

WHY THE INTERNET DID NOT WIN THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

LE 8 OTTOBRE 2010 FEDERICA COCCO

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 is 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 construction” – 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.

IT Crowd – The Internet

envoyé par **combine**. – **Plus de vidéos fun**.

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.

RICCARDO LUNA

le 8 octobre 2010 - 14:31 • SIGNALER UN ABUS - PERMALINK



As you can imagine, I disagree totally, but this a perfect report for the opposite standing, I mean for those Not supporting the campaign. Great job

VOUS AIMEZ



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VOUS N'AIMEZ PAS



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LUI RÉPONDRE

KHAYMAN

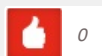
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Like you said, the Internet is'nt an homogenous thing. It is a tool use in many ways.

On the other hand, I'm sure that the Wikimedia Foundation, Jimmy Wales or the Wikipedians or Wikimedians will win the Nobel Peace prize one day.

VOUS AIMEZ



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VOUS N'AIMEZ PAS



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LUI RÉPONDRE