



Sharing without laws: an exploration of social practices and ad hoc labeling standards in online movie piracy

Roberto Tietzmann

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Porto Alegre, Brazil, rtietz@pucrs.br

Liana Gross Furini

*Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Porto Alegre, Brazil,
lianagrossfurini@gmail.com*

Published on 30 Jun 2016 | DOI: 10.14763/2016.2.416

Abstract: This paper discusses self-labelling standards as sharing mediators in pirated versions of movies available online. Piracy has existed since the beginning of the film industry, challenging established rules and regulations. The dynamics of digital movie piracy often try to meet viewers' expectations while ignoring any regional and premiere date restrictions. Movie piracy organises its abundant offer by generating a self-regulatory repertoire of labeling standards. In this paper we propose an exploration of social practices related to the ad hoc labeling standards as regulators of a presumed user experience in unofficial versions of the movie *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. Lessons for sharing economy regulation, especially in contexts where chaotic social relationships are involved, are identified and discussed.

Keywords: Sharing economy, Piracy, Peer-to-peer (P2P)

Article information

Received: 01 Feb 2016 **Reviewed:** 12 Apr 2016 **Published:** 30 Jun 2016

Licence: Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Germany

Competing interests: The author has declared that no competing interests exist that have influenced the text.

URL:

<http://policyreview.info/articles/analysis/sharing-without-laws-exploration-social-practices-and-ad-hoc-labeling-standards>

Citation: Tietzmann, R. & Gross Furini, L. (2016). Sharing without laws: an exploration of social practices and ad hoc labeling standards in online movie piracy. *Internet Policy Review*, 5(2).
<https://doi.org/10.14763/2016.2.416>

This paper is part of Regulating the sharing economy, a special issue of Internet Policy Review guest-edited by Kristofer Erickson and Inge Sørensen.

INTRODUCTION

Unofficial circulation of copyrighted works has always been present in the film industry, occurring in parallel to regular distribution, as Toulet (1995) and Craig (2005) affirm. In the first years of the 21st century, broadband internet and the tools enabled by its ubiquity have shifted some control over the exhibition, availability and programming of films' distribution from producers to the hands of consumers. This handover took the shape of many services, from the online delivery of audiovisual content in different platforms as Cunningham and Silver (2013), Landau (2016), Strangelove (2015) and Ulin (2014) explore, allowing the consumer to tailor the circumstances of exhibition to suit one's needs, to an infrequent dialogue between distributors and audiences, as Furini and Tietzmann (2013) describe.

However, as Lessig (2008, p. 28) states about digital networks, “culture in this world is flat; it is shared person to person”. In this context, exchanges tend to be more democratic and horizontal with fluid roles in the process. The contact between these two mindsets and practices -- one managed by producers and distributors offering consumers choice, but wary of losing control over the process -- and the other created on-the-fly by regular people accustomed to sharing goods as easily as one might lend a book or DVD, comes to clash regularly on the internet as cultural habits of sharing are reproduced online.

Unauthorised circulation of audiovisual content, usually identified as piracy¹ in contemporary media and culture, remains a *doppelgänger* of regular distribution policies and practices, challenging established rules and regulations and often leading to criminal charges from law enforcement, but also fulfilling audiences' desires to watch specific content when official channels are not quite able to meet that demand. As audiovisual technologies came closer to consumers' homes, practices of sharing and piracy found new spaces to thrive.

In the 1970s, the possibility to record materials on home video and duplicate them domestically created the notion that these homemade copies were not piracy *per se* but rather the creation of a personal collection and a possible non-commercial sharing practice among individuals and groups of interest. As Abramson (2002) writes, this first took the shape of discussions on postal communities dedicated to tape trading, an exchange of recordings of television programmes between fans and home video technology enthusiasts that mushroomed after the 1976 release of the Betamax and VHS² systems. Inside these communities, which soon enough migrated to Usenet³ newsgroups like alt.video.tape-trading among others, users posted and exchanged requests and offers of programmes that could be copied and sent by regular mail to interested parties.

In this context, a sense of fair use in these sharing practices prevailed since the amount of copies made by the effort of fans was considerably smaller than the figures of audience of those networks that created the programmes. There sharing practices were no direct threat to the film business itself. Second, the degradation of image and sound on each analog copy generation meant that the experience of watching the show on the main broadcaster could easily be the one that would offer a better experience.

Even so, studios were not happy with the possibility of circulation of home recorded tapes, potentially eroding sales, ratings. As a result, they sought compensation. According to Best (1995), the right to make recordings was upheld in a domestic dispute in the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982 between Universal Studios and Sony. Later, in 1995, home video hardware

releases like the DVD, created by a consortium after Sony itself became a movie studio - after its purchase of Columbia Pictures in 1988, complicated recording and duplication of content to a point where the copy-and-share functionality of the VHS lost out to the efficiency of DVD copies. Peer-to-peer trading surfaced again after broadband internet became widely available, in the 1990s.

Early peer-to-peer networks emphasised the social aspects of sharing in their architecture and purpose. According to Lessig (2008) this reinforces the concept known as sharing economy, where access to cultural material depends not only on commercial issues, but also on social relations. To Shirky (2010), the cost of sharing affects how much content is going to be transmitted. The easier a piece of content is to share, the more people it is likely to reach. Along the same line, Jenkins, Ford and Green (2013) corroborate that certain characteristics can increase the spreadability of a given piece of content, such as its availability at a time and place where audiences want it, portability, reusability, relevance to multiple audiences and its position in a steady stream of material.

The potential for networked sharing of cultural expressions increased with the spread of personal computers in the 1980s and the constant improvement of storage and processing of multimedia content in the following decades, finally coming of age in the first decade of the new century, characterised by the success of early P2P platforms, such as Napster. The evolution of P2P networking follows the idea expressed by Wilson (2014) that the internet, in its essence, tends to eliminate the need for intermediaries. Consumers now find themselves in a utopian scenario in which practically any recordable audiovisual content can be delivered online, anytime, anywhere. Often, when official means of distribution are not able to deliver the content desired by the consumer (such as in developing economies or in conditions of windowed exclusivity), other outlets will take part in the process.

The highly disorganised dynamics of movie piracy may be seen as an attempt to meet viewers' expectations. In order to do this, pirates must organise their abundant offer by generating a self-regulatory repertoire of labeling standards and applying it to digital files that remain remarkably stable throughout varied players and timeframes. Labeling standards must also remain flexible enough to adapt to new formats and labels as they appear. The excess in supply brought about this need to develop labeling systems which serve the function of identifying pirate groups' aliases, sources of content, language of subtitles, expected image quality and resolution, before the consumer invests time and bandwidth in downloading the movie file.

In this paper we propose an exploration of syntactic and semantic practices related to the *ad hoc* labeling standards which serve as regulators of a presumed user experience in pirated movies available online. Even questionable distribution practices, we argue, need to organise themselves. The standards of self-labeling help pirate consumers to find what they want when downloading audiovisual content with reduced frustration. The discussion will focus on the labelling of multiple unofficial versions of the film "Captain America: The Winter Soldier", available on The Pirate Bay⁵ repository from April to September 2014. We develop understanding of such labelling standards as aides of sharing practices regardless of their legality.

SHARING ECONOMY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

People are used to sharing goods with each other in a non-commercial fashion. John (2012)

states that the concept of sharing is under-theorised and draws attention to its social dimensions. Since the term is broadly used, this gives the impression that researchers and the public are in agreement about its meaning. However, John (2012) contrasts the current usage with The Oxford English Dictionary definition of the verb *to share*: "'to cut into parts' or 'to divide'" (p. 169), an idea that fits material objects, which are finite when divided, but does not describe entirely the sharing practices of immaterial digital goods that can be endlessly duplicated with minimal loss or deterioration, since sharing implies "duplication" and not "division" in this context.

John (2012) observes that the logic of sharing on the internet is closer to the meaning of "participating" in many ways, implying that each form of sharing and participation can do so by agreed rules between those involved. From the assumption that people are used to participating and sharing online, companies like Wikipedia, Airbnb, eBay and Uber use the motivations to share, fundamental in social relations, as a basis from which to build their businesses, with the idea of generating more than just money, but trust and experience. John (2012) defends that the goal of economies based on sharing "is not to make its participants richer" exclusively. This means that access to these materials is regulated not by price, but by the building of social relations.

A similar idea is applied in file sharing websites such as The Pirate Bay, mostly known for the circulation of unauthorised copies of media goods, but also a social networking site with user commenting and participation. The internet is a space that facilitates participation in many forms including sharing. In such an environment, users have the possibility to distribute content the way they want, writing the rules of acceptable practices and behaviours as they go along in a self-regulated environment, as a potentially anonymous networked community.

Bodó (2013) comments that even in such a potentially freedom-prone environment, there are some rules that must be followed so that the time and effort invested by the participants is rewarded, such as learning the meaning of labels, reporting errors in files, continuing to share files after a personal download has ended, etc. On open platforms these rules are not officially imposed by anyone, but operate as stable conventions of cooperation between users. Cooperation, according to Recuero (2009) is the establishing process of social structures. Those who contribute to the community by making files available, translating subtitles and correcting errors, are doing it for the community that they are part of.

FUNCTION AND USES OF FILENAMES

The bottom-up nature of the labeling of pirated audiovisual works can be understood in many dimensions. It is a necessity driven by scarce resources available to communicate the contents of a large number of files (movies). If one compares this type of labeling with commercial marketing done by the film industry, it becomes evident that many different media strategies are used to raise awareness of new releases with potential audiences, including suggestive movie titles, teasers and trailers, film posters, TV ads, online content and many other transmedia strategies.

This promotional content often uses audiovisual communication: moving images, sound clips, photographs or other forms of interactive content to translate some selling point from the film. Such communication methods are used because they are effective and available to the creators of such advertisements. In their absence one can understand the relevance of a stable code of

labeling to the distribution of pirated audiovisual content on the internet as it is responsible for the films' identification and correct reading of its technical characteristics.

The absence of audiovisual cues is a result of the underlying structure of websites like The Pirate Bay, whose roots echo older text-based online protocols like FTP, Gopher and Archie where a folder/files dichotomy and a criteria-ordered text list were the norm for user interfaces.

Although access is provided on regular web browsers through pages with advertising insertions and the descriptions for each entry, The Pirate Bay offers its visitors a conventional database structure where the sequencing of the most popular files, or the results of a text query, are presented according to user demands. It has no "fixed shape" and its range and accuracy are heavily dependent on the precision of the submissions made by its participants.

The labeling of a pirated motion picture file must accomplish many tasks: the first one is to make an ad hoc promise of trust between the publisher of the file and the potential viewer about the authenticity of contents expected. Although no financial exchange is made on the peer-to-peer distribution of unauthorised content *per se*, we can assume that a relevant relationship keeps bringing the audience back to the same sources, once a modicum of prestige capital is attained. This way, repeated fake names or imprecise information could make audiences look for other sources in search of gratification.

The labeling system also works as a primary packaging of the distributed movie file whereas a DVD, a Blu-ray or even, by older standards, a VHS copy of the film, displays in itself an expected promise related to the content of the material and its sound and image quality. The absence of a material medium requires this information to be shown in a line of text rather than by other means. In older media this was reflected by the selection of different shapes of packages such as the DVD and the Blu-ray discs that share the same size, but the packaging of high definition content had to change shape to make the difference in quality of image instantly recognisable for potential customers.

SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC PATTERNS IN FILE LABELING

Businesses often classify films based on genre conventions (e.g., comedy, drama, musical, etc.) and on their distribution media of choice, such as VHS, DVD or Blu-ray. Since digitally pirated movies have left behind their eventual origin in a material medium, their labelling and filing must happen in a way that enables their later retrieval, with relevant information to their potential audiences. In order to be recognised and understood, most of the words that are used to tag the movies are not made up, but are appropriated from other repertoires. This also emphasises that piracy does not create original content, but rather replicates content originated elsewhere.

One fundamental difference between the self organisation of such labelling standards in an unofficial online circulation space and an official one like Netflix is a matter of automation of the sorting and selection. When a Netflix stream is started, it increases the playback resolution in the first moments, according to the bandwidth available, so it goes up from below-DVD quality to 480 lines of resolution (roughly the resolution of a DVD) to 1080 lines of resolution (full high-definition) or further if available, dropping resolution if there is a slowdown from the internet connection provider. The selection is automatic, the labels that identify the resolutions

are not shown by default and the playback system assumes the users will desire a higher resolution if available.

Curiously, title and resolution are also two of the most frequently used categories to label unauthorised film content, followed by year of launch, source or capture method, resolution, codec, group responsible for making the file available (and, in some cases, the subtitling), and some language and audio information. Thus, a relevant point in the understanding of the labeling practices is that the repertoire of words and symbols used is often a jargon of a technical nature related to screen resolutions, number of audio channels and so on. Labelling of films based on genres is rare, and the authors speculate that this originates in the subjective nature of identifying a title as a comedy, drama, a mix of both, etc., as a potential source of ambiguity and confusion, whereas technical information about the shared file is precise.

We propose that the technical nature of vocabulary used is directly connected to the difficulty involved in making unauthorised content circulate, requiring greater technical skills and digital know-how compared to pressing play on Netflix or inserting a disc in a player. At first, the variety of words used to label pirated films and TV episodes seems daunting to all but the most tenacious of audiovisual content viewers.

In a web site like The Pirate Bay, however, it is up to the user to select which film resolution he or she desires to download, which spoken languages and subtitles are sought after, etc., with each change of mind generally requiring a separate download. We understand that the automatic selection on paid services versus a learning curve of established codes and practices on the unauthorised distribution and circulation outlets strengthens the advantages of regular, law-abiding, solutions for the wider audiences as they become easier to use.

The presence of a learning curve suggests the existence of an underlying syntax for labelling standards. The definitions of syntax by authors such as Van Valin Jr. and La Polla (1997), as well as Lee (2014) converge around the rules of arrangement of understandable sentences, either in pure linguistics for the first authors or in computer coding for the second. Thus, the idea a flexible, linguistic setup relates to Chomsky (1964) and his concept of creativity guided by rule as the capacity to construct an infinite variety of expressions that stem from a fixed and limited repertoire of lexical components. Part of this alphabet soup can be organised in various categories of terms employed in the construction of a simplified syntax, where the code words are organised in the shape of a simple language. This directly functional labeling system is both constant enough to be learned and to operate as a sign of trust and, flexible enough to adapt to new technologies - as long as it continues to be used and delivers trustful results in the process.

Trust, according to Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395), is "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of others". This relates to the situation in which users do not know much about the website from where they are downloading a file. The users with greater knowledge about the environment is able to recognise the content published due to these linguistic codes. Only the most knowledgeable user can look at a list of hundreds of files and identify which are the files that actually contain the material they are looking for.

One of the characteristics that a reliable file in a piratical repository of files has is a large number of seeders. Having a number of users in contact with a file may mean that the file actually contains the content it claims to have. Otherwise, some users would download it and, after realising that the file does not contain the content that it claims to have, they would cut the contact with the file. In other words, one user has to rely on another user to increase the chances

of downloading the file that he or she is looking for, and understand the dynamics of the website, trusting in a kind of online word-of-mouth (Pradeep, 2008). We can understand the community of users built in a piratical website as a social network. Carminati, Ferrari and Viviani (2014, p. 25) state that the reliability that some users have in the most shared files is because the users "tend to trust other community members with expertise".

As we have identified the presence of elements that resemble a simplified language on the labelling practices, we can affirm that it mimes elements of the organisation of an pidgin - a language of trade and contact employed by individuals of distinct backgrounds that displays basic syntax, straightforward grammar, extraneous vocabulary inputs and aims at objectivity in communication. Far from properly developed languages such as English or Portuguese, as Kouwenberg and Singler (2008) define, pidgins tend to appear on boundary zones, where the contact between two or more cultures is urgent but also there are no shared cultural or linguistic repertoires to build upon. In these spaces, historically present on the commerce between European seafarers and native Africans and Americans, a proto-language sprang up to start the mediation of trade and other relations. In our case, the absence of the possibility of a direct contact among file uploaders and downloaders outside of a comment box on The Pirate Bay dissipates the more human-like language usage and personal bonding of other social networks and rethreads the need for a simple sharing-mediating pidgin-like structure.

A language can be understood from several approaches. The central principle to consider, as Fiske (1983) puts it, is the language as a system of meaning between peers. Saussure (1997) postulates that there is a common structure to all languages. For him, there are two basic levels of organisation of linguistic elements: one syntagmatic axis and one paradigmatic axis. This organisation was an elegant model to describe languages derived from study and observation, and also being able to predict linguistic structures. In this model, the syntagmatic axis is organised from a sequence of linguistic elements over time, which is called by Saussure as chain of speech.

The phrase is linear and exclusive in its organisation: if one element is being pronounced, then the other possibilities from the paradigmatic axis were passed over or discarded. Describing the phrase, Saussure had in mind the model of the human vocal tract, as it was able to express only one vocal element each moment. Once inserted in the syntagmatic chain, each linguistic element loses its individual value. The interpretation of possible meanings from their significant, as well as their value shall be interpreted from the relationship with the neighbouring elements in the chain.

The parallels between the Saussurean syntagm and paradigm proto-structure and the notion of the language as a way to convey meaning converge on the observation of the labelling of the film files shared online. Due to the near-anonymous nature of the exchanges, it is impossible to know for sure who is on the other end or what language competences could be involved if such a conversation between the peers were to be made. Even so, there is a desire to share and circulate audiovisual content that required the labelling of files to be made constant enough to be recognised as a syntagm and sufficiently flexible as a paradigm of choices to accommodate new files' features as they became available, a repertoire that we'll observe in the following section.

THE MANY COPIES AND LABELS OF *CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER*

In order to understand the syntactic and semantic operations of file naming in the piratical distribution of a blockbuster Hollywood movie, we followed the unauthorised circulation of the film *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* from the time that the film was still being shown in movie theaters up to its release on Blu-ray disc.

The film, produced by Marvel Studios and released in 2014 tells the story of Steve Rogers (played by Chris Evans), also known as the comic book hero 'Captain America'. Steve works in the fictional American spy agency S.H.I.E.L.D. After having spent decades frozen in suspended animation, he returns to life and faces a new enemy: the Winter Soldier, a former ally turned evil. The film features two other main protagonists: the Black Widow (played by actress Scarlett Johansson) and the sidekick Falcon (played by actor Anthony Mackie).

We chose to conduct this research by collecting data on the website The Pirate Bay, due to its status at the time as the world's largest repository of torrent material and therefore having significant relevance in this context. The data were collected from 9 April 2014, one day before the film's world premiere in theaters, until 9 September 2014, the release date of the film on DVD and Blu-ray in US stores. The dates were chosen so as to allow us to observe how the labeling changed from the early copies available - poorly shot inside movie theatres, to the high quality files extracted from high definition discs. The five files with the most seeders⁶ from each day were selected and observed to understand the labeling that organises the files in the unofficial space. We looked for the keywords that are part of the labeling in order to classify the file according to its descriptive contents (see Table 1) and observed the breadth of expressions.

The files with the greatest number of seeders were deemed relevant, which means that these were the files with more people involved, either downloading or uploading the content at each given moment. After the data were collected and the results were cleaned up and organised, the authors parsed these files' labels. The keywords found in the dataset were related and grouped in seven categories: film title, year of release, source or capture method, resolution, codec, group responsible for making the file available (and, in some cases, the subtitling), and some language and audio information. These categories remained constant throughout the five months of data capture and can be considered as the basic working parts of the syntagmatic axis, with the variations of each paradigmatic element represented on Table 1.

Table 1: Filenames and metadata describing torrent downloads of *The Winter Soldier*

Title	Year	Source	Resolution	Codec	Group	Language/Audio
Captain America The Winter Soldier	2014	CAM	720p	XviD	SUMO	Dual Audio Hindi Englis
Captain.America. The.Winter.Soldier		CAM.READNFO	1080p	XVID	EVE	MP3-RAR
Captain America- The Winter Soldier		HDCAM V2 x264		AC3	Pimp4	MP3
		HDCAM (PROPER) x264		XVID.AC3	SmY	MP3-RARBG
		HDCAM R6 HC			MiLLENiUM	
		R6 HDCAM x264			HELLRAZOR	

Title	Year	Source	Resolution	Codec	Group	Language/Audio
		CAM x26			BladeBDP	
		CAM NEW SOURCE			VaIN	
		TS			CRYS	
		TSRip H264			TuT	
		R6 DVDScr			juggs[ET	
		HDTS			MAX	
		HD-TS			YIFI	
		HDTS NEW VIDEO			SPARKS	
		HD.TS.NEW.VIDEO.XVI			CPG	
		READNFO HDTS			BL4CKP34R	
		HDTV				
		HDTS NEWSOURCE				
		HDTS.NEW.VIDEO				
		DVDRip				
		BrRip				
		BluRay				

Regarding the order of categories, the title of the film came first in the file name on every occasion. This is significant, as we infer that the title is the first and foremost way for a potential audience to find the movie it is looking for and thus deserves to begin the syntagm. In previous generations of online extra-official distribution practices it was not unusual to see a substitution of names when the files were posted, and, although this is evidence not accounted for in our methodological choices, it also demonstrates that keeping a regularly named file is the best way to make sure that potential users find their intended search target, with the flipside being that copyright enforcers can also find the film easily.

Besides the order of the title, we found only three variations on the representation of the film's name, a seemingly small amplitude of the first paradigm's axis. It was either presented by the words with spaces between them, or the spaces separated by dots, or spaces except for a hyphen positioned between "Captain America" and "The Winter Soldier". The writing of the title also has to deal with restrictions on character usage of various file sharing systems, hence the choice for the absence of a colon between the title and the subtitle and also the option of inserting points between the words. This solution does not complicate the experience of the human reader and does facilitate the circulation on some digital operating systems.

The insertion of the year of the movie's launch did not show any variation in our verification, as it remained constant throughout the many copies available. We can attribute its presence to the intention of dissipating any doubt about the specificity of the release, or even future remakes or past films with similar titles, not unlike the usage of year identifiers in academic quotations. Regarding the syntagmatic position, it remained fairly close to the title on most of the files observed.

The source material classification was one of the hardest ones for us to establish. In a sense, it ranged from the first pirated copies of the film (often recorded on movie theaters right around the time of the release) to the Blu-ray release (which generally represents the latest release). Its

paradigmatic axis has 21 entries, the widest observed, which suggests a constant competition among users and groups releasing new versions to achieve greater visibility of the copies available - a measure of prestige among peers. Its syntagmatic position gravitates towards the beginning of the title, which stresses the relevance of this information to potential users.

Through an empirical observation of copies featuring each one of the 21 entries, we can summarise that the usage of the words remained constant with each version's features, as described in the following paragraphs. The CAM denotes a copy that was recorded in the theatre, usually with a camera operated by a member of the audience. In this case, the image is a poorly framed movie screen, often lacking focus or relevant elements on the edges of the screen. In addition to the precarious image, the audio in the CAM file also has problems: as the audio recording is done in the camera itself, often laughs and conversations and other sounds in the movie theater are overheard, external to the diegetic context. The HDCAM files were also shot in a movie theater, but had marginally better image quality due to the recording being made with an High Definition camera.

Both the TS and the HDTS files featured the audio captured from the theatre's sound system, which solves the issue of room noise. The image on these releases were the same, or were very similar, to the ones available on the CAM and HDCAM versions. The occasional mention of labels as NEW VIDEO, NEWSOURCE or PROPER indicated consistently a new attempt on recording the film in theatres, or a digitally cleaned version of a previous release. The occasional mention of x264 indicated the compression technique used to reduce file size and make it more swiftly transmittable, as older codec versions (XVID or similar) were quoted farther from the film's title.

After these preliminary versions, the following featured sources already on digital discs, albeit with diverse qualities. The label R6 denotes the extraction of the content from a DVD marketed to chinese consumers, hence the "Region 6". The label DVDSr indicates a preliminary, noncommercial version of a DVD release, usually aimed at film critics, crewmembers or other limited audiences. The higher quality files, DVDRip, Bluray and BRRip (extracted, respectively, from commercial DVD and Blu-ray discs) displayed the best quality of picture and sound found on the copies, the closest to the official releases on home video. They also represent the last released copies on the paradigm's extension, once there is no stimulus for the audiences to go back and look for earlier versions with poor quality.

In terms of the paradigm's content and a consideration of these expressions as a linguistic structure, it is relevant to observe that the repertoire of 21 designations on this category demonstrates some properties of a pidgin proto-language as it mixes references to elaborate some items. For instance, we find technical details (HD, x264, DVD, Blu-ray) often found elsewhere on the media side by side with basic advertising promises (NEW SOURCE, NEW VIDEO) and also some autochthon solutions (TS, CAM), thus conveying a vocabulary that is not exclusive of the English language – hence the use of brand names, acronyms and Greek and Latin-rooted words – and expands through trial and error for the new users that begin anew on this platform.

The screen resolution of the file was the first category where we see conventional jargon of technology showing up on our observation. In our sample, only two resolutions were evident: 720 and 1080 lines of resolution. It is important to mention that all other resolutions are implicit in the naming of the material's source.

Towards the end of the syntagm, there reside the signatures of the several loosely organised

groups that provide films in file sharing websites. These users band together and adopt a name that identifies them such as: YIFY, anoXmous, aXXo, etc. Through these identities, these groups compete among themselves to see who is the first to deliver a film, especially those most anticipated (Furini, 2015). As expected, there are groups that present themselves with fake identities, which often demonstrates some kind of pun or irony, or even represent some incomprehensible acronym, an inside joke for the participants. These identities of distribution groups actually provide the only information presented in the titles of pirated files which is authorial, since all the others refer to the commercial source, a technical parameter, or a language identification. This was the second largest paradigm found on the dataset, counting 16 separate identities and consequently operating as a confirmation of the competition among them.

Closing the syntagm, on the identification of foreign language versions, we can confirm that the movie is circulating in English (its original language) when there is no mention about it. This raises an interesting point because the official distribution usually brings more than one option of language and subtitles, which is the first point noticed that suggests that the unofficial file is offering less to its audience than the official one, even if it delivers content beyond the commercial restrictions.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the main points is how regular the structures of labelling remain even in a marginal field such as this. Piracy is at best a misdemeanor that finds additional speed or channels of distribution for contents that come from the film and television industry. The adoption of a stable code of labelling in a decentralised and highly competitive field is something of a surprise.

Although not encouraging or facilitating file sharing directly, the decision about information that should be part of the name of a pirated file is important because it equips the user with relevant information on the material to be downloaded. In the case of a user with more technical knowledge about the platform and the practice of pirate download, he or she can seek information about the source and the group that made the file available, while a user less accustomed to these platforms can be satisfied only with the most basic information, such as movie title and language. Even if not all users rely on them, these details can help users to reduce errors at the time of a piratical download.

Besides that, the two fields with the greatest variation were the file sources and the distribution individuals or groups. The first underscores something that is not often perceived in the dynamics of piracy: it trails behind or anticipates official release dates for the film's primary markets, incorporating compatible tags as badges of quality to ensure recognition. Why add "Bluray" to an immaterial file's name? To gain extra prestige points by claiming proximity with the attributes the commercial brand has developed with consumers over time via advertising and promotion. The second axis suggests a continuous use of masks to hide the identities of the ones involved, an echo of the early days of the internet where aliases and personal identities were often distant as well as the implicit recognition that the activities of posting a film's copy online might not be entirely legal, hence posting it with a real name might invite the law's attention.

Also, websites like The Pirate Bay pay little effort in terms of promoting user interaction. The Pirate Bay's platform is very lightly regulated, and imposes very little on users that want to

upload any material. The website has some broad categories that users must select when uploading: audio, video, applications, games, porn and other. Those are the same categories that a user aiming to download an item will find, which presupposes that every time that a user accesses the website, he or she needs to have prior knowledge of what he or she will seek. The only options that can indicate something to the user are: browse torrents, recent torrents, TV shows, music and top 100, but these are very broad, since it works without any system of recommendation algorithm that recognises the user's tastes. This self labeling, very organised and functional, not necessarily exists because people do not like the organisation already established. What happens is that in order for the search engine platform to be functional, there must be a minimum of indexing of files that are part of it. As the platform itself does not deliver labels, users depend on other people for the platform to be useful and organised. This organisation, therefore, is communal, not institutional.

Although pirate services encourage trust between strangers, there is a strong presence of social capital animating the groups that make the files available. Some groups are popular precisely because they are known for their "good work", either by making available correct files of high quality, for having subtitles and audio synchronised, etc. The point is that these groups are known for being reliable. This, in fact, is different from trust in strangers. Services that rely on sharing economy dynamics, such as Uber and Airbnb can learn from piratical, self-regulated organisations: you can trust in strangers, but cannot depend on them. That is why reviews are so important: to transform strangers into those you can invest a modicum of trust in a specific context.

REFERENCES

- Bodó, B. (2013). Set the fox to watch the geese: voluntary IP regimes in piratical filesharing communities. In: M. Fredriksson & J. Arvanitakis (Eds.), *Piracy: Leakages from Modernity*. Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books.
- Carminati, B., Ferrari, E. & Viviani, M. (2014). Security and Trust in Online Social Networks. In: Bertino, E.; Sandhu, R. *Synthesis Lectures on Information Security, Privacy & Trust*. California: Morgan and Claypool.
- Chandler, D. (2002). *Semiotics: The Basics*. New York: Routledge.
- Chandler, D. & Munday, R. (2011). *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1964). *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*. Mouton: The Hague.
- Craig, P. (2005). *Software Piracy Exposed: Secrets from the Dark Side Revealed*. Rockland: Syngress Publishing.
- Cunningham, S. & Silver, J. (2013). *Screen Distribution and the New King Kongs of the Online World*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fiske, J. (et al). (1983). *Key Concepts in Communication*. London : Methuen.
- Furini, L. G. (2015). *Audiovisual piracy: the BitTorrent protocol as an unofficial way of online distribution of feature films*. Dissertation (Master of Science in Social Communication). Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul.
- Furini, L. G. & Tietzmann, R. (2013). Acerto entre fãs e distribuidora no caso Scott Pilgrim. In: *Anais da Semana da Imagem*. V. 1, n. 1. São Leopoldo: Unisinos.
- Jenkins, H., Ford, S. & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press.
- John, N. A. (2012). Sharing and Web 2.0: The emergence of a keyword. In: *Sage Publications*, 15(2), 167 – 182.
- Katz, E. (1998). *The Film Encyclopedia* (3rd Ed). Boston: Perennial.
- Kouwenberg, S. & Singler, J. V. (eds.). (2008). *The Handbook of Pidgin and Creole Studies*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Landau, N. (2016). *TV Outside the Box: Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution*. New York: Focal Press.
- Lee, K. D. (2014). *Foundations of Programming Languages*. New York: Springer.
- Lessig, L. (2006). *Code*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Levine, R. (2012). *Free Ride: how the internet is destroying the culture business and how it can*

fight back. London: Random House.

Pradeep, R. (2008). *Factors Influencing Consumers' Trust Perceptions of Online Product Reviews: a study of the tourism and hospitality online product review systems*. Ann Arbor: ProQuest LLC.

Recuero, R. (2009). *Redes Sociais na Internet*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.

Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S. & Camemer, C. (1998). Not So Different After All: a cross-discipline view of trust. In: *Academy of Management Review*, 23(3).

Saussure, F. (1997). *Curso de Linguística Geral*. São Paulo: Cultrix.

Shirky, C. (2010). *Cognitive Surplus: How Technology Makes Consumers into Collaborators*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Strangelove, M. (2015). *Post-TV: Piracy, Cord-Cutting, and the Future of Television*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Publishing.

Toulet, E. (1995). *Cinématographe, invention du siècle*. Paris: Gallimard.

Ulin, J. C. (2014). *The Business of Media Distribution: Monetizing Film, TV and Video Content in an Online World*. Burlington: Focal Press.

Van Valin Jr., R. D. & LaPolla, R. J. (1997). *Syntax: Structure, meaning and function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, F. (2014). Platform Monopolies. *Business Insider*, July 2014.

FOOTNOTES

1. Piracy can be defined as "the unauthorized use - copying, editing, appropriation publication, transmission or distribution, whether commercial or not - of a material under protection of intellectual property laws. It is always present in the market, parallel to the traditional models of distribution, raising questions about their supremacy" (Furini, 2015).

2. According to Chandler and Munday (2011) VHS was the first home video recording technology to reach mainstream appeal after it was manufactured by a diverse number of companies. Betamax arguably had a superior image quality, but licensing issues kept it bound to Sony, the format's creator, never having reached an equivalent success.

3. Usenet is a system of online bulletin boards grouped by subject matter first created on 1979 according to Chandler and Munday (2011).

4. Peer-to-peer (or P2P) is an architecture that allows exchange of files between users, without the need for a server mediating contact between them.

5. The Pirate Bay is the world's largest torrent website in terms of availability of material. According to information of the documentary TPB AFK: The Pirate Bay Away from Keyboard - launched in 2013 and directed by Simon Klose - The Pirate Bay is responsible for half of BitTorrent traffic in the world.

6. A *seeder* is a user who is uploading the shared file. When a user starts to download a torrent

file he or she is called peer. By the time he or she already downloaded enough of that file, that user participates in the upload of the parts of the file that he or she already downloaded. He or she thereby becomes a seeder himself.