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Lawrence Lessig, November 16th, 2006

In my last letter, I described some of the ways CC technologies get integrated into Web 2.0 applications. Many of you wrote that you were surprised by the examples, and were especially excited that the applications reached so broadly internationally.

That response has led me to tell a bit more about CC as a global movement. For certainly the most exciting work in spreading CC is going on in cultures far from our headquarters in San Francisco.

So, this week, consider just three examples drawn from a pool of many more. In each, our tools for encouraging sharing are encouraging a much wider range of creativity.

Brazil

The first example comes from Brazil, at the site ["Overmundo"](#)

Overmundo is a collaborative website designed to spread Brazilian culture. Its distinction is that both its content and design are generated by its users. Users choose what should or should not be published on the website. They choose what goes on the front page. And everything made available on the site is licensed under a CC license.

The Overmundo tools give users the capacity to rate the quality of contributed content. This invitation to the site's users has in turn inspired a community that has built a "cultural database," with thousands of people sharing and making content available broadly. In less than 7 months, there have been more than 7,000 contributors from all over Brazil. The site has hosted a few million visitors, and is now, according to [Technorati](#), among the top 7,000 websites in the world. The site's traffic is growing by 20% per month, and there are more than 400,000 references to it recorded by Google.

The Netherlands

My second example focuses more on archives. From the Netherlands, the "Images for the Future" project is building a large-scale conservation and digitization project to make available 285,000 hours of film, television, and radio recordings, as well as more than 2.9 million photos from the Netherlands' film and television archives. A basic collection drawn from the archive will be made available on the Internet either under CC licenses, or in some cases, in the public domain. The Government of the Netherlands, a long time supporter of the local Dutch CC project, will invest a total of 173 million Euros over a seven-year period. Their aim is to spur innovative applications with new media, while providing valuable services to the public.

The idea of an archive like this is not new. But the scale and values of this project are extraordinary. The Netherlands may be a small country, but if it is successful, the "Images for the Future" project may well be the largest archive of free culture available anywhere in the world.

South Africa

Finally, consider some magic from South Africa. [ccMixer South Africa](#) is leading a unique cultural remixing competition, drawing upon the work of creators from both Brazil and South Africa. The competition is part of the ["culturelivre"](#) project, which is a joint effort of Creative Commons in Brazil and South Africa.

To find samples for the competition, [ccSA](#) invited some of the most important custodians of musical heritage in South Africa – including the [International Library of African Music \(ILAM\)](#) – to produce short riffs using traditional African instruments. Among these instruments are the "Mutumba drums," which are generally inaccessible on the Internet today. These drums were originally from Zimbabwe and were used to accompany spiritual ceremonies that include dancing, singing, clapping, and playing the mbira thumb piano. Young musicians entering the competition will remix these traditional sounds, and in the process, develop an understanding of the roots of music in both cultures. Ultimately, the team hopes that the competition will develop new sounds that young start-up musicians can use to advance their own musical careers.

In all of these cases, CC tools provide a legal platform to spread and build culture. That much we expected when we launched CC four years ago. The part I never expected, however, is the extraordinary community that this platform is inspiring internationally. CC has come to be about much more than just licenses, and certainly much more than any of us dreamed.

This email is part of a weekly series written by Lawrence Lessig about Creative Commons. If you would like to be removed from the list, please click [here](#). Alternatively, if you know others who might find this interesting, please sign them up [here](#).

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