

## Contribution Mrs LINDVALL

### Those who want freedom from copyright will really deliver feudalism

What control do you have over your life if you have no control over your own work?

Do you ever feel there's not enough music, film or books to read in your life – that the web is just a black, silent hole, devoid of any culture? Maybe that was the view of Consumer International, which has just issued a new report declaring the UK has some of the [most "oppressive" copyright laws in the world](#). Yes, it puts the UK below such beacons of free speech as China, Malawi and Ukraine.

CI delegates its "research" to a group called A2K (Access to Knowledge) funded by the billionaire George Soros. It appears not to matter to A2K that knowledge is, in fact, easily accessible in the UK, nor that it's available at a low cost – often even for free. What it hates is that those producing the knowledge have control over it.

A2K's viewpoint was this week echoed by the European "digital agenda commissioner" Neelie Kroes, who declared the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (Acta) [as good as dead](#). Having experienced the [hearing on the agreement](#), I'm not surprised. But what was puzzling was the statement that came with this declaration. Kroes said "industries once based on limitation and control could now be based on customer focus, sharing and interactivity" – that closed business plans would strangle innovation and freedom.

Sounds a lot like Kroes is demanding that creative industries, which add around \$560bn to European GDP annually, should throw out the mechanics that have long underpinned their entire business model, just so she can pander to a few voters who want stuff for free, as well as businesses that hate having to ask for permission to use content as they wish and are largely based outside of the EU (Google, Facebook, Pirate Bay) – businesses that barely even pay any tax here. Meanwhile the creative industries in the "oppressive" UK contribute a higher than average percentage to the GDP. (The owner of an independent label I know recently calculated that his label pays more taxes in the UK – not only percentage wise, but monetarily – than [Google, Amazon and Facebook](#) combined.)

You don't need a degree in economics to understand that all industries in a free market are based on "limitation and control" – that's how you negotiate fair deals. If you don't control what you've produced, how can you enter into any negotiation? You can't have a healthy market economy without property rights. One could also argue the reason many old recordings are not restored is that restoration can be costly, and if there's no chance of making that investment back there's no financial incentive to do so.

It's common among anti-copyright campaigners to portray the [music industry](#) as a bunch of big corporations sucking the life out of poor artists. But, unlike companies such as Google and [Grooveshark](#), record labels and music publishers can only make money off what artists and songwriters produce after entering into an agreement with them, pretty much always accompanied by monetary advances and a share in royalties.

I'm a songwriter. I had written more than 100 songs – that I controlled, thanks to the beautiful invention of copyright – before I was approached by a publisher who wanted to give me money in return for a share of my royalties and control over those songs as well as the songs I'd write during the term of our agreement. I needed investment to be able to create music full-time – in other words, the publisher's investment would promote innovation – and so I entered freely into this agreement.

I'm now self-published and rely on the not-for-profit collection society Stim (Sweden's version of the PRS) to negotiate deals for my music on my behalf with online music services, radio and so on. To do that, Stim has to have control over my copyrights and songs – another agreement I've entered into by my own free will, as it would be impractical for me and those music services to negotiate separately.

Around 90% of the UK music industry is made up of "small and medium enterprises" like me, employing fewer than five people, all relying on copyright – control of their work – to survive. Interestingly, the Swedish word for this control is not copyright, but "origin right" – and I'm not called a copyright owner, but an "originator" (upphovsman) – which is probably a better description.

Contrary to what Kroes and the ludicrous CI report claims, this right has not limited consumer access to what I create – it's available at the click of a mouse all over the world on a multitude of legal sites – but it's allowed me the right to get remunerated for my work when it's used, which in turn allows me to create more of it.

Why do Kroes, CI and A2K want to take this fundamental right, enshrined in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), away from me? Their "solutions" would create either a corporate feudalism where I would have to go around hat in hand, or a communist state, where the state would decide how much or even if I should get paid when my music is used. And to think that these solutions come from people claiming to be forward thinking? If this is their version of freedom and innovation, I can live without it.