Formation of the new network post-society: new civilization challenges: The digitalization of the mass media in a postal-modern society founded on web and her meaning for the dialogue of the civil societies
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“Diversity in a World of Digital Media: Global Transformation and Universal Regulations”

I’m honoured and privileged to be with you today, Ladies and Gentlemen. Allow me to convey my thanks to Prof. Jens Wendland, the chair of our Round-Table for his kind invitation, that permits me to share with you some ideas and recent experiences. My subject is headlined: (Headline)

It would be no exaggeration, to assert that mass media constitute the fundamental culture institution of the global e-civilization (says the Programme).

Or should we better say:
of global civilization itself?

If it is right to say:
mass media are more and more emerging as the factor directly responsible for the construction of social reality -:

We better speak of the state of global civilization in the net-world, conceptualized by UNESCO as “knowledge societies” - embedded in the frame of a New Humanism.
(the only one of the 17 special UN-agency with the mandate to promote the free flow of word and images)

The chair invited us, to catch the present state – not only of the dynamic development of digital mass media,
but rather the societal implications and perspectives of the “digital era”.

This notion “digital era” reminded me of a stark debate with Freimut Duve, the 1. Director for mass media of the OSCE taking place in the Vienna Hofburg during a conference on the consequences of digital and global media.

Duve, a well-known author and publisher strongly rejected the notion “digital era” arguing that the phenomenon was nothing like a historical era. Mass media are mass media, regardless of the way they are produced and transmitted.

L&G, today we know: not only Francis Fukuyama who postulated the end of history failed, the OSCE -Media Director did as well. History went on – rushing more than ever - and a digital era emerged immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall 1990.

Now, the fall of the wall and the 2+4-treaty are becoming Documentary Heritage - a good reason to question where we stand now, 20 years later: I will try to answer that question in the structure of a good Sunday sermon.
  Where do we come from?
  Where do we stand?
  Where do we go?
(And don’t worry, chair, I know I only have ten minutes).

I.
Where do we come from?

One of the most beautiful utopias regarding knowledge societies originates from the US-American President Thomas Jefferson: „He, who receives an idea from me receives instruction himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine receives light without darkening me“. 
Interesting enough, Jefferson said this when he launched the copyright law (laid out at that time for 28 years). Jefferson wanted to attract the intelligence of his people for the better sake of the whole society: an idea of the era of enlightenment.

The internationalization of mass media had been debated already in the League of Nations, the predecessor of the UN at times of subsea cables – already highly political debates about power, sovereignty and commercial interests.

But only when the World Trade Organization with its 157 member states and international treaties like GATT, GATS and TRIPS entered into the AV-Sector – we are talking about the mid nineties – we began to realize the changes in international communication namely:

a. the open conflict between Economy and Culture behind which stand not only different interests but different perceptions of the world;

b. the conflict and change from specific sector politics (as Radio/TV/Broadcast) to a multi-sector approach, touching even on constitutional law: from culture- to economic- to trade and at least to societal politics; and

c. the conflicts of national media politics and international communication-, trade and culture policies.

Nevertheless, in all these conflicts, it is our idea of society which counts. Think of Jefferson. The perception we have of the world is decisive for the way we act.

II. Where do we stand?

"Among the nations of the earth", Immanuel Kant wrote in 1795, "an age in which "a violation of law in one place is felt in all places". What else can we say – more than 200 years later? ("Unter den Völkern der Erde", schrieb Immanuel Kant 1795, sei es nun „so weit gekommen, dass eine Rechtsverletzung an einem Platz der Erde an allen gefühlt wird").

Not much! Yet, we can describe the reaction of the nations today
to a „world public sphere“ the visionary Kant has described and celebrated as an advancement and progress of reason (at a time when the world map was still full of white spots!)

So follow me to Paris to the last (36.) GC into the hall of the deliberations in Commission V – Information and Communication – taking place last November. Where else can we better realize the reactions of Nations on the transnational world public sphere and its backbone, the Internet? Let me open the time window:

„The digitization is not changing the mode of communication“, the observer of the Vatican said to the members of the 193 delegations, „but communication itself“. (Besides, proving herewith that he knew Lawrence Lessig’s „Code“.)

At stake was a draft „Code of Ethics“, brought in by the Russian president of IFAP, the Information for All Programme of UNESCO. The US-American delegate cut it short: No political interference on the market. what else is Communication than a world market?

Whilst the delegate of China questioned the assembly: This change of „communication itself“: „What does it mean for the „common good“ of a respective society, for the national implementation of legislation for ICT?“

The US position themselves self-confidently claiming, that the market suffices for the development of the Information Society, the Nordic countries are definitely against any “Code” whatsoever in the field of information reasoning with the freedom of expression; the Chinese are obligingly welcoming the idea of a code as long as it is subjugated to national legislation.

Germany underlines that for the first time in history there is a global infrastructure for communication, already used by more than one quarter of the world population. Should we not reject
the concept of a ghetto-ised and partitioned Internet in order to safe an open communication between the people of the world?

Answers were given as well at the World Economic Forum in Davos 2012:
Knowledge and innovation have become the new production factors of the century, according to the founder and president of the WEP, Klaus Schwab.
„The rules of capitalism have to cope with that!“

Sir Thimothy Berners-Lee gave an answer as well, the creator of key technologies such as the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), the Universal Resource Identifier (URI) and the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), basis of the global World Wide Web – so nothing less than the preconditions of a revolution.

Sir Timothy argued:
The Internet developed to a powerful tool of mankind existing everywhere – a brilliant artefact – because it was based on egalitarian principles which thousands of individuals, universities and private entities obeyed in their co-operation, thus constructing the www-consortium and enlarging the fantastic possibilities for the development of the world.

Yet, at the 20th Birthday of the net, Sir Timothy doesn’t feel like celebrating. It was not so, he said, that the revolution was digesting its children. Rather the reverse:
Some of the most successful inhabitants started to undermine the principles of the web:

- Big social networks erected walls around the information given by their users and thus splitting up from the rest of the net the consequences of which have been described by the NYT as „Text without context“;
- Traffic to websites of companies with whom they are not doing
business are being slowed down by the handful of competitors providing the services on the net;
- Huge private entities as well as governments – be they autocratic or democratic – investigate the online-behaviour of the people and doing so endangering the Human Rights.

Sir Bernes-Lee insisted: The net should be the net of the people of the world obeying universal rules. But seemingly, times are not so liberal.

Just one year later – only some days ago -, the focus of the man (who, besides, always having denied copyrights for his inventions) has changed. Without the problems of the market being solved he now focuses on action of his state. Great Britain was always said to be the perhaps most liberal state in Europe. And now that:

The Guardian reported:
Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia, has sharply criticised the government’s "snooper’s charter", designed to track the internet, text and e-mail-use of all British citizens, as "technologically incompetent". If this would become law, he said to MP’s, the internet economy worldwide would start to encrypt the traffic.

Berners-Lee, 57, argued:
"In order to be able to turn the whole thing off or really block, suppress one particular idea then the countries and governments would have to get together and agree and co-ordinate and turn it from a decentralised system to being a centralised system.

"And if that does happen it is really important that everybody fights against that sort of direction."

(Wales has frequently expressed strong opposition to the suggestion of extending government control of the internet; earlier this year he called for a blackout of Wikipedia)
to protest at a proposed US law which would have been able
to shut down non-US sites alleged to infringe copyright.)

Berners-Lee told the Guardian earlier this year that the government should
abandon the proposals,
calling them
"a destruction of human rights"
and warning that "the amount of control
you have over somebody
if you can monitor internet activity
is amazing."

III.
Where do we go to?

The famous son of my city, Frankfurt on the Main,
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said:
Important are the connections (die Bezüge), the interrelations,
they are everything! (By this he shows to be a systemic thinker.)
What counts is how we understand and connect notions, sectors (like
culture and economy) and meanings.

It has become obvious in the debates on Human Sustainable Development
how different our cultural traditions are regarding
the concepts of society,
the concept of constitutional rights (individual and social rights),
the concept of the State and the Market.
and the concept of the public sector.

Therefore, only seven years ago, the international community resolved on a
new international instrument - called the
“Magna Charta of International Culture Policies”, which could be
understood as a change of paradigm as until then international law was
framed mostly by finance- and trade treaties.

It is an international instrument for national politics based on the
• Acceptance of the dual nature of culture products, being commodities as well as
bases of our identity;
• Allows thus to harmonize cultural policies with international trade obligations;
• Promotes bilateral and plurilateral co-operation treaties in favour of the
development of media- and audiovisual markets in transitional states

Therewith, the “Convention on Protection and Promotion of Cultural
Diversity”
works with a double mechanism:
It offers **legitimacy for national** culture policies as much as it asks for cultural co-operation and the acceptance of **common principles** in tying up these new forms of **international** relations.

(In the language of trade law which aims at liberalising the world market this is nothing but a preferential treatment. Such a treatment is a „discriminatory act“ in the context of WTO-treaties like GATS, which most important for media markets, and could be brought to court.

Nevertheless, meanwhile the world understood: relinquishing cultural policies brings up societal inefficiencies, both on a national as well as the international level.

In the international debate which accompanied The emergence of this smart international instrument Europe was proud to say, there was more at stake than the question of state and market, that successful societies have a third dimension available: the public sector.

It seems not only Europe has lost some of its pride and its conviction about the public sector. The scientific world seemingly lost their belief in a good end of the story:

“Paradoxically, as the goal of a truly multilingual Internet is approached, there is a growing risk that the Internet could fragment along national, linguistic, cultural or political lines, undermining cultural diversity, mutual understanding and a culture of peace.”¹

**Let me close**
Hans Magnus Enzensberger, German philosopher of our days, sais: “Cultural expressions are as much shaped by cultural traditions
as they are shaping our culture”.
It tells us something
about the systemic nature of culture
shaping our future.

UNESCO therefore speaks of an
“Ecology shaping the Internet”
following principles such as equity, diversity and sustainability.
“By placing developments in these arenas
into a broad ecology of choices,
it is more apparent how freedom
can be eroded unintentionally
as various actors strategically pursue
a more diverse array of objectives.

“The findings”, a scientific team from Oxford writes in a study for UNESCO
“reinforce the significance of concerns
over freedom of expression and connection,
while acknowledging countervailing trends
and the open future of technology, policy and practice.

**Freedom of expression is not an
inevitable outcome of technological innovation.**
**It can be diminished or reinforced by the design of technologies,
policies and practices –
sometimes far removed
from freedom of expression.”¹

This synthesis points out the need not only
to focus on systematic research but a political debate
of us, the citizens, on this wider ecology
shaping the future of expression
in the digital age.
Perhaps it started already.
In the moment, our newspaper and magazines
are full of it.”

As the UNESCO-constitution of 1946 says:
“Peace, if it is not to fail, must be founded
upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.“
So: Welcome to the Club, Ladies and Gentlemen!

(2311 words)