

Are we insane?

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Bryce Ives, General Manager of Syn Media, lamented at a recent FRAMED seminar, how disappointed he has been with the 21st Century.

We've yet to find alien artifacts on the Moon and we're yet to ride around in personal hovercrafts let alone the flying cars Bryce dreamed of as a child.

And yet somehow we're living in what we are led to believe is a modernist society, accompanied by goofy personal technologies and expensive sneakers. Many of us live beyond our means whilst our parents, or grandparents for that matter, face the ominous and undignified prospect of spending their last precious years in the bedrooms of nursing homes ever so slightly sedated "to keep them calm".

Which ever way we look at it, despite the extraordinary achievements of science, engineering, agriculture, architecture and the arts many still don't know how to complete a ballot form correctly, and many more care less that much of our bottled water, OUR WATER, is owned by the Coca-Cola Company, that much more of it is shipped abroad in what could be considered the most heinous act of plunder of a natural resource in our lifetimes.

So what's all this got to do with Creative Commons and why am I grumbling about the stupidity of humans when so many of us are so well educated and wealthier than most countries – that each of us carry a mobile phone and mobile debt, that we eat extremely well and when we get to 40 we can still ponder a life change? That's a kind of wealth that affords us time to grow clever and wise... but at a price: for every act there is indeed an opposing re-action.

Take a simple USB stick. Seemingly harmless and yet it could get you a short spell in prison, or at the lighter end of the scale, a mere \$6600 fine. That's if you've copied the tune you've purchased off iTunes a few too many times. Record your favorite band with your mobile phone and you can be issued with an on-the-spot infringement notice by the Police pulling a neat \$1320 from your savings.

So what's all this got to do with me, what's it got to do with being a Producer who uses flexible licenses and why am I here?

It's not possible for me to separate the creative act from that of the society I live in, the countries I visit and the policies that sustain, and impose, what are still 19th century ways of thinking, 19th century education, legislations, legal and governance structures. I may be naive, but it does astound me that we accept this despite living in a world where creativity and innovation have brought us incredible technologies, that we shape our world through our collective knowledge and accumulated wisdom, and yet we continue to muddle about on what could well become a desert island.

One of the common questions I am asked about my work and why I use flexible licenses such as Creative Commons is, “how can I make money?” Just as we have to think of different ways of living, so to do we need to think of different ways of earning an income. I do not think it is possible to earn the kind of money we have come to expect from creative industries by merely posting our content online. In addition, we can no longer afford to live as we have done so, as our forefathers have done... there just ain't the resources to support this. As such, I feel tools such as Creative Commons are part of the discussion we should be having about our lives, how we live, what we and how we learn and the mechanisms required to support innovation and creativity, that which sustains life, gives it meaning and purpose, a lifetime of learning rather than a lifetime of uncertainty.

The rationale for flexible licenses is not only about challenging concepts of ownership, it challenges the core of our mercantile, consumer driven economy – an economy that promised every Australian an acre block, a new car, free education and medical benefits... my, how things have changed.

Flexible licenses, that which you elect to allow copies of your work to be made in perpetuity, for non-profit purposes of course, is a kick in the guts of one of the manifestations of our liberal economies - globalisation – which at the extreme end ensures a MacDonal'd's in every capital city, the same clothing labels on every back, brands on every t-shirt and Big Brother haircuts in every pub across the country – what I'm talking about is homogeneity.

If the core of all life is sustained through diversity and if humans have less genetic diversity than a lecture room full of chimpanzees, why are we trying to make everything the same?

This freaks me out! We're kind of killing ourselves. We're insane! That's why I embrace the core efforts of Creative Commons because it does more than offer cool sampling licenses, they are contributing to a revitalization of creativity and cultural development as a **collective** effort. It ensures diversity, sustains it and keeps my fans free of fines and some of them even out of jail.