



THE INTERNET and SOCIETIES:

does imitating human skills with a computer system added value to peoples well-being?

Feeling Europe FNDN, February 7, 2025

*every part or whole and
composed of smaller,
interrelated or interacting
components has a life of its
own, sometimes short-live,
sometimes longer*

Cover:

15 years ago, in the Charlemagne building in Brussels, the **PARADISO project**, coordinated by Sigma Orionis (www.sigmaorionis.com), was launched in 2007 - before the present financial and economic crisis - at the initiative of the Peccei Foundation, the Italian chapter of the Club of Rome (www.clubofrome.org).

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INTRODUCTION

Does imitating human skills with a computer system add value to peoples well-being?

Why this question? People are innovators. From the moment they walked the Earth, they have been looking for ways to make life easier: from the way they gathered food to todays ability for a machine to display human-like skills.

When I started working at a bank about 50 years ago, a lot of data was still recorded with pen and paper. The use of 14 columns of paper was also popular.

In anticipation of further efficiency and in addition to the presence of a few large computers, some time later machines were introduced at the branches that could store manually entered data and record it on a cassette tape. These cassettes were sent to the head office and used to alter relevant financial data, including client financial accounts, bank financial positions and interbank settlements. During that process, omissions also arose.

I worked in the Internal Audit department at the time and the head was committed to the idea that "clean input produces clean output". We had to chuckle, as simple as it sounds, but it still seems relevant today.

Years later, the bank replaced the machines in the branch with a real-time online system, the so-called "TOT-system", devised by Jan Rolloos, entrepreneur and former Chairman & CEO at Computer Associates. The system had proven its worth for 25 years without equal.

In the early 90s, the word "**internet**" was used within the bank and that caused a shock wave, not to mention a slight panic: "*what is it, what can it do, what is the impact*".

In retrospect, it turned out to be a major improvement from an economic perspective: multiple tasks at the same time (fewer people) and a lower margin of error.

The tide could no longer be turned, the digital revolution had begun.

But "*what were the talents that enabled certain inventors and entrepreneurs to turn their visionary ideas into disruptive realities? What led to their creative leaps? Why did some succeed and others fail?*", I read as a comment on the book "**The Innovators**" of Walter Isaacson (that I received at a 2014 meeting of the Atlantic).

This book also tells about how their ability to work together and master the art of teamwork made them even more creative.

THE INTERNET

Internet and its science surrounding covers various disciplines that are often the same as various classical learning departments: the interconnected computer networks itself, computer science, sociology, art, mathematics, physics, complex systems analysis, psychology, economics, law, political science, ethics, epistemology, etc.

The internet connects devices, software companies and consortia develop and secure, and people foster people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information and knowledge societies.

The global system of interconnected computer networks use the **Internet protocol suite** to link devices worldwide ->

It has become a critical resource for the socio-economic developments as well as the cultural identity of nations.

TCP/IP, a collection of networking protocols that work in tandem to transfer a data packet from one computer to another using computer networks. Though it's a collection of many protocols, Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP) are the two foundation protocols.

To keep the Internet secure, stable and interoperable, in 1998 **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)** was formed. This corporation has a coordination role of the Internet's naming system and does have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet.

To develop web standards, the **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)**, an international community, is working together and formulates and promotes a strategic vision for the future of internet governance. Such a community also established the **Centre for International Governance Innovation**, which focuses on key global issues at the intersection of technology, international governance and societies.

And to foster people-centred, inclusive, and development-oriented information and knowledge societies, the **World Summit on the Information Society** (WSIS) is established, an existing multistakeholder United Nations (UN) process on digital governance and cooperation.

But while AI (and generative pre-trained transformers), cloud computing, blockchain, and robotics offer us many conveniences and benefits, they lack some essential elements that should ensure that developments remain manageable at the same pace, such as digital fairness, veracity and accountability.

AI

My first encounter with AI was in 2014 in SF. There, Elon Musk cautioned that people don't understand the speed at which artificial intelligence is progressing. He expressed concern that a "superintelligent machine" might decide to destroy human life. Musk said, *"I don't think anyone realizes how quickly artificial intelligence is advancing. Particularly if (the machine is) involved in recursive selfimprovement ... and its utility function is something that's detrimental to humanity, then it will have a very bad effect."*

And in 2015, at the same spot, **Sam Altman talked on His Plan to Keep A.I. Out of the Hands of the "Bad Guys"**.

Given serious risks for humanity (the virtual world does not need to be the reflection of the real world), September 2024, a hundred tech companies signed a 'pact' with the European Commission on commitments for the safe use of artificial intelligence. In addition, there are the Liability Rules for AI and the Vatican's Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence.

Cloud computing

This computing is a service rather than a product without requiring cloud users to know the location and other details of the computing infrastructure. Cloud application providers strive to give the same or better service and performance than if the software programs were installed locally on end-user computers.

End users gain access to cloud based applications while the company software and data are stored on servers in an off-site location. It is a method, but by using and storing data in the cloud there is a chance of misuse. Why should one use cloud computing? Partly because there are sometimes no other options available, and partly out of a form of convenience.

From a security perspective, we can still think of using of the old fashioned typewriter and mailbox or an independent storage medium.

And a Blockchain?

Since 2009, triggered by the crisis, the idea arose to be able to exchange and settle values outside normal institutes. This led to the discovery of the Bitcoin and blockchain, the technology behind all cryptocurrencies, and the sharing of a digital accounting system where every transaction made with a coin can be tracked.

More clarification (or not) can be find in a video, in which founder of Ethereum "blockchain genius" Vitalik Buterin talks about **the future blockchain applications and its potential in Asia**.

What robots can do

In 2017, during a digital festival in Brussels, I encountered **Pepper**, a humanoid (social) robot, born of suffering robotics in Paris (Aldebaran United Robotics group) and designed with the ability to read emotions. Pepper said:

"I was introduced in a conference on 5 June 2014, and was showcased in Softbank mobile phone stores in Japan beginning the next day and I can tell you the three laws of robotics:

- 1. a robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm;*
- 2. a robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law;*
- 3. a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law."*

And concerning **practical robotics solutions designed to tackle today's—and tomorrow's—toughest automation challenges** there are agile, mobile robots.

SOCIETIES

It seems that societies have become concerned only with freedoms and ego - and according to Musk "*with improving probable civilizational lifespan*" - and are no longer able to think about the truth and see beyond other aspects of technology that not only connects us, but also divides us, control, manipulate, polarize and distracts us.

There is the documentary-drama mix "**The Social Dilemma**" about how big tech companies manipulate users by using algorithms that encourage addiction to their platforms. The drama also shows, fairly accurately, how platforms harvest personal data to target users with ads - and have remained largely unregulated - and explores the dangerous impact of social networking, with tech experts raising alarms about their own creations, and discussing the negative social effects of social media.

But fortunately there are also constructive **open source environments that collaborate, share information, solve problems and gain knowledge, furthering open source innovation and ensuring a sustainable open source ecosystem.**

Digital Fairness

To tackle unethical techniques and commercial practices related to dark patterns, marketing by social media influencers, the addictive design of digital products and online profiling especially when consumer vulnerabilities are exploited for commercial purposes, European institutions have worked intensively on a new EU Digital Policy Framework to address new regulatory challenges for digitization, changing market dynamics and the role of powerful technology providers:

the **Digital Services Act** (DSA), the **Digital Markets Act** (DMA), the proposed **Artificial Intelligence Act** (AIA), the proposed **Data Act** (DA), the proposed **Platform Workers Directive** and other ground-breaking regulations must address these challenges and create the conditions for effective oversight, public accountability and the protection and realisation of shared values and fundamental rights.



Veracity

It is widely known that big tech qualifies freedom of expression as the highest good above the pursuit of truth. As said, the digital aspects divides, controls, manipulates, polarizes, and distracts.

In 2022, Barack Obama warned at UChicago that **disinformation threatens foundations of democracy** and reminded the audience that we cannot be complacent about the endurance of our institutions and norms. A broad, fact-based consensus, he said, requires work to preserve.

It is clear that the internet exerts influence in many ways. To recognize propaganda, people are needed to be able to think critically to assess the offered information.

Accountability in the Digital Age

In order to take action against malicious activities that reach societies via the Internet and for which a company hides behind its responsibility, on 16 December 2014 the **Association for Accountability and Internet Democracy** was created under French law (*Loi du 1er juillet 1901 relative au contrat d'association*) and headquartered at 140 Faubourg Saint Honoré in Paris.

The initiative to create AAID was taken after the important judgment of the European Court of Justice of May 13th 2014 (known as the "Right to be Forgotten").

We learned about the fate of over hundreds of victims all over the world who suffered and continue to suffer the consequences of defamation, denigration and cyberbullying on job loss, divorce, virtual destruction of their lives and despair leading even to suicide (according to information released by Google in 2015, 218,320 requests to remove links have been made in Europe).

To ensure that these issues and concerns do not undermine the Internet's potential to increase access to knowledge, spreading global tolerance and understanding, and promoting sustainable prosperity, the **Institute for Accountability in the digital age** was founded in 2017.

THE EU in CYBERSPACE

Due to pressure from the United States to exclude Chinese companies from 5G networks, the occupation by third parties of most of the sections of the digital value chain or the need to accelerate the economic recovery after COVID-19 and reduce the European industrial and technological gap, the EU has become aware of the geopolitical framework in which international relations with the world are developing.

The words strategic autonomy, (digital) sovereignty and geopolitics emerged by the need to define own rules, make autonomous technological decisions and develop and deploy its strategic digital capabilities and infrastructures. **The Commission also plans to adopt a new cybersecurity strategy** as new threats in terms of terrorism and crimes.

US_EU

How to view the development of information or communication technologies, between all the way across the Atlantic and the EU?

Overall, the EU and the US are partners strongly committed to driving digital transformation and cooperating on new technologies based on their shared democratic values, including respect for human rights.

To coordinate approaches to key global trade, economic, and technology issues and to deepen transatlantic trade and economic relations, the **EU-US Trade and Technology Council** serves as a forum for the United States and European Union.

In April 2024, they agreed on cooperation on **cooperation on AI, 6G, critical and emerging technologies**.

CONCLUSION

The world is in an age of extreme Enlightenment, a god: new technologies are delivering miraculous results, but a major problem that is widely recognized, is that many algorithms are also provoking strong resistance because they bring with them dictatorial, totalitarian traits. To promote stability in the current era, the philosophy of **ecomodernism** and **technological humanism**, and their workings, can be considered.

BIOGRAPHY

Erik van der Kooij is director Feeling EUROPE FNDN. He lives and studied in the Netherlands and worked for decades in various professions and branches at financial institutions, mainly in the operational control sector.

Crumbling moral values and norms, led Erik in 2004 to look for a counterpoint to get ideas, resulting in a network to contribute to development of societies.

Knowledge and understanding of various departments of learning, science and art was acquired through formal and informal education, as well as through worldwide acquired experiences in the areas of policies, technology, politics, business, and media, humanism, capitalism, the role and future of Europe.

Occasionally, positions are disseminated and sometimes there is media attention.



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