section of the networked archive we call Internet.

Maybe this is even more the case the less that event is directly - technologically - archived, thus allowing the participants to speak for the archive, to become guardians of it. To give it their interpretation. The more an event is wasted, forgotten - the more meaning the stored fragments of it gets - the louder they speak. (Maybe there will be an informal dinner afterwards that is not recorded - and the people participating there will have the opportunity to give their interpretation of that event)

Archives are created by archiving events - their primal scene is in the foreground. (ex youtube (documenting events), facebook (information is linked to events), sartorialist (meaningful only because someone wore the style on the street. We can suspect that its fake, this would make it less meaningful. Or maybe it is right here, between what is real and imaginary that the interesting things happen), stureplan.se (wannabe celebs going out only to be archived))

Feedback loop between digital archives and events. Between the remembering and accumulation of archives and the forgetting and waste of participating in an event.

One could be pessimistic and say that events are never experienced directly because of this - you are never really in the moment. Only experienced to look good in the archive. This is certainly true for some and it's very important not to forget the waste of time and energy involved in events. This event is located somewhere between a real-time event and an archivization. What would be the difference to see this live or to see it as recorded? But a more optimistic view is that these events can be intensified due to this link to digital archives. Different events can be connected, they can build on each other, become viral. (Fixies)

- Barcelona

Lets turn back to economics - this time to the macro level, because here is where this is connected to the global economy. Because if the economy of the information age is not to be found in selling digital information, in granting access to archives, in copyright - it is exactly here - in the links between events, experiences and the symbolic. This is what drives the so called creative economy on a regional and city basis.

We have today is a global competition between cities and regions for qualified work, companies, tourists and finance. As these become more mobile, cities all over the world compete to keep and attract these flows of goods, people and money.

Distinctive marks. This is certainly true for Barcelona. When manufacturing moves to cheaper countries, something else has to be installed in its place.

Using old catalan history as symbolic capital together with new spectacular architecture and an idea of a Barcelona lifestyle to attract tourists and commers and distinguish the city from other european cities - city branding.

In this, creative activities have a key role, from the grand architectural projects to small scale, alternative or independent scenes, events and projects. All get caught up the creative industry game.

They become symbolic capital connected to the experience of Barcelona, which will give the city a competitive advantage.

So events happen, cultures form, networks take shape in Barcelona.

These are supported and turned into symbolic capital creating an archive of what Barcelona is.

This is used to attract tourists, money etc to Barcelona.

The development has its downsides. First of all, the feedback effects of having more tourism and money coming in to Barcelona.

It often leads to increased real estate prices, more traffic, expensive living and more global brands taking the place of distinctive businesses.

From a strictly economic stand point this has long term negative effects since the city loses its distinctiveness and the attraction that was based on Barcelona NOT being like other cities. These new events rewrite the archive for the worse.

Not at least about the history, the archive, the symbolic. The experience of coming to Barcelona is sustained by a story of the history of the city and the lifestyle associated with it.

But the archiving is not done by the people that took part in the archiving events. These are often based on alternative communities, squatters, that developed self-organizing networks before this feedback started.

Whose history is evoked when the symbolic capital of Barcelona is to be increased.

Who are the guardians of this archive? What happens to the movements that potentially can create another story, another archive - or that are a part of the story told?

-----  
Creative industries

This scenario is not unique for Barcelona, but is at the moment a very influential discourse in European policy that goes under the name of creative industries or creative industry policies. Since it is a reaction to a post-industrial situation, it will probably only be more influential the more manufacturing is moved away from Europe.

The basic idea is that the cultural economy or rather the creative economy - the economy based on innovation, creativity, design etc. - takes on a crucial role in an economy that can't support itself on manufacturing anymore.

Two forms of CI

One is where culture is directly profitable through IP - thus supporting copyright.

Two is where culture is only indirectly profitable. Tourism or companies.

Either the general climate of CI and its outputs attract tourists or migration which boost the economy through commerce or real estate.

Or a well developed CI attracts establishments of companies, either to hire people from the CI or as a "listening post" to find styles, desires and markets.

The question is what kind of grey zones this opens up. What kind of combination of freedom and resources can be gathered.

The networks of CIs are created in grey zones, before the talk about CI.

The creation of meaning happens in self-organizing networks. It can not be produced by corporations, advertising or artists alone. (The end of the billboard, buzz marketing. Fashion industry and street styles). What companies can try to do is to facilitate this meaning-creation, take part in it. This of course has to be analyzed but there is no use in totally rejecting it. This would be to have a totalizing view of commercialism. There are cracks, possibilities for hacks. This does not mean that you have to buy into the whole idea of creative industries, but the fact is that there are new connections that are possible.

Creative industries as a catalyst for discussions, formation of networks, cooperations and conflicts.

-----

- DIY

So, in all of this, how does the future look for D.I.Y. media or D.I.Y. culture - this spontaneous, self-organizing culture that creates the cultural meaning, the symbolic capital.

Previous attempts at DIY media were stuck in the home or small circles, as private resistance to mainstream media, because there were no distribution system. Today there is an opportunity to have a real impact - the tools are there.

But that DIY is not restricted either to the home or to private distribution networks also mean that DIY cannot avoid engaging with the rest of the cultural industry. There is no outside anymore.

Dependent on businesses - not at least IT as platforms, on standardised formats

Dependent on living conditions provided by the public sector - cost of living, access to spaces, subsidies.

We will see more active efforts from the public sector and companies to engage with this self-organized culture. The public sector needs it both for branding as symbolic capital to distinguish themselves and to solve social problems, to communicate, to reach out to communities they can't reach.

Companies need to use external resources - they need special competence, they need someone to create meaning, give credibility.

Companies value local, unique initiatives - the opposite of what was thought to be commercial culture.

CI can be used to think in new ways and form new alliances. Not only between different independent networks but between them and the city and commercial actors.

CI is a discourse in the exact sense of the word. A way of talking and thinking that generates effects, that can be used for different purposes, but one that is not easily escaped.

Copyright is not only a law that can be reformed or abolished - it is a way of viewing culture and economy.

So what is needed today, and is already happening, is both a new language of media that is not focused on end products and does not separate between archive and event.

And a new way of organizing and networking. With companies and the public sector - making use of their resources, but also being able to work without them - self-organized and self-sustained.

Today we have formed one particular blend of archivization and experience, made possible by a particular way of communicating, networking and resource gathering. There are infinite ways of doing it differently.

So, I end the same way Bill Drummond ended his letter:

Please accept my invitation to embrace the unknown opportunities of what lies ahead in whatever way excites you.