

**Opening panel PARADISO (FP7)**  
**08/09/2011, Charlemagne**

Dear Vice-President,  
Colleagues,  
Dear attendees,

First of all, let me thank the PARADISO team for inviting me to this session. As a Member of the European Parliament, Governor of the European Internet Foundation, and until this year, head of the Parliament's delegation to the Internet Governance Forum, I've indeed been following the issue at stake for a certain time!

And to directly move on, let me say that I disagree with one of your assumptions... but don't worry, for this is gonna be a positive comment after all! Indeed, I think that the Internet is more and more widely recognised not only as a transformational tool, but also as a "grand societal challenge" by itself. At least, that's what I feel in the policy circles which I just mentioned...

In general terms, I absolutely share your approach. Yet, the question is how to design and implement what could be described in broad terms as a "progressive Internet agenda", in a largely conservative world -including sometimes Europe-!

In order to take on this challenge, we most certainly need the holistic approach which you mention several times in your conclusion paper, and which imply perpetual cross-influences between the Internet as a problem-solver and the problems themselves having diverse effects on the Internet.

The Internet is neutral: yet, how can we "separate the wheat from the chaff", that is, ensure that all its positive, progressive externalities don't get soiled by the difficult issues which it should help resolve? I'll take three examples.

First: Internet and innovation. The Internet, by allowing "innovation without permission", spurred astounding creation of wealth -bucks and content alike-. Yet, it is up to us, policy-makers, to make sure that this wealth is well-distributed and well-shared. There are two potential risks: capture and impoverishment. The former would happen if yesterday's small and innovative entities -today's major players-, decided to seal off their track to success. The latter would be the result of a bursting bubble (such as the one we already underwent at the beginning of the century). So we need to make the Internet value chain both fairer and more solid.

From a European perspective, I strongly recommend the reading of the High-level Expert Group on Key Enabling Technologies' Final report, which was recently released. In particular, we need to examine how innovation, and in particular Internet-driven innovation, changes the industrial processes and the notion of workplace (from a single, closed workplace to the open and kaleidoscopic one, organised around clusters).

Secondly: Internet and sustainable growth. With regards to "green ICTs" in particular, how can we make sure that it becomes more than a catchphrase?

In that respect there are three dimensions I'd like to highlight. First, because of the complexity of the Internet itself, and the variety of actors, there's no top-down way to globally minimise the Internet's "carbon footprint". Thus, how to trigger a sort of ICT grassroot environmental consciousness? My second comment relates to the unsustainability of our hardware consumption. In particular, if there's no clear strategy of device durability or recycling (the latter seems to be favoured currently), it will lead to extreme tensions on the raw material market (especially the rare earths which are concentrated in certain places). Finally, on smart grids, I've got the feeling that in Europe the different industrial actors are not talking to each other enough yet to really make up the best of their potential synergies.

Thirdly, Internet and Human Rights: this question, which had been discussed for a long time in diplomatic circles, took a much more concrete turn with the debates over Intellectual Property enforcement in the digital sphere. As a French person, I was rather upset that it was my country which strongly

pushed in favour of, and set up, the infamous three strikes. I'm glad that at the European level, the final compromise over the telecom package, which was under my responsibility, made the link in a legislative text between the Internet and fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial. In the meantime, some positive steps have been made; for example, it has been acknowledged at the very top of WIPO that rather than penalising end-users, a review of the very substance of copyright law was needed in order to fit the digital environment.

As a side note, these few dimensions are only a small part of what the Paradiso project covered, and yet one cannot help but notice that it is difficult to find consistency in the different fora which regularly tackle them (National and regional authorities, OECD, IGF, eG8, etc...)!

Another point on which I agree with your conclusions, is that we certainly need to move away from techno-centrism, and pay more attention to the social or societal aspects of the Internet in terms of innovative and emerging practices. The interactions between physical and virtual realms, and vice versa, could trigger a virtual circle whereby societal evolutions would create new needs, to be answered by technologies which could, or should, represent a chance for Europe. That's what Tim Berners-Lee -in support of W3C- calls "Web science", more generally rebaptised by the Paradiso team "Internet science". And it is an unfortunate surprise that there are still so few dedicated scholarly formations and studies, which would allow to better grasp the Internet as a phenomenon and not only as an instrument.

If such Internet "culture" was more widespread, maybe we policy-makers could move away from yet another pitfall, which could be coined as "turf-centrism". Let me illustrate this with yet another example: the European institutions are currently negotiating a mandatory policy program for spectrum. Building up on the Commission proposal, the Parliament insists a lot on setting up a public and transparent inventory of frequency usage. The idea borrows a lot from the Open data movement, and a lot of MEPs, I included, expect this to have a very positive impact on solving inefficiencies through crowd-sourcing, and allowing new, smaller players to come onboard. But I'm

sometimes disappointed to observe that in the exchanges between the Commission and the Council, the same issue is bluntly scaled down to a question of competence. Of course, questions of competence are important (and always a bit tricky in the European Union, as we know). But to focus only on them often means that we keep the same, old way of thinking and miss the most promising and innovative points. As you say in your paper, you were sometimes called "dreamers"; but dreams of Open Data for example, while they certainly bear a disruptive effect, are also very promising in terms of real economic dynamism and growth!

This brings me to my last point, and conclusion: the Internet as a tool can greatly enhance democratic government or governance, by allowing new types of more direct and participatory interaction with citizens, meaning a different society overall! On the other hand, the Internet itself needs governance, which really is an iterative process. Open multistakeholder processes which characterise ICANN and IGF proceedings, while certainly imperfect yet, represent a real paradigm change. This is because they mirror their protean subject: complex, distributed, horizontal, and leaderless. Actually, Internet governance could certainly inspire positive and much-needed evolutions in the governance of other complex, global issues, such as climate change, or financial regulation.

From my point of view, that key aspect should definitely be part of Paradiso's future investigations!!

Thank you very much for your attention.