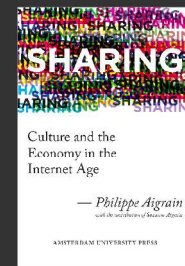


The non-market practices of individuals as
the core of [digital] culture

in « Global Changes in the Production and
Consumption of Culture »
@European Parliament



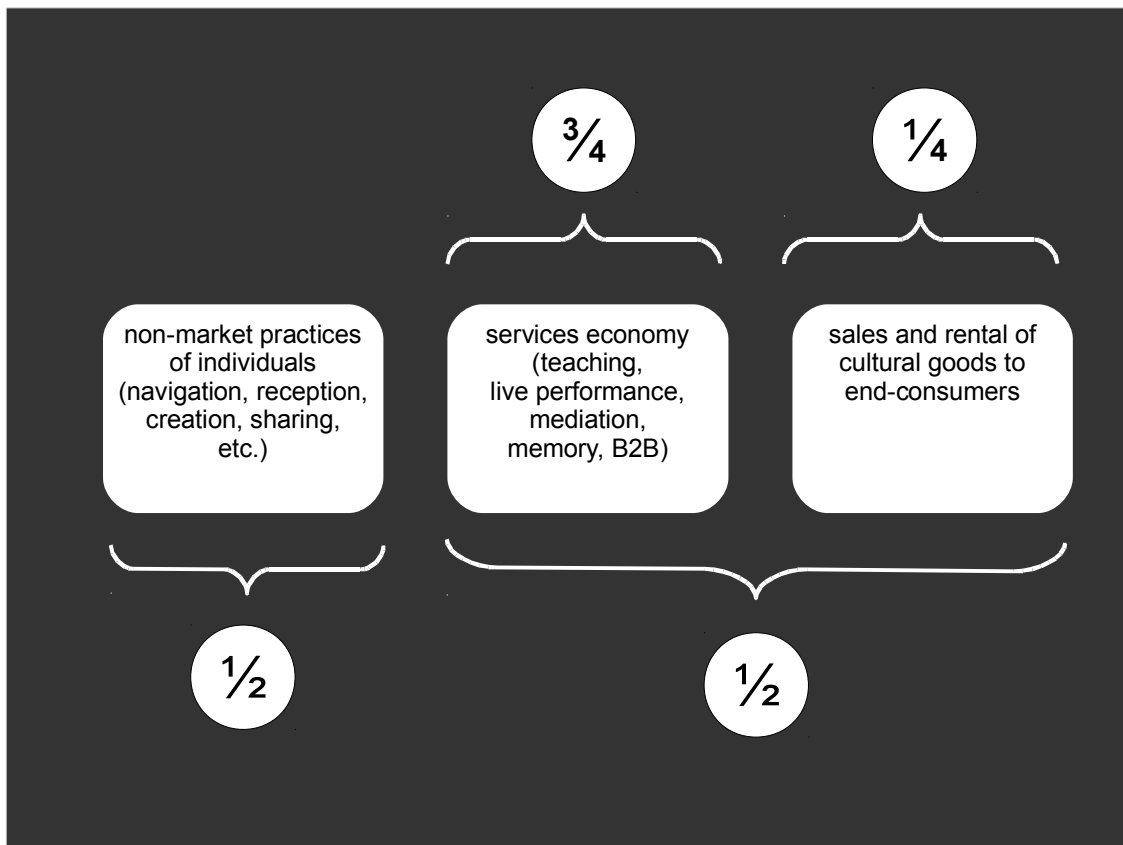
Philippe Aigrain
7 June 2012



I am mostly known in this building as a proponent of legalizing file sharing of digital works between individuals, while putting in place a new financing scheme for remunerating contributors to works that are shared, financing the production of new works and helping valuable editorial functions to remain sustainable.

Today, I am NOT going to speak about the *creative contribution* proposal. I am very happy to be able to focus on the why of all this, that is the substance of digital culture, its achievements and the challenges that it is facing.

My key message will be that digital culture and its economy are rooted in the non-market practices of individuals.



Let's first look at the gross figures of the cultural economy and of the non-market cultural activities. Policy-makers mostly hear about the alleged pains of investors, producers and distributors of cultural goods that are sold or rented to end-consumers. Well that represents at the very most 1/4th of the cultural economy (in reality it represents 1/4th of the direct cultural consumption of households, but probably less when one takes in account indirect financing through public subsidies). The other 3/4th are mostly various service activities (teaching, live performance, mediation, memory institutions such as library, archives and museums, B2B services) but also income from commercial reuse and non-content goods such as musical instruments. You never hear about them, except when the odd librarian finds its way to the Parliament.

Now let's look at non-market activities such as navigation, reception (reading, viewing, listening) when it is not bundled with buying access, production in all media, sharing, etc. Here we can't rely on monetary figures. We have to look at other measures. The size of contents is one, and it is clear that contents that are produced outside the market sphere vastly dominate the digital world. The value of this indicator can be challenged, as one can produce contents of no value at no cost (though most of the time people who produce contents try to make it interesting to others). So maybe a better indicator is time budgets, how much time do people spend in these non-market activities. Unfortunately our knowledge of it is very sparse because our statistical apparatus is predominantly focused on economics. Tens of millions of € have been spent knowing how much time people spend using electronic commerce, and we know about nothing on how much time they spend taking photographs, transferring them, sorting them, publishing them on the Web, selecting them for printing, etc.

The result of all this is that for maybe 30 years, we have been producing regulation that is driven by let's say a fifth of the cultural economy and a tenth of culture practices.

the Internet is not a distribution
channel, it is a major space of
cultural, creative and expressive
activities

Content producers and distributors for media that existed before the Internet tend to see the Internet as a distribution channel (and digital technology as a production tool for them). This view is not just misleading (as we will see in the rest of this talk) but is deeply harmful. In particular, when the former content industries realize that the Internet does not behave as a normal distribution channel, they tend to consider this as an anomaly to be corrected, and not as the consequence of a cultural revolution.

The simple consideration of Web pages, blogs, microblogs, digital photographs, self-published music and short videos, etc. should already make obvious that the Internet and digital world are a major space of cultural, creative and expressive activities.

One key aspect of this revolution is the great increase of the number of works and contributors of all kinds (authors, performers, technicians, etc.) at all levels of competence and quality.

While the cultural industries era (1920–1995) saw a decrease in artistic practice* they develop again in the Web era

* playing an instrument, singing, writing, drawing or painting, theater, dance, etc.

It is also worth noting that the expansion of digital cultural practices has coincided with a return to non-digital cultural practices that had been progressively eroded during the cultural industries era. Since 1995, that is the date at which the Web was massively used in developed countries, there has been a progressive but constant growth in artistic practice such as playing an instrument, singing, creative writing, drawing, painting and sculpture, acting in theater, dancing, etc.

Today's figures in Europe (approx.)

Contributors 20% of population
serious effort contributors > 2%
receive money from copyright system 0,4%
receive serious money from copyright system 0,02%
receive 1/2 of significant copyright systems benefits 0,002%

To put the increase in the number of people who engage in creative activities in perspective, let's look at some figures. In 2009, in Europe (EU-27) 20 % of individuals aged 16 or more (around 85 million people) produced contents shared on the Internet. I have tried to define a notion of « serious effort contributor », someone who invests time and energy at becoming better at what s/he does, enhancing a know-how, exploring a style or presenttaion, etc. This a fuzzy concept, so take the figure with caution, but my estimate is serious effort contributors to digital culture represent at least 2 % of the European population (more than 8 million people). Now the number of living authors and artists who receive any money from the copyright system (including neighbouring rights) over 5 years is around 0.4 % of the European population (1.5 million people). The number of people who receive serious money from the copyright system in one year (for instance minimal wage) is around 0,02 % that is 75000 people. And finally, the number of people who receive half of all copyright income that goes to living authors and artists is 10 time less, 7500 in the EU, 1200 in France or 1600 in Germany.

This means that the copyright system is extremely ill-equipped to deal with the sustainability issues of culture in the digital world, which I termed a many-to-all cultural society.

challenge: recognizing*, rewarding**,
financing*** an unprecedented mass of
contributors to (digital) culture

* as much as possible

** when desired, to provide them with time/resources

*** when necessary for works and valuable editorial
functions to exist to exist

Can we summarize these sustainability challenges?

Let's remember that a great share of the creative and expressive practices take place in the non-market sphere. It does not mean that the people involved do not need to be recognized (to get recognition for) their achievements and for part of them to obtain resources to further invest time energy and build higher competence or purpose. Recognition often is obtained in non-market mechanisms, by access, feedback, recommendation, etc. But we do live in a society where the freedom to use time is dependant on monetary resource use of times, in particular for the less socially advantaged citizens. Depending on where people lie in the continuum that goes from simple reception to full-time professional activity

II. Diving in digital culture: the case of creative writing

All this was about big figures and of a relatively abstract nature. I suggest that we now dive in more concrete stuff and explore a corner that has long been absent from policy debates, but will be at the heart of the hottest debates in the year to come : texts, books and literature.

I choose it not just because I am a writer of non-fiction books and other texts, and an amateur writer of fiction, but also the digital writing scene is the seat of exciting developments.

Let's not forget first that though the digital era initiated a long-awaited development of visual sound and animation literacy, text still forms the core of Web contents and non-oral human expression.

millions of blog posts and hundreds of millions
of microblog posts per day

significance presence of literary creation and
criticism

spreads to publishing (doubling of # of titles
per year in US in a few years!)

The mass of text which is made « universally » accessible today is unprecedented. There are millions of blog posts and similar short/medium texts per day, hundreds of millions of microblog tweets or comments. In this huge mass, I am not able to estimate the share of literary creation and criticism (if there are media studies researchers in the room, please try to estimate it, it is a tractable problem). By the way, there are tweets with a true literary value, specially considered as a series. Actually, that the same for all of digital culture, there is so much stuff that we know only small islands of it. Don't believe that Google, because it indexes a great share of it knows «what it is indexing », it just designs smart algorithms for providing access to it without knowing what it is.

There are indirect elements that tell us a lot. In the US, in 2008, the number of new paper book titles published that year was double the number of ten years before, mostly through the development of print-on-demand books.

But where does it really happen? I will show you a small part of what happens in the French digital writing scene.

An explosion of new literary forms

petite Racine
04 juin

SILO
ACADEMIE 23 - LUCIEN SUEL
7ÈME ANNÉE

583
poème Express #0583

4 commentaires
Todo liste, 339

photo @therox jeanney

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- ATOM.XM
- FLUX RSS
- COURRIER
- INDEX

MÉS AUTRE
LUCIEN SUEL
A NOIR E I
PHOTO

vases communicants
(chaque premier vendredi du mois)

- novembre 2009 [Brigitte Célérier](#)
- décembre 2009 [Anne Savelli](#)
- janvier 2010 [Juliette Zara](#)
- février 2010 [Isabelle Butterlin](#)
- mars 2010 [Arnaud Maisetti](#)
- avril 2010 [Kathie Durand](#)
- mai 2010 [Michel Brosseau](#)
- juin 2010 [Jean-Yves Fick](#)
- juillet 2010 [Nathanaël Cobenceaux](#)
- septembre 2010 [Pierre Ménard](#)
- octobre 2010 [Piero Cohen-Hadria](#)
- décembre 2010 [Kouki Rossi](#)
- janvier 2011 [Juliette Mézenc](#)
- février 2011 [ana nb](#)
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- avril 2011 [Maryse Hache](#)
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- février 2012 [Sylvain Esposito](#)
- mars 2012 [Christophe Sanchez](#)
- avril 2012 [Louise Imagine](#)

photo @therox jeanney

- à première vue une question de choix, mais il n'y a pas de première vue
- à deuxième vue, il y a les autres vues, diffusées, se regroupent en troupeau, harassées, certaines allongées sous les arbres, ramainantes, les autres très occupées à boire, une bosse à l'encolure palpable quand un moustique la bite (ce sont les vues lozennes, les vues renardes se cachent si bien que personne ne sait ce qu'elles font, les vues insectes meurent et se transforment)
- et puis bien sûr tu imagines être à l'écart et préservé du temps, de l'heure, des mygales et des albatrosses quand deux voitures se joient
- il n'en est rien, c'est au milieu, tu le transportes (les barrières les côtes, les bras et tu traché-antres) comme tu sais faire mais sans savoir, tu transportes avec tes des raisonnements retrouvés, fondus, des vues indénombrables

I know a small corner of it, maybe one percent of what is worth knowing for someone with my taste. And I am showing you one percent of this corner. But that should be enough to make you curious to see more, and to give you a hint of what's happening. There is an explosion of literary forms and processes. Style itself, narratives or their absence that's long period change, there is no direct rupture with digital writing. But forms, processes, presentation, sociality of reading ! In the centre you see on of maybe 10 projects that Christine Jeanney, one where people can point her to a photograph, and she will answer with a *todo liste* which is in general a 4 « bullet points » literary form. The one I am showing you is #339. On the left, Lucien Suel is at #583 of his express poems (also one of maybe 6 or 7 projects). Behind you have a glimpse of one of many productions of Cécile Portier (petiteracine). These writers also publish together, interact with each other. There is a movement being born here. This is digitally native, non-market writing. This is NOT « user-generated content » the name that the European Commission uses when it wants to give right of use to YouTube or Dailymotion but no rights to authors. These are authors, dot. And, by the way, many amateurs are doing the same type of stuff. Christine Jeanney has great texts motivated or triggered by the paintings of Dennis Hopper. I was once invited to a party where each invitee was presented with a set of paintings in which a character is reading, had to choose one and to write the page they imagined the character was reading. Several paintings were by Hopper and I picked one.

Digital writing is also rooted in older literacy, in anthological practices (commonplacing, notebooks) and in the more recent avantgarde traditions that you can find on Kenneth Goldsmith's UbuWeb site.

From the Web to publishing

The collage features several elements: a central photograph of a man in a blue shirt reading a book; a background of overlapping text from various sources, including a book review about 'Le Net' and a quote from François Bon; and a screenshot of the remue.net website interface. The website shows a list of literary works with categories like 'TEMPS RÉEL', 'PUBLIE.NOIR', 'HORS COLLECTION', and 'NOS CLASSIQUES'. The remue.net logo is prominently displayed in the center of the collage.

Believe it or not,, the new book publishing comes from there, not from the publishers who are trying to sell eBooks like they were selling paper books. The man here is François Bon, a reknown novelist and collection editor who emigrated to the digital work as a pioneer. He runs the remue.net literary website and the publie.net digital publishing.

Fair trade publishing

- rooted in Internet-native digital writing
- Cheap, DRM-free, open format eBooks
- sharing-compatible
- fair to authors and readers
- and YES also paper books



What he, and not enough others are doing is fair-trade publishing for the digital era. You have it all on the slide.

So what ?

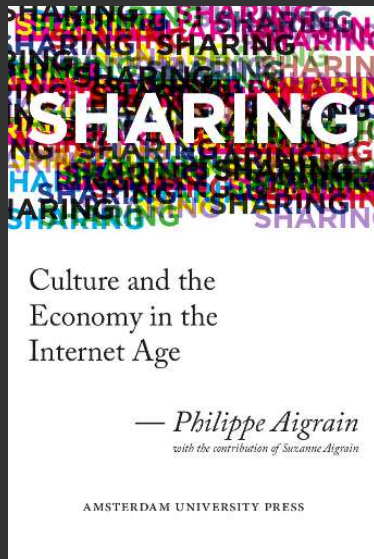
When you hear someone saying:

- « how could I compete with free-of-charge access enabled by sharing? »

ask yourself:

- « is it normal that the unfair trade in publishing that respects neither authors nor readers is considered as the reference model, and the explosion of creativity in digital writing as an irrelevant curiosity? »

For more details



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models, datasets and
commenting:

www.sharing-thebook.com