

FUTURETEXT

Technology predictions/trends 2012



I am an outsider to the Telecoms industry. Even today, the ethos of 'OpenGardens' and its implications are alien to many in the industry. However, the transformation of whole industries – and indeed whole economies – continues rapidly as the Web and the Mobile ecosystems converge. And this is the domain I have monitored over the last decade ...

So, where will the combined ecosystem evolve in 2012?

Having worked with governments, global companies and start-ups to understand the changing value proposition over the years, here are some of my thoughts. I hope you find them useful for your work

Before that, some **background to my analysis**:

- I do not conduct a 'survey/collated results' because I believe that the industry is aligned to the status quo. To see truly disruptive changes, you have to look at uncomfortable questions from an NPOV (neutral point of view) perspective which the industry often ignores
- I do not worry about specific company fortunes. At the end of 2011, it's fairly easy to predict that 2012 will be a difficult year for RIM/Blackberry.
- With the rise of the iPhone, prediction for a given year has become easier. The iPhone has simply taken existing technologies and integrated them very well at a device level to provide the customer with a great user experience. For example, consider [Siri](#). Siri is powered by [Nuance](#) technology which has been around for a while but was not integrated well by any of the handset vendors (prior to Siri). So, by that logic, what will the latest version of the iPhone bring later in 2012? Cnet has a [good set of features and probabilities of deployment](#). By this token, the winners are Biometrics, NFC and LTE and I broadly agree with this. This means, when Apple will deploy these features, the rest of the industry will take notice and deploy the same technology it as is happening [with Siri- like features on Android](#)

- Hence, the real question is: Who else could orchestrate the ecosystem effectively like the iPhone managed to do by involving both developers and consumers? The two candidates I can think of are: Microsoft who has been [getting some great reviews for their windows phones](#) and Amazon with strategies like [Kindle fire](#) and of course Google with Android.
- My analysis is not purely 'mobile' related. It covers related areas ex tech policy
- Finally, any prediction has to be considered within the focus (and limitations!) of the author. So, I am emphasising areas like Open systems, Mobile, Smart cities, tech policy and others which I am familiar with.

2011 trends which will play out in greater detail

Some trends which we saw in 2011 will continue to play out in 2012

- **The patent wars worsen**
- **Hybrid apps with HTML5 will be the norm**
- We will see the **rebirth of the music business** with the [spotify model](#)
- **More 'springs'** motivated by the Arab spring – all driven by social media
- Privacy
- Operator consolidation
- **NFC – more for interactions than for transactions** because the secure element discussion is yet to be resolved at a mass market level. Transactions need credentials to be stored on the device in a 'secure element' which can be accessed by third parties. There are three ways to do this – the SIM card, secure memory or embedded within the chipset. These three techniques do not have a common API for third party developers albeit some efforts are under way in that direction through [the Sim alliance open API](#). Hence, NFC will be first used for interactions (tap on a product to get extra information etc – and over time, some of those interactions will be transactions)
- **Augmented reality** is making some great strides as [Hilel's blog shows](#)
- Back in Oct 2010, [I said that tablets have been around before the iPad, but the iPad combined content with the tablet devices](#). Other **tablets** were devices only – i.e. not tied to content – with the exception of Amazon's device strategy (since the kindle combines devices with books). But now we are seeing new devices like the [Samsung galaxy note](#) which are being used as mobile devices purely for the form factor. Even more interestingly, a device like the Akash tablet coming from

India also gives credence to this idea i.e. [that people are now using tablets for the form factor alone](#) (and not for the integration with specific content types)

So, here are my top predictions/trends for 2012

- 1) **[What if you called a bandwidth crunch and no one came? AKA have you ever seen a bandwidth crunch in Boise Idaho?](#)**
- 2) **[The decline, fall and potential rebirth of SMS in a world dominated by Smart phones](#)**
- 3) **[Will we see a compromise on SOPA?](#)**
- 4) **[Why Facebook will make an impact beyond advertising in 2012](#)**
- 5) **Free.fr and the business model of unbundling the set top box:** I have been tracking the rise of [free.fr](#) for some time .. and it could be truly disruptive. Gigaom explains the context and says that the set-top box could be a stealth weapon. [Unbundling – decoupling the set-top box](#) could be a powerful concept. It is also relatively easy for other providers/countries to also do the same i.e. decouple the set top box from the network and provide connectivity services by including Nano cells/femtocells etc
- 6) **The perfect storm driving the uptake of Smart cities :** Relating to my work on the advisory board of the [Word Smart Capital Initiative](#) - Amsterdam, in the recession, many local governments all over the world will adopt the idea of smart cities. Smart cities reflect ‘Internet of things’ in action. There are three drivers to Smart cities: the Smart home, the smart building and mobile devices. However, the biggest driver for Smart cities could well be Smart data and the enabling of people to ‘add intelligence’ to locations and objects –ex the [tweeting cat door](#) , [the live blogging cat](#) , [Aduiono](#) etc. This is a perfect storm of many elements: Cheap sensors , open source hardware and software, Sensors in mobile devices, networked homes and most importantly, Open data. For instance, the [European Commission has launched an open data strategy](#) and here in the UK, [professor Nigel Shadbolt will lead an “Open Data Institute” with Tim Berners-Lee](#). This is the perfect storm driving Smart cities. See my presentation at the Oxford University on [Apps for Smart cities](#)
- 7) **Tech policy issues impact mainstream computing because they effect both cloud computing and the Internet:** Cloud computing is everywhere – but the technology is not the only issue now for CIOS. SOPA, the Patriot act and other regulations are now taking center stage. Privacy, identity and cybersecurity dominated tech policy headlines coming. The U.S. government’s [National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace](#) addressed key issues around creating an “identity ecosystem online.”, the [eG8 showed that online innovation and freedom of expression still need strong defenders](#). We covered this in the policy bloggers network – [Fostering trust in the Cloud in the face of law enforcement access to data and IGF – Nairobi : voices from the blogosphere and beyond](#)

- 8) **Social media ‘inside’ like ‘Intel inside’ – TV finally becomes a ‘social’ platform:** Social media is fast becoming ‘embedded’ i.e. ‘Social media inside’ (just like [Intel inside](#)). The value of Social media is not in itself but rather as a component of other services. This will have the greatest impact on TV this year. Already, we can login via facebook or twitter, we can logon using spotify on virgin (i.e. listen to spotify on virgin media) etc. Social media recommendations via TV, co-viewing apps (tablet apps used to watch with TV) etc all are becoming mainstream. A year ago. Western Europe suffered its first [Q1 drop in TV sales ever](#) and now [Smartphones, tablets are edging out television sets on buyers list-Accenture](#). So, this year, TV will finally become a social platform – despite some resistance from the traditional TV purists.
- 9) **Transhumanism:** I have been interested in transhumanism like many in the technology industry specifically my latest book - [Meditation in the age of facebook and twitter](#) – this trend of ‘augmenting human capability through technology’ is being picked up by more mainstream companies – [IBM says mind reading is no longer a science](#)

As usual, comments and feedback welcome

Events:

Here are some of the events I am speaking at in Jan and the near future: If you are there, happy to meet up

- [The Digital media forum Dubai](#) – the first event of its kind in the middle east bringing together media, mobility and technology – Jan 25, 26
- “Exclusive Mobile VIP-Night” – Central Munich. An invite only event of leading innovators in the Munich area where I discuss some of the predictions for 2012. If you are interested in getting an invite, please email Frank Stepan at fstepan@sandsmedia.com
- [Consciousness, media and technology conference](#) in London co-organised by my good friend [Dr Ornella Corazza](#)
- The [transatlantic policy network](#) event in Washington
- Finally, as of this week, I have been invited to be on the Scientific Advisory Board member for the [BIT Annual world conference](#) at [Dalian – China](#) (known for its technology and IT industry research

Image source: [wikipedia](#). [The Old Farmer’s Almanac](#) is the North America’s oldest publication – famous in the US for its (not necessarily accurate) long-range weather predictions.

Kind rgds

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