

THE ALL-SEEING FUTURE

PETER COCHRANE IS THE CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST AT CONCEPTLABS. THIS IS AN EDITED VERSION OF HIS WORLD TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT PRESENTATION ON COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.



My oldest two daughters remember black and white TV but not VHS. My son can remember only colour TV, VHS and not computers. And my 16-year old asks me fundamental questions like ‘did you play this game when you were my age [talking about Doom]?’ The answer is ‘we didn’t have computers’ to which his reaction is ‘what did you do?’

I look on everything in our business as exponential. We’ve moved from voice to data; fixed to mobile; copper to wireless and glass; circuit to packet and IP; network smart to network dumb; high cost to who cares?; bandwidth limited to bandwidth unlimited; control and constraint to freedom and anarchy; company control to customer control.

What is the big deal for society? I thought I would pick a few key areas just to highlight the changes that are upon us.

What is technology? If 25 years ago I’d said to you ‘can I borrow your car?’, most likely you’d have said no because you’d have had to pull the choke out. Now, because the car starts every time, it is no longer ‘technology’. If, today, I said ‘can I borrow your laptop?’ you’d likely say no because it’s flaky. But when it becomes reliable and no longer ‘technology’ then we won’t care.

Mobile phones are now becoming cameras. The paradigm is that there is suddenly a new business. There is a car crash and I have something to sell; I can see Concorde flaming into a field and suddenly I have something to sell. The mobile phone suddenly becomes a new kind of business opportunity.

Cameras everywhere represent a little bit of a threat to society. We have more surveillance cameras per capita in the UK than in any other nation. You are always on camera in the street or in a store, and on the road. You have speed cameras and there is even a new sport on the UK: you get a tire you hang it around the camera, you get some petrol and you set fire to it. You cook yourself a speed camera. There is now a cycle of rebellion against some of these

<p>Peter Cochrane Bio Bio</p>	<p>WTN MEMBER BIOGRAPHY</p> 
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cameras. Still, people like the cameras in the street because it means your wife and kids can go out, they even like cameras in the car park and the store.

But cameras are so small that you don't know they are there. Have a look in the elevators and see if you can spot the cameras. Or the next time you are flying see if you can spot the cameras in the aircraft that are watching you.

When I worked for BT we did a lot of work on recognising people using iris scanning. This is a passive technique and is far more accurate than a DNA sample. The error when you looking at someone's iris is about 1 in 10 to the power

tics, and think in terms also of security. I walk into the airport with the people in the first two rows of this audience. We never associate, we've never said we know each other, we get to the aircraft and we are scanned again – including everything we are wearing, have in our possession or have bought. The security system is rolling. Suddenly the security system discovers that we are all carrying mobile phones purchased on the same day from the same store with the same credit card. That is sufficient data to ground the aircraft and say there is an association here that is dangerous.

There were those kinds of associations between the



of 24. The marvel is that with a telescope and good control you can recognise someone's eye from quite a distance; in fact you can recognise someone's eye through the windscreen of a car, when it's raining and the windscreen wipers are going. Of course, they don't know that someone is looking at them with a camera.

My dream is to arrive at the airport and not have them fascinated by my shoes. I don't know what it is about my shoes but the American security guards just love my shoes. I have not been a terrorist in the last 50 flights, I won't be a terrorist in the next 50. If the system had any brains at all it would recognise this and it wouldn't give me such grief.

Gillette is putting RFID (Radio Frequency Identity Tags) tags into the blades of its razors, Nike is putting them into the heels of all its shoes – very shortly everything you can buy will have RFID in it. But why RFID? The companies are into brand protection but I think it goes much, much deeper.

Think in terms of manufacturing, think in terms of logis-

hijackers on 9/11. The data was in the system but it was not being tracked or scanned.

Supposing that everything I buy has got RFID in it. I put a new TV into my home and it is stolen in the night. What the thief doesn't know is that my TV, when I plugged it in, looked around and found my tumble dryer, my microwave, my PC. The thief takes it to his home, plugs it in and the TV knows that is now communicating with the wrong appliances. It emails the police and let them know where it is. All of this is incredibly disruptive.

Finally, I think we're missing a trick. We've made a lot of business to business (B2B), business to consumer (B2C), and consumer to consumer (peer-to-peer). The big one I think people have missed is consumer to business (C2B). There is a huge sea of capability in young people that is not being put into the economy.

Ten years ago we were waiting for the technology, now the technology is waiting for us. ■