

The Power of the Open Net: J P Rangaswami

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2011-10-21

Polis Intern Terrine Friday reports on the latest [Polis Media Agenda Talk](#) by Salesforce Chief Scientist J P Rangaswami on the Power of the Open Net

What's rectangular, easy to read and full of bright pictures?

If you answered a book or magazine, you're wrong. [The answer is the iPad.](#)

"That shift is a signal of the speed at which things are changing," said JP Rangaswami during his Oct. 19 talk [The Power of the Open Net](#) at the LSE.

Rangaswami, chief scientist at salesforce.com, lauded the Internet as the epitome of technological evolution at its finest as time and space become increasingly compressed and navigable.

It's true, the Internet is great. Websites such as [Project Noah](#) and [Leaf Snap](#) promote community learning and engagement while others like [Health Map](#) provide a mining tool that help identify patterns and meaning. Open sourcing gives tech nerds a viable platform to share their innovation while mapping the seemingly mundane can create a holistic picture.

Facebook would be the third-biggest country in the world thanks to its mashing of social media and corporatism. But in terms of thinking big and expanding upon original ideas, are we really evolving?

In a [New York Times article](#), scholar Neal Gabler rethinks what the "elusive big idea" really means in a time where information is moving too quickly for us to stop and think about it and reach conclusions with actual depth. We create, we consume. We don't spend as much time grappling with concepts that defy our prior teachings because we can't make sense of them. We are of course thinking, but evidently not enough to warrant a post-post enlightenment era with a catchier name.

Gabler argues we are too caught up with absorbing as much information as we can that we forget to actually exert critical thought into meaning. We are the most informed we have ever been quantitatively, but "We are like the farmer who has too much wheat to make flour." Thinking has taken the backseat to mass production/consumption, though "profit-making inventions and intellectually challenging thoughts" are riven.

Adorno and Horkheimer would probably say our social system is cultural hegemony at its height; control is negotiated in the culture industry by providing a plethora of choices within one grand scheme. In *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, they wrote: "The development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself—which once expressed an idea, but was liquidated together with the idea."

Maybe technological innovation has a negative correlation with theoretical innovation. We've proved we are masters at creating interactive programs, but it begs to question whether we can distill, extract, interpret and share ideas that do not involve a flashy button.

This report by Polis Intern Terrine Friday

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