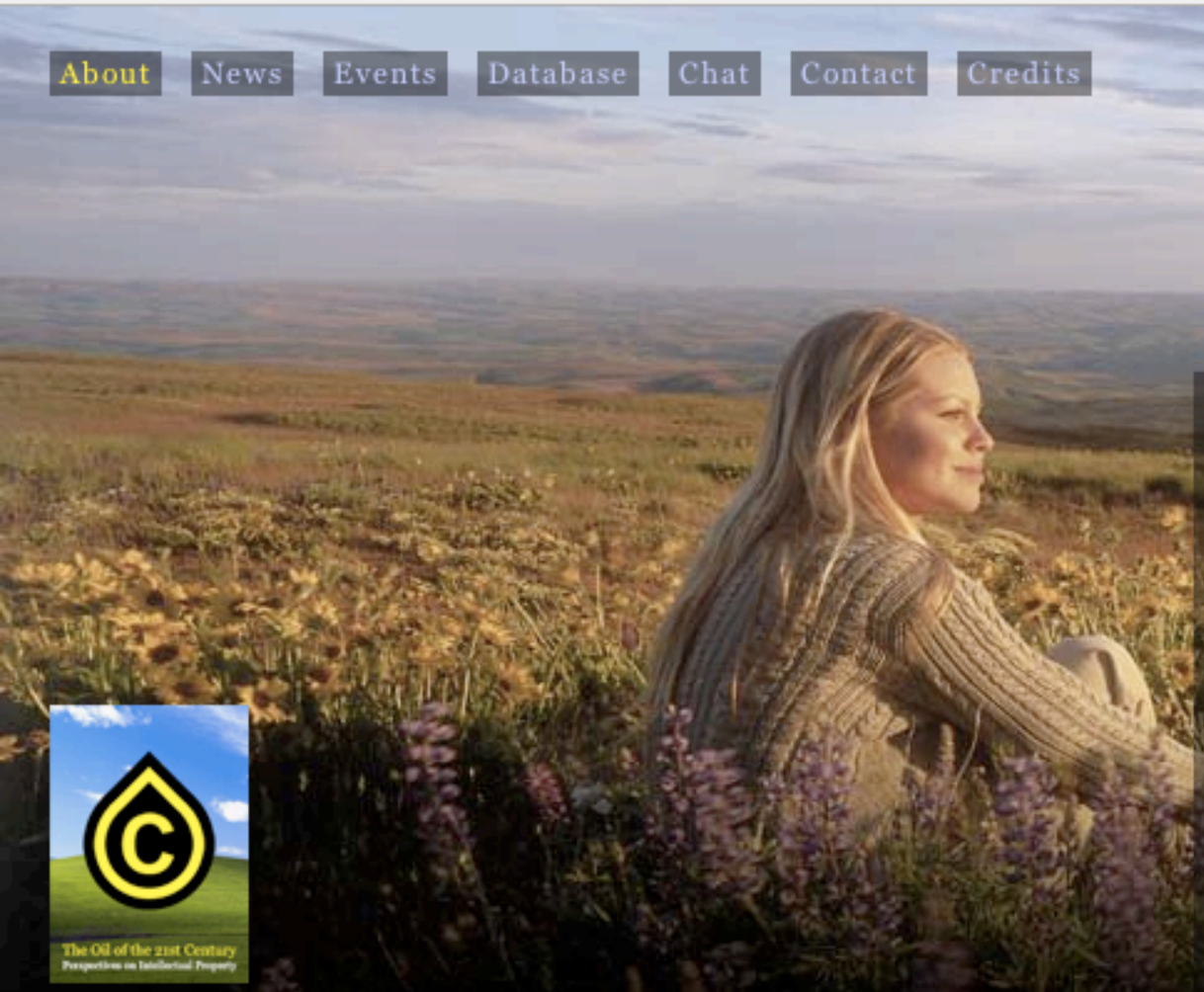


The Oil of the 21st Century
Perspectives on Intellectual Property

"Intellectual Property is the oil of the 21st century" - this quote by Mark Getty, chairman of Getty Images, one of the world's largest Intellectual Proprietors, offers a unique perspective on the current conflicts around copyrights, patents and trademarks. Not only does it open up the complete panorama of conceptual confusion that surrounds this relatively new and rather hallucinatory form of property - it must also be understood as a direct declaration of war.

The "War Against Piracy" - a preventive, permanent and increasingly panic-driven battle that defies the traditional logic of warfare - is only one of the many strange and contradictory crusades that currently take place at the new frontier of Intellectual Property. Under the banner of the "Information Society", a cartel of corporate knowledge distributors struggle to maintain their exclusive right to the exploitation and commodification of the informational resources of the world. With their campaign for "Digital Rights Management", the copyright industries attempt to simultaneously outlaw the Universal Computer, revoke the Internet and suspend the fundamental laws of information. Under the pretext of the "Creative Commons", an emerging middle class of Intellectual Proprietors fights an uphill battle against the new and increasingly popular forms of networked production that threaten the regimes of individual authorship and legal control. And as it envisions itself drilling for "the oil of the 21st century", the venture capital that fuels the quest for properties yet undiscovered has no choice but to extend the battlefield even further, far beyond the realm of the immaterial, deep into the world of machines, the human body, and the biosphere.

But while Intellectual Property struggles to conquer our hearts and minds, ideas still improve, and technology participates in the improvement. On all fronts, the enormous effort towards expropriation and privatization of





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