

A 10 years perspective – the Foresight Saga

In 2010 radio transmission became almost forbidden. Lengthy and costly juridical processes nearly made Ericsson bankrupt in 2004-2005. It all began when the connection between the cancer epidemic and public radio/TV was recognized. The recurring cancer mortality trend-breaks were nasty enough to occur the same years that new public broadcasting networks were deployed namely 1920, 1955, 1969, 1983 and 1997. And a sudden improvement was noticed in 1979, the same year that old AM transmitters were decommissioned.

Professional ‘no-sayers’ tried for long to deny obvious facts. Even responsible governments and institutions tried to hide data, or did not publish data in the official cancer databases.

The 3:rd generation of mobile systems was put on hold in 2003 due to massive complaints from the public. It became known that Ericsson top management already in 1998 had been informed about a connection between broadcasting and cancer but decided not to tell anybody about it.

In 2004 a large number of lawsuits were put against all major telecom players including Ericsson and also against Teracom, the Swedish broadcasting network operator. Teracom subsequently had to reorganize and their main function in 2005 was to manage the decommissioning of all radio transmission towers in Sweden.

Meanwhile, the build-up of a fixed, truly G-bit broadband network had taken place and in 2005 almost 80% of all households had access to true broadband, that included all TV- and radio channels in the world.

The use of mobile phones was first prohibited while driving in 2003. This was then followed by a number of other restrictions in restaurants, official buildings, public transport etc despite desperate lobbying activities from the industry.

A WHO-sponsored group reported clear indications that brain-, gliand- and other cancers were associated with the use of mobile phones in June 2006 after a 9 months period on hold as classified. Most young people had now developed facial nevi (brown skin dots) to such an extent that it easily was seen if the phone normally was held in left or right hand.

Meanwhile, Ericsson had prospered from the fast expanding fixed broadband market. Normal mobile phones were not possible to sell unless Ericsson issued a personal certificate of full medical care should the buyer become ill due to the use of the product. This market was virtually wiped out in 2006. Some suppliers, including Ericsson, tried hard to deploy the products and systems in developing countries where most of the inhabitants were illiterate, and thus not able to read the red signs of caution that had to be marked on every phone.

Even before this happened Ericsson had invented a completely new set of mobile phones. These were communicating via diffusive UV/IR. transmitters and worked only inside buildings. But it turned out that people easily adapted to this constraint and many felt relaxed, not having to answer the phone signal at every possible and impossible occasion. The flavour of privacy was slowly recognized and appreciated.

In 2007 the extremely high social costs for cancer treatment showed a clear downtrend. It was even more pronounced than in 1980 when the AM-transmitters were closed. Many experimental cancer specialists got unemployed, the medical stock market collapsed in 2008 and the telecom market prospered again. Virtual holidays, VisIT and other low-cost broadband alternatives to greenhouse gas generating communication became popular options. These were partly funded by the increasing CO₂-taxes that in most countries now was close to 2,5\$ per kg.

In retrospective, it was recognized that Foresight had been an important eye-opener to the top management that so cleverly had guided the company all the way through difficult stages to this 'sustainable' position we today can enjoy in year 2010.