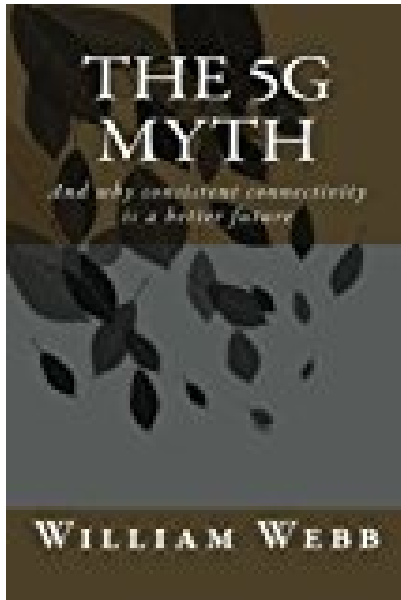


The 5G Myth When vision decoupled from reality



BOOK DETAILS

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BOOK SYNOPSIS

5G - the next generation in mobile telephony - is heralded as a huge advance in global connectivity. But the vision is flawed. It is flawed because users will not value the higher data rates that are promised and will not need the higher capacity forecast. It is flawed because technological advances are insufficient to realise the vision and because mobile operators are insufficiently profitable to afford it. Yet it is not in the interests of any of the stakeholders to point this out. They all benefit from the interest, funding and potential that 5G promises. There is an alternative vision where industry focuses on consistent connectivity everywhere rather than ridiculously fast speeds in city centres. This short and easily digested book explains why the vision of 5G is flawed and sets out a better vision for a connected future. Chapter 1 examines the lessons of history, looking back at the transitions through previous generations and showing what simple extrapolations of trends would predict for 5G. It shows that if previous trends were followed, 5G would become widely deployed in 2022 and deliver realistic end-user data rates of 200Mbps/s and an increase in capacity of around 2x compared to current networks. Chapter 2 examines whether such increases in speed and capacity are needed. It shows that users do not value speeds above those already widely available on 4G. It demonstrates that while data requirements are currently growing rapidly, the rate of growth is slowing and if extrapolated will result in a plateau in data rate requirements around 2027, with little growth in the 5G era. Hence, it concludes that the advances in speed and capacity that 5G might bring are not needed. Chapter 3 considers whether the technology is available to provide such gains. It shows that further capacity improvements are very difficult and likely to be expensive to realise, raising the cost of provision for MNOs. It also suggests that some changes to the core network may have unexpected side-effects of enabling different industry structures, splitting the functions provided by MNOs today across multiple players. Chapter 4 considers industry economics and shows that MNOs are in a position of declining revenues relative to GDP, and poor profitability. Few expect this to change with 5G with the result that investment is highly unattractive. Chapter 5 asks why, if the position is so bleak, that the industry collectively appears so supportive of 5G. It shows that it is not in the interest of any of the key players to cast doubt on a bullish 5G vision and that for some the emergence of 5G is essential to their very survival. Chapter 6 examines the visions set out for 5G in more detail. It shows that they are often over-stated. The collective vision of the MNOs, as set out by the NGMN group is examined in detail and each service is shown to be either deliverable via existing wireless solutions such as 4G, or economically unviable. The chapter shows that few know what 5G actually is. Chapter 7 asks what might transpire in place of the current 5G vision. It suggests that consistent connectivity of around 10Mbps/s everywhere is a more compelling vision and shows how it can be delivered via a mix of 4G and Wi-Fi. It also lays out a possible path for its introduction showing how this could result in seismic changes to the structure of the industry. Chapter 8 looks more broadly at the communications world, considering the impact of regulations, spectrum and broadband access to the home. It shows that regulation is set to maintain the status quo which early chapters have shown to be unsustainable and predicts this will cause further problems for any 5G vision. Chapter 9 summarises the findings of the book, sets out why the current 5G vision is a myth, and discusses what is more likely to transpire.

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