

6.805 Semester Project Scope — Michael E Plasmeier, Stephen J Suen

In order to better focus the direction of our final project, we have devised a basic skeleton for the paper and the framework contained within. Hopefully this should give you a better idea of our intended project scope, what specific issues we want to focus on, and in what capacities a mentor might be able to assist us. The structure of the paper will flow as follows:

1. Review of current literature on evaluating the economic costs of piracy and on assessing the effectiveness of anti-piracy mechanisms
2. The details of the evaluative framework itself
 - a. Abstract guiding principles by which anti-piracy mechanisms will be weighed against and to steer the future development of such mechanisms
 - b. Specific objectives and considerations that tangibly reflect these principles
3. Case study to show the framework in action
 - a. Graduated response policies
 - i. HADOPI law
 - ii. “Six strikes” warning system
 - b. Lawsuits against individual infringers
4. Meta-analysis of the framework — strengths, weaknesses, possibilities for future improvement
5. Proposition as to how the framework might be used and integrated into debates over anti-piracy legislation and the overall decision-making process

As a starting point, we’ve identified three broad principles that will serve as the basis of the framework. We believe that they comprehensively cover the major points of contention in assessing anti-piracy policies and should be reasonably satisfactory for all parties. Moreover, we’ve narrowed down the specific objectives that we’ll be investigating to the bare essentials:

1. Is effective in reducing piracy (economic argument)
 - a. Ease of circumvention
 - b. Revenue in reclaimed sales
 - c. Positive effects on employment
2. Has minimal negative repercussions on internet (technical “MIT expertise” argument)
 - a. e.g. DNS
 - b. Non-infringing use of technology – effects on innovation (e.g. Megaupload, torrents)
 - c. Fair use arguments (creative/cultural)
3. Will be acceptable to stakeholders (political/legal argument)
 - a. Who will implement? Legal authority/precedents?
 - b. Costs of implementation/enforcement
 - c. Political views/possible challenges of stakeholders, e.g. industry, citizens, artists

With respect to the economic arguments, we don’t expect to be devising an actual equation to plug numbers into. Considering our current level of knowledge and the time frame of the project, this would be impractical. Instead, we will be taking a more broad view of the economic effects that an anti-piracy mechanism might have on sales and employment.

As for technical arguments, these should become more apparent as we delve further into the research. Naturally, we won’t be able to go into detail of all the potential technical problems that an anti-piracy mechanism might pose; however, we can identify the broader issues as well as particularly key standards and systems to pay close attention to (e.g. DNS).

In terms of mentorship, we would best be assisted by someone who understands how economic analyses of piracy are conducted as well as the overall political landscape of copyright legislation. Looking at the points identified above, we feel that we can amply address (2), could benefit from support on (3), and definitely require guidance with (1).