

Creative Value Chains

Copyright and Beyond for a Better Value Distribution

OVERVIEW

Digital platforms increasingly cannibalise the value generated by human creativity, from sharing platforms (TikTok), to streaming services (Spotify) and AI models (ChatGPT). This extraction of value from artists and internet users to platforms threatens cultural diversity and the sustainability of creative work. A new framework is needed to ensure fairer value distribution across the creative economy.

The creative ecosystem also remains too narrowly focused on initial acts of creation rather than recognising creativity as a value chain that spans production, distribution and use involving multiple contributors (creators, intermediaries, click and digital workers). The value also has multiple dimensions: A creative work generates not only economic but also social, cultural, educational and emotional value, which current frameworks fail to capture.

Creative industries such as music, gaming and visual arts act as societal catalysts, often anticipating wider shifts in work, community governance and technology.

This calls for approaches that reward all contributors – from creators to digital and click workers – across the entire chain. Solutions include copyright reform (new remuneration rights for streaming and AI training), value chain contractualisation and cultural policies that strengthen professionalisation and resilience.

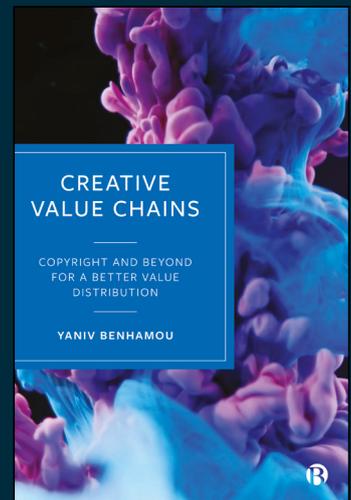
More radical, ambitious pathways, such as treating AI datasets as commons and developing alternative creator-owned platforms, could help reimagine creativity as a sustainable public resource.

CONTEXT

Digital platforms dominate creative industries, from music and video games to visual arts. Yet value distribution remains highly unequal. Artists and digital workers receive little or no reward, uncredited data extraction and limited bargaining power, while their content fuels both platform profits and AI training models.

Drawing on 20 years of interdisciplinary work that brings together sectoral analysis (music, visual arts, video games), first-hand experience (artistic practice as a musician) and legal design tools to illuminate complex value flows, *Creative Value Chains: Copyright and Beyond for a Better Value Distribution* by Yaniv Benhamou invites policy makers to:

- redefine creativity as a distributed value chain;
- recognise creative sectors as laboratories of future economic and social models; and
- support transparent and equitable value-sharing systems to sustain cultural diversity and fair digital futures.



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FINDINGS

Digital technologies have reshaped the creative economy and its value chains. They multiply opportunities but deepen inequalities. Value accumulates at the top while creators face growing precarity. Key insights include:

- **Value is multi-layered.** Creativity accumulates value in layers – from creation to collaboration to data – each adding and capturing worth along the chain. Cultural policies must reward all contributors across economic, cultural, social, educational, emotional, historical and spiritual value dimensions.
- **Oversupply and the 'long tail'.** With 120,000 tracks and an estimated 5 billion images uploaded daily, visibility collapses for most creators. This leads to a longer tail – with most artists achieving less success or none at all – and to a concentration of revenue among superstars. New platform, economic and social models are required to support them.
- **Platforms capture most value**, while income fragments across many actors. Copyright helps but was never designed as a living wage, so new compensation models are needed.
- **Cultural diversity is at risk.** Without intervention, we drift toward a 'self-driving culture' governed by platforms and AI. A better alternative supports bottom-up creativity and diverse cultural expressions.
- **Creative sectors act as societal catalysts, often anticipating wider shifts:** Gaming and visual arts pioneered monetisation models (free-to-play, NFTs). Music prefigured debates on streaming, algorithms and data transparency. Artist communities are inventing new economic and governance utopias (self-regulated communities and creator-owned platforms).

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

- **Reform copyright** to include collective and distributive dimensions, and establish a right to remuneration for streaming and AI uses, extended to metadata and usage data.
- **Complement copyright with contract law and data trusts:** Develop commons-based data licensing covering all forms of data (copyrighted, personal and technical) supported by data trusts.
- **Professionalise creative industries by strengthening intermediaries:** Combine traditional measures (social protection, collective agreements, cultural quotas) with new framework conditions that strengthen intermediaries, professionalise the sector and build resilience.
- **Encourage collective digital governance:** Create incentives and frameworks that enable individuals and professionals to adopt collective digital tools (e.g. Web3-based royalties, shared rights management).
- **Support cooperative and commons-based innovation:** Provide funding, regulatory support and infrastructure for creator-owned platforms and commons-based data models (e.g. AI training datasets with micro-royalties).
- **Promote algorithmic accountability and transparent metadata standards:** Encourage the development and adoption of open metadata standards and transparent audit mechanisms that empower individuals and creative professionals to understand and influence how their work circulates online.
- **Stimulate new economic and social models:** Combine technological measures (automated payments and fractional royalties) with disruptive, radical solutions like AI as a common good – i.e. inputs feeding models as common goods (input-as-commons) that could be self-regulated by the community, i.e. any internet user wishing to participate in the circulation and governance of AI – or alternative streaming platforms for small players (long tail) and features such as manual curation and 'à la carte' pricing allowing artists to determine the amount of remuneration and tips.