

From the desk of Peter Sunde Kolmisoppi, internets and democracy aficionado

A public comment on the 2020 Special 301 Out of Cycle
Review of Notorious Markets. Docket No. USTR-2020-0035

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Jacob Ewerdt

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Dear Jacob,

I read with great interest some of the comments you have received on your Special 301 Review of so called Notorious Markets. Being mentioned, both by name, and also through some of my earlier performance pieces, I felt it would be justified that I also bring a comment for the good of the discourse.

As you might know, I am one of the people that was involved in the earlier times of The Pirate Bay, one of my more known art pieces. We've exhibited this piece at many art festivals, ranging from local Scandinavian galleries to more prestigious events such as the Venice biennale. Even though it's far from my best work, it has inspired millions of artists and fans around the world, for which I'm very thankful.

As an artist, I'm always open for critique of my work. Without criticism art doesn't move further, so in many ways I am thankful and honoured for having my work acknowledged by some of my antagonists. However, their purpose with said acknowledgement are raising some pressing concerns.

For the past two decades or so I've used art in order to shed some light on the problematic ownership of culture that the Internets has brought to our societies. A never before seen centralisation has happened rapidly, without much after thought as to what this means for our cultural development or future drawbacks. As can be seen in recent years, the class society that we have in the physical world has been mimicked in the virtual one, where countries that do not have the means to be an interesting fiscal market are left behind and locked out from accessing the global information feed. This is something that are very much the fault of a few Central North American companies

and their lobbying efforts, and thus something which unfortunately ends up on your table as something to consider when you make decisions.

Last year I made a documentary series for public broadcasting in the European nordic region, called "The Activist". I met with several activists from different fields around the world. From Germany, Russia to Liberia, they all had very many similar understanding; that the internet is the one of the most important platform that they have for their work. Many of them has been censored by the use of immaterial rights legislation, and almost all of them are critical of how this legislation is being used in order to rather censor than promote important information from reaching its intended audience.

I went to Moscow to talk with Edward J. Snowden, an information technology activist. And when making Risotto, we also had an opportunity to air our thoughts on why the definition of private property has shifted in the digital realm from being private - as in held by a private person - to being owned by large corporations for-profit.

This shift is ironic, considering that we from outside the Central North Americas has always understood this to be against the ideals of your countries fundamental believes; that individual rights and belongings are just that; individual liberties, not a mafia-esque antidemocratic business opportunity.

We're now living in a world with fake news and trolls as presidents. We can't take the rights to information for granted. We should not centralise the control over information, in any shape or form. Information is the cornerstone of our cultural heritage, democracy and common knowledge, common language. This should not be something that a few opportunistic rich lobbying organisations should get the right to dictate terms for, or for that matter be trusted as some sort of righteous entity.

Claiming that basically half of the internet, half of the world, are enemies of ones business model should rather be a wakeup call to realising that this business model is archaic and that it's time to adopt to reality. The same people are instead hiring private investigators to follow individuals around, and resorting to bribes and falsifying evidence to get the results wanted in their court cases. The same organisations that promise to protect artists and culture are the ones screwing them over; always fiscally (like with Hollywood Accounting), sometimes physically (Harvey Weinstein is not the first nor last one).

These organisations are willingly putting our global democracy in jeopardy. The legislations brought forward by their lobbying, to protect one business model affected by the internet, is also being used for stopping people in opposition from

overthrowing dictators. Instead we should all be working towards more fitting business models, granting both the audience and the artists more influence and participation in their financial stake. As long as these mafia-esque organisations are allowed free reign over the immaterial rights discourse, they will never relinquish their power nor money to the intended recipients.

These are not righteous organisations. These are not the voice of the people. These are not elected officials. They are the antithesis of that. Please keep that in mind, making your decisions and own thoughts going forward.

Best Regards,

Peter Sunde Kolmisoppi