Project Visions and Visioning

This article is developed within the scope of the **Project Visions and Visioning**, an effort to enhance Foresight learning through collaborative work.

In the first part of his article ?The Future of Communication: an Essay for the Year 2001? A. Michael Noll draws attention to the fact that the world of communication is divided into four segments: sound and audio, sight and video, speech and spoken language and writing and written text. But even back then, when the article was written in 1999, the author sensed that ?the boundaries between these segments often blur? (Noll, 166). Along with the astonishing evolution of technology, these boundaries have been more and more blurred up to the point where you can barely distinguish those four segments anymore.

As developers say, the future is permanent beta, so we will never know what exactly will happen in the future, but just like Noll, we can observe what?s happening right now and try to see where we are headed.

First of all, the physical and digital worlds will be more highly connected than ever before. What does that mean? Soon enough we will be able to crosslink our Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and Foursquare accounts together with our smartphone, having real time recording of all our shopping, eating preferences, so that next time we are exposed to social ads, we will be correctly targeted. We might even track our progress in the gym and correlate it with a diet to see how close we are to reaching our goal, while your friends might cheer for you on your Facebook profile! Or you might even get a thumbs up from your favorite sportswear provider.

Technology is so advanced nowadays, that you can now connect your phone to your car, receive all your alerts while driving, even based on your location. The concept cars that companies have presented recently show how cars can become a real office for you, helping you to resolve tasks as you are on the go.

In 1999 Noll was already worried about the invasion of private data: ?The expansion of the Internet and electronic commerce is creating the potential for horrendous invasions of personal privacy as vast amounts of personal information is gathered. The future of electronic commerce and email will be shaped by these kinds of consumer concerns.? (Noll, 170). As it turns out, he was right to be worried. If up until now specialists were only talking about Web 2.0, soon we will be dealing with Semantic Web, or Web 3.0. But what does that mean? It means that we will no longer need to search for information on the Web, as the information will find us based on all the data that companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon are collecting. The right information will be served to the right people at the right time, saving users a lot of time, effort and energy. These platforms will serve us smarter search results with more intuitive navigation options.

Tools and platforms will and do change in the effort of making real connections with people that want what we have to offer and then allow us to build better relationships. If until now most things were dependent on proximity, they now focus on relevance. Companies? job is not to provide users with data or just keep them updated, it is to serve their needs. People have a need to not only receive a constant flow of information, but also to get quality information in ways that add benefit to their lives.

In the past years, mobile technology has become more and more accessible to everyone, which only means that in the near future it will become more dominant and NFC (Near Field Communication) technology will be developed so that it will enable companies to offer special promotions, coupons and tips based on geographical location and their interests. Location Based Services are already winning the race of offering coupons and attracting customers into a certain venue. The more people will be buying smartphones, the more people will be reached through this new technology.

Speaking of how brands will be addressing their target audiences in the future, specialists say that the future belongs to Interactive Media. This means that media will interact with us in dynamic ways on all platforms. We will no longer be passive media consumers. The new eye-tracking technology included for mobile devices and tablets allows users to control the content only through their eyes (http://www.eyetracking.com/) How does this technology work? We calibrate the soft with a straight view and then through eye movements we can deliver information on where our users look (http://www.eyetracking.com/Services/Marketing-Research).

You know that moment when you leave home and you check to see if you have your phone, your keys and your wallet? Well, soon enough, all you will need is your smartphone: Cashless pay. By using this system users could make different pays only by swiping their smartphones. In Bucharest, this system has already been implemented in subway stations ? you just have to swipe your smartphone, that has been previously connected to your bank account, and you can go in and the fee for the admission will be withdrawn from your bank account.

What about the keys? With the new smart cars, you can start the engine while you?re still in your home, the doors unlock as you get near it etc. You can connect your phone to your car so that it reads your emails, gives your reminders and so on. It will not be long until you will be able to start your car and drive using only your phone!

Where does all this leave human relationships? Well first of all, they will no longer be physically dependent ? we will befriend and hang out with people from all over the world, creating a worldwide melting pot. In his article, Noll was predicting that ?Today?s 10 cents a minute will be 1 cent a minute by the year 2050? (Noll, 169) and he wasn?t far from the truth. He goes on saying ?Midway into the twenty-first century, telephone calls around the world will be a penny a minute. This means truly a world made smaller through telecommunication? (Noll, 169). Nowadays, you can have hours of Internet video calls almost for free ? you only have to pay an average price for your Internet connection. This was of huge help in the globalization process, helping people from around the world get together, the migration process has become a lot easier ? one can have online interviews for jobs before moving to a new country, more and more people meet their spouses online and so on.

Towards the end of his article, Noll asks the question ?Can there be too much communication?? and if that question made sense 13 years ago, it certainly makes sense today, when every person is assaulted with messages for most of the time when he is up and running, messages and images that may or may not have a lasting effect on our minds. He goes on saying ?Communication is indeed making the world smaller, but also overcrowded in a communication sense? (Noll, 171). The overload of communication has led to lower attention span ? for example, people can?t watch online videos that are longer than two minutes because they get bored; we are so used to multitask that we do not pay attention to details anymore ? more quantity, less quality and we spend less and less time in real life with our friends and family.

References

Noll, A. Michael, The Future of Communication: an essay for the year 200, Foresight, vol.01, no. 02, 1999;

Online source: http://www.eyetracking.com/