

Human interaction: the next digital revolution

In the digital age, why should we care about human interaction? The answer is neither simple nor obvious. The rise of new technologies has generated a flourishing debate about the pros and cons of a wide usage of the Internet, transforming the Web in the angels and demons' epic battle of the 21st century.

Today's relevant role played by the Internet contributes to consider it a fundamental infrastructure of the economy, in the same way as water, electricity and mobility. The recent decision of the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to approve strict new rules to govern broadband internet like a public utility, leaves a mark in the fight for the protection of net neutrality – i.e. the concept that all information and services should have equal access to the Internet.

The huge amount of information that circulates across the online world has several implications in terms of economic activities, social challenges and cultural opportunities. Such a wide range of applications makes it difficult to identify a reliable measure of the size of the Internet economy. An OECD study on the economic importance of the Internet, points out that the attempt to address this issue should take into consideration the complexity of a phenomenon able to effect investment strategies, regulatory rulings and policy decisions. In the quest for value, the challenge facing us is how to combine different approaches for better understanding the process of measuring the Internet economy.

Obviously, in an economic context deeply marked by a long-lasting downturn, new technologies are said to be a prominent sector capable of offering business opportunities and to unlock creativity and innovation. The embedded capability of digital tools and services to provide both traditional and more recent productive industries with revolutionary products and solutions, has made a great deal of excitement around the world for its potential to empower citizens, has changed how government works, and has improved the delivery of private goods.

From a different point of view, the possibility of living in two parallel worlds – both real and unreal – brings to the table some ethical and relational issues that represent an endless talking point in the contemporary society. The centrality of human contact and interaction stimulates a continuous discussion on computers and networks' capacity to isolate us from one another, while we have the illusion to be closer to each other than ever before. Even if Internet is powerful and it could become the new ideology of the future, we have to realize that virtual reality alone is not enough.

As stated by the techno-sociologist Zeynep Tufekci during her TED talk upon the effectiveness of online social change, although “technology does empower in multiple way”, there is a real risk that it “can also paradoxically help weaken” social movements. After more than a decade of studying how online voices and online crowds interact with traditional power, using Facebook, Twitter and other social tools, she has come to the conclusion that we need to nurture the “capacity to work together, think together collectively”, in order to succeed and to achieve gains.

Replicating a common human behaviour, after an initial phase of fear and suspect, technology makes us now completely fascinated by its magic realm. Just to be clear, this is not a negative aspect in itself. On the other hand, if we want to preserve our cultural and emotional intelligence we have to avoid becoming unaware victims of such a digital wonderland, characterised by high volume, high velocity, and a high

variety of data, but also by frustration and isolation.

In this respect, in the current issue of Tafter Journal, Marc Rocas focuses upon cultural intelligence as a necessary capacity in order to adapt to a new cultural setting. Broader social changes in society have led to more multicultural environments that need high levels of cultural intelligence for succeeding in a global context. Marco Bernabè offers an accurate analysis of online tourism market, paying attention on the vantages and disadvantages of the sharing economy model. Valeria Morea conducts us to videoart's world, showing the power of this new medium to generate a stimulus to look for the external self-perception and to help people in a deeper exploration of themselves.

Once again, the technology can offer the right solutions to small and big problems but abstract and critical thinking is a human peculiarity. Personal relations are too important for our surviving and we have to resist the temptation to stop making the right enquiries. Now, it could be extremely risky answering well the wrong question.



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