

Future Radio Is Not Wireless

...if you pardon the pun!

White paper on
"digital radio" and DAB

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Preface

This paper has been prepared for distribution to the members of Nordini present at the statutory general assembly in Copenhagen on 27th January 2003.

Its style is rather straightforward and unlike that employed in typical technical or scientific papers or the average business plan with their footnotes and references to sources and peers. The purpose of this is to give readers the time to reflect on the actual points made. Obviously, quite a number of references do exist and will be made available to those interested.

The following contemplations of the future, trends and potential impact are therefore deliberately presented without much argumentation – in fact they are postulations based on emerging technological, sociological and economic patterns, as they seem likely to appear. As such, the points made in the paper may well seem to be based on relatively fairly linear extrapolations and therefore be simple to follow. In fact the points comprise a number of factors correlating to non-linear exponential technological growth and a much slower change in social behaviour primarily due to the present economic slowdown (which, thankfully, is not a permanent state).

Predictions of the future are usually based on a generally agreed underlying definition of the topic and the use of meaningful semantics. Basically there are three methods: Firstly the extrapolation of historical figures in a both linear and a non-linear fashion. This will give you fancy graphics and lots of numbers based on just that: linear extrapolated growth. Secondly there is the methodology of scenario building, which implies a number of definitions and prerequisites. The scenarios are descriptions of vividly different, contrasting and relevant future environments. Each scenario describes the key trends and interactions that may characterise the development of a particular future environment. A business model supports and reflects the essence of the scenario. Finally, we have the third issue, of predicting futures and defining what is the real difference between development, innovation, paradigms (and perhaps quantum leaps).

What this paper attempts to do is combine several of the above methodologies and to express these as postulations relevant to “digital radio”. Obviously both terms, “digital” and “radio”, can be considered in isolation, which makes it necessary to investigate the implications of “digital” in terms of generic transformation, i.e. what we actually mean by normal development [of technological product and services], what is innovative technology, and how does paradigm shift apply to in this context? Equally obviously, technology cannot be discussed in isolation – it is the application of technology within society which gives meaning. This means that economics is not a separate issue either.

The above, then, is the pretext for, as well as the context of, this paper. On this basis, the paper will endeavour to define some basic and inevitable impacts and trends in technology, social structure and economics and at the same time combine these and try to formulate the point of departure for possible scenarios.

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