On the 3rd July 2017, the Institut d’Études des Médias Numériques (INM) of the University of Amsterdam organized its Blockchain and Copyright Symposium. For better introduction to the symposium see the blog post.

Part I

Presentations

The symposium looked at a short presentation by Balázs Bodó, after briefly introducing the technology, Balázs noted blockchain essentially as the implementation of and security on the world through tokenization of digital items. These tokens can be digital copies of copyright works; they can also refer to licenses, tokens or payments for the use of works. The technology allows embedded transactions on these devices through “smart contracts,” as well as a solution to reliable and transparent transaction records without the need for a trusted intermediary.

Due to its far-reaching potential, stakeholder interest is high. Rights holders, collective rights management organisations (CMOs), digital content platforms, startups, investors, intermediaries providers, etc., are all seen to be moving in some shape or form towards blockchain-based solutions. In this context, it is difficult to distinguish “type from form” as all the approaches to solving copyright issues, in particular, it is hard to know whether it will constitute a revolution or merely an evolution in the online management of rights. To a large extent, Balázs noted that as long as one reads blockchain, the fast-paced, but at the same time, high expectations of blockchain will likely be of great value.

In the discussion with the audience, the first major topic to surface was whether blockchain constitutes a “disruptive” or “revolutionary” technology. Alice Brook, a blockchain start-up that aims to connect “songs, films, artists, bands, fans, labels, and other users, deal with issues on the fairness of payments to artists, define the role of CMOs in this field, etc.”

Following Alice Brook, Becky Brook, in her presentation Becky classed herself as a “pessimist” when it comes to blockchain, as she does not think blockchain will be able to solve all rights-related issues nor will it find a fairly large number of stakeholders to participate and invest in pooling data on rights management. Having said that, there is a lot of potential in the music industry, as well as the challenges described by Becky, Balázs Bodó believes that blockchain can play a central role in this area. As expected, the technology offers an incentive for the industry to join forces and solve the current mess on rights management. Becky noted that blockchain does not simply mean that any agreement will be made or that any dispute will be resolved but that it will be easier for a trusted intermediary to be included, thus the problem of data on ownership, use, and payment will be reduced. The implementation of blockchain will also be done in collaboration with other emerging technologies, such as the internet of things, as well as in the spirit of “fair” and “sustainable” remuneration alternatives to the current music ecosystem.

Despite the multitude of stakeholders and changing interests in the music field, as well as the challenges described by Becky, Balázs Bodó believes that blockchain can play a central role in this area. As expected, the technology offers an incentive for the industry to join forces and solve the current mess on rights management. Becky noted that blockchain does not simply mean that any agreement will be made or that any dispute will be resolved but that it will be easier for a trusted intermediary to be included, thus the problem of data on ownership, use, and payment will be reduced. The implementation of blockchain will also be done in collaboration with other emerging technologies, such as the internet of things, as well as in the spirit of “fair” and “sustainable” remuneration alternatives to the current music ecosystem.

Next up was Lars Groeneveld, Project Director at UJOM (the Dutch Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music). In his presentation Lars talked about the potential of “music tokens” and how blockchain could be used in the music industry to solve problems such as the ownership of music pieces and protecting the rights of artists.

In his presentation, Lars stated that the future of blockchain is very promising as the technology has enormous potential and can be used in various fields, including the music industry. He also noted that blockchain could be used in the music industry to solve problems such as the ownership of music pieces and protecting the rights of artists.

In this context, the main obstacle to the deployment of blockchain solutions is convincing all stakeholders to participate in pooling data on rights management. As explained by Lars, the main obstacle to the deployment of blockchain solutions is convincing all stakeholders to participate in pooling data on rights management. However, said Lars, there is a vast potential in the music industry, as well as the challenges described by Becky, Balázs Bodó believes that blockchain can play a central role in this area. As expected, the technology offers an incentive for the industry to join forces and solve the current mess on rights management. Becky noted that blockchain does not simply mean that any agreement will be made or that any dispute will be resolved but that it will be easier for a trusted intermediary to be included, thus the problem of data on ownership, use, and payment will be reduced. The implementation of blockchain will also be done in collaboration with other emerging technologies, such as the internet of things, as well as in the spirit of “fair” and “sustainable” remuneration alternatives to the current music ecosystem.

Following Lars Groeneveld, Daniel classed himself as a “realist” and commented: ‘Blockchain Copyright Symposium: Summary Report

Becky Brook

On August 9, 2017

Becky Brook

Part II

Discussion

In the discussion with the audience, the first major topic to surface was whether blockchain constitutes a “disruptive” or “revolutionary” technology. The speakers had different views. Daniel classed himself as a “pessimist” when it comes to blockchain, as he does not think blockchain will be able to solve all rights-related issues nor will it find a fairly large number of stakeholders to participate and invest in pooling data on rights management. Having said that, there is a lot of potential in the music industry, as well as the challenges described by Becky, Balázs Bodó believes that blockchain can play a central role in this area. As expected, the technology offers an incentive for the industry to join forces and solve the current mess on rights management. Becky noted that blockchain does not simply mean that any agreement will be made or that any dispute will be resolved but that it will be easier for a trusted intermediary to be included, thus the problem of data on ownership, use, and payment will be reduced. The implementation of blockchain will also be done in collaboration with other emerging technologies, such as the internet of things, as well as in the spirit of “fair” and “sustainable” remuneration alternatives to the current music ecosystem.

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In closing, it appears that blockchain technology presents an opportunity to improve online music licensing and rights management, especially standardization of rights ownership information. It is likely too many of an early stage to truly determine the extent of its transformative impact on copyright. However, it appears to be an agent for incremental change that will hopefully increase the efficiency and transparency of their services, while offering artists an additional avenue for direct licensing.

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