



Title:

**Internet and Social Perceptions in Greece:
Digital or ‘Cultural’ Divides into Shaping?**

The role of regulation in the closing of divides

by

PANAYIOTA TSATSOU
Department of Media and Communications
London School of Economics

**Paper prepared for
the 2nd PhD Symposium on Social Science Research in Greece
of the Hellenic Observatory,
European Institute,
London School of Economics.
June 10, 2005**

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the ways in which the Greek society makes use of the Internet. The paper is based on the latest figures that show that the Internet is not yet broadly diffused throughout the Greek society because of the lack of people's interest in using the Internet, articulating, thus, 'cultural' rather than purely digital divides. The research aims to explore those divides and look at the role of regulation accordingly by interviewing four key stakeholders and analyzing their theses through discourse analysis and reflexivity. The research confirms the bibliography on the Internet in Greece and identifies the existence of a techno-phobic culture within the Greek civil society, stressing, at the same time, the liability of political authorities of the country, as a similar culture prevails in the institutions that design policies on the Internet as well. Hence, the report concludes that regulation on the Internet fails to encourage the more widespread Internet usage, calling for more human-centered Internet policies and regulations.

**This is a preliminary version. Please do not quote without permission.*

***Address for Correspondence:** Panayiota Tsatsou, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE, UK .

E-mail: p.tsatsou@lse.ac.uk.

Tel: +44(0)7742924990

Background

Greece in the Information Society: a distinct case for study

The first official concern of the Greek authorities regarding the Information Society was manifestly expressed in 1995 by the then Minister of Industry and afterwards Prime Minister Mr. Costas Simitis through a text entitled ‘Greek Strategy in the Information Society: A tool for Employment, Development and Quality of Life’. This text set out four main goals of the Information Society Strategy regarding the decrease of the gap between Greece and other EU Members¹.

Indicative of this gap and the way in which Greece is positioned within the international Information Society is the following table of data comparing Greece with the EU as well as with other EU and OECD Member States on a number of ICT indicators:

Table 1: Greek Information Society in comparison to the EU & OECD Members

COUNTRIES	INDICATORS						
	Secure Web Servers ¹	Percent of people online ²	PCs per 1000 Inhabitants ²	Mobile phone lines ³	Internet Connection ⁴	Modem ⁴	Fax ⁴
Germany	0,68	6.4%	362	15,9	7,1	10,2	22,9
UK	1.41	9.5%	441	18,6	10,7	9,3	19,7
Austria	1.30	4.5%	346	23,9	6,8	9,6	24,3
Norway	1.47	14.3%	515				
Finland	1.58	14.6%	505	57.3	17,2	17,7	27,3
Ireland	1.71	4%	404	22,8	8,4	9,0	16,6
Netherlands	0.95	9%	450	19,4	19,6	24,7	39,5
Spain	0.67	2.2%	202	17,1	5 (E?)	4,6 (E?)	17,9 (E?)
Portugal	0.32	1.9%	160	28.3	3,4	4,2	10,9
Belgium	0.51	4.7%	405	17,1	8,2	10,1	19,1
Italy	0.34	2.4%	297	35,8	6,1	7,0	16,8
France	0.43	2.6%	368	19,2	3,9	5,5	17,1
Denmark	1.01	13.1%	510	27,5*	24,6	24,5	44,8
Sweden	2.08	15%	509	43	39,6 (S?)	34,3 (S?)	49,5 (S?)
Switzerland	2.42	10.6%	444				
Luxemburg	2.88			24,2	14,0	15,0	34,5
Greece	0.14	1.1%	125	14.3	2,9	2,4	7,0
EU-15		6%	352	22.1**	8,3	9,3	20,8
OECD average	2.04						
USA	6.13	16%	580				

¹ So far some of these goals have been achieved, whereas other aims and actions have been abandoned due to the fact that ‘implementation has always been the weak point in many governmental initiatives in Greece’ (Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2002: 13).

1. For Electronic Commerce per 100 000 inhabitants, August 1998. Source: Greek Initiative 'Information Society': *Telecoms Infrastructure*. Available at: <http://en.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/securewebservers.gif>. Figures taken from OECD – Communications Outlook 1999.
2. Technology penetration indicator. Source: Greek Initiative 'Information Society': *Telecoms Infrastructure*. Available at: <http://www.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/tables1.pdf>. Figures taken from Forbes.²
3. Total number of mobile phone lines per 100 inh – End 1998. Source: GSI, *Telecoms Infrastructure*. Available at: <http://en.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/mobilelines.gif>. Figures taken from ESIS-ISPO.
4. In households, % of population, 1998. Source: *Greek Information Society: Telecoms Infrastructure*. Available at: <http://www.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/tables1.pdf>. Figures from Eurobarometer 50.1, at <http://www.ispo.cec.be/polls/EB98.htm>.

*end 1997

**82,3 millions of mobile phone lines

Hence, Greece is, according to the White Paper of 2002, 'relatively behind in the course towards the emergence of the Information Society', as 'inactivity, lack of appropriate initiatives and of preparation for the circumstances of the new emerging society risks cutting us off from European and global developments' (Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2002: 9)³. Therefore, the White Paper acknowledges the necessity for 'new rules for the protection of data, the protection of privacy, the commercialization of material protected under intellectual property rights, etc' (ibid), as well as the need for 'citizens participation' (ibid)⁴.

At the same time, Greece presents an increasingly improved picture in terms of ICT diffusion throughout the Greek society. More specifically, the 2001, 2002 and 2003 GRNet surveys (GRNet, 2001; GRNet, 2002 & GRNet, 2003) point out the increasingly improved picture of ICT diffusion and usage in Greece over the last few years, contrasting, thus, manifestly the Flash Eurobarometer 125 survey for the year 2002, as the latter argues the relative increase in the digital gap between Greece and the EU (EC, 2002a). A comparative examination of the use of new technologies, such as WAP services, Internet use, computer use and a five-layered

² The same results concerning the number of PCs per 100 inhabitants were obtained from the European Commission and ESIS in 1998, as Greece has the lowest number of PCs per 100 inhabitants both at home and at the office among twelve other EU member states, followed, in order, by Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Holland, Britain and Danish (Greek Initiative 'Information Society', *ICT Use*. Available at: <http://www.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/pcper100habitants.gif>).

³ Furthermore, the dynamic nature of the Information Society sets new requirements for the Greek policy, economy, culture and society to develop and for Greek public and private sector, citizens and the research community to keep up with the rapid international ICT evolution.

⁴ Citizens' right to participate in the Information Society is proclaimed in the Article 5A/par. 2 of the revised Greek constitution which ordains further that the state has an obligation to facilitate production, exchange and dissemination of and access to electronically handled information.

indicator of new technologies use, can illustrate the gradual and increasing diffusion of ICTs in Greece for the years 2001-2003:

Table 2: Greek citizens and ICT use (2001-2003)

YEARS	INDICATORS							
	Usage of WAP Services ¹	New Technologies Use (%) [five layered use] ²					Internet use (%) ³	Computer use (%) ⁴
		--	-	+	++	+++		
2001	0.8%	38	27	20	8,7	6,3	10,6	20,8
2002	1.2%	32,1	26	21	10	10,9	17,2	25,8
2003	2.3%	29,1	27,4	19,6	10,9	13	19,9	27,1

1. Source: GRNet, 2003: 49
2. Source: GRNet, 2003: 80
3. 'Do you use the Internet?' Source: GRNet, 2003: 21
4. 'Do you use the Computer?' Source: GRNet, 2003: 5

Hence, Greece presents a mixed picture, illustrating that although it still lags behind other European countries, it is currently catching up:

...Greece has had to fight with several problems from the past, such as poor network infrastructure, inflexible bureaucratic structures, largely ineffective State apparatus and distortions in competition...With the Community Support Framework (CSF III) for 2002-2006 and the preparations for the 2004 Olympic Games, the Greek economy has great potential for future growth, which in turn will also contribute to supporting the digitization of networks in the ICT sector (DDSI, 2001:1).

Internet use in Greece: the off-line Greek civil society

The above extract on the mixed picture of the Greek Information Society is also confirmed by the 2001, 2002 & 2003 national GRNet surveys (GRNet, 2001; GRNet, 2002; GRNet, 2003) on Internet usage and culture of non-adoption in Greece.

More specifically, these surveys illustrate the serious delays that Greece experiences compared to other EU Member States in terms of Internet diffusion and usage. In some sense, Greece fails to take advantage of the eEurope initiative, as,

while the Internet's penetration in December 2001 in the European households was 38%, Greece is an outlier with Internet penetration of less than 10%⁵:

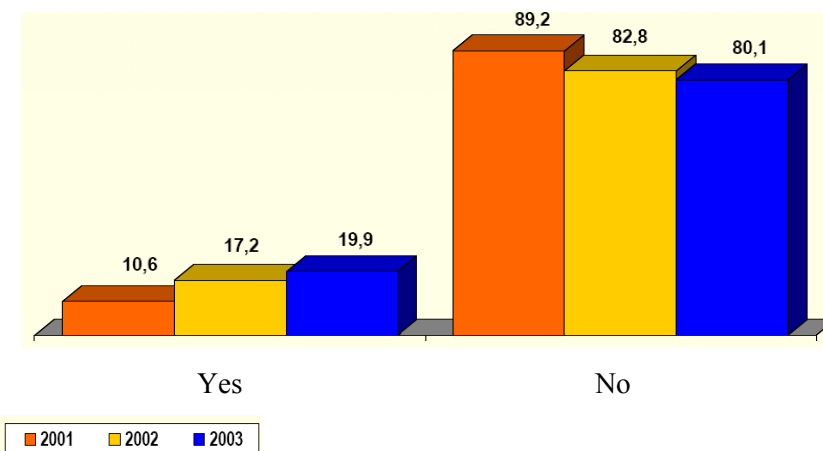
Graph 1: Internet Penetration⁶ (% EU Households connected, December 2001)



Source: EC, 2002b: 5. Figures are based on Eurobarometer, December 2001

However, while in 2002 Internet usage increased by almost 7% (10.6% in 2001 and 17.2% in 2002), as more than 1 out of 3 Greeks was a computer user and almost 1 out of 5 was an Internet user, the picture was even better in 2003 with Internet usage increasing by 2.7% and reaching 19.9% of the population (73.3% of computer users) (GRNet, 2003: 21).

Graph 2: Internet use 2001-2003. 'Do you use the Internet?'



Source: GRNet, 2003: 21

⁵ Internet penetration is a significant indicator relating to technology penetration and the Information Society, indicating that, although substantial advances have been achieved in Greece over the last years, the Internet and ICTs have not yet penetrated substantially Greek citizens' everyday life settings.

⁶ Moreover, the Flash EB 112 survey illustrates the weak relationship between Greek citizens and the Internet. Indicatively, to the question 'does your household have access to the Internet?' only 10% of Greek respondents answered yes, presenting, thus, a decreasing rate of access to the Internet from 12% in October 2000 to 10% in November 2001 (EC, 2002c: 6). According to the same survey, Greece has the lowest percentage of citizens accessing the Internet from their household among all EU Member States, followed by Spain and Portugal where only one quarter of the population has Internet access in their households (ibid). On the other hand, Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland), Netherlands and Austria had the highest percentages of positive responses to that question (ibid: 16).

Another illustrative finding of the GRNet survey is that in 2002 computer and Internet usage expanded in all geographic regions throughout Greece (GRNet, 2002: 10), whereas the sub-categories with the lowest Internet penetration tended to have higher penetration rates than the average measured rate of the same year⁷. Moreover, Internet users in Greece engage with the passing of time in Internet usage of wider breadth, as, according to the GRNet 2002 & 2003 surveys, Greek users use the Internet for an increasing number of applications:

Table 3: Online activities (2002-2003)

ACTIVITIES	YEARS	
	2002	2003
E-mail	20,6	20,6
Information searching	19,1	17,5
News	13,4	13,6
Entertainment/games	10,6	10
Entertainment/music	8,4	8,7
Education	8	7,2
Information on public services	3,3	4,8
Chat rooms	4,3	2,9
Purchases of products/services	1,6	2,8
Entertainment/TV, Video	2,4	2,5
Job searching	1,5	2
Online banking	1,2	1,7
Access to free software	1,6	1,5
Online public admin. services	1,6	1,5
Information on health	1,3	1,4

Source: GRNet, 2003: 31

The 2002 and 2003 GRNet surveys have also illustrated a noticeably rising frequency of usage, as 27.9% in 2002 and 31.9% of users in 2003 use of the Internet daily (GRNet, 2003: 12)⁸:

⁷ This finding is very indicative of the decreasing digital gap in different demographic categories of the Greek population, since, as far as Internet use in categories with income inequalities is concerned, 'the dynamism of the rates of development in this year has moved from the higher to the lower income layers of population, creating, thus, appropriate conditions for decreasing the digital gaps and massive penetration of new technologies' (GRNet, 2002: 28-9).

⁸ Furthermore, the average weekly time spent in using a computer and the Internet increased in the period 2001-2003, with an average of 14.2 hours of computer usage in 2002 and 15.5 hours in 2003, and 6.3 hours of Internet usage in 2002 and 6.6 hours in 2003 (GRNet, 2003: 30).

Table 4: Frequency of Internet use 2001-2003

	2001	2002	2003
	INTERNET USERS		
	N=664 respondents	N=423 respondents	N=558 respondents
Daily (6-7 days)	33.7	27.9	31.9
Many times a week (3-5)	27.0	29.1	25.6
1-2 times a week	25.4	32.9	31.8
More rarely	13.2	9.2	10.0
I don't know/answer	0.7	0.9	0.7

Source: GRNet, 2003: 29

In June 2002, the average Internet use for people over 15 years of age in the EU was 51%, achieving a growth rate by 11% in comparison to 2001. Although Greece lags behind with a 19.3%, it appears to have a 91.1% increase in comparison to 2001, namely a multiple increase rate of the EU rate, entailing, thus, a significant convergence with EU standards. Finally, this survey predicted that in 2004 Internet use in Greece would reach either 49.6% or 67.5% (GRNet, 2002: 23).

Greek society and the Internet: Digital or 'cultural' divides in shaping?

Although the above figures present an optimistic picture of the future of the Internet in Greece, the large majority of Greek citizens still remain off-line. The 2002 and 2003 GRNet surveys attempted to go further and investigate why the majority of Greece citizens reject, either directly or indirectly, ICTs in general and the Internet in particular.

More specifically, the obtained data in 2002 indicate that it is the lack of interest by the majority of Greek citizens and the sense of not needing to use the Internet, rather than any particular fear or the cost of this technology, that lie behind the decision of people in Greece not to use the Internet. Hence, 1 out of 6 Greeks who do not use either computers or the Internet say that they do not need them or that they are not interested in them (GRNet, 2002: 11). Similar results were obtained about computer users who do not use the Internet, as 5 out of 10 do not use the Internet either because they are not interested in it or because they have never used it before and they do not need it, whereas just more than 3 out of 10 do not use the Internet because they do not have an Internet connection (ibid: 12)⁹.

⁹ Nevertheless, computer- and non-Internet users show by far a more positive attitude towards the prospect of using the Internet than non-computer and non-Internet users, as in 2002 10 out of 11 of

Likewise, in 2003, even more computer users (30.7%) than in 2002 (23.1%) stated that they do not need the Internet, whereas the concern about the cost of connecting to the Internet appears smaller (4.2%) than in 2002 (9.2%) (GRNet, 2003: 32). Equally important, the lack of Internet connection was articulated in 2003 (25%) as a less frequent reason for people not using the Internet than in 2002 (30.8%) (ibid), justifying the claims about a decreasing digital divide in Greece over the last few years, on the one hand, and a persistent culture of a low degree of interest and involvement of the Greek society with the Internet, on the other.

Table 5: Reasons for not using the Internet (2002-2003)*

REASONS	YEARS	
	2002	2003
I do not need it	23,1	30,7
No Internet connection	30,8	25
I am not interested	16,2	15,6
I have never used the Internet	10,9	14,6
No available PC	2,5	4,3
It is very expensive	9,2	4,2
Other reason	3,4	3
Its usage is difficult	2	1,1

*Respondents are computer users that do not use the Internet

Source: GRNet, 2003: 32

Therefore, what is more illustrative than the actual numbers of Internet usage and technology penetration are the measures of public attitudes towards the new communications technology, as Greeks present a lack of interest in ICTs in general, displaying, more specifically, the highest percentage of non-interest in the Internet at the office and the second highest at home among all other Europeans in the EU (Greek Initiative 'Information Society: *ICT Use*. Available at: <http://en.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/imginter1.gif>).

The most recent survey conducted in Greece in the first quarter of 2004 by the National Statistical Service (ESYE) also confirms the above figures and

the former argued about their positive predisposition to using the Internet in the future for a number of reasons. Also, 1 out of 12 households that do not own a PC declared their intention to buy one within the next six months, which entails an increase in the percentage of PC occupation in Greek households by 8% in only six months, namely from 29% to 37% (GRNet, 2002: 19). Likewise, 1 out of 10 households that did not have an Internet connection declared their intention to obtain an Internet connection in the next six months, leading to an increase in the respective percentage by 9% (from 13.4% to 22%) in only six months (ibid: 20).

concludes that the non-appreciation of the Internet is the main reason for people not using it, as the majority of the respondents, 52.62%, stated that the main reason for not accessing the Internet is the belief that the information provided online is not of particular usefulness and interest (ESYE, 2004).

In conclusion, it seems that Greek citizens suffer from a lack of familiarization with new technologies and electronically mediated ways of communication, pointing, thus, to new challenges and bringing to the fore the existence of ‘cultural’ rather than purely ‘digital’ divides:

In our country today there is a tendency to distinguish the few (but rapidly increasing in number) users of computers and communication networks such as the Internet from the **many who treat the new technologies at best as a mystery and at worst as a danger for their future** (emphasis added) (Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2002: 12).

Implications and challenges for policy and regulation on the Internet

The above shaping of divides within the Greek civil society poses, therefore, the question of whether those divides are purely digital or ‘cultural’ in nature, and stimulates further research regarding cultural, economic, historical and socio-political factors into play. This study questions the nature and character of those divides, and investigates the way they challenge existing policy and regulatory frameworks on the Internet requiring, possibly, more flexible, mediating and socio-culturally oriented Internet regulatory and policy schemes¹⁰.

More specifically, Greek regulation on the Internet covers a range of distinct policy and regulation areas, often, however, in an incomplete, partial and at many points a-social way, while, in many instances, not particular or specialized regulatory provisions are put in action¹¹. This drawback might explain to a degree the lack of familiarization of Greek people with the Internet, stressing, furthermore,

¹⁰ Furthermore, up to this moment, Greece is one of the countries appearing problematic, in terms of compliance and adoption of the EU policy and regulation on the Internet, raising, thus, the role of the cultural particularities and of the national ICT environment to the degree in which EU law and policy on the Internet can be fully and effectively implemented. The core of the problematic is that the failure and only partial applicability of the EU Information Society (EC, 2003a; EC, 2003b; EC, 2004) are fundamentally rooted in the absence of substantial and constant consideration of socio-cultural particularities of EU Member States such as Greece and of the fundamentally ‘cultural’ character of the persistent divides.

¹¹ In some sense, the problematic for the existing policy and regulatory frameworks on the Internet stems from the insufficient account of the Greek civil society and in particular of the society of ICT users, making, at the same time, the two-sided goal of the regulation itself harder; namely the protection of the Greek Internet users, on the one hand, and the development of the market economy of new products and services in the Information Society, on the other (Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2002: 76).

the need for more culturally adjusted policy and regulatory provision on the Internet in Greece.

In other words, Greece is an illuminating case for study regarding the underlying reasons for the low ICT and Internet adoption and usage rates, on the one hand, and for the further examination of the role that regulation might play in the boosting of the Internet and the possible alterations that the current policy and regulatory frameworks need to undergo, on the other.

Research Questions

Consequently, the questions to be explored are:

1. Whether the decision of most people not to use the Internet in Greece is derived from digital divides or from a culture of a lack of interest in the Internet and insufficient familiarization with ICTs in general.
2. How the current regulatory frameworks on the Internet in Greece respond, facilitating or hindering the diffusion of the Internet throughout the Greek society.

These two questions are investigated by interviewing key policy makers, market players and regulators in Greece, and analyzing the interview texts through discourse analysis and on the basis of reflecting on the epistemological implications of the research situation, as well as of my own position as a researcher.

Rationale for the method used

The method applied to address the above research questions is a small-scale qualitative study of interviewing Greek key-stakeholders, in accordance with the principles of discourse analysis and bearing in mind the simultaneous task of reflecting on my own position as a researcher and the epistemological implications that this position might entail for the research process. This multi-layered qualitative analysis and the employment of different research tools will work in combination with the initial exploration of the most recent documents and surveys on Internet

adoption and usage in Greece¹² in order for the two main research questions to be investigated.

In-depth Interviewing: the research tool for data collection

On the one hand, **in-depth individual interviewing** is the appropriate research tool for addressing the two research questions, as it has the potential to operationalize a number of concepts and topics, whereas devising a semi-structured questionnaire has the advantage of ‘openness’, where new issues or concepts can be raised, leading the researcher to new paths of analysis (Gaskell, 2000)¹³.

On the other hand, a quantitative approach could be charged of inappropriateness, as the goal of this essay is not the strictly quantitative approach to people’s patterns of online behaviour. Rather, the aim of this study is to investigate Greek people’s perceptions and evaluations of the Internet and the respective role that Internet regulation plays in accordance with stakeholders’ views. From this perspective, quantitative research fails to analyse the open meaning of words and the various ways in which this meaning can be interpreted. Finally, a quantitative analysis is inappropriate for small sample research and in particular for the investigation of a group of people with its own professional particularities and interests at stake, such as the stakeholders of the Internet in Greece¹⁴.

Nevertheless, there are a number of limitations in pursuing this qualitative research. One limitation is that the participants will be selected by some unavoidably arbitrary criteria and by using purposeful sampling. Generalizability

¹² The findings obtained from the multi-layered empirical research will afterwards be compared with the results and conclusions of those documents and surveys outlined in the background section of the essay.

¹³ In this respect, the strength of the in depth-interviewing is that: ‘It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge... it is in fact a strength of the interview conversation to capture the multitude of subjects’ views of a theme and to picture a manifold and controversial human world’ (Kvale, 1996: 6-7).

¹⁴ However, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research tools is justified in many cases, as, according to Webster’s (1967) view, a qualitative analysis is a kind of chemical analysis designed to identify the components of a substance, while a quantitative analysis is a chemical analysis designed to determine the amounts of the components of a substance. Research often requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, as the whole research process involves the interaction of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Mayring, 1983). By using multiple sources for data collection, the researcher is able to use different data sources to validate and crosscheck findings. By securing the ‘objective’ quantification of the data obtained on the one hand, and the ‘openness’ of the qualitative data on the other hand, new issues and concepts can be raised, which can lead to new paths of analysis (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000).

should not be assumed. Another limitation relates to the validity and reliability of the research, as although these parameters of verification of the knowledge obtained are always one of the goals of qualitative research (Kvale, 1996: 235-6), such interviewing validity and reliability are heavily dependent on structural limitations and individual restrictions, with the latter being very much formed around the interviewer and interviewee's subjectivity and possible pre-dispositions.

Nevertheless, I will attempt to overcome these limitations by conducting tests of reliability and validity throughout the research. Furthermore, an analysis of the data obtained will be carried out in accordance with the questions asked and the goals of the research, namely the identification, from a policy aspect, of the underlying factors creating divides on the Internet and the respective role of regulation¹⁵.

Discourse Analysis: the analytical means for interpreting interview texts

Discourse analysis employs a sort of constructivist approach, according to which what we are interested in looking at is not only the denotations of the texts (descriptive and value-free meaning), but also, and even more importantly, the connotations of them (construction of meaning and the role of ideology)¹⁶. By constituting part of the general epistemological concern, discourse analysis deals more with the unsaid, implied or contradictory arguments and the 'significance of silences' in the texts (Gill, 1996), rather than with the said, explicit and manifest words (Berger, 1998: 65-76). In this respect, discourse analysis helps this essay to go beyond the 'obvious', and to draw more sophisticated conclusions from 'implied meanings and tacit codings in language use' (Deacon et al, 1999: 311), working on

¹⁵ Qualitative data analysis consists of coding the interview transcripts and analysing them in a systematic and ordered way. Themes and patterns are then compiled according to the research question, and suggestions about future prospects and considerations are made. In-depth interviewing can be essentially functional for this task, as it is, as Robert Farr (1982) argues, '...a technique or method for establishing or discovering that there are perspectives or viewpoints on events other than those of the person initiating the interview'.

¹⁶ Having its theoretical roots in structural linguistics and Sapir's work (1949), that is in the post-structuralist principle that there is no reality which is accessible other than through systems of representation, as well as in Saussure's legacy of semiotics (1974), the above epistemological position leads this study to focus on how people construct their views in relation to their self-identity as social objects, and the linked process through which they engage in the issue at stake.

latent meanings, sometimes unconsciously and intended for the interviewees themselves¹⁷.

What is worthwhile for this study is that the discourse analysis is, according to Gill (2000: 173), epistemologically based on skepticism about the unproblematic reflection of the 'truth' on the world as this is experienced¹⁸. Hence, by identifying the possible textual conventions and codes in the process of 'decoding' (Eco, 1977), the polysemantic and polysemic interview texts can be identified throughout the analysis of the data. This point is particularly valid in this study where the language and views of stakeholders on the Internet in relation to citizens and ordinary people will be investigated, and as social and cultural discrepancies and differentiations might have an effect respectively¹⁹.

However, discourse analysis is a kind of craft, consisting of sophisticated and vague principles of text analysis²⁰. This makes the whole endeavour very ambitious, as while trying to reflect on interviewee's language the researcher comes across his/her own language and analytical predispositions, demanding, therefore another research tool to trade-off: this is the tool of self-reflection as the epistemological choice for addressing the pursuit of neutral knowledge of the issues at stake.

Reflexivity: addressing the epistemological question of the objectivity of knowledge

Generally speaking, social research is faced with epistemological concerns regarding how social scientists might gain knowledge of social life and what should count as knowledge in the social sciences. This raises the question of "where does our knowledge come from and how reliable is it?" (Williams and May, 1996: 5;

¹⁷ Indicatively, discourse analysis is concerned with 'extended samples of talk or text, with the structural, stylistic and rhetorical features of these samples, and with the form of dialogue or communicative interaction that occurs through talk and text...' (Deacon et al, 1999: 310).

¹⁸ In this respect, this essay takes into account that knowledge is socially constructed and reliant on social processes, and, that any investigation of it must be historically and culturally related and contextualized.

¹⁹ This is why the unit of analysis will be fundamentally the discourse/text itself, whereas the language will be viewed as constructive and constructed at the same time, and the discourse will be treated as a form of action in its own right. Nevertheless, the interviewees can sometimes be the informers of 'true' situations, and they can constitute the unit of analysis for a moment, as their 'real' parameter of life can be of central interest to the study.

²⁰ We should also be cautious of the difficulty in judging how: 'a discourse had constructed its object validly' (Eagleton, 1991: 205).

quoted in Lazar, 1998: 8). These epistemological concerns²¹ have at their centre the question of objectivity, which gave in turn space to the tradition of relativism and the view that different theories construct their own conception of reality and promote their own claims for knowledge²².

This study had to review the main debates regarding both the means of research and the objects of knowledge, deciding where it stands exactly. Thus, this research ended up with a rather interpretivist thesis and the application of qualitative methods of research, instead of a naturalist position and the employment of quantitative methods. Regarding the second dilemma on the claims about objective or relativist knowledge, this study resulted in an account of the problems that social research faces concerning objectivity, acknowledging the importance of the question:

Social scientists...are individual with personal characteristics, are situated in a certain class, ethnic group, gender, religious group and live in a particular historical period. How, when each researcher is embedded in prejudices, values and specific cognitive frameworks, can we move, however tentatively, towards something which might be called objectivity?' (Lazar, 1998: 17).

The question of the objectivity of knowledge sheds light on Bourdieu's 'reflexive sociology' (1992, 1999) which goes beyond the biases of the researcher in terms of social class and biographical idiosyncrasy, and emphasizes the role of the position that the researcher occupies in academic space and the possible biases existing in the view that s/he is "off-sides" or "out of the game" (1992: 71-2)²³. Bourdieu's 'reflexive sociology' suggests, therefore, the construction of theories that contain within themselves a theory of the gap between theory and practice (ibid: 70)²⁴:

²¹ The main epistemological debates took place between rationalists, such as Popper, and empiricists, between naturalists, such as Durkheim, Parsons and Merton, and interpretivists, such as Geertz, Taylor and Schutz, while others, such as Weber, attempted to reconcile naturalism and the interpretive tradition (Lazar, 1998: 7-22).

²² Kuhn's standpoint of paradigms represents a moderate relativist thesis, while Feyerabend's rejection of research method(s) expresses a radical relativist position instead (ibid).

²³ On the view that reflection might correct this bias, Bourdieu states: 'There is thus an intellectualist bias inherent in the position of the social scientist who observes from the outside a universe in which she is not immediately involved. For you, it is this intellectualist relation to the world, which replaces the practical relation to practice...that must be objectivized to fulfil the requirement of reflexivity' (1992: 73).

²⁴ Bourdieu considers that reflexivity might prove very helpful for the novice researcher, as it 'encourages him or her to take into account, in the definition of her project, the real conditions of its realization, that is, the means she has at her disposal...and the possibilities of access to informants and to information, documents and sources, etc' (ibid: 252)

Bourdieu's 'reflexive sociology' is used in this research for the frequent relativism of knowledge to be illustrated and the necessity of reflecting on the researcher's own scientific and intellectual status to be indicated, so that the objectivity of knowledge is ensured as much as possible²⁵. Bourdieu's 'reflexive sociology' is an appropriate tool for methods of research such as open-ended individual interviews (1999), as it allows open discussions between the researcher and the subjects of research and constant reflections on the researcher's own positions concerning his/her own performance throughout the interviewing and collecting data process.

However, I do not adopt the claim that objectivity through reflexivity can be thoroughly ensured, as the influence of personal values and preconceptions cannot be entirely eradicated from the research, due to structural limitations and self-consciousness restrictions²⁶.

Method

In order for the research questions to be operationalised, I had to make a range of decisions regarding not only the main research tools employed but also the research procedures followed until the data was obtained.

Decisions made on the research subjects

Firstly, I had to choose between the investigation of ordinary people's perceptions on the Internet and the study of key stakeholders' views on how people incorporate the Internet in their lives and the reasons lying behind it. My final decision to interview key stakeholders derives from the fact that in the literature on the Internet in Greece the only side presented is that of ordinary people. The policy and market side's views on the character of the existing divides on the Internet in Greece and the factors into play are entirely absent. Moreover, this study aims to

²⁵ However, even reflexivity itself has been the object of various debates and perceptions among social researchers. However, the conceptual framework that this research takes into account is Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, in the sense that the latter emphasizes the scientific importance of a reflexive return on the researcher throughout research, due to the importance of mediation provided by the relatively autonomous space of the field of cultural production, as well as the influence of the invisible determinations inherent in the intellectual posture itself (ibid: 68-9).

²⁶ From this perspective, Bourdieu's ambition that a researcher should be aware of his/her dispositions so as to get a grip on those dispositions and resist them (ibid: 253), cannot, scientifically speaking, be certain.

confront the challenge of relating the so far available data about Greek people's attitudes to the Internet with the respective views of policy makers and experts on the Internet in order for discrepancies and contradictions, if any, to be identified.

Finally, policy-makers, regulators, researchers and official institutions in charge are the only bodies which are able to answer questions regarding the role of regulation and policy on the Internet and the way that existing policy and regulatory frameworks fight persistent divides, either digital or cultural, on the Internet.

Research Sample: characteristics, recruiting and access

This qualitative study is based on open-ended interviews with four Greek stakeholders in Greece: the Secretary of the Operational Program 'Information Society', Professor Vassileios Assimakopoulos; the President of the Greek Hotline, Safeline, Mr. Nicolaos Frydas; the Officer of the Federation of Hellenic Information Technology & Communications Enterprises (SEPE) and Product Manager of FORTHnet, Ms Sofia Parissi; the Director of Telecommunications at the Hellenic Republic National Telecommunications and Post Commission (EETT) – that is the Greek NRA - Mr. Costas Balictsis²⁷.

This selection was based on a list of public, private and research bodies on the Internet in Greece, attempting to represent the main spectrum of Greek institutional bodies currently working and deciding on the Internet. The interviewees were selected according to their role within each body and their usability for the purposes of the study. The exact process of administering the drawn sample was based on the publicity of those bodies and persons, as well as on some professional networks that I still maintain as a journalist in Greece.

However, the difficulty in getting access to these institutions remained an important problem that took me more than one month to resolve²⁸. More specifically, I started with getting as much information as possible and I then tried to get access by contacting the selected interviewees over the phone and introducing my research and myself to them. Afterwards, I e-mailed them with some more

²⁷ The number of four interviews cannot be regarded as sufficient to enable us to trace themes and social factors at work. However, the accountability of the research subjects allows us to come to useful conclusions regarding stakeholders' understanding and analysis of the Internet in Greece and the way that regulation responds accordingly.

²⁸ This is perfectly understood if we take into account the unwillingness and reluctance of most policy-makers to be interviewed even for academic reasons because of the fear of information distortion by the interviewer

details about the research and the purposes of the interviews²⁹. Two weeks later, three of them had not responded. Thus, I had to phone them up again and request an answer. In two cases, I had to resend the e-mails because they had lost them! Finally, I managed to arrange all four interviews by the end of March.

Interview Schedule

Four interview topic guides were constructed following the objectives and narrative of the research, so that the variables used, the questions asked and the particular conceptual frameworks employed to become operationalized for the aims of the study (Appendix B)³⁰.

Furthermore, the interview guides' thematic frame was based on a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and the social processes intervening, while following the principle that 'when conducting an in depth interview, you can adapt as the situation changes. If a promising topic comes up, you can pursue it' (Berger, 1998: 57). In other words, in order for the discourse analysis to become an efficient tool of analysis, it is imperative for the question and coding categories of the data obtained to reflect the main research interests and to allow changes of question and coding units, if such a need comes up, while allowing reflection on my own position as individual, Greek citizen and social researcher.

Finally, the interviews which were conducted in the first week of April in the capital of Greece, Athens, were all face-to-face discussions, whereas some notes were taken while the interviews were being recorded. Further notes on the atmosphere of the interviews, on the different feelings of the interviewees at different phases of the interview and on things that were said after the recorder was switched off were taken after each interview was over. Finally, some notes were taken via reflecting on my own position throughout the empirical research.

Ethics and consent

I was seriously concerned with the issue of ethics throughout the research process. More specifically, I was required to make a range of decisions regarding

²⁹ At this point, I had to face the dilemma of how much I should reveal, something that I cover in more detail in the ethics section.

³⁰ Although the basic thematic framework was the same for each interviewee, some different questions were asked according to the expertise of the interviewee and the role that the institution where s/he belongs plays in the Greek Information Society. Therefore, four different interview guides were constructed addressing, however, the same key questions.

the extent to which the interviewees should be informed in advance about the rationale and aims of my research; the way I should treat them while interviewing them; the manner in which I would transcribe the interview texts; whether I had to go back and inform the interviewees about the way their views were presented in my final report; and, finally, the extent to which I should take the interviewee's feedback seriously into account, allowing it to affect my final report.

In my effort to overcome all these ethical dilemmas I addressed the LSE regulations on ethics of research and tried to position myself within those regulations. I ended up with a consent form (Appendix A) that ensured the full consent of the participants, the mutual trust between me and the participants and the principle of confidentiality, although not the anonymity of the interviewees. This decision helped me to confront in an efficient way the main ethical issues posed at least at the first stage of the research process, namely the point up to the conduct of the interviews, whilst I kept struggling with ethical issues concerning the analysis of the interview texts and the role of the interviewees in my research after the recorder was off until the very end of the research process.

Analysis and Findings

Decisions and procedures for analysis of the interview material

Firstly, I had to make some decisions regarding the procedures for analysis of the interview material obtained. Since the number of the interviews was rather small, only four, I decided that the use of software for a qualitative analysis, such as the ATLAS or ALCESTE, would be of minor practicability. Therefore, I read and re-read the interview transcripts and went through the main obvious points made in relation to the research questions. Afterwards, I compared the main points, while trying to identify possible contradictions, common patterns or divergent theses within the interview texts, in order to come to some conclusions and answer the articulated research questions.

Furthermore, I employed a discourse analysis strategy of the used linguistic equipment in order to investigate the role of the social, ideological, professional and cultural capital of the interviewees in the formulation of their theses through the usage of particular linguistic vehicles. The discourse analysis helped me to the

further discussion of the findings and the illustration of things that cannot be discerned at first sight. Finally, throughout the analysis and writing of the findings, I constantly reflected on the interview situation and format, on the research relationship between the respondents and me, as well as on my own cultural capital as a researcher in comparison to the interviewees' cultural capital, thus, ending up with a self-critical account in the discussion section.

Key findings

The key findings focus on the respondents' representations of the Internet in Greece and the role that citizens and Internet regulation might play respectively.

All the interviewees confirm the disappointing picture that the surveys and official figures show about the Internet in Greece, maintaining characteristically:

S.P: Unfortunately, it is broadly known that Greece has one of the lowest ICT and Internet penetration rates not only within the EU but also globally. The problem is even more acute as far as broadband Internet is concerned, as only 1% of the total population has access and uses broadband Internet.

Generally speaking, the 'techno-phobia' of the Greek society is viewed as one of the main factors obstructing the development of the Information Society. This characteristic is also present in a culture of non-modernization of the bureaucratic and non-technocratic public administration in Greece, where members of the government are not fully aware of the importance of new technologies for the country.

Therefore, the stigma of a culture of techno-phobia and non-modernization prevails in both social and political life in Greece, leading to policy delays, social resistance and lack of initiatives in the public administration for the further development of the Information Society. From this perspective, Indicative are the words of the Secretary of the 'Information Society' program, Professor Vasilios Asimakopoulos:

- What is the role that the Greek society plays in the way in which the Information Society evolves?

V.A: Yes...the difficulties, beyond...the lack of modernization of the Greek public administration, are also related to the fact that we talk about technology in a society that is marked by techno-phobia. In other words, if the same program was about roads and not technology, then we could say that it would be easier because it would be more comprehensible to people.

- Can you tell me in more detail how this phobia about technology has affected the program itself?

V.A: It has influenced the program in terms of occurred delays, as even staff members of public authorities in charge, such as Ministries...do not put as much effort as they should do, possibly because they do not understand the benefits of new technology or because they are afraid of it.

- Therefore, it has to do with culture...

V.A: *(interrupts) Yes!*

- ...of the authorities as well...

V.A: *(interrupts) Yes!*

Regarding the Internet in particular, the issue of techno-phobia, as a parameter affecting significantly the decision of Greek people not to use the Internet, is emphasized, accompanied by the recognition of the role that the traditional, off-line, way of living in Greece plays, since the Internet is not yet part of people's daily life. At the same time, reference to the lack of sufficient infrastructure, governmental initiatives on the Internet and availability of a wide range online services is made, while the low level of awareness is also mentioned:

- In other countries, however, where the Internet appeared in the same period as Greece, we see far higher penetration rates. How do you explain that?

N.F: *...there is no sufficient infrastructure, no significant offer of e-government services, as the people in the public sector are negative towards the development of online public administration, while the high amounts of ignorance does not allow citizens to develop a rational perception and usage of the Internet.*

On the other hand, there is a phobia about technology...I do not know why in Greece this phobia is higher than in other countries.

Also, there is the predisposition of Greek people to act more face-to-face than online; there is a more traditional attitude towards offline activities.

All the interviewees, however, did not omit to underline the liability of the official authorities of the country that do not offer to citizens the alternatives that would make the Greek civil society modernized:

C.B: *... people in Greece are tired and need to make some changes and adopt new things...People in Greece are still attached to this traditional life-style because they are not informed or because they have not seen other examples of people in other countries using new technologies successfully.*

At the same time, there is no particular optimism about the potential for dramatic changes of this culture in the immediate future:

- How are you planning to change this?

N.F: *I do not think we can do lots of things about that, because it would be like wanting to change the Greek society for the sake of the Internet and this cannot happen.*

Furthermore, all the four respondents admitted to the lack of sufficient regulatory and policy schemes on the Internet in Greece, emphasizing the role of culture in terms of political inaction and bureaucracy, and arguing that the existing regulatory frameworks are incapable of stimulating interest in the Internet in Greece. Thus, the issue of culture goes beyond the mass of ordinary people, and concerns the political authorities of the country as well. At the same time, the solution proposed by the four interviewees is about more socially responsible policies and initiatives on the Internet. Indicative is the following extract of the interview with Sophia Parissi who is, in strict terms, the representative of the market:

- To what extent do the policies and regulations on the Internet reflect the concerns of the Greek society, contributing, thus, to the rise in Internet penetration in our country?

S.P: No, I do not think that the efforts of the political authorities of the country are able to contribute to the diffusion of the Internet throughout the Greek society...In Greece there is no such efficiency of the policy and regulation making process on the Internet.

- What are the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the existing regulatory schemes on the Internet?

S.P: The policies and regulation on the Internet need to be very close to the end user and clear to him/her, so that the user receives their impact. From this perspective, we are still behind other European countries.

Although the social insufficiency of the policies on the Internet is acknowledged, the four respondents do not think the active participation of the civil society in the policy making process is likely, as no active social organizations and institutions exist, whereas the lack of conscious citizenship that the Greek people are marked by does not help either:

- Tackling this last issue, do you not think that Greek citizens might play an essential role in the way in which regulation and policy on the Internet is decided and put in action?

N.F: In other countries maybe, but I do not think that this is the case in Greece...we do not have the mass social organizations and institutions that could play an active role in decision-making. I do not see how citizens might have some influence unless new social organizations and other institutions emerge.

Discussion

Background, research questions and given answers

All the interviewees confirmed the fundamental assumption about the non-diffusion of the Internet in the Greek society.

More specifically, ignorance and low awareness levels, a culture of not advanced technology in the Greek society, lack of familiarization and non-integration of the Internet in people's everyday life, the traditional life style, backward and un-technocratic public administration, as well as lack of appropriate political initiatives, were all mentioned as factors shaping the picture of an undeveloped Greek Information Society, where people still refuse to use the Internet. Even though every interviewee stressed the role of culture from a rather different perspective, all the above factors allow us to answer the first research question by underlying the role of culture, at both societal and political level, as the force determining the present disappointing picture of the Internet in Greece.

Concerning the second question, the interviewees maintained that existing policy and regulation schemes do not contribute to the diffusion of the Internet, while they suggested that policy makers and regulators must come closer to citizens, allowing the development of more human-centered and social policies and regulatory models. In this sense, all the interviewees propose more human-centered policies on the Internet as the means through which Internet usage will be further stimulated, whereas representatives of the market forces, such as Ms Sophia Parissi and Nikos Frydas, do not forget to underline the role that the further empowering of the market can play in the more dynamic presence of the Internet in Greek society.

Related findings in the field

A first point of interest is that all interviewees attempted to restrict the focus of the discussion to their own expertise, showing a particular reluctance in talking about people/citizens. Most of the interviewees preferred the term consumer(s) indicating that the public and private authorities in Greece view citizens from a rather political economy point of view.

At the same time, although each interviewee followed a different direction of thinking, all the interviewees agreed on the importance of economic development and re-regulation – they all rejected de-regulation – and the significance of more

human centered regulations and policies on the Internet. All the interviewees also emphasized the political and economic strategies of development, rather than the societal ones, whereas they underestimated the dynamism and influential action that the Greek civil society could develop, addressing, complementarily, the issue of the liability of the central governmental authorities regarding the persistent weaknesses of the Greek Info-Society.

By employing discourse analysis, we identified contradictions in the interviewees' arguments concerning the way in which the cultural particularities of the Greek society and politics might affect the Information Society and the insufficiencies and unsocial character of Internet regulation, on the one hand, and the clearly market-driven linguistic tools that the interviewees employed from a rather political economy perspective. Hence, they explicitly follow the approach market → regulation → society, even though their concerns frequently indicated a rather sociological point of view.

Concluding, all the interviewees were very reluctant to talk about issues outside their expertise, stating 'I am not an expert, but...'. Hence, they used a rather a-social language that made them feel more secure in professional terms. In this sense, there was discrepancy between my sociological language and their more technical and professionally restricted language, leading sometimes the whole discussion to underlying tension.

Self critical assessment

Although the conducted research answers the formulated research questions to some extent, a reflexive look throughout the research process and in particular during the interview and writing process might shed light on the flaws in the implementation of the project.

On the one hand, every single interview demanded a different type of treatment not only at the stage of collecting the data, but also throughout the analysis of the obtained data. This is related to the fact that all the interviewees spoke from a different position, in terms of profession, expertise and interests. On the other hand, all the interviews needed to be viewed in accordance with the purposes of the research. This often challenged the focus of the research and the language used by me as a researcher throughout the interviews, while, in many

cases, it made me re-orient the direction of the discussion and integrate the interview material according to the research questions and goals of the report.

An implication of the complexity of the interview process was that in many cases I revealed some of the research purposes and expressed some of the predispositions and hypotheses articulated about the issues at stake affecting, thus, the interviewees to a certain degree. More specifically, I did not avoid the distortions embedded in the very structure of a research relationship, as the relationship between me and the respondents brought to the surface a frequently conflicting interaction between two divergent views: the research/academic view of my self and the political economy view of the interviewees. From this perspective, I rather prompted the articulation of other things by stressing the societal and cultural parameter in the discussion about the Internet in Greece.

Furthermore, the existing asymmetry in the linguistic capital used by me and the respondents brought to the fore the contrast between an academic and a political economy language, creating an interview identity marked by a range of inconsistencies. I tried to reduce these discrepancies, as well as the ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1996: 609) exerted through the interview relationship, by attempting to bridge the gap between these two divergent linguistic vehicles³¹.

At the same time, a more procedural kind of difficulty, namely the translation of the interview texts from Greek into English, and the use of two different linguistic mechanisms with different syntax and grammar rules, challenged the quality of the final report, affecting, in some cases, the accuracy and originality of the language transcribed and, therefore, the reliability of the findings reported³².

Therefore, what I concluded is that the aim of this project should not be the utopian objectivity of knowledge, but rather the realist construction of it, as my theoretical predispositions as a researcher brought to the fore the risk of the ‘imposition effect’ and jeopardized the ‘neutrality of the project itself (Bourdieu, 1996: 620).

³¹ As an outcome, I faced the difficulty in following what the respondent was saying and, at the same time, in thinking ahead to the next questions that should come into the discussion smoothly and following the decided ‘line’ of the interview. Therefore, many times, my follow-up questions were not the expected outcome of the previous answers given by the interviewee, while I purposefully oriented and re-oriented the discussion, catching, thus, up the respondent by surprise.

³² The process of recording the interviews also played a role in the research, as all the interviewees seemed to be reluctant to express their thoughts and theses freely, since the tape recorder put a kind of limitation by exerting a more psychological censorship on them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the report confirms the bibliography on the Internet in Greece and the existence of a techno-phobic culture in the Greek civil society, attributing this culture to non-awareness, lack of integration of the Internet in the everyday life and persistence in a traditional life style. At the same time, the research went further, stressing the liability of the political authorities of the country, as a similar culture prevails in the bodies and institutions that design policies and regulations on the Internet. Hence, the report concludes that, according to all four interviewees, regulation on the Internet fails to encourage the more widespread Internet usage, calling for more human-centered Internet policies and regulations.

These findings entail wider implications for both policy makers and regulators, as they challenge existing regulations on the Internet, calling for more social policies that will confront the more ‘cultural’, rather than just ‘digital’, divides in Greece. Additionally, the findings challenge the character and culture of public administration and calls for its modernization through the assumption that the issue of culture goes beyond the mass of ordinary people and concerns in an imperative way the political authorities of the country as well.

Finally, this research brings to the fore the consideration of further research questions for future researchers regarding the possible role that social institutions and civil associations might play in the shaping of the Information Society, as well as the new procedural and principal issues that policy makers and regulators should take into account when making decisions about the Internet in particular.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bauer, M. and Gaskell, G** (eds) (2000) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: a Practical Handbook for Social Research*. London: Sage
- Berger, A.** (1998) (2nd ed.) *Media Research Techniques*. London: Sage
- Bourdieu, P.** (1999) *The Weight of the World*. Cambridge: Polity
- Bourdieu, P.** (1996) ‘Understanding’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, **13(2)**: 17-37, (reprinted as pp. 607-626 of *The Weight of the World*).
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L.** (1992) *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- DDSI** (IST-2000-29202) (2001) *European Dependability Policy Environments. Greece*. Project funded by the European Community under the “Information Society Technology” Programme (1998-2002)
- Deacon, D, et. al.** (1999) *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. London: Arnold
- Eagleton, T.** (1991) *Ideology*. London: Verso
- Eco, U.** (1979) *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- ESYE** (2004) Available at: http://www.statistics.gr/gr_tables/0800_SFA_3_TB_AN_2004_7_Y.htm.
- European Commission** (2004) *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. European Electronic Communications Regulation and Markets 2004*. COM (2004) 759 final. Brussels, 2.12.2004.
- European Commission** (2003a) *Report on the Implementation of the EU Electronic Communications Regulatory Package*. COM (2003) 715 final. Brussels, 19.11.2003
- European Commission** (2003b), *Electronic Communications: the Road to the Knowledge Economy* COM (2003) 65, 11 February 2003

European Commission (2002a) *Flash Eurobarometer 125: Internet and the Public at Large*. Brussels: DG Press & Communication. Available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/flash/fl125_en.pdf. [Accessed on: 01/09/04]

European Commission (2002b) *eEurope Benchmarking Report: eEurope 2002*. Brussels. COM (2002) 62 final Available at: http://europa.eu.int/information_society/europe/2002/news_library/new_documents/benchmarking/benchmarkin_en.pdf [Accessed on: 10/11/04]

European Commission (2002c) *Flash Eurobarometer 112: Internet and the Public at Large*. Brussels: DG Press & Communication. Available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/flash/fl112_en.pdf. [Accessed on: 01/09/04]

Farr, R.M (1982) 'Interviewing: the Social Psychology of the Interview' in F. Fransella (ed.) *Psychology for Occupational Therapists*. London: Macmillan. pp. 151-170

Gaskell, G. (2000) 'Individual and Group Interviewing' in M. Bauer and G. Gaskell (eds.) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: a Practical Handbook for Social Research*. London: Sage. pp. 38-56

Gill, R. (2000) 'Discourse Analysis' in M. Bauer and G. Gaskell (eds.) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: a Practical Handbook for Social Research*. London: Sage

Gill, R. (1996) 'Discourse analysis: practical implementation' in J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.

Greek Ministry of Economy and Finance (2002) *White Paper: Greece in the Information Society, Strategy and Actions*. Available at: ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/greece/docs/wpgreeceinfosoc_mnec_2002_en.pdf. [Accessed on: 02/11/04]

Greek Initiative 'Information Society', Telecoms Infrastructure. Available at <http://en.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/securewebservers.gif>. [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

Greek Initiative 'Information Society', Telecoms Infrastructure. Available at <http://en.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/mobilelines.gif>. [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

Greek Initiative 'Information Society', Telecoms Infrastructure Available at: Available at <http://www.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/tables1.pdf>. [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

Greek Initiative ‘Information Society’, *ICT Use*. Available at <http://www.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/pcper100habitants.gif>. [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

Greek Initiative ‘Information Society’, *ICT Use*. Available at <http://en.infosoc.gr/content/downloads/imginter1.gif>. [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

GRNet (2003) *National Survey on New Technologies and the Information Society*. Athens. Available at: <http://www.ebusinessforum.gr/content/downloads/plh8usmos2003.pdf>. (in Greek) [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

GRNet (2002) *National Survey on New Technologies and the Information Society*. Athens. Available at: <http://www.ebusinessforum.gr/content/downloads/ereuna2002.pdf> (in Greek) [Accessed on: 10/12/04]

GRNet (2001) *Nationwide Survey on the Use of Computers, the Internet and Mobile Telephony in Greece*. Athens. Available at: http://www.ebusinessforum.gr/content/downloads/Paroyasiash_EDET_VPRC_2001.pdf. (in Greek) [Accessed on: 10.12.04]

Kvale, S. (1996) *InterViews: an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage

Lazar, D. (1998) ‘Selected issues in the philosophy of social science’ in C. Seale (ed) *Researching Society and Culture*. London: Sage: 7-22

Mayring, P. (1983) *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*. Weinheim: Beltz

Sapir, E. (1949) *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Saussure, F. (1974) *Course in General Linguistics*. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins

Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1967) Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster

APPENDICES

A. Consent Form



Internet and Social Perceptions in Greece: Digital or ‘Cultural’ Divides into Shaping?

The role of regulation in the closing of divides

By agreeing to take part in an interview I demonstrate that I have read the attached document detailing the Internet Regulation and Social Concerns: Regulation to be Regulated by Users? project and that I am happy to put forward my views as invited by the researcher.

I am aware that my interview will be audio-recorded for purposes of accuracy, and will later be transcribed. I also understand that I will have an opportunity to review my transcript and correct any inaccuracies if necessary.

I understand that the information that I make available will be handled confidentially. In addition, I understand that transcripts will only be handled by the researcher, who will abide by high standards of confidentiality.

I understand that the final findings of this research will be reported or published for purely academic reasons.

I agree to participate in this study

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

B. Interview Guides

1. Professor Mr. Vasilios Asimakopoulos, Secretary of the Operational Program ‘Information Society’ - The Greek Ministry of National Economy and Finance

A. The Greek Information Society

- Main conclusions about the way the Greek Information Society is positioned within the European Information Society; particular emphasis on Internet indicators;
- Persistent weaknesses and areas for further development, according to numbers and official data;
- Factors affecting the course of the Greek Information Society and Internet usage in Greece in particular;
- The role of culture respectively;
- Main areas of interest and concerns on the Internet; Are citizens taken into account (officially, unofficially, at all?);

B. Greek civil society and the Internet

- How the Greek civil society perceives the Internet, the main social concerns regarding the Internet, as expressed in the feedback that the Operational Program ‘Information Society’ receives, and the main forces at work regarding those concerns/perceptions (cultural, technological, societal, economic, political, etc);
- Time evolution of how Greek citizens ‘feel about the Internet’;
- Whether and the extent to which governmental policies, initiatives and regulation respond to this ‘feel on the Internet’;
- The role of civil society in the designation of regulation and policy on the Internet in particular.

C. Telecoms and Internet policy and regulation in Greece

- Greek Internet policy and law in action; current governmental initiatives and future plans implemented by the Operational Program ‘Information Society’;
- Areas that are still – legally and institutionally - uncovered by policy and regulation (such as Freedom of Expression and Information era);

- The character of ICT and Internet policy and regulation and the extent to which citizens and the associations of ICT users are taken into account and through which mechanisms (e.g. public consultation or complaint mechanisms); comparison to the past; emphasis on the initiatives and policies implemented by the Operational Program ‘Information Society’ (the main forces driving those initiatives and policies);
- Regulatory and policy process, problems and internal obstacles in comparison with the EU reality (possible divergence, delays, correspondence and reaction of the Greek society of Internet users); the possible role of historical legacies, structural and bureaucratic limitations and cultural particularities;

2. Mr. Costas Balictsis, Director of Telecommunications at the Hellenic Republic National Telecommunications and Post Commission (EETT) – The Greek NRA

A. The Greek Information Society

- Main conclusion about the way in which the Greek Information Society is positioned within the European Information Society; particular emphasis on Internet indicators;
- Persistent weaknesses and areas for further development, according to existing research and available data;
- Factors affecting the course of the Greek Information Society and Internet usage in Greece in particular;
- The role of culture;
- Main areas of interest and concerns on the Internet; Are citizens taken into account (officially, unofficially, at all?);

B. Greek civil society and the Internet

- How the Greek civil society responds to the Internet, and which are the main forces of influence at work (cultural, technological, societal, economic, political, etc);
- Time evolution of how Greek citizens ‘feel on the Internet’;
- Whether and the extent to which regulation responds to this ‘feel on the Internet’;

- Role of civil society in the designation of regulation and policy on the Internet in particular.

C. Telecoms and Internet policy and regulation in Greece

- The overall regulatory provisions on telecoms and the Internet, focusing more on issues of privacy, universal service, control, freedom of expression and security;
- The main areas that the Greek Internet legislation covers;
- Areas that are still – legally and institutionally - uncovered by legislation (such as Freedom of Expression and Information era); problems and delays at the forefront;
- Rationale of the regulatory process and the role of public consultations; Market-driven or socially concerned regulation? Mapping out the process of ICT regulation and identifying the main forces at work;
- Role of public consultations and their possible contribution to overcoming those problems;

D. Comparison with the EU

- Evolution of Greek regulation on telecoms and the Internet in comparison to other EU countries;
- Evaluation of the transposition and implementation of the EU telecoms law; identification of forces (social, cultural, political, structural, economic, etc) that might hinder the whole process;
- To what extent can we talk about Greek distinctiveness and in what terms?

3. Ms Sophia Parissi, Officer of the Federation of Hellenic Information Technology & Communications Enterprises (SEPE) and Product Manager of the Hellenic Telecommunications & Telematics Applications Company (FORTHnet).

A. The Greek Information Society

- Main conclusion about the way the Greek Information Society is positioned within the European Information Society; particular emphasis on Internet indicators;

- Persistent weaknesses and areas for further development, according to existing research and available data;
- Factors affecting the course of the Greek Information Society and Internet usage in Greece in particular (technological, economic, structural, cultural, etc);

B. Greek civil society and the Internet

- How the Greek civil society responds to the Internet, and which are the main forces of influence at work (cultural, technological, societal, economic, political, etc);
- Time evolution of how Greek citizens ‘feel on the Internet’;
- Whether and the extent to which regulation responds to this ‘feel on the Internet’;
- Role of the Greek civil society in the designation of regulation and policy on the Internet in particular.

C. Telecoms and Internet policy and regulation in Greece

- The overall policy provisions on telecoms and the Internet, focusing more on issues of privacy, universal service, control, freedom of expression and security;
- The main areas that the Greek Internet regulation covers;
- Areas that are still – legally and institutionally - uncovered by legislation (such as Freedom of Expression and Information era); problems and delays at the forefront;
- Rationale of the regulatory process and the role of public consultations; Market-driven or socially concerned regulation? Mapping out the process of ICT regulation and identifying the main forces at work;
- Role of public consultations and their possible contribution to overcoming those problems;
- What is the particular role of SEPE in those public consultations?;

D. Technology & Communications Enterprises and the Internet in Greece

- The position of Greek online enterprises internationally and factors affecting it accordingly (political, economic, technological, cultural, etc);

- How Internet enterprises in Greece perceive the current policy and regulation on the Internet;
- Is there any possible contradiction between enterprises' and users' interests on the Internet and how does policy in Europe and Greece respond to?;
- How are enterprises going to protect the users' interests on the Internet?;
- Strategies of developing cooperation with citizens and Internet users – feedback from users;
- Self-regulation and new challenges for online enterprises: how are the Greek online companies going to correspond to those challenges? Relevant initiatives and their scope so far;
- Is self-regulation the solution to the risks that Internet users face online and a sufficient alternative to the existing public policy and regulation?;

4. Mr. Nikos Frydas, President of SAFELINE (the Hellenic Hotline)

A. The Greek Information Society

- Main conclusion about the way the Greek Information Society is positioned within the European Information Society; particular emphasis on Internet indicators;
- Persistent weaknesses and areas for further development, according to existing research and available data;
- Factors affecting the course of the Greek Information Society and Internet usage in Greece in particular;

B. Greek civil society and the Internet (security issues regarding harmful and unwanted content on the Internet)

- How the Greek civil society responds to the Internet security risks in terms of unwanted and harmful content, and which are the main forces at work affecting (cultural, technological, societal, economic, political, etc);
- Time evolution of how Greek citizens 'feel about the Internet' in terms of security;
- Whether and the extent to which regulation responds to this 'feel about the Internet';
- The role of the Greek civil society in the designation of regulation and policy on the Internet content in particular;

C. Greek Internet users and regulation/policy on the Internet

- The overall policy provisions on the protection of users from unwanted and harmful online content; efficiency/sufficiency and areas still unregulated;
- How users perceive and evaluate the current Greek Internet policy and regulation on online content and the way in which the latter responds to the raised social concerns;
- What factors affect these perceptions and evaluations (level of awareness and culture as crucial parameters into play);
- Possible areas for further legal provision and suggested measures to be taken – in terms of security and control over the online content;

D. SAFELINE, Users and the Internet in Greece

- How the Greek Hotline coordinates with the European Association of Hotlines Network;
- How Greek citizens respond to the Greek Hotline;
- Evaluation about whether the Greek Internet users are informed enough about the Hotlines Network and the policy and regulation initiatives on citizens' protection from illegal and harmful content on the Internet in general;
- Main social concerns about online content and the way it is regulated according to the recorded cases;
- Insufficiencies and possible gaps in the Greek law – areas of particular interest;

C. Interview Transcript

Interview with the Secretary of the Operational Program ‘Information Society’,
Professor Vassileios Asimakopoulos

- How would you evaluate the present phase of the Information Society in Greece?

V.A: The Information Society in Greece is implemented under the umbrella of the Operational Program ‘Information Society’ which is funded by the 3rd EC Structural Funds and includes a range of horizontal actions involving almost all the Greek Ministries, whilst the Secretary of the program is the supervisory and leading body. The program aims at the introduction of the Greek economy, enterprises, education, and society to the Information Society.

- What are the priorities and goals of the Operational Program ‘Information Society’?

V.A: The program is based on the fundamental EU strategies on the Info-society, such as e-Europe 2005 and now the i2010, entailing that the program is entirely compatible with the priorities of the European Union. Of course, there is some differentiation for national purposes, but the whole program is structured around the EU Directives and policies on the Information Society.

- How would you evaluate the efficiency of the program and the way it has affected the course of the Information Society in Greece?

V.A: So far there has been a tremendous difficulty in the implementation of the program because of its horizontal character. The fact that many bodies and authorities are involved in the implementation of the program at many different levels, creating a horizontal structure of implementation, as well as the lack of previous experience, contribute to the persistent difficulty in the harmonious cooperation of various authorities involved and the drawing of a common policy line on the Information Society.

However, these problems have recently been confronted satisfactorily, as the political authorities have started to realize the importance of the Information Society for the development of the country. The new government has established a Coordination Committee on the Internet with the potential of influencing the official governmental authorities of the country.

- Do you think that these difficulties are also related to the character and culture of public administration in Greece?

V.A: Yes, of course, because the public authorities in Greece are not used to cooperation and the implementation of policies concerning more than one policy body. Besides, the time-consuming bureaucratic processes in our country and the lack of modernization of the public administration in general are significant barriers to the timely and efficient implementation of the program on the Information Society.

- However, you mentioned that something has changed since last year and the elections of 2004

V.A: Yes there is some activity. More specifically, the rates of implementation of the program last year in comparison to the previous three years have tripled. Namely, the work carried out over the last eight months of 2004, since the time that the government changed, equals the work carried out over the years 2001-2004. Of course this is not enough. We have to be even more efficient. This year we have to double our efforts because the program is structured in a way that allows the results to be increasingly escalated.

- What is the role that the Greek society plays in the way in which the Information Society evolves?

V.A: Yes...the difficulties, beyond the horizontal character of the program and the lack of modernization of the Greek public administration, are also related to the fact that we talk about technology in a society that is marked by techno-phobia. In other words, if the same program was about roads and not technology, then we could say that it would be easier because it would be more comprehensible to people.

Thus, the horizontal character of the program plus the tradition of techno-phobia are the factors creating the main difficulties in the implementation of the program.

- Can you tell me in more detail how this phobia about technology has affected the program itself?

V.A: It has influenced the program in terms of occurred delays, as even staff members of public authorities in charge, such as Ministries, who should implement the sub-programs in a more dynamic way, do not put as much effort as they should do, possibly because they do not understand the benefits of technology or because they are afraid of it.

- Therefore, it has to do with culture...

V.A: (interrupts) Yes.

- ...of the authorities...

V.A: (interrupts) Yes.

- ...which, however, does not express the culture of the Greek society itself?

V.A: This culture is reflected on the Greek society, although the latter gradually changes. We see that it changes and we think that our work contributes to that. At the level of citizens, we believe that if the Greek citizens are told about the Information Society in simple words, without technocratic terms and in a language that fits their standards, and become the recipients of work in this direction, then, I think, we can move closer to the ordinary people.

- How do you work in this direction?

V.A: There is already a dramatic change in the way that citizens perceive the Information Society and, towards this goal, we make really important efforts through simplifying terminology and avoiding jargon. Practically speaking, we design all our future activities in accordance with existing social concerns and needs. Namely, we do not give our approval to any new proposal for action, unless this proposal benefits citizens in an essential way.

- How would you evaluate the diffusion of the Information Society in the Greek society, and in accordance with the goals of the program 'Information Society'?

V.A: It is very low, it is very much low (emphasis)! I would say that it is disappointingly low. In our last survey in March 2004, which measured the impact of the Information Society on citizens and the way they understand the concept itself, the findings showed that nobody understood what the Information Society means. When we interviewed some focus groups, again nobody knew what it means both as a notion and as part of their lives.

- What does this mean for the policies and regulations on the Information Society in Greece?

V.A: We attempt to change the whole concept of the Information Society and the strategies followed on it. This, however, cannot happen through advertising or any such kind of launch. Instead, we decided to act more drastically and practically in order to move closer to the citizen through making decisions and designing policies that would have a practical impact on the everyday life of the citizen.

- Can you mention some of those policies?

V.A: For instance, very recently we designed an invitation for a sub-program concerning the geographic areas outside the urban regions and corresponding to the needs and particularities that the citizens in different localities present. You see, the importance of regional policies was another parameter that had been neglected in the past. Although this subprogram will be implemented throughout Greece, it will take different directions in different regions. More specifically, what we did was to offer a whole range of services and give the option to the local authorities to pick up the services that correspond to the needs and preferences of the particular region. A follow-up action program will be afterwards designed according to the services and preferences that different geographic regions will have indicated. In this way, we achieved both the regional dimension of our policies and the satisfaction of different local societies with different needs, abandoning the past enforcement strategy of uniform policies and maintaining, at the same time, the fundamental central designation and control of these policies. Until very recently, what happened was the uniform enforcement of all policies and programs to all regions throughout Greece, without negotiating in advance the decided measures with local authorities and action bodies.

- Is this, in your opinion, the main flaw of previous policies on the Information Society?

V.A: The main mistake was that the local particularities were not taken into account. What we now attempt is to take them into consideration, as we intend our decisions and policies to be even more comprehensible at the level of everyday life and understandable by citizens not only in terms of language but also in terms of action.

- Have you, therefore, identified a lack of social considerations in the designation of policy and regulation on the Information Society?

V.A: There was such a lack...but this is something that does not change within a single day, but....

- Would you say that this is a kind of Greek particularity?

V.A: No, no. It is a broader problem. Simply speaking, to a different degree in Greece. I would say that all Mediterranean countries, Spain not so much though, face the same problem. It is not only a Greek phenomenon.

- Which are the forces affecting and contributing in the policy-making process?

V.A: In all our actions, and before we publish final proposals, we conduct some public consultations. Therefore, all the involved authorities and interested bodies participate in the process. However, we go even further, as we ask from all interested parties to participate in the designation of our policies and before the public consultations take place. This makes the whole process more participatory. Furthermore, an ex post evaluation takes place once every year allowing us to alter and improve past policies and actions.

- It sounds like you evaluate the current policies on the Information Society in Greece in a rather positive way...

V.A: I could not say that yet. The citizens are those who will judge the work on the Information Society. We try to change many things, but unfortunately huge delays took place in the past. Indicatively, in 2004, in the middle of the program, the implementation rate was just 11% of the total budget, namely the proportion between the duration of the program and implementation level was extremely low. This means that we are not satisfied at all with the impact of the program so far. And we cannot say that we will change the overall picture of the program in just one year.

- Tackling you last point about the low impact of your policies on the citizens' everyday life, what do you think is the role that the Greek civil society plays in this respect?

V.A: Very good question but there are many different arguments in this direction. There are those who say that the Greek civil society is a traditional society and those who say that Greeks enjoy the sunny weather, questioning the potential of Greek people for using the Internet and broadband Internet, in particular, and in contrast to other European countries, such as Sweden. The answer is that Greece does not differ in anything from other countries. For instance, in Spain there is sunny weather and sea as well, in Italy there are also traditional families, while Portugal also has very nice coffees. All these countries have made progress on broadband Internet though. We believe that if the appropriate conditions - not only economic but also regulatory and in the area of new ideas and proposals coming to the fore - take place in our country as well, there is no reason why Greek citizens would not want to use services, such as those provided by e-government.

- In other words, you maintain that the authorities in charge have to come closer...

V.A: (interrupts) Exactly....

- **...to the citizens and offer them a range of useful ICT services...**

V.A: (interrupts) Exactly, that is right....

...under the appropriate conditions?

V.A: Exactly, that is right, otherwise we will get in a vicious circle saying that since there is nothing at this moment, the citizen should not bother, while the state can say, in turn, that since the society is traditional, it is pointless working on it. However, we believe that we can break this vicious circle and make the first step in the right direction.

- **However, the surveys conducted so far show that most of the Greek citizens do not use the Internet because they are not interested in it and they feel that it is not part of their life....**

V.A: (interrupts) This is very basic...

- **... not so much because of the cost...**

V.A: (interrupts) Broadband is very expensive...

...what if we talk about a dial-up Internet connection?

V.A: There is a very sensitive balance between pursued cost and pursued value. When the pursued value is bigger than the cost, everyone will proceed to the purchase of any product. At this point, we have two major problems regarding the Internet in Greece: the first is the very low pursued value of the Internet and the reason lying behind this is that possibly the offered online services are not such that would make citizens decide to obtain an Internet connection; the second problem is the high cost, as in order for many Internet services to be available a broadband connection is needed, while the cost of such a connection is 55 EUROS per month for every average Greek family, an amount that is very high, particularly in comparison with other European countries.

- **Is, therefore, the high cost the main factor affecting negatively broadband Internet use in Greece?**

V.A: It is the cost, as well as the irrational way in which broadband Internet has developed in Greece, as, until last year, there was no political and institutional legal frame in favour of market competition. Thus, with the lack of competition, the smooth operation of the market was undermined and the very high cost of broadband services persisted. If the market works properly, a goal that we currently

work on, the cost will get gradually lower and converge with the EU average, increasing, therefore, the very low penetration.

- Apart from the cost, have you identified other parameters affecting people negatively when going online, such as issues of privacy security, control, etc?

V.A: This would be a very interesting observation, but we have another technological example undermining this picture: mobile telephony which, although it engenders a number of security and privacy risks, is broadly diffused throughout the Greek society.

- Do you not think, however, that telephony is a different case because people are familiar with the use of this medium since the age of landline telephony?

V.A: That is right, but I think that mobile telephony gradually entered people's life introducing step by step the multiple potentials of the medium. I believe that the same will happen with broadband Internet. Namely, at this stage we perceive broadband just as fast Internet and only as such, while broadband, if it enters the Greek society in the right content and cost terms, the Greek citizens will be able to afford it, being provided with telephony, video on demand, fast Internet and a range of other services, integrating, thus, many services provided by different means and networks. Broadband is something more than just Internet; it is new services.

- In the Greek case, however, all the Flash EUROBAROMETER surveys have shown an extremely low level of awareness about the Internet in Greece and in comparison with the EU-15 even with the EU-25

V.A: We are the worst! The Internet and broadband Internet in particular were not treated as a tool for development by the responsible Greek authorities. The authorities of the country realized the importance of the Internet just in 2002, when the whole world had changed because of the Internet. We first need to have results and then to design some awareness campaigns.

- In this respect, does Greece attempt to adopt and incorporate the dominant European model or to develop its own policies, regulations and initiatives on the Internet?

V.A: It is a mixture, it is a mixture...

- How would you evaluate the new policies and regulatory framework on the Information Society decided by the EC?

V.A: Very good. For us it is a vision. We are happy that Europe understands new technologies in such a way. In particular with the new plan of the Commission, the

i2010, which replaces the e-Europe program, the directions of the European policy are, in our opinion, absolutely compatible with our perception of the Operational Program 'Information Society'. For us the Information Society is not just technologies, as technologies are the means. For us the Information Society is a society that works more pleasantly, faster and more efficiently. We do not want ready solutions enforced equally everywhere. We want a more human-centered policy on the Information Society that will identify the different needs and demands of different groups within society.

- In this sense, do you not think that the EU should treat its Members differently and that a uniform EU strategy on the Information Society might not benefit all Member States equally?

V.A: Not exactly. What we say is that every Member State can pick up some policy priorities that correspond to its particularities and needs. The European Commission is absolutely agreed on that, giving, thus, options to its Members.

- In one of your presentations in the European Commission, you talked about the necessity for more extroversion in the way that Greece works on the Information Society. Is there introversion in our country?

V.A: Yes, there is introversion in relation to new technologies and, therefore, we try to follow the example of other EU Members running and looking at the interior situations in our country. We believe that there is space for far more extroversion.

- However, Greece still presents weakness in the transposition and implementation of the EU policies and regulations on the Information Society...

V.A: That is right, but the Ministry of Transportations and Communications has proceeded to the formulation of a telecommunications regulation that transposes the new EU framework. Essentially, within 8 months the new government corrected omissions of the previous government.

- Are you, then, optimistic about the way that Greece will correspond to the requirement for full and efficient implementation of the EU law on telecommunications?

V.A: Yes, I am.

- Thank you very much

V.A: Thank you.

