Innovation Journalism
at the In-Betweens

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If I'd asked my customers what they wanted, they'd have said a faster horse.

– Henry Ford (1863–1947, was the American founder of the Ford Motor Company and father of modern assembly lines used in mass production.)

1 Introduction

Erkki Pennanen discusses the misguided practice of "self-journalism" in his column in Helsingin Sanomat. Journalists used to write primarily anonymously, but today "subjective experiences and the presentation of one's own opinions are considered valuable". Author's name is attached to each and every article. Many journalists who are active bloggers have become brands in their own name. Journalism is evolving to something new.

People generally think that branding is primarily connected to marketing. Branding is also considered to be commercial by nature. However, brand building has turned into a widespread societal and cultural phenomenon that affects everybody, including journalists.

What does a brand mean? The whole concept seems to have remained somewhat unclear to many professionals. Definition the term should take the related cultural evolution into consideration. Furthermore, defining the term has to be task that is tied to the present day and to be viewed as a part of developing knowledge and know-how of the field. I have discussed this issue for years, especially with Timo Kivi-Koskinen, an expert on immaterial rights and intellectual capital. Today, it is justifiable to say that a *brand is a marked name*, which is familiar to a certain market segment and which distinguishes it from other marked names. A brand can be the marked name of any organisation, business, product, product group, service, project, production, or person.

Also non-commercial activities, organisations or individuals can be marked names and brands. The main goal of non-commercial brands' communication is *influence* or *effectiveness*

It is often said that whereas Coca-cola is obviously a brand, the hot dog stand up the street is not. However, if the hot dog stand is a marked name known by hundreds of people, it is clearly a brand, too.

Many consumers, researchers and artists – especially those working in and around sub- and counter-cultural circles – have wondered what if someone opposes the idea of branding and takes pride into not standing out from the crowd. Harri Uusitorppa writes in Helsingin Sanomat about Timo Kiiskinen, a songwriter of more than 500 recorded songs, who dislikes the idea of being called an artist. Kiiskinen states that "I rather consider myself a craftsman". The blind spot of Finns is our (seeming) modesty and (seeming) originality. In fact, Timo Kiiskinen brands himself as a craftsman and describes his own character – in line with the principles of brand management – by stating that "I am a rather heavy-hearted and melancholic soul" (and the bystanders, the customers nod approvingly as the craftsman presents the "correct opinion").

Even the strongest critics of brand building are most likely to become "victims" of the logic of branding. It seems apparent that the louder the critique towards branding is, the more known and marked the critic's name becomes – and, thus, a brand is born. Making oneself known about any given thing is, in part, brand building.

What line of work is branding in the end? Undoubtedly communication, design, marketing, marketing communication, and sales are at the core of brand development. In addition, brand management requires engineering and business know-how, information and knowledge management, internet and mobile competence as well as jurisprudence, architecture, interior design, sociology, psychology, semiotics, cultural anthropology, etc. The number of competence areas related to brand development keeps on rising. For example, instances working with precision marketing would like to use the latest results of brain research to support their intentions.

2 Service design

Service design is a relatively new competence area. The service design conference organised in Amsterdam in November 2008 brought together some of the most essential actors of the field to discuss the concepts of the field and to present their projects and to create new networks. It seems that many people of the design field are yet to grasp what is actually meant with the term *service design*. One mistaken definition of the term claims that it equals designing service experiences. However, individual experiences cannot be designed – instead, good design can have a positive impact on the service environments and the encounters related to services. Designing service concepts and service processes is, by nature, immaterial and conceptual, and thus service design has been difficult to understand from the viewpoint of traditional industrial design, which aims to create real physical objects.

What is meant with service design? In short it is:

1. Strategy work related to the development of services
2. Concept design
3. Designing service processes
4. Designing service environments

Development of services is closely related to other development challenges of an organisation, such as knowledge development or brand building. After the conference in Amsterdam, I was left wondering if we are building yet another category of expertise which is then promoted as such without understanding the links between service design and all the other development work that is done in organisations. On a strategic level, the service design viewpoint should be a part of the business strategy and the brand strategy (design, architecture, communication, marketing, web communication, sales). In a yet more holistic view, the service design viewpoint is present in all activities and competences of an organisation.

The debate on service design includes key words and phrases like *touchpoints, service paths* and *service moments.* It seems apparent that service design competence is about to become increasingly multidisciplinary, as design teams are participated by psychologists, sociologists and cultural anthropologists.

Furthermore, it seems like service design is about to become a viewpoint also in the development work related to journalism and newspapers. In the end, newspapers are a service that the customer purchases. The texts created through journalistic competence are parts of a conceptualized and branded service package.

3 Tradition Meets Future

In recent years, there have been world-wide discussions in which our time has been accused of suffering from amnesia, if not ahistoricism. Everything is happening now – for the first time, as it were. This is one of the reasons why it should be emphasized that this article is in no way against history as such. On the contrary, people should have a thorough appreciation of the past in order to live fully in the present. Knowledge and an understanding of history is also useful when forecasting the future.

However, when looking at the evolution of expertise, traditions have become

something of a burden in many professional fields. Strong traditions and professional cultures often produce a lack of vision and keep values and attitudes locked in place.

Amidst rapidly changing environments, being stuck in the web of traditions would be fatal for newspapers and media houses. Electronic readers represent one insight into the changes of the future.

Immediately on its release, **Amazon Kindle 2** received loads of interest. The second incarnation of the electronic reader introduces improved features and clear development in its design. The keypad of the thin gadget is quality design, and applicability is seriously enhanced by the possibility of sending and receiving e-mails. Altogether 1500 books fit into the 2GB storage. Currently available for the Kindle are the 240 000 books of Amazon's own catalogue and the possibility to read several newspapers. Amazon's vision is, according to CEO **Jeff Bezos**, to be able to offer each and every book ever printed, and to have each opus no further away than 60 seconds of downloading.

Kindle operates in a competed market (e.g. Sony Reader), and development of the field leads to many potential futures. It is difficult to foresight which kind of a device is going to become the norm or the standard. It is probable that the cultural and technological evolution produces a number of competing solutions   and   devices.

Newspapers are clearly facing a crisis all over the world. Today, breaking news are first delivered online – and it is not only the customers moving towards the free-of-charge news services of the web, advertising money is increasingly directed to the online magazines and newspapers, too.

The death of the printing press has been a hot topic for so long now that such talk has almost lost its meaning and credibility. However, the long-term trend in clear. I anticipate the use of current paper products in newspapers and books to decrease month by month, year by year in the near future.

4 Ubiquitous Society and its Impacts

The true megatrends of the last eight or ten years – ethical and ecological considerations – are visible in the external communication of political parties and business conglomerates alike. The next big megatrend in the *ubiquitous society* is – according to my foresight – the adaptability and adoptability of our

environment and communication, both enabled through technological advancement and development. In the near future, we might be discussing the effect (specific) brands have on the wellbeing of people.

Ubiquitous refers to pervasive, embedded information technology that works imperceptibly. The term *ubiquitous computing* was first defined by Mark Weiser from the Xerox laboratory in the late 1980s. The goal was to achieve technology with such a subtle, easy-to-use presence that it goes unnoticed. Discussions on ubiquitous society involve such concepts as "smart" spaces and materials and mediated built environments. A smart space refers to the interaction between man, computer and the built environment. "Smart" is in quotes, naturally, for we are not dealing with intelligence per se. A "smart" space is not an independent cognitive entity. "The emerging relationship between people and pervasive computation is sometimes idealized as a 'smart space': the seamless integration of people, computation, and physical reality" (Mark 1999).

Mediated spaces involve such objects as walls, tables or, say, sofas turning into media. "Mediated spaces will expand human capability by providing information management within a context associated with that space. The context will be created by recording interaction within the space and by importing information from the outside. Individuals will interact with the space explicitly in order to retrieve and analyze the information it contains, and implicitly by adding to the context through their speech and gesture. Achieving the vision of mediated spaces will require progress in both behind-the-scenes technology (how devices coordinate their activities) and at-the-interface technology (how the space presents itself to people, and how the space deals with multiperson interaction)" (ibid).

What we are dealing with, thus, is human-space interaction, where the built environment opens up to an entirely new horizon for personal adjustment and stylistic choices. Tiny computers pervade our existence: "A ubiquitous society is also called a "computers-everywhere society" and is a society where anyone can use computers anytime, anywhere. Tiny computers would be embedded everywhere in our living space -- not only in home appliances, but also in the walls and electric lights in houses, items in shops such as clothes and pill bottles, and food wrappers' papers -- and these computers would communicate and link with each other in order to realize a more convenient and higher-quality life for us." (www.uidcenter.org/english/ubi_te.html)

I would like to point out here that we are not dealing with some distant future or science fiction. We already have access to a number of applications which

are quickly approaching those of a ubiquitous society; the sources of the present paper include YouTube video clips to illustrate the change at hand. Keywords include ubiquitous (computing), present intelligence, extended reality, wearable computing, smart objects and spaces etc. Applications crop up, from iBar to interactive playgrounds. SmartUs is an interactive playground invented by the Finnish Lappset Group: SmartUs is an internationally recognized playful learning and activity concept for today's children and families. Its research and development involved experts in fitness, education, design and technology.

 (See http://www.lappset.com/global/en/Products/SmartUs.iw3)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bho1-R5heFc

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR2EFH4aJcs

The video clip example of "smart" rubber anticipates the development of selfmending materials. Cars of the future, made of metal that "remembers", have been discussed for quite some time. After a crash, such a car could be restored to its original shape. The other video clip is about eyeglasses made of memory metals. These clips show that such applications already exist.

There are currently many radical developments related to ubiquitous society underway around the world. One of the most impressive is perhaps Songdo City, a large "ubiquitous city" being built in South Korea. "A ubiquitous city is where all major information systems (residential, medical, business, governmental and the like) share data, and computers are built into the houses, streets and office buildings. New Songdo, located on a man-made island of nearly 1,500 acres off the Incheon coast about 40 miles from Seoul, is rising from the ground up as a U-city (...) Although there are other U-city efforts in South Korea, officials see New Songdo as one apart. New Songdo will be the first to fully adapt the U-city concept, not only in Korea but in the world" (Licalzi O'Connel 2005).

The example above shows that the next development in ubiquitous society is the *internet of things*. It is as pivotal a change in society as industrial revolution. *Everything will be linked to everything* may sound like a science fiction illusion, but it is likely to be reality for the most part in twenty years or so.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMXox8IJvmE

This Greefield clip is part of a larger whole (1/8): check out the entire package at YouTube. Anyone with the slightest interest in ubiquitous technology and society should also read *Everyware: The Dawning Age of Ubiquitous Computing (Voices That Matter) (2006)* by Adam Greenfield.

Mika Ilari Koskinen, architect and expert on digital media, says in his recent thesis *Digitaalisesti laajentuva reaalitodellisuus - arkkitehtuurin uusi ulottuvuus* (Digitally augmented reality - a new dimension in architecture) that "It is almost certain that spatial feedback and other mechanisms of the digitally extending reality will change the essence, structure and functionality of our environment.(...) The change in our environment and the related social innovations will inevitably lead to novel ways of understanding space and new context of use of space. Gradually, people will regard the smart functionalities hidden in spaces as a natural part of their environment, learning and even requiring digitalised spatial functionality".

One vision where ubiquitous computing might take us is presented in science fiction films such as *Minority Report* (2002), directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Tom Cruise. Identity is verified by iris scanning. The film includes a scene which has no doubt inspired many ubiquity enthusiasts: Cruise is walking in a mall, identified as another person (he has had his irises replaced), and begins to receive personalised commercials. Far-fetched? No sir: "Imagine having a glass capsule measuring 1.3mm by 1mm, about the size of a large grain of rice injected under your skin (...) The night club offers its VIP clients the opportunity to have a syringe-injected microchip implanted in their upper arms that not only gives them special access to VIP lounges, but also acts as a debit account from which they can pay for drinks" (news.bbc.co.uk). The nightclub in question is VIP Baja Beach Club in Barcelona.

You can imagine how RFID technology or other means of identity verification could be deployed in altering the communicative identity of environments. What if, say, the style, colours, graphics, images, soundscape, lights and scents of a hotel room were customisable according to your personal preferences and sense of style. The transdisciplinary ambience design research and development group, however, thought that everyone's personal well-being is best increased if the choices are made by the individual. This could take place with a mobile phone, for example: selecting between different pre-defined ambience sets. Until now, the publicly presented projects in Finland have been relatively tentative, and regrettably – once again – engineer-driven. Many functionalities related to adjusting and distant controlling are generally available: quite a few Finnish homes have the option of dimming lights or

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turning on the sauna on your way home with your mobile phone.

Adjustability and personalisation are subject to criticism as much as enthusiasm.

Agi, a Finnish publication of the graphic field, asks in the cover of issue 25 (2008):*"First name, Last name – is this what personalisation is all about? It has been discussed in Finland for years. Digitalisation has been praised and hyped. What is the truth?* On the other hand, *Esquire* recently featured an electronic ink cover. The use of moving graphics presents new, interesting opportunities for visualisation and marketing of publications. In the near future, we may well see magazines changing their visuals according to pre-scripted narratives. Also, it is not inconceivable that a magazine would recognise the reader's preferences (with an RFID tag, for instance) and change according to personal choices.

The *dynamic architecture* developed by David Fisher and his team is one of the new topics of discussion. In Fisher's vision, buildings can change shape and adapt to their environments. Fisher and his team have designed a dynamic skyscraper in Dubai and Moscow. Each floor can rotate independently according to the direction and schedule selected by the residents. The buildings are designed to produce green energy for themselves and even provide some for others. According to the Fisher team model, the buildings can also be built quicker than traditional skyscrapers: a single floor is created in six days, while it takes six weeks in a conventional static high-rise block.

5 Transhumanism

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PW8rgKLPHMg

The other day, I stumbled upon a science documentary *Vision of the Future* (Part 2 of 3) on the Finnish television. The documentary by the "science superstar" **Michio Kaku** describes three synergies (three potential outcomes of the revolution that is about take place due to the breakthroughs in quantum mechanics and the developments of computers and biotechnology) of modern science. In the near future, the human race is able to control ageing through the manipulation of our genes. Human 2.0 might be able to live to the age of 150 and possess the average IQ of 150. The documentary also stated that the first human to reach the age of 150 might currently be somewhere between 50 and 70 years of age.

The attached video presents Kaku talking about the dawn of *quantum computers*, which will have superb computing powers in relation to our current computers, and which will be available in 15 or 20 years (amongst others, the CIA has a keen interest in quantum computing, as their sheer computing power renders all

contemporary decryption methods virtually meaningless). **Ray Kurzweil**, an inventor and a futurist, contemplates on his vision of the future in his book *The Age of Spiritual Machines*. The opus discusses the evolution of the humane and intellectual life in comparison to the developments of artificial intelligence and gene technology. Kurzweil uses the phrase *technological singularity*, which describes the point in which artificial intelligence exceeds the human intelligence. *Singularity* was originally coined as a term by the science fiction writer **Vernon Vinge** in the 1980s. In 1993, he stated that he would "… be surprised if this event occurs before 2005 or after 2030." Today, scientists believe that technological singularity is reached at some point between 2030 and 2050.

Today, gene technology already enables us to affect the human evolution. A whole new dimension to the discussion on the manipulated evolution of the human kind is offered by the relationship between the man and the machine. The article *What Will Become of Homo Sapiens?* by **Peter Ward** discusses this mix and argues that downloading the mind or the brain of a human being into a computer will be possible in the near future. He contemplates on the effects such a bypass of natural selection and the continuous developments in the relation between humans and computers/robots might have on the humanity. Ward distinguishes between three scenarios: 1) **Stasis**; human beings remain recognisably the same they are now, 2) **Specification**: a whole new species develops, and 3) **Symbiosis with Machines**: the integration of machines and the human mind create a *collective intelligence.*

In the abovementioned television documentary, Kaku stressed the importance of discussing the ethics of manipulating the human evolution. *The Humanity* and *The World Transhumanist Association* are organisations demanding ethical considerations to be included in the technological developments leading towards a manipulated human evolution or a manipulated enhancing of human attributes.

Just as our built environment, we ourselves are in the midst of a great change. Where does the guided evolution take us? What are the characteristics of Human 2.0?

6 At the In-betweens of Innovation Journalism

I support the widest possible definition of innovation journalism: a form of futures journalism that makes good use of futures studies. I share the view of Erkki Kauhanen according to which social, cultural and non-commercial innovations belong to the "spirit" of the concept.

This paper aims to look deep into the future. Looking from the futures viewpoint, many current discussions seem to be too strongly tied to the past or the present, which is, of course, understandable. The stressful everyday of

work easily blocks future-oriented views. Thus, it might be advisable to bring the toolkit of futures research into to everyday of publishing.

The idea of innovation journalism looking at innovation systems and acting as their journalistic watchdog is a idea to support. On the other hand, many of my doubts focus on the critical role of innovation journalism. The relationship between innovation journalism – and the relationship between the wider concept of innovation communication – and brand building are especially interesting. A question arises: to what extent is an individual innovation journalist simply bound to promoting a national brand or the development of national innovativeness?

The personal brand of a journalist can surely be built on critical thinking. An innovation journalist may become known as a critical figure who rises up to the task of analysing e.g. the deficiencies of an innovation system in a constructive manner.

The in-betweens of different occupational categories are perhaps the most interesting areas where the shaping of futures is concerned. Innovation journalism can be a mixture of economic, technologic and political journalism (not forgetting culture, either). On the other hand, on could think that a journalist (or the related organisation) should be well accustomed to social media applications and the development of various media in a way where high quality content is accompanied by audiovisual competence and open discourse.

What is the role of a journalist in a world where each individual is about to turn increasingly into a producer of his/her own services (prosumerism/produsage). Let us look at the change of the communication environment through an example. Philips Lumalive introduces textiles which enable us to portray personalized moving images on fabric:

"Philips Lumalive is a new medium to convey emotions and messages. It creates a positive spirit and boosts your energy level. We use colorful dynamic animations on textile products like garments, to make an unexpected striking appearance. By integrating multicolor LEDs (light-emitting diodes) into textile objects Philips Lumalive transforms them into communication platforms, while their textile look & feel retains. This is a distinctive way to experience, communicate and personalize".

What is the role of innovation journalism in a world where our environments become increasingly "intelligent" and mediated? Perhaps innovation journalism reaches its best potential by acting in a future-oriented manner in various in-betweens and networks.

No matter how wild we think our inventions might be, they can never match the unpredictability of what the real world continually spews forth. This lesson seems inescapable to me now. Anything can happen. And one way or another, it always does.

– Paul Auster, Leviathan

About the author:

Jari Koskinen is a futurist, lecturer, non-fiction writer and head of various transdisciplinary design and brand projects. He is the driving force and initiator of the CID GROUP operating under the Finland Futures Research Centre at the Turku School of Economics.

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