

The objective of this project is to analyze and understand the perceptions of fairness in sharing digital media files, as well as the visions of the future of copyright and piracy, in the eyes of an occupational group most highly skilled in law: professional lawyers. This group is particularly useful for the study of understanding the social changes in perceiving file sharing, since they know well the current legal constraints, they have high professional ethical standards of conduct, they are rarely under major financial pressure, and thus their contribution to understanding the problem may be useful both in terms of better realizing the social change itself, and in terms of possible future developments in this area. As the project aims not to be constrained by the views of representatives of just one national culture, and as it intends to study the problem from the perspective of the most legally qualified international elite, it will focus on Harvard LL.M. program participants.

The project will seek answers to the following research questions:

- *How do lawyers perceive the digital environment?* Is digital files sharing (depending on the tech used) understood as lending or multiplying a good? Do any social contexts allow for natural asking for file sharing, as well as for offering it? Does the convenience of copying influence the practice of sharing?
- *What factors influence perceiving files sharing as fair or not?* With whom sharing of digital media is perceived as more fair and why? Are some kinds of files perceived as more fair to share than others? Does the date of original publication matter? To what extent does the technology used for sharing determine the perceived fairness? Does the nationality of the author matter?
- *How are the consequences of file sharing perceived and enacted?* How is refusing to share perceived and what reasons are considered more valid than the others? In which sharing contexts (private, public, digital/material, within social networks and outside of them, etc.) is legal status of the action important and how is it enacted?

The research is going to be ethnographic. This means that it will mainly rely on observations and interviews. The chosen methods are particularly useful for studying new, emerging social phenomena, and thus are particularly well suiting the chosen topic. Also, it should be noted that due to the very sensitive nature of the topic (potentially related to law violations, even if widely perceived as acceptable) the choice of ethnographic approach is the only possibility, just conducting random qualitative interviews would not suffice.

The proposed topic has high significance, and it explores new, under-researched social phenomena, which have major impact on many organizations and societies. The area of copyright, intellectual and digital (non-material) goods redistribution seems to be one of the key challenges for the society in general, and management and organization science in particular, in the very near future. This is so because the very notions of ownership, value, and of fairness in sharing non-material goods (very low marginal costs, lack of entry barriers, low communications and search costs, reduced informational asymmetries) are being redefined.

In fact, there is already a wide social acceptance of copying digital files. Yet, the social perception of sharing of digital media has a far more reaching consequences than media: We are on the verge of a massive technological revolution related to 3D printing. When the material production and distribution will not be playing a major part in the organizational value chain, a question how are the digital files perceived is really just as crucial for production companies, as it is for the media ones.

As a result of an analysis of an international group of professional, outstanding lawyers, it will be possible to delve into the emerging social logic of what is fair and acceptable in media and digital files sharing. Apart from an obvious academic value (discovering a new phenomenon from an unexplored angle) the outcomes may also have some practical value: they may help adjust the business models to social expectations, as well as have direct influence on the development of civilization, economy, and society.