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2010 & OWNI.eu

BY FEDERICA COCCO

“The Future is here, it is just not evenly distributed” – these famous words from William Gibson somewhat encapsulate the driving philosophy of digital media and of Owni in particular. We aim to scout out new cutting-edge ideas that find themselves buried underground (a phantomatic abode where alternative thinking broods indiscriminately) and 'bring them to the masses', so to speak. These masses have a particular identity: they're European and they're keen to communicate with each other.

Owni.eu is of course a young creature, launched in October, shortly before our sister site, Owni.fr, was awarded with an Online News Association prize for excellence in journalism. Despite its young age, Owni.eu has an ambitious aim: to be the first Europe-wide website focusing on digital culture, cyberactivism, journalism and politics. We feel our particular historical context is a fertile ground for the growth of an engaged pan-European civil society - but where that will take us, we are yet to find out. It's one reason our name 'Owni' is play on the French word for UFO - 'ovni'. From the depths of our flying saucer we tend to be animated by a techno-utopian spirit, and we are more often than not optimistic about such future.

Of course the protagonist throughout these pages is innovation, but most of all the way our society and its mindset is adapting to such developments. One of the main characters of 2010 is WikiLeaks and its push for a new era of open governments and transparency. Owni.eu hosted the best opinion pieces on the release of the Embassy Logs - known through Twitter as #cablegate - and we finally selected one for this year's ebook: Jeff Jarvis's 'Big Brother's little brother'.

'Why the internet did not win the Nobel peace prize' is a critical look at Wired's campaign to award the internet with a prize usually collected by men and women who have sustained a life-long fight for social progress and civil rights. The ideology behind that campaign, our editorial team felt, was ignorant of a key facet of techno-utopia; as Kevin Kelly put it, humans are the sex organs of technology. Technology is neutral and humans should take responsibility and credit for whatever they do with it.

The missing manual for the future by Tish Shute is a long and thorough account of the main initiatives and ideas of 2010 and its driving forces - 'the four cylinder engine of innovation' - as told by one of the main technology publishers, O'Reilly.

In the spirit of cyberactivism we have included two pieces which take part in longstanding polemics on the subjects of censorship and discrimination, two themes you'll be sure to find explored even further on our site in 2011. 'Blacklisting and Sexting; parental control as a political tool' surveys the ramifications of practices such as parental control, as opposed to a more long-term education on the risks and perils of the web.

Last but not least, 'Why we need to reframe the women-in-tech debate' is a popular and controversial article that first appeared on Mashable, which gave rise to a constructive debate on gender equality within the tech industry, a theme which we aim to expand within the European arena in the coming year.

BIG BROTHER'S BIG BROTHER

by [Jeff Jarvis](#) On December 1, 2010

Whom do we trust more to decide what should be secret? The government, the leaker, Wikileaks, or the press?



Wikileaks has pushed the definition and question of transparency to its limit and beyond, releasing hundreds of thousands of leaked documents about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq through media organizations including the Guardian, The New York Times, Der Spiegel, Le Monde, and OWNI, a French site devoted to digital journalism that built a crowdsourcing tool so readers could cull through the docs to find important bits. The U.S. government

screached indignantly about the leaks, calling them illegal and dangerous. But then, the leaks revealed government actions that are or should be illegal. Who holds the higher ground?

The media organizations Wikileaks worked through said they redacted names and published only documents that would not endanger individuals. So they decided, in the end, what would be secret. Whom do we trust more to make that declaration: government, the leaker, Wikileaks, or the press? And does it much matter now that any whistleblower has the power to leak information anonymously via computers that run in countries beyond the arm of the law from other countries? Wikileaks' Twitter profile lists its location as "everywhere." Now nothing, not even war, can be carried out in assured secrecy.



The only solution to leaks is then not more secrecy but more transparency. If we trusted government to determine what needed to be secret—if its default were public and it had nothing else to hide but things that would be harmful if public—then leaks would be a clear violation of our norms and of the common good.

One way or another—by force of through sanity—we are at the dawn

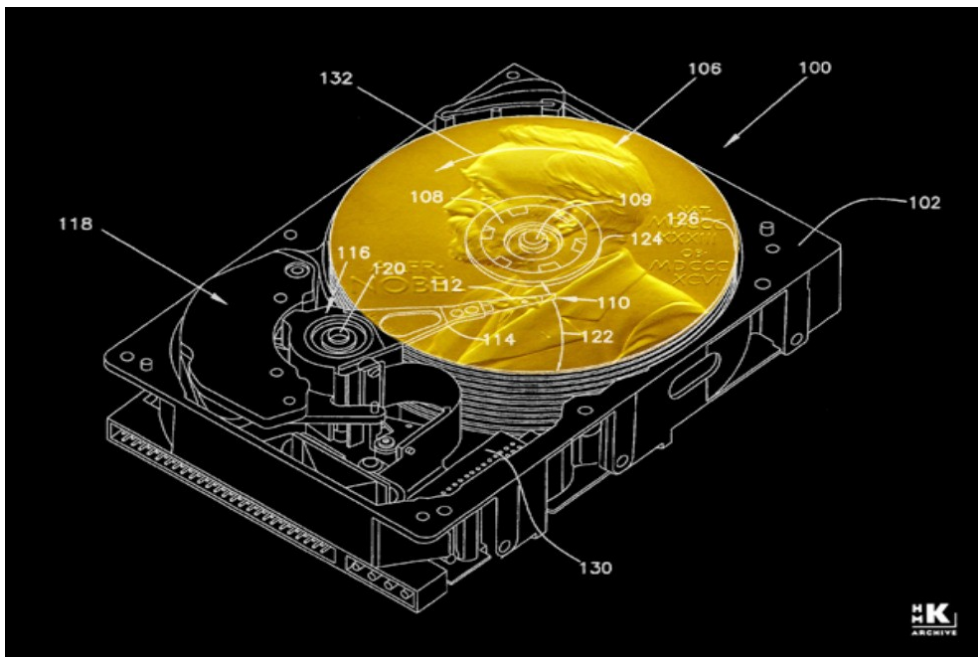
of the transparent age. But it's not going to be a pretty or easy transition. For the first facts to be dragged into the sunlight will be the ugly ones that somebody thinks need to be exposed. Only when and if government realizes that its best defense is openness will we see transparency as a good in itself and not just a weapon to expose the bad. Only when governments realize that their citizens can now watch them—better than they can watch their citizens, we hope—will we see transparency bring deterrence to bad actors and bad acts. Then we become Big Brother's Big Brother. Or we can hope.

This article originally appeared on [Buzzmachine](#)

Photo Credits: Flickr CC [Fräulein Schiller](#) and [World of Good](#)

WHY THE INTERNET DID NOT WIN THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

BY FEDERICA COCCO ON OCTOBER 8, 2010



The campaign was ratified by 160 Italian parliamentarians - and as an Italian, I must confess, the question pops to mind: are these the same MPs who approved the infamous gag law, imposing numerous censoring barricades on blogs?

Its [manifesto](#) was initially presented in November last year, and Riccardo Luna - editor of Wired Italy - was inspired by the so-called Twitter revolution in Iran, when thousands of protesters took to the streets of Tehran following elections of 2009, and informed others on their whereabouts via the microblogging website.

The proposal has been endorsed by a number of distinguished personalities, such as "techno-utopian" Nicolas Negroponte and Iranian nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, though they have been joined by a number of unlikely elements, such as Giorgio Armani, Vodafone, Citroen and Microsoft.

Now, why would they want to take part in such an initiative?

I don't completely doubt the sincerity of corporate social responsibility, but the rhetoric was suspiciously similar to a marketing strategy and not, I repeat NOT, a serious campaign committed to rewarding peace-making efforts.

The show was presented at the Piccolo Teatro Studio of Milan. Under the spotlight, and with a firm grip on the microphone, Riccardo Luna, was occasionally accompanied by David Rowan, editor of Wired UK, delivering the English-version of the manifesto, which read something along the lines of:

We have finally realized that the Internet is much more than a network of computers.

It is an endless web of people. Men and women from every corner of the globe are connecting to one another, thanks to the biggest social interface ever known to humanity.

Digital culture has laid the foundations for a new kind of society.

And this society is advancing dialogue, debate and consensus

through communication.

Because democracy has always flourished where there is openness, acceptance, discussion and participation. And contact with others has always been the most effective antidote against hatred and conflict.

That's why the Internet is a tool for peace.

That's why anyone who uses it can sow the seeds of non-violence.

And that's why the next Nobel Peace Prize should go to the Net.

A Nobel for each and every one of us.

There was another guest of honour, Maurizio Costanzo, whom most of you don't know but suffice it to say, is a special Italian mixture of Jerry Springer and Jean-Luc Delarue, is hardly a credible advocate of peace, innovation and disinterested information.

Lately, even show biz joined this playful bandwagon, with the likes of [Jude Law](#) releasing a video endorsing Internet4Peace- on behalf of NGO [Peace One Day](#).

The campaign was ratified by 160 Italian parliamentarians - and as an Italian, I must confess, the question pops to mind: are these the same MPs who approved the infamous gag law, imposing numerous censoring barricades on blogs? Isn't it somewhat ironic that the proposal is being put forward by a country that has seen severe cuts to research and education? Mind you, a little group of sycophantic cronies put forward [the one and only 'Silvio' for the same award](#).

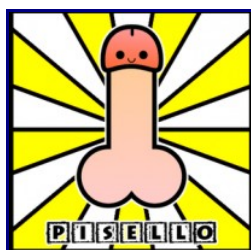
Sure, we are trying to change things - despite a tragic brain drain - but is a commercially driven Nobel campaign really the place to start? Especially when it's upheld by businesses whose interest is not necessarily to favour freedom of information, let alone peace.

Armani's first initiative on the web platform comes to mind. His debut was to sue an eponymous blogger in order to seize the domain Armani.it and use it for his own commercial needs. Not the best case of netiquette I would add.

Many use the presence of pornography, pedopornography and

websites endorsing violence as a reason for not supporting the nomination. Lately [an interesting piece by Julian Baggini on the BBC website argued](#) that if we consider internet as having a systemic influence on the way we think and communicate, then it has been proven that "*good systems really can promote better behaviour*", though on the other hand "[Stanley Milgram's famous obedience experiments found that people were much more willing to inflict pain on another person if they couldn't actually see them, even if their howls of anguish were still audible](#)". Think of the exemplary belligerence displayed on most comment threads (the proverbial *reductio ad hitlerum* comes to mind). According to writer Evgeny Morozov, "Whether it is to track down unruly bloggers, spread their own online propaganda, or launch cyber-attacks, authoritarian governments have emerged as very active users of the web". This is a risk we're running in Europe at this very moment, with laws like the Hadopi, the Lodo Alfano in Italy, and the [Digital Economy Bill in the UK](#).

Morozov also adds: "Would we ever give the Nobel award to the machine gun just because it could be used by UN peacekeepers?". Maybe. Other options include another weapon of mass construction:



Critics have added: "Why not give it to carrier pigeons as well?" and indeed they did make an unrewarded effort to improve communications, back in the day!

According to its nominators, internet should win the peace prize due to its importance in promoting participation, democracy and mutual understanding between different cultures. Indeed, the catch phrase used in this context is that "internet is the first weapon of mass

contruction" - a slogan that, according to a source, was actually devised by the underpaid, overworked, only female staff member of the Wired Italy newsroom.

Don't get me wrong, I am aware that the motivations are noble. Overall, I would argue that the weakest point of this campaign is that it is promoted by the same corporations that hardly have individual freedom as a priority - this makes the attempt self-righteous and heavily misguided. It is fundamentally, nothing but a gimmick. I should know, I used to work for Wired.

Aside from these considerations, I find worthy of notice that every single Wired-target-audience geek I have discussed this with has been against the initiative. Why is this?

Well, for one the I4P [website is in itself technically questionable](#). But what comes to mind is mostly an episode of the IT crowd where the main characters hand a box to their luddite manager claiming "the elders of the internet" have allowed her to use the internet for a conference.

Though [according to the Vancouver Sun the internet was shortlisted](#), of course, among the [237 candidates](#) it was hardly the best candidate, especially if you consider favourites Democratic Voice of Burma, the special Sierra Leone Peace Court, [Afghan human rights activist Sima Simar](#) and the winner, of course, Chinese dissident Lui Xiabao.

THE MISSING MANUAL FOR THE FUTURE

BY TISH SHUTE ON NOVEMBER 4, 2010

In recent weeks Tim O'Reilly took part in several events, Maker Faire, Web 2.0 Expo, Hadoop World, among others. Tish Shute immerses herself in the depth and breadth of innovation showcased and discussed at these events.



Tim O'Reilly's Four Cylinder Innovation Engine

O'Reilly Media, is famous for is producing [“missing manuals”](#) for new technologies, but thinking of O'Reilly as just a publisher of books

would be like saying Facebook is just a website (this came up in the discussion at Media Round Table at [Web 2.0 Expo, NY, 2010](#)). In recent weeks, I managed to catch Tim O'Reilly at several events, [Maker Faire](#), [Web 2.0 Expo](#), [Hadoop World](#), and the free webcast Tim did with John Battelle on [The Battle for the Internet Economy](#) (although Tim spoke several other times during this period!).

It occurred to me, as I immersed myself in the depth and breadth of innovation showcased and discussed at these events that Tim O'Reilly, and the O'Reilly team, are creating *The Missing Manual for the Future*.

As Tim puts it, we are “**changing the world by spreading the knowledge of innovators.**” Tim uses a quote from William Gibson to illuminate what is at the heart of the O'Reilly project:

“**The Future is here, it is just not evenly distributed yet.**”
(William Gibson).

But Tim O'Reilly makes another point about the future when he speaks. The future unfolds unexpectedly – so we must invent for an unknown future not a known future, or as Alex Steffen put it so well in his post, [Why Our Bright Green Futures Will Be Weirder Than We Think](#), – “**The world we need is one we've never yet seen.**” The magic of attending an O'Reilly event is that it gives you a chance to work on this koan in interesting ways, and to take more responsibility for how things turn out.

Tim O'Reilly also urges that we think more deeply about what we are doing. His keynote for [Hadoop World](#), NYC, billed as, “**The Business of Data**” turned towards “**The Consequences of Living in a World of Data.**” The 900 strong crowd at Hadoop World was probably one of the most savvy crowds in the world about the business of data, so this was a nice turn.

[Web 2.0 Expo](#) with the theme, **Platforms for Growth**, was a deep

dive into the business of innovation. Tim O'Reilly's keynote at [Web 2.0 Expo](#), "*Thinking Hard About The Future*" (or rather "thinking a little bit creatively or differently about the future), developed the call he made at Web 2.0 Expo 2008, to "**work on stuff that matters,**" into a Four Cylinder Engine for Innovation.

The first of the four cylinders in the firing order is, "**Having Fun!**" But, at Maker Faire, Web 2.0 Expo, and Hadoop World I got an inside look at the workings of all four cylinders, and there is more to come, I am sure, as the other O'Reilly events unfold over the coming months including, [Web 2.0 Summit](#), [Strata](#) (a new O'Reilly conference on The Business of Data), and [Where 2.0, 2011](#).

In a free webcast, last week ([recording here](#)), previewing [Web 2.0 Summit](#), John Battelle and Tim O'Reilly discussed the [Points of Control Map](#) which is developing into a fun and useful tool to examine a very serious topic, "*The Battle for the Internet Economy,*" and how the "*increasingly direct conflicts between its major players*" could effect "*people, government and the future of technology innovation.*"

The Four Cylinders of Innovation

Web 2.0 Expo NY 2010: Tim O'Reilly, "Thinking Hard About the Future"

O'REILLY*

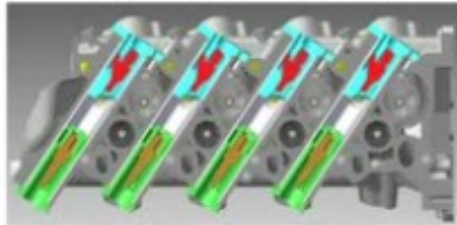
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The Firing Order of the Innovation Engine

- First cylinder: Have fun!
- Second cylinder: "Hey, we can change the world!"
- Third cylinder: Build products, business models, companies, and entire industries
- Fourth cylinder: Keep the ecosystem going: Create more value than you capture



From Jet Ponies to Jet Packs: The First Cylinder of Innovation – “Have Fun”

The “maker” energy and its spirit of play, and the courage to create, hack, reinvent and re-purpose everything and anything, is a quintessential example of the first cylinder of innovation firing big. Many “maker” projects also go on to fire on all four cylinders. But the Maker forte definitely is in the first cylinder zone (and safety third as some of the rides, including Jet Ponies, warned). The photo opening this post by Marc de Vinck – for more pics [see here](#), is of [Tim riding The Jet Ponies](#) at [Maker Faire](#) which took the New York Hall of Science by storm in late September – see [The New York Times coverage here](#). The ride was “**built by the dastardly danger-hackers at the [Madagascar Institute](#).**” See this [wonderful interview](#) with Hackett on his work to design “**our specific jets from a patent that was filed in 1960s by a Mr. Lockwood, for Valveless Pulse Jets.**” Hackett points out:

“Louder than god, glowing white-hot and looking like the trombone of the Apocalypse, pulse jets are also really

shitty, inefficient engines,”

But, he adds:

“I have always wanted a jetpack, and one of the reasons I learned to build these things was to further that goal.”

This grand vision behind the Jet Ponies is a key to firing...

...The Second Cylinder of Innovation, “Hey, we can change the world!”

But Jet Ponies, as a stepping stone to jet packs, also really struck a chord for me as I have been devoting a lot of time lately to the emerging Augmented Reality industry, a technology which was lumped in the same category of sci fi chimera as jet packs until very recently.

Data is the Gasoline

WEB EVOLUTION
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“The faces are coming from the sky. The locations are coming from the sky. All these apps depend on something, somewhere up. And that, to me, was always the heart of Web 2.0. And I am so delighted that people are finally getting it. Because for a long time, people thought, ‘Oh, Web 2.0, it’s about lightweight advertising supported

in a web start up.’ So I went, ‘No, no, no. It’s about the fact that we’re building these giant database subsystems in the sky that are going to drive applications.’ And now, of course, the same application is on your PC, it’s on your phone, it’s on you iPad. And clearly, the applications are just sort of an interface to something that is being driven from the cloud, and that is fabulous. That’s the difference. People get it now.”

(Tim O’Reilly, said this as part of a response to the first questioner at the Media Round table Web 2.0 Expo)

“ The data that is generated by the sensors and the applications that use that data is going to be where people are going to be innovative.” (Tim O’Reilly)

During the Media Round Table, I had a chance to ask Tim more about the role of bottom up innovation in a world where big data is the gasoline for increasingly sophisticated engines – platforms integrating machine to machine intelligence and real time analytics.

Tish Shute: You brought up Maker Faire in your keynote, and again now. I was there, which not many people in the audience were [not too many hands went up when Tim asked during his keynote]. But I think one of the things that struck me was the jet ponies – they were just earthshaking to stand near. They made the ground tremble; they made the world shake. Yet, most of your keynote, and most of what’s on our minds here, at Web 2.0 Expo, is extracting intelligence from the big data [in the sky], and algorithmic intelligences are the jet engines of the internet. And of course, not to be forgotten, as we are here in New York City, where the trading markets are creating the air we breathe [although we probably don’t realize it until we lose our mortgage or something] and these algorithmic economies or “robot casinos” as Kevin Slavin put it, are all about speed – it’s not just real-time, issues of latency are so critical that co-location is key to winning the game of the markets. [Kevin Slavin brilliantly unpacks this in his talk, "Loitering on the Motherboard." For more in this see

my conversation with Kevin Slavin below].

So my question is, who's making the jet ponies for the algorithmic economies in the sky that you just described? How can we make a play from the bottom up? I always feel [Ushahidi](#) is one of the jet ponies of the data algorithmic space [because of their great work to bring human and machine intelligence together to solve problems in crisis situations]. But who do you think is doing exciting work and how can we ensure that this powerful world of data and algorithmic intelligences does not become hidden in a closed black box [only really accessible to elite players like the NYC trading markets]?



Tim O'Reilly: “Well, I think there's certainly a lot of interesting things happening in, say, the financial services that a lot of, kind of, the Internet folks are kind of blind to. I think that there are companies like [Next Jump](#) which are really good with data and good with algorithms. But kind of speaking specifically to the maker side of this, that whole sensor enabled world which is going to produce data is in its infancy. What we have that I think is so powerful right now is we have the first portable sensor platform. I said in my talk the other day, you know, your phone has ears, it has eyes, it has a sense of where it is. And these are all available to application developers. You

know, you can compare, say, Dodgeball to Foursquare, you can see how different... Dodgeball is Foursquare in the tele-type era. Foursquare is now possible because there are so many more capabilities on the phone.

And I think that we are going to see a lot of other areas that are revolutionized by the sensors in the device. It could well be that some of them will come explicitly out of the maker kind of projects, or it could just be that make is sort of a proxy for them. So yeah, [Arduino](#) is this great maker sensor platform, but hey, here's a consumer sensor platform [holding up phone]. Maybe we vaulted past the maker stage already and we just didn't know it.

And that's not entirely true, because Arduino is building a whole economy of special purpose devices. But it feels a little bit like the days when people rolling their own PCs coexisted with the rise of Dell, who was a kid in his college dorm room who made his own PCs and sold them on the net, but figured out how to scale it pretty quickly and get good at it. But there were still a lot of garage shops, you know, 'I'll make a PC and sell it to you' people for probably a decade before there was really a clue that that was a commodity industry. In fact, I do think the sensor platforms are going to become a commodity industry. And the data that is generated by the sensors and the applications that use that data is going to be where people are going to be innovative."

The internet operating system is a data operating system and it is happening in real time (Tim O'Reilly)

Not only do we have a portable sensor platform in our pockets but developers also have powerful platforms and tools to make sense of data that fuel our apps. Opensource [Hadoop](#) makes available, to anyone with some data munching chops, the power to work with

giant unstructured databases and do the kind of real time analytics previously only available to giants like Google. Big players like Yahoo, Facebook, and Twitter use Hadoop (Jonathon Gray from Facebook noted they add 10TB *a day*). But, as [this great roundup of Hadoop World](#) points out, while Hadoop gets the press for handling petabytes of data, Mike Olsen (CEO of Cloudera) noted, the fastest growing area of users are working with clusters smaller than 10TB and over half of the Hadoop clusters were under 10TB in size.

Four Square: A Platform for Growth with an ecosystem built on top of data that exists in the real world



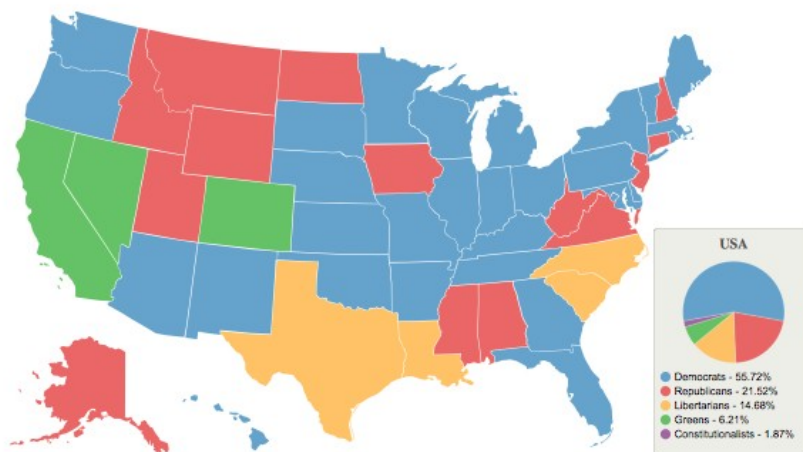
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Sign Up Signing up will add GeoPollster as a friend. GeoPollster will have access to your checkin history. You can cancel at any time.



As an augmented reality enthusiast it is not hard to guess that one of my favorite platforms for growth is [Four Square](#). See [Dennis Crowley's keynote at Web 2.0 Expo](#) here. The Four Square API has been available to developers since November 2009, and there are

already a number of interesting applications, and there will be many more to come. The screen shot above is of [geopollster](#) – [see the gallery of Four Square apps here](#).

@dens tweeted recently “Politics + @Foursquare = @GeoPollster” <http://geopollster.com> <- I love love love that people are using 4SQ to think about election tools

As Kati London pointed out in her keynote, Four Square is the “**kind of augmented reality that is aimed at shifting or changing a person’s social reality, e.g. the mayor badges in Four Square that change my relationship to the people and the place I am in, and augment engagement and reputation through socially driven consumer tie ins.**” We are already see augmented reality developers beginning to work with the Four Square API – see here, [Foursquare + Augmented Reality + Virtual Graffiti = ARstreets](#).

As augmented reality development tools mature, Four Square will, increasingly, become an important platform for creative AR developers interested in integrating the power of this platform for augmented engagement and reputation with “**device aided augmented reality that can shift visual experiences of situated geolocal experiences.**” With the [Qualcomm vision based augmented reality SDK](#) now available for download, and [Wave in a Box](#) soon? to be released, and an [ARWave](#) client working on Android (almost!), I have been exploring the Four Square API in my non existent spare time!!

The Four Square API also offers some interesting possibilities for exploring games that take the complex economy of Four Square – not personal data but aggregates of behavior, as their subject matter (for more on this see my conversation with Kevin Slavin later in this post and in an upcoming post).



Pachube (Patch-Bay): a web service for storing and sharing sensor, energy and environmental data

Eighteen months ago, I interviewed Usman Haque (architect and director, [Haque Design + Research](#)) and founder of [Pachube](#). Usman pointed me to this wonderful evocative image from [T.R. Oke's](#) book, "[Boundary Layer Climates](#)" (original photo source Prof. L. E. Mount's [The Climatic Physiology of the Pig](#)). "*It's the same piglets, in the same box, but on the right hand side the temperature has been*

increased. This small change in how the space is “programmed” has dramatically changed the way the ‘inhabitants’ relate to each other and how they relate to their space.”

The Challenge of Connecting people and environments

At Web 2.0 Expo, I got the opportunity to talk with Usman Haque again. [Pachube](#), is becoming an established platform now, Usman explained. They have a development team of eleven and robust back end. And, they will now be spending some more time on the front end, including a redesign of the website, making **“it a lot easier to widgetize the entire website so that you will be able to take almost any element and embed that into your own website.”** And, as [Usman mentioned in his presentation](#), they are working on an augmented reality interface, Porthole, for facilities management and, “as a consumer-oriented application that extends the universe of Pachube data into the context of AR – a ‘porthole’ into Pachube’s data environments.. Usman is also contributing to the AR standards discussion and on the program committee now [for the W3C group on augmented reality](#).



Porthole marker corresponding to a networked sensor device is detected – several datastreams are discovered

The image above is from Chris Burman’s paper for the W3C, [Portholes and Plumbing: how AR erases boundaries between “physical” and “virtual”](#) [PDF].

Pachube, is sometimes described as the Facebook for Data or an

analogy Usman prefers, a Twitter for Sensors. At Web 2.0 Expo, I had an amazing opportunity to hear from Twitter and Facebook about their strategies as platforms for growth. This gave me lots of fuel for questions about Pachube's approach to developing their platform. Simplicity was a theme that Facebook and Twitter both affirmed as a key. One of Pachube's challenges will be to deliver ease of use, and the equivalent of Facebook's "like" and Twitter's "follow" to gain mass appeal.

Here is a brief excerpt from my upcoming conversation with Usman:

Tish Shute: So as a platform you see Pachube as having more in common with Twitter – a Twitter for Sensors. In what ways is Pachube similar to Twitter?

Usman Haque: Well we are the Twitter of sensors, devices & machines in the sense that, really, the API that enables all this communication is important, much more so than the website itself. It is where, basically, most of the millions of our hits actually go, is to the backend. And we've now got dozens of applications built on top of the system, a little bit like Twitter's applications; you know, all the apps are the important part.

But we are actually going to be doing some quite exciting things with API keys that we haven't really spoken that much about in public. But we have come up with a pretty innovative solution to make almost every resource have granular privacy options on it, [now discussed here](#).

At Hadoop World, Tim O'Reilly also raised some interesting broader questions that are very relevant to Pachube's vision to "patch the planet", e.g, the problem of digital identity in the age of sensors? (Smart phones already know their users by the way they walk!) And, "**How should we think about privacy in a world where data can be triangulated?**"

Usman talked about Pachube's approach to both the technical aspects

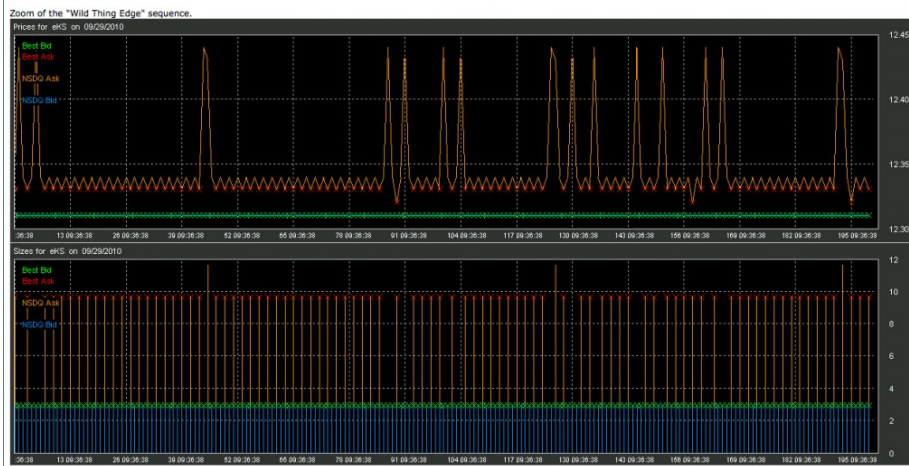
of how to build a massively scalable system, and the conceptual aspects of how people connect to each other, and what they might do with these new opportunities to connect environments and sensor data (see my earlier talk with Usman, Pachube, Patching the Planet, for a detailed explanation of some of the concepts behind Pachube).

I look forward to posting this conversation. Pachube is growing, and Usman always goes beyond the familiar tropes of connecting human and machine intelligence.

2nd Cylinder of Innovation: “Hey Can We Change the World!”

The possibilities for reimagining of the role of data in healthcare produced some of the most powerful “Hey Can We Change the World” moments for me at both Web 2.0 Expo and Hadoop World. The slide above is from Esther Dyson’s brilliant Ignite presentation, [“What you can and can’t learn from your genes?” are here](#), Tim O’Reilly also brought up the powerful role real time data analytics can play in improving healthcare in his Hadoop World Keynote. Also see Alex Howard’s post, [10 Lessons for Gov 2.0 from Web 2.0](#) for some more great, “hey we can change the world moments” at Web 2.0 Expo. The keynote from [Lukas Biewald of CrowdFlower and Leila Chirayath Janah of Samasource](#) (see video below) in particular, is a provocative exploration of the future of work in the new ecologies of human and machine intelligence.

Changing the World When Our Lives Our Increasingly Shaped by Forces Invisible To Us?



Mike Olsen, CEO of Cloudera, noted that **“the largest area of data growth does not come from humans interacting with machines; rather, it’s from machines interacting with each other”** (see here in [Minor Technical Difficulties](#)). One of the most interesting presentations at Web 2.0 Expo was [Kevin Slavin’s, “Loitering on the Motherboard,”](#) which, as Tim O’Reilly pointed out in his keynote at Hadoop World, is a talk that raises all kinds of questions about a system where big players are gaming the data for their own ends.

Kevin Slavin, a founder of [Area/Code](#), notes the operating system of our mortgage, life insurance, the operating system of currencies and gold is now governed by machine to machine intelligence and algorithmic economies outside of human cognitive processes. The markets are now legible only to bots in an algorithmic arms race with bots surveilling bots, and throwing off false information in a bid for counter-surveillance. He showed some slides of the eery but beautiful visualizations of traces of the trading bots created from the Nanex API.

The screenshot above is from the [Nanex: Crop Circle of the Day – Quote Stuffing and Strange Sequences](#). **“The common theme**

with the charts shown on this page is they are all generated in code and are algorithmic. Some demonstrate bizarre price or size cycling, some demonstrate large burst of quotes in extremely short time frames and some will demonstrate both...” This one is a zoom of the NSDQ “Wild Thing.” Wild price/size repeater from NSDQ running at 1,000 quotes per second, effecting the BBO along the way (I love the great names Nanex gives the different patterns and traces produced by the trading bots).

Nanex supplies a [real-time data feed](#) comprising trade and quote data for all US equity, option, and futures exchanges. They have [archived this data](#) since 2004 and have created and used numerous tools to “sift through the enormous dataset: approximately 2.5 trillion quotes and trades as of June 2010.” May 6th 2010 (day of the flash crash), had approximately 7.6 billion trade, quote, level 2, and depth records.

Kevin points out that our lives are being shaped by criteria invisible to us and the old hackneyed tropes of machine to machine intelligence such a robots reading HUDs in English are long worn out. The latter point is, perhaps, something for us augmented reality geeks absorbed in ideas of “making the invisible visible” to chew on. Changing a world shaped by forces that are, increasingly, invisible to us presents a huge challenge.

But I had the glimmer of a, “Hey Can We Change the World” moment, when I attended Kevin Slavin founder of Area/Code’s presentation and had a conversation with him after his talk. *Could games take these complex economies as their subject matter?* The economies of [Farmville](#) and games like [WoW](#) are not opaque at all, and these are environments with complex economic behavior, **“where you can actually have enough data to understand what it is” ?**

“It’s not so much about personal data. It’s more about, like, aggregate behaviors.” “Games that can really model those, and

play with those, and take those as the subject the way that Monopoly takes Monopoly as a subject could be really interesting.”

Kevin made many fascinating points – more to come on this topic.



Here is the beginning of our conversation:

Talking With Kevin Slavin

Tish Shute: You began your talk today about visibility and where some of the algorithmic masters of disguise went to work, after they had solved the math behind stealth bombers. I thought perhaps you were leading into ideas about a reverse surveillance society.

But you surprised me, as I felt you made visibility itself kind of a non-issue by the end of your presentation and that counter surveillance became basically a time and speed issue. Now I am not sure quite how to imagine a counter-surveillance society, something I try to think about...

Kevin Slavin: Well, let's see. There's a couple ways to think about it. I think one point is just that when we talk about counter-surveillance, we usually locate that as something that comes from the

bottom up, something that comes from the population. Think about the way the plane spotters discovered the CIA black rendition flights.

I think in general, when people talk about counter surveillance, or sousveillance, they imagine it as an inversion of the traditional relationship between the people and the state.

But that's what's interesting. What's happening now, is that there are forms of surveillance and counter-surveillance that are in play beyond any human perceptual horizons. These forms are at their most sophisticated in financial services, in the markets.

If you were a bot, and could read the market legibly (which humans cannot), what you would see, effectively, are bots that are surveilling bots. Then you have bots that are throwing off false information in a bid for counter-surveillance. Many of the bots are, themselves, surveilling other bots; each one of them is trying to figure out what all the other ones are going to do. In essence, it's an algorithmic arms race, and game theory has become concrete, since the theories are code, the code is action, and the action affects, let's say: your mortgage.

And so, basically what you have is you have this series of algorithms that are all looking to discern each other, while also trying to prevent themselves from being discerned. I think of the tunnels under the trenches in WWI, tunnels to surveil the trenches, and then, later, tunnels to surveil the tunnels. There's a few examples of this kind of thing. But It's especially strange when it's computer code, and at the magnitude we're seeing today.

All of it, as noted in the talk, accounting for 70% of all the trades in the market. 70% of the market trades are never touched by human hands or even seen by human eyes; they don't move through a conventional cognitive process. And that's why you get things like the Credit Suisse algorithm, it was buying, selling 200,000 shares of stocks to itself over and over and over again. It was a bug and it

slowed the market to a crawl.

Credit Suisse was fined, in essence, for failing to control an algorithm. Maybe that's the first time an algorithm was treated like a human, in a way. As if the algorithm broke the law, and Credit Suisse was responsible for letting it do so. For me, that feels like a threshold event.

It's not that humans never made mistakes when trading on the market. But when algorithms err, they err with magnitude.

The idea that we now have bugs in the United States market economy is really worth looking at. If Apple can't keep code bugs from the most simple iPhone apps in a closed and regulated ecosystem, I'm pretty certain we'll have a lot more Credit Suisse type bugs in the future.

And that will be pretty interesting. There will be viruses, and the operating system they will operate on will be the operating system of the United States. The operating system of your pension, your house, your life insurance. The operating system of currencies and gold.

Tish Shute: I was hard-pressed by the end of your talk to think of like, "Well, what would be the equivalent of, sort of a people's uprising to create a better fairer society in this kind of world where, really, the things that affect the key aspects of lives most are going on beyond human perception at an algorithmic level?" But you made a pretty radical suggestion at the end...

Kevin Slavin: Well I think increasingly the markets have become delaminated from anything meaningful. First from goods, then from fundamentals, and now finally from homo sapiens. So that's hard to fight.

It's the race towards abstraction that makes it impossible to simply "resist." The latest version in the long series of fiscal catastrophes was based on Wall Street finding goods that could be rolled up and sold with false valuations, but goods that would take a long time to fail.

Mortgages are handy like that. It's the tradition of extending the abstraction as long as possible, until finally the bill arrives and the banks fail. I don't know if that's something to rise up against or not. It's like a rally against evil.

I think the point is that it won't be the people that rise up. It will be the financial services themselves that rise up. They'll just detach completely.

That was harder to do with cotton or with wheat, with simple futures; they keep financial services tied to the ground. So what we're doing is creating increasingly complex financial instruments that are further and further removed from anything you can touch. Like the way a mortgage is abstract. But, of course, the bottom line is that at the end of that mortgage lies someone's home.

It's said that Wall Street is now moving onto life insurance, because that's going to take even longer to fail. They're doing the exact same thing. The word is that they are rolling up CDOs made out of crap life insurance policies, same way they rolled them up with crap mortgages a few years ago.

And those will probably take, I don't know, 15 or 20 years to unwrap and unravel.

But what you see in the meantime, is that they are looking for things that are increasingly abstract, intangible, removed as far as possible from the experience of everyday life.

So maybe this is good. Maybe that's financial services rising up. Lifting off. I think best case scenario now is that they actually leave humans alone altogether. That, someday, they are just trading, effectively, completely arbitrary goods, the stocks could be anything at all, maybe for crops that no longer exist, and I'm just saying that then these bots would no longer affect what we do and what we are, it would just be a robot casino, an invisible paradise in the air.

People are the platform: How Games Can Be Engines of Innovation in Our Lives

Kati London, Senior Producer, [Area/Code](#), in her keynote showed how [games that know where we live](#) can shift players perspectives – from device aided augmented reality that can shift visual experiences of situated geolocal experiences to a kind of augmented reality that is aimed at shifting or changing a person’s social reality, e.g. the mayor badges in Four Square that change my relationship to the people and the place I am in, and augment engagement and reputation through socially driven consumer tie ins.

Area/Code has recently developed [two games for the Knight Foundation](#) that take people as the platform. Macon Money, uses very simple games dynamics (for more [see the video](#) of Kati’s keynote) in a game designed to help “Knight’s continuing efforts to support revitalizing Macon and creating a vibrant college town.”

The other game that Area/Code has designed with the support of the Knight Foundation is for the Biloxi and Gulf Coast community, a game called Battlestorm. [“The game’s purpose is to increase awareness about natural disasters and change the way people prepare for them.”](#)

3rd Cylinder of Innovation: Build products, business models and entire industries.

[Glympse](#) – real-time, private location tracking

Julianne Pepitone, Yahoo! Finance, nailed the essence of Web 2.0 Expo, NYC, this year in her post, [Web 2.0 Expo startups are big on neighborhoods, storytelling](#). She writes:

“At the Web 2.0 Expo in New York City this week, executives from big sites like Facebook, Twitter and Pandora all spoke about industry trends. But the showcase of 27 startup tech

companies stole the show.”

Listen carefully to Tim O’Reilly and Fred Wilson, Union Square Ventures, question their picks from the [startup showcase](#) at Web 2.0 Expo. Also see [this video of Fred and Tim discussing their conversations with all the start ups](#). This is one of the clearest public windows onto both how to present your company to VC, and how to figure out what are the most important questions for you as an entrepreneur building a business in a world of data.

[Glympse successfully pitches](#) their “jet pony” strategy for a location based business, and is Fred’s pick. They hold up well under pressure and answer Tim and Fred’s hard questions about how their start up will not get overtaken by an encumbent player with resources and market share before they can gain traction. [food52 responds to Tim’s probing about their strategy](#) for business data analytics that he points out are vital if they want to survive with the small margins of ecommerce. There is a list of all the participants in the start up showcase in Brady’s [post here](#). [hour.ly](#) was the audience pick.

[Shazam for Faces!](#)



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- Low cost hosted biometric matching service
- Rapid custom biometric matching software
- Laptop ABIS up to 1,000,000 records



[Face, Iris and Fingerprint Matching as a Service...](#)

My favorite start up was a biometric service doing face, iris, and finger print matching, [Tactical Information Systems](#).

Tim and Fred also liked them, and they have an interesting discussion about the merits or not of approaching your platform through a narrow first application as Tactical Information Systems

are with [WanderID](#) - an application to help identifying lost Alzheimer patients. As Fred pointed out, they are potentially the [Shazam](#) for faces, so why start so small?

I had asked TIS the same question when I met them in the “speed dating” session. This is just their first toe in the water as they are a two person company at the moment. Their vision for their platform is big. Mary Haskett and Dr Alex Kilpatrick, the founders of this quintessential jet pony for the algorithmic economies in the sky, are not only a partnership with the credentials to do a [Shazam](#) for faces – [see their bios here](#), they are the people I would want to be running a [Shazam](#) for faces! They really get the consequences of living in a world of data – check out Dr Kilpatrick’s absolute killer Ignite talk.

How Can Augmented Reality Add Value to the Real Time Internet/Data Operating System?



[planefinder.net](#) – an augmented reality app that lets you find information about planes by pointing your phone at the sky, “including flight number, aircraft registration, speed, altitude and how far away it is” (via [MacLife](#)).

The new opportunities in the algorithmic economies in the sky were center stage at Web 2.0 Expo and there are some interesting AR apps for the real time internet/data operating system emerging, like [planefinder.net](#). But Augmented Reality was still pretty low

profile at Web 2.0 Expo (except that NVidia augmented reality demo attracted a lot of attention at the sponsors expo). However, everyone working in the emerging industry of AR should recognize that apps big on “neighborhoods and story telling” are heading right up the AR street, and that platforms like Four Square and Pachube present enormous opportunity to explore the possibilities of AR. And if augmented reality enthusiasts are not already paying attention to real time data analytics, and [Hadoop](#), they should be (see [this post for an excellent round up](#) on Hadoop World).

At Hadoop World, Tim O’Reilly referenced the great tagline from the [IBM commercial](#):

“Would you be willing to cross the street — blindfolded — on data that was five minutes old? Five hours? Five days?”

As I have noted in several earlier posts – [see here](#) and [here](#) for starters, we are just seeing the tools for developing near field, vision based, mobile, social AR become widely available to developers, so there should be a new level of AR apps emerging through 2011.

There is a wonderful discussion in the comments of this post by Mac Slocum, [“How Augmented Reality Apps Can Catch On,”](#) between Mac, Raimo one of the founders of [Layar](#), and [Chris Arkenberg](#) on what constitutes a platform for growth for augmented reality.

Mac’s post, the comments and [Chris Arkenberg’s post](#) on the [latest edition of the Gartner Hype Cycle](#), that rather curiously placed Augmented reality almost at the peak of inflated expectations, really got me excited about exploring an idea I have been thinking about for a while, which is to get the AR community to discuss the [Points of Control map](#).

[The interactive Points of Control map](#) is an amazing tool to think with! Check it out in movements, territory and movements, acquisition mode. There is a competition for the most interesting

comment and most interesting acquisition suggestion. The prize is a ticket to Web 2.0 Summit!

What is the Future of Social?



ARWave is a open source project to create a standard method for geolocating data on Wave servers.

The recent “defection” from Google to Facebook – see [Lars Rasmussen, Father Of Google Maps And Google Wave, Heads To Facebook](#), is as MG Siegler of TechCrunch points out, “the biggest one since Chrome OS lead [Matthew Papakipos](#) made [the same jump in June](#)” (TechCrunch also notes “current Facebook CTO [Bret Taylor](#) was heavily involved in the launch of Google Maps”).

These moves have drawn my particular attention as did [Bret Taylor’s response in his conversation with Brady Forrest at Web 2.0 Expo](#) to Brady’s question, “**How soon until we get the Facebook firehose?**”

If you have been reading Ugotrade you already know how important I think an open, distributed, standard for real-time communications such as the very innovative Wave Federation Protocol could be for AR development.

The anticipated release of [Wave in a Box](#), has raised hopes in the developer community that WFP will soon become easier to work

with, and hopefully more widely adopted. Like many others, I wonder what will happen to [Wave in a Box](#) now?

But the innovation of Wave is deep and broad (and as many have pointed out hugely ambitious). Perhaps the boldest attempt yet to innovate both at the low level of architecture (where Google is so powerful) and at the high level of **the Mark Zuckerberg, “big idea,” which as Tim O’Reilly notes is, “What is the future of social?”** MG Siegler noted [Facebook Groups Is Sort Of Like Google Wave For Human Beings](#).

But I deeply hope that the open, distributed standard part of the Wave big idea is not lost in the mix here.

Fourth Cylinder of Innovation: Keep the Ecosystem Going, Create More Value than You Capture

Tim O’Reilly points out that there is a worrisome dark side to the Points of Control Map – see [Tim’s keynote here](#). To paraphrase some of his points:

There are companies on the map that are forgetting to think about creating a sustainable ecosystem. Rather than growing the pie, they are trying to divide up the pie and that threatens to cause the fourth cylinder of innovation to misfire. This fourth cylinder is essential to the ecosystem.

Tim O’Reilly looks back to the lessons of the personal computing industry which was incredibly vital and creative, and lots of people made money until a couple of big players “**sucked all the air out of the ecosystem**” and innovation had to go elsewhere.

The Power of Platforms is to create value not just for your company but for other people. Create value for yourself by creating value for other people. Tim O’Reilly used the wonderful example of Henry Ford inventing the weekend so that there would be enough people

with time and money to buy his mass produced cars. Think about building the ecosystem that will support the future you are going to build. Grow the pie rather than cut up the pie. This will be the vital fourth cylinder of innovation in [Squared](#) world.

Tim O'Reilly has long proposed that [Web 2.0 is all about harnessing collective intelligence](#), but as Gartner predicts, “*By year end 2012, physical sensors will create 20 percent of non-video internet traffic.*” Yet another previously unevenly distributed future is going mainstream, and if you haven't read it already, now is the time to read this paper by Tim O'Reilly and John Batelle, [Web Squared: Web 2.0 Five Years On](#).

The Consequences of Living in a World of Data



To bring this very long post to a close! Here are just a few of the key questions re *The Consequences of Living in a World of Data* that Tim O'Reilly raised during his keynote for Hadoop World:

“How would we solve the problem of digital identity in the age of sensors? (Our smart phones are able to know their users by the way they walk – their gait!)

“How will we input data when our devices are smart enough to listen on their own?”

“How should we think about privacy in a world where data

can be triangulated?”

“We are moving to a world in which every device generates useful data, in which every action creates information shadows on the net.”

“Shouldn’t we regulate the misuse of data rather than the possession of it?”

“How do we avoid a data arms race?”

“Create more value than you capture.”

This article originally appeared on [UgoTrade](#)

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BLACKLISTING AND ‘SEXTING’: PARENTAL CONTROL AS A POLITICAL TOOL

by [Fabio Deotto](#) On October 29, 2010

“Be careful of people who claim they want to protect you. They probably want to take you down or, even worse, they are trying to stitch you up”



My grandmother once told me: “*Be careful of people who claim they want to protect you. They probably want to take you down or, even worse, they are trying to stitch you up*”. My grandmother left school after junior high, and worked in the textile industry for her entire life. I doubt she’ll ever get the chance to do an online search.

Nevertheless, she possesses the kind of wisdom that could really help many of us to unravel the tangle of pronounced freedoms and subtle censorship the internet is fast becoming.

In the past few weeks, Google and Apple have introduced a couple of new ideas, each with their own tools ostensibly for the “protection” of minors. [Google's new Instant Search](#), for example, has proven to be an instant hit, its primary feature being to display your search results as you type. However, beware: the moment you start typing anything remotely improper (the word “Escort” is already too raunchy), you'll get a pure and unsullied blank page instead of your preview.

There are hundreds of “bad” words Google Instant doesn't like, and there's a website ([2600.com](#)) collecting them all for posterity. The young or unwary web surfer is prevented from running into such dangerous previews as Lesbian (but not Gay), cocaine (but not heroin), swastika (but not Nazism), Kama sutra, ejaculation, fellatio etc.

And if you happen to be a fan of Philip K. Dick – sorry, no preview for you.

Last week, the puritan revival which spurred Google's censors also emerged in the form of a new patent from Apple. The patent is filed under the title “*Text-based communication control for personal communication devices*”. Apple claims it will help parents to clean up “dangerous” text from their children’s SMS. It ultimately allows a smartphone user, or a designated administrator, to control the text content of incoming and outgoing messages.



Parental associations and some child protection websites praised the [patent](#) approval, explaining that it will help tackle the growing problem of ‘sexting’ (a neologism that refers to the exchange of sexually explicit material through the internet and particularly phones) and its connected potential for child abuse. However, according to some - notably, [John C. Dvorak](#) - the patent’s parental-control feature is nothing but a window dressing that hides a subtle tool for political censorship.

“This is a classic example of something looking like one thing and being something else altogether. And the entire tech world is stupidly missing the point.” [explains Dvorak](#), columnist for PcMag.

“This patent is not about sexting; it's about political speech. Apple wants its phone in Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, and other parts of the world where political dissent is a crime. Over the years, it has become apparent that the mobile phone is a tool for revolutionaries. This was proven with the Iranian "Green" riots of 2009, but began with a series of riots all over the world through the last decade.”

Actually, the term “sexting” is never used in the patent – and in fact, parental-control is only one potential use. It’s not difficult to imagine that such a feature could be used to ban mention of any unsuitable contents (or people).

The collection of vintage advertisements provided by [BoredPanda](#) bear great witness to how the world of marketing (and consequently

the Web) is politically correct now more than ever. And if on one side I'm totally happy that I no longer am forced to look at saucy pictures of little girls, I'm also aware that, in a certain way, censorship is easier (and more accepted) today than twenty years ago.



[See more images here..](#)

Let's assume, though, that behind Apple's patent lies a genuine intention to prevent teens from hazardous messages, or to provide parents with a tool to dig out bad words from their children's conversations; it remains a fact that this application is more a tool of

copyright than a tool of education.

To be frank, the real danger of sexting is not that two fifteen year old kids could exchange hardcore messages. This happens now as it will always happen in the future, with or without Apple's consent. The real danger of sexting lies in images and video, and the ease with which these files – even if originally recorded by the kids in jest – could actually be spread throughout the net, manipulated (say, for bullying) and, at worst, exploited by adults to trick or lure other minors. In this way the flaw in the patent is apparent even in the title: it only applies, and can only apply, to text.

Child sexual abuse through sexting is a real problem, and there's only one way to fight it: to take responsibility, to educate, and to inform.

A kid who is ignorant of the perils hiding in the Web is likely to frivolously squander their privacy and that of their contacts by posting information with little regard for safety. They are more prone to accept friend requests from total strangers, and ultimately their naivety of the dangers can lead to them “innocently” posting such revealing pictures on their own publicly accessible blogs. The solution is not asking for more automated stewardship, but for more information, starting from schools.



A proof of this is the fact that a piece of [research recently completed](#)

[by Ipsos](#) for the charitable Save the Children fund has revealed that Italy, the country in which I live, is where young people use the internet with the least precautions. And if 76 kids out of 100 actually exchange personal images and video with strangers, if 73 of 100 young persons are accepting friend requests from strangers, and if 23 of them have no problem with giving away their home address to anyone, this is not because of a lack of an application that blocked them. It's because they are not informed and, moreover, awake to the risks connected with the Web.

Luckily, while Apple contrives more coercive methods to avert the spectre of sex from children's smartphones, while Google dislodges the most malicious terms from its instantaneous previews, some schools are launching media-education classes, warning towards problems like sexting. Their final goal is to educate not only young web-surfers, but especially their concerned parents.

Photo Credits: Flickr CC [Alicakes*](#), [lindley rebecca](#), and [v i p e z](#).

WHY WE NEED TO REFRAME THE “WOMEN IN TECH” DEBATE

by [Carla Thompson](#) On November 27, 2010



The song-and-dance has been the same for years, but the drum beat lately is deafening: Where are the women entrepreneurs and their startups? The question should instead be asking “Why do we perceive there are so few of them?”

This [article](#) originally appeared on [Mashable.com](#), a top source for news in social and digital media, technology and web culture

The song-and-dance has been the same for years, but the drum beat

lately is deafening: Where are the women entrepreneurs and their startups? Why aren't they funded? Are their businesses successful? *Ad infinitum*. These are all questions worth asking, to be sure, and there will continue to be a need to revisit them from time to time. But doesn't it feel like we're spinning endlessly in this particular hamster wheel? It's time to change the conversation.

The reality is that women entrepreneurs are everywhere, in every industry and from every career phase. And they're eager to coalesce. Since launching a company exclusively for them five months ago, I've had trouble keeping up. They're coming out of the woodwork to talk and network, many of them aggressive in their desire to connect with fellow entrepreneurs and have real conversations about building their businesses.

So the question we need to be asking right now is, "Why do we perceive there are so few of them?" And it's time to move this discussion out of the comments section and into the business pages.

The Problem



There's no doubt that outright bias still exists, but there are so many ways to work around it now. The real issue is perception vs. reality.

A main cause of this incorrect perception is the way we ask questions. Let's say you're a woman thinking of launching a tech startup. As you're thinking through your business plan and company creation, you understandably go looking for resources online. When your initial search for "women tech startups" returns countless headlines like, "Addressing the Lack of Women Leading Tech Startups," you're likely going to feel at a disadvantage before you've even started.

While researching the competitive landscape for my company, I found that a large majority of websites targeted at "working women" are littered with motherhood references, ads for envelope-stuffing "home-based businesses," and fashion tips. There's perhaps nothing more disheartening as an entrepreneur than having your ideas belittled, no matter your gender. When you've forsaken sleep, food, and time with loved ones to build a company, the last thing you need when looking for resources is a bunch of diaper ads, or worse, an article saying you don't exist and have no hope of being funded.

But despite this disheartening media and marketing-spun perception, real numbers certainly exist to support a more positive outlook. A February 2010 study by Illuminate Ventures titled "[High-Performance Entrepreneurs: Women in High-Tech](#)" takes a decidedly different view of this issue, and I encourage you to download the full report. Predicting that "women entrepreneurs are poised to lead the next wave of growth in global technology ventures," Illuminate's study found that:

- Women-owned or led firms are the fastest growing sector of new venture creation, representing nearly 50% of all privately held businesses.
- Women-owned businesses are more likely to survive the transition from startup to established company.

- The number of U.S. software patents held by women has increased 45-fold since 1985; three times the national average.
- Women currently make up more than 30% of the technology workforce, but receive less than 10% of venture funding.

The numbers are there, and the biases are becoming less powerful. So what now?

The Solution

The solution lies in an old truism: If you don't like the answers, change the questions. We need a fundamental shift in the conversation around women entrepreneurs and women in business overall. We need opportunities to ask the questions that matter about the companies we're building. We need answers that spark discussions from women who've been there. We need brainstorming around innovative ideas that will eventually turn into companies. In short, women need what any entrepreneur needs: support, ideas, energy, creativity, and answers. And you don't have to paint it pink or make it heart-shaped to appeal to us. (Really, please don't.)

Imagine what would result if we replaced every "Where are the Women" article with something weightier — perhaps an examination of why some women are less inclined to sell themselves and their businesses, out of fear of being viewed as egoists. Maybe we need to look at all those software patents cited above and how they've affected key sectors, or explore the rapid growth of female entrepreneurs and what effect it's having on business overall.



Now imagine like-minded women gathering online and off to discuss these issues and share their experience toward a goal of enriching all. If we took our collective knowledge, energy, experience, and motivation, shared it and built on it, we'd be able to move the world.

The number of organizations that have emerged in recent years — to encourage, foster, develop, and sustain women-owned businesses — is overwhelming. We need to establish a more central repository for these, so women looking for resources can easily find communities in which to coalesce. We're out there. We simply need to find each other more effectively.

I'm a woman. And I've started a business. And I know at least 500 more like me. I'm betting you do too.

Carla Thompson is an emerging technology analyst and the CEO and Founder of [Sharp Skirts](#), a network for women entrepreneurs. You can find her on Twitter [@carlat](#).

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