

PEOPLE • OPENNESS • TRUST

THE INTERNET: A SHARED FUTURE



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INVITATION TO AN EXCHANGE OF THOUGHT

The Hague, May 2008

The internet has developed at an unprecedented speed over the last 20 years: from a new way of communication between some thousands of scientists to a worldwide driver of economic growth for billions of people.

Knowledge is now distributed much faster and communication is much easier. Consumers can become prosumers, creating their own media content, or becoming entrepreneurs in electronic marketplaces.

Social networking sites and virtual worlds broaden personal and professional interaction across borders and within local communities.

As happens everywhere, we tend to think that the internet is more or less finished. It is not. It has nowhere near realised its potential with regard to the number of people on line and the number and quality of applications and services it supports. The internet can help us solve problems in fields like care, the environment and education – but only if internet connections remain open and if we manage to ensure a trusted system of electronic communication. People need to be empowered to use these tools for the

benefit of themselves and those around them. In short we need to cherish three things: openness, trust and most of all people.

These issues deserve serious discussion. The Netherlands is well connected electronically, yet we struggle with these topics and do not have the answers. I hope this booklet and our discussion paper (www.futureinternet.ez.nl) will draw your attention, trigger your thoughts, and encourage you to take part in an exchange of ideas. I look forward to meeting you on line!

Frank Heemskerk

Minister of Foreign Trade, The Netherlands

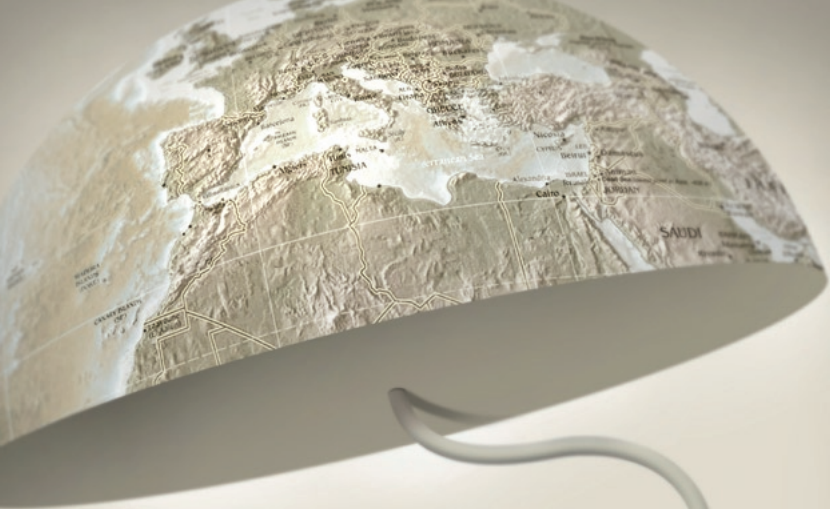


OUR INTERNET, OPEN AND UNFRAGMENTED

The internet was developed as an open system for information sharing between scientists. It is thanks to the internet's open protocols that many of the most useful innovations, from the web to instant messaging and internet telephony, emerged without developers needing anyone's permission. This freedom enabled its explosive growth.

However, this openness has come under threat. Around the world access to services and information is increasingly denied for commercial or political reasons, as providers demand payment to allow access and countries filter out 'undesirable' information.

There is also a real risk of fragmentation of the internet. As more people in more countries are going on line, more languages need to be supported, requiring Internationalised Domain Names (IDNs). In the absence of global standardisation, many non-Latin scripts emerge on the internet in non-standardised formats, prompting the question of whether a quick and simple approach is better than standardised but slower solutions.



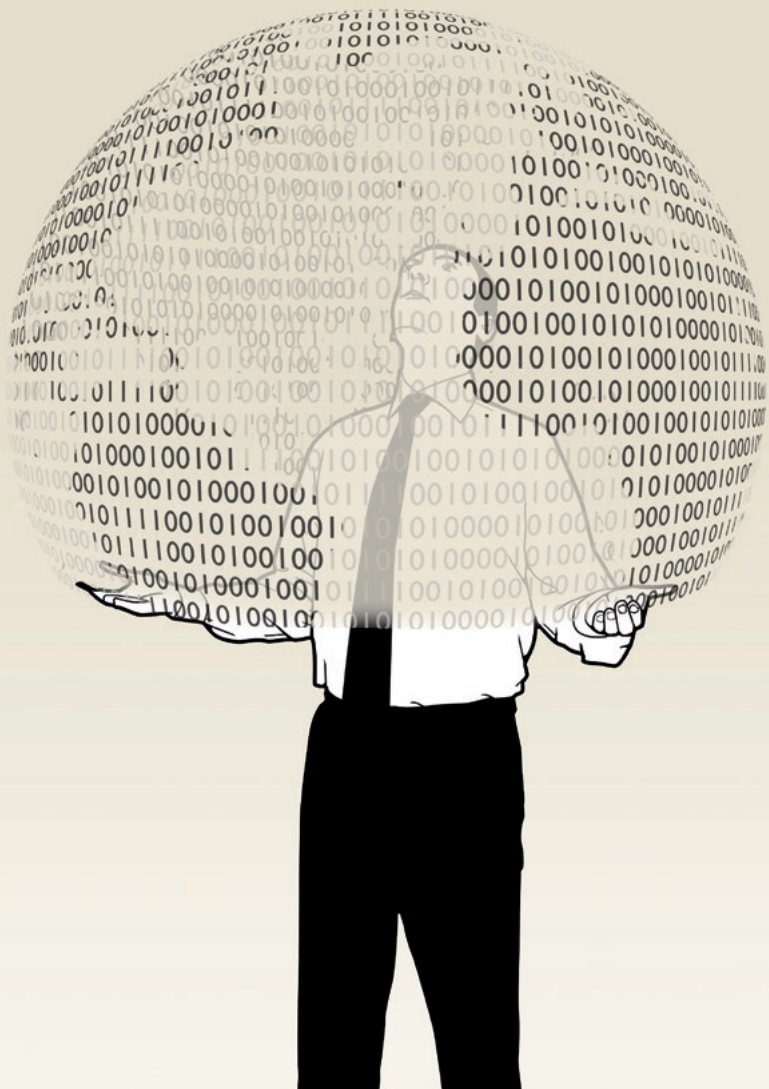
GLOBAL INTERNET, A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

The internet unlocks the global wealth of information and knowledge. Its universality allows formerly unconnected people and organisations with similar and diverse interests to find each other, resulting in new and wide-ranging communities of interest, supply chains, and markets and networks – for good and for bad intent.

Although unprecedented growth in access and use of the internet is noted all round the globe and particularly in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America, the large majority of the world's population is still excluded from it. There is still a huge untapped socio-economic potential of 5.3 billion consumers, entrepreneurs, innovators, creators, communicators and activists – and on the other hand also disruptors and criminals – waiting to enter this virtual global space.

Access and use will impact on development opportunities for all if the internet remains fair, open and affordable. This requires a spread of risks, an equitable share of benefits and the uptake of IPv6 for

sufficient address space. Global access will increase diversity, prompting exchanges of values, thoughts, cultures and ideas – and possibly leading to unexpected societal challenges and changes.



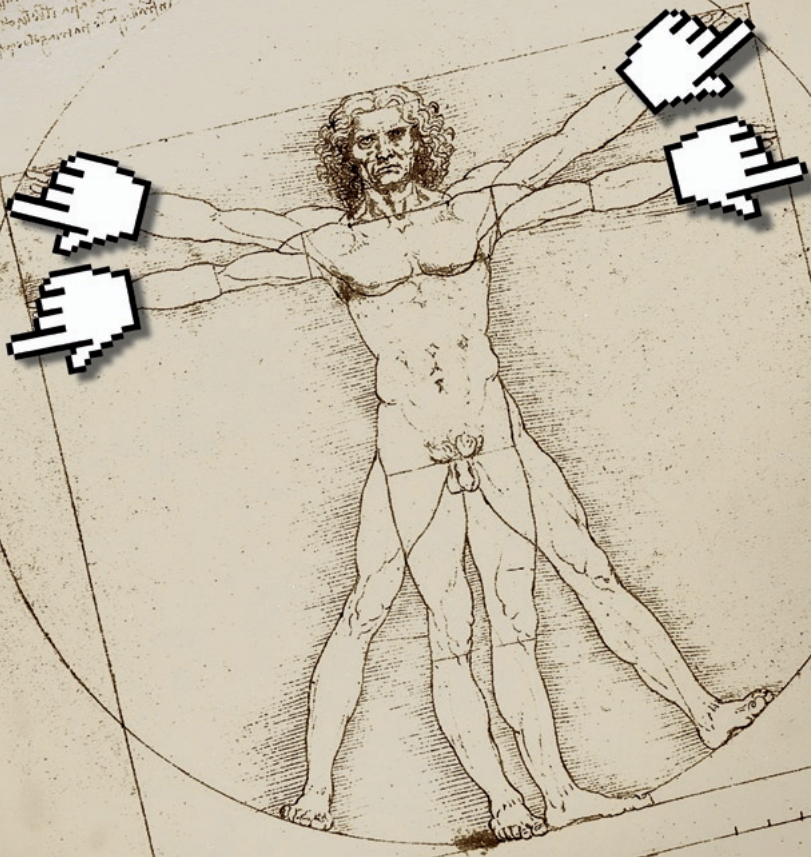
THE INTERNET IS EVERYWHERE AND IN EVERYTHING

Increasingly, like a new dimension, ambient intelligence changes what we know about the world. Whereas information used to be something that someone had to put on the internet, more and more information is now collected and exchanged automatically – from RFID card readers, telephone call registries, credit card transactions and all kind of other sensors and systems connected through the internet.

In combination with location-based services, this means that you will be able to get information about people and objects by a tap on a touchpad. People will be more aware of their surroundings: phones will tell you which of your relations is nearby; the airbag will automatically call emergency services when it is triggered; the fridge will help with ordering and ensuring outdated products are not consumed; the street will tell who passed and left a message; and shops, restaurants and museums will leave tags inviting passersby to enter and interact.

Dream or nightmare? This world is transparent, maybe too transparent for some. Governments as well as individuals and businesses must balance the right to information with the legitimate right to privacy. Also people should be allowed a choice to engage in this world or not. All that is possible may not be desirable. If we are concerned about making sure the world develops in the way we want, we need to assess and discuss the impact and take action accordingly.

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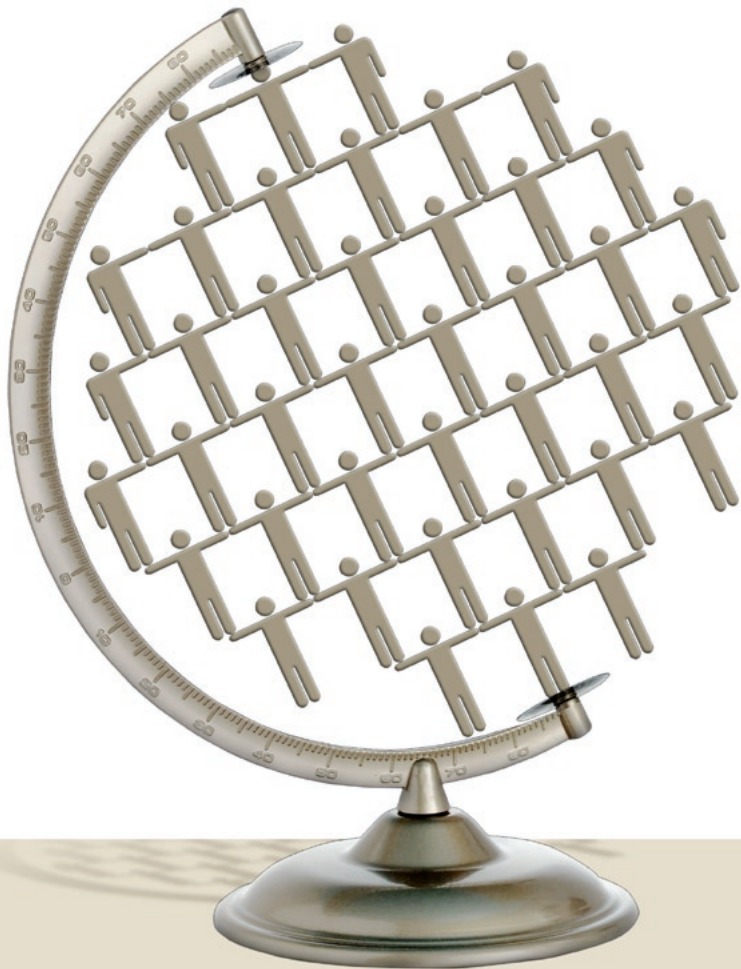
I CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

The internet is empowering creative and entrepreneurial individuals around the globe by providing access to information, communities and markets that were never within reach before. Any person connected to the internet can communicate with, deliver services to and publish content for the rest of the world. People are shaping and using the virtual public space in their roles as citizens, entrepreneurs, artists, voters, activists and consumers. Already

in 2007, more than 60% of people online between the ages of 16 and 24 created content accessible to other users.

This power of the people steers activity towards places where self-organisation and expression, as well as collaborative participation, are facilitated. In this world government does not only govern but facilitates, enables, shares, empowers, creates awareness and stimulates trust. Businesses benefit from direct interaction with their customers, all being enabled to express their ideas and needs. Direct participation by individuals and groups in public decision making can now be witnessed in a variety of forms. An active stance from government and industry

towards allowing access and making skills available to everybody can help ensure that all citizens may benefit and nobody need be excluded.



SHARE YOUR WEALTH AND BECOME RICHER

The winners are those organisations, governments, businesses and individuals that are able to mobilise the combined intelligence and creativity of the collective. New forms of public participation and civic engagement are making an impact on public policy. Innovative business models emerge, which open up critical business, research and development processes in order to involve the voluntary inputs from users, consumers, designers, scientists and

independent professionals worldwide – to mention only a few examples, Linux, Wikipedia, You Tube – and also transform traditional businesses like Lego and IBM, which are sourcing the power of the masses.

In this light, the protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) is also changing. In addition to traditional IPR, other types of property rights – whether tangible or intangible, such as spectrum – play key roles in enabling and shaping market and non-market value creation. Instead of exclusivity, secrecy, protection and drawing rents, the internet economy invites inclusivity, transparency, open standards, interoperability and new forms of value capture through growth and innovation.

In the public domain this translates to facilitating social innovation, application of open standards and using open-source software where possible.

On line collaboration may – but should not – lead to anticompetitive behaviour, e.g. through strategic use of standards, price and market-sharing agreements.



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TRUST, SECURITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

While the popularity of the internet is growing by the day, many people are held back from using its full potential out of fear of abuse or swindling, resulting in loss of money or privacy. As a consequence a lack of trust remains, driving up transaction costs because of the measures required to overcome that lack of trust. End-to-end tunnelling is part of the solution, but only works between trusted parties.

In order to avoid being in the dark about what happens on the internet, it is important that users are aware and understand the risks. Full security is impossible, and people should know that. Governments, businesses and individual citizens alike have to realise that risks are always there, and need to be managed.

At the same time everything possible needs to be done to increase security. Active measures can also enhance the reliability of the technical and transport layers of the internet. Governments could back up and help enforce certification of internet services, and also support tools and protocols that enable secure transactions.

Self-certification is an integral part of the approach, which will be complemented by emerging and evolving user-generated codes of conduct, whether formal or informal.

BETWEEN IDLENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

The changing role of government

National governments are losing control of the behaviour of 'their' citizens in the borderless internet world. In many ways this is the direct consequence of the global, open and democratic character of the internet. Any desire to control would have to be balanced against safeguarding these unique features and the potential to exploit the internet's full socio-economic value as an information resource, publication tool and communication medium. Interventions can be effective only if they are aligned with the grain of the internet: that is, ensure

its openness, build on its self-regulatory nature, actively engage communities of interest and invest in open standards and interoperability.

The internet as a global infrastructure needs a global governance structure that is inclusive, agile, light-touch and effective at the local level. This is a formidable challenge as the context is rapidly changing and approaches are new and experimental, involving stakeholders from all levels and localities to ensure legitimacy. General principles of good governance can provide guidance, such as transparency, accountability, targeting, proportionality, awareness, consistency, wide participation and exchanges of good practice.

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