



HOW A.I. CHANGES OUR WORK



Future of Work
Report

THE GOAL OF THE MEETUP

The goal of the Meetup was to talk about the future of work and the widespread concern of machines taking our jobs. We all know that there will be enormous changes with the more extensive introduction of artificial intelligence but what most people don't know is how fast it's going to happen and which are the jobs that will be the most affected.

The picture most people envision is rather pessimistic. These technologies we are experimenting with can go wrong and even researchers who are creating A.I., cannot fully predict what will happen when we let the control out of our hands.

However, we believe that the changes that technology will bring into our lives, function as self-fulfilling prophecies. Therefore, it is our common responsibility to make the most of these technologies and make sure that we do all precautions to prepare a future that will make our lives better, not worse. We live in an age, where we have the chance to redefine ourselves as humans. Therefore, we choose to look at these technologies as an opportunity.

This is the reason why we kicked-off the Meetup series with this topic, in order to figure out together whether we really have to be afraid of machines and how can we

prepare for working together with them once they are part of our lives.

We invited our participants for a panel discussion to get some input from various fields and to evoke some thought for the following groupwork. After the panel discussion we used LEGO to model challenges of A.I. and possible steps, which can help us as individuals prepare for the future.

THE PROCESS AND THE OUTCOME

[Future of Life Institute](#) defines artificial intelligence today as narrow A.I., which is designed to perform a narrow, therefore a single task (e.g. only facial recognition or only internet searches or only driving a car). However, artificial intelligence of the future would ideally be general A.I. (or strong A.I.), which would outperform humans at nearly every cognitive task.

We agreed that **A.I. is already used on a large scale nowadays**, particularly in:

- big companies for automation and decision-making
- medical sphere for diagnosing illnesses
- interface sphere as chatbots
- delivery systems in restaurants

Wagner pointed out that for some people working alongside A.I. actually might not be so bad, since having a smartphone giving you orders on what to cook might prove more pleasant than having an angry boss who just had a bad day shouting orders at you.

According to this example, we shouldn't consider A.I. as taking over our world, but rather supporting it. However, there are some doubts regarding the independent future of A.I., and the **biggest threats** are:

- Computers being able to manipulate people (i. e. robots used as salespersons). The [IBM Project Debater](#) is already going in this direction.
- A.I. doing the most important decisions for us (i. e. self-driving cars making decisions within the traffic).
- A.I. being used in preventing/rising conflicts between countries (deployed [Samsung SGR-A1 robots](#) guarding the Korean demilitarized zone).
- No competitive advantage if all the companies use automation.
- Lack of motivation among people when applying for jobs that might be overtaken by robots anytime soon.
- If A.I. is programmed to do something beneficial, but it develops a destructive method for achieving its goal (failure in aligning A.I.'s goals with ours; "If you ask an obedient intelligent car to take you to the airport as fast as possible, it might get you there chased by helicopters and covered in vomit, doing not what you wanted but literally what you asked for". (Tegmar, Future of Life Institute)).

Speaking about robots overtaking our jobs, we agreed **it will be the repetitive jobs that will be automated first**. Raunig stated that this might hurt in short term, but in the long term, it makes sense to automate and use the human qualities (i.e. empathy) to shine. Also, the industrial revolution brought significant sacrifices.

Wagner adds that **it will always be cooperation between humans and robots**. There will be more people doing the courier work, as there is a steady increase in online shopping or food delivering. Moving in and out of traffic, or dealing with the customers are still very complex tasks to programme.

Nevertheless, the unpredictable threats of A.I. are still hanging over our heads like the Sword of Damocles. During the Meetup, we touched upon the topics like ethics, biases, or risks that are yet to be solved, but due to a shortage of time, we were only able to scratch the surface of these aspects of artificial intelligence.

TIPS TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

We asked our panelists and participants for suggestions as to what concrete steps we could do today, in order to not to end up in the dark future:

- Read the general „**Social Psychology**“ **book by Michael Hogg**. Once you understand humans better, you can apply it to A.I.
- **Pick one value that we are passionate about and shape it**. If we embody those values in the meaningful ways and in systems that actually produce those things on daily basis, then we'll live in a very different society. One of these values is unmistakably accountability: making systems more accountable to their users.
- **Boost your creativity**. It is the key aspect of preserving our human traits. One of the panelists described a concept they practiced successfully in several teams, called the “scary idea”. When a team member says that she or he has a “scary idea” the others know that now they're supposed to suspend their disbelief and listen with an open mind. Labeling something as “scary idea” gives a lot of freedom to explore an idea without immediate judgment.

It cracks open the box within which people were thinking about a problem. Often it really is just a crazy idea and that's ok, but sometimes it is exactly the brilliant angle nobody has thought of before. Even more often others are inspired in return and start bouncing back and forth (scary) ideas - which often results in a particularly creative output.

- **Think entrepreneurially.** Entrepreneurial thinking and acting are key to positive change. No matter if its a young entrepreneur, who wants to revive local bookstores in Vienna, a group of people who organize a non-profit job fair for refugees in Austria, or an employee who is frustrated by a slow process in his company and comes up with a suggestion how to improve it. The more people feel empowered to develop solutions to problems instead of complaining about them, the better off society will be.
- **Take steps to understand A.I.:** what it is, and what it is capable of.
- **Raise the awareness** about the coming A.I., and the change the workforce and the company.
- **Focus on the things that humans are good at.** Do more learning on these things — communication, empathy, creativity.
- **Educate yourself on data privacy** and be conscious of what data you share.

CONCLUSION

The Meetup proved useful in organizing our ideas as well as generating new ones. We could sum up the main ideas into 5 points:

- 1) A.I. is already being used at workplaces, proving to be supportive rather than threatening.
- 2) The threats about A.I. are based solely on our decisions - what we program and how we go about it.
- 3) A.I. is only as good/bad as the data we put into it, so we should be precautious when programming it.
- 4) Which jobs will be automated and which will not, depends on us as well. Companies might not give tasks over to A.I. which are enjoyed by the employees and motivate them.
- 5) After all the automation, what's left for us is „Play more“: replace the monkey work (excel sheets, etc.) with A.I. and do more what we like and enjoy, use our potential.

We should not forget that we, humans, are

the creators in this matter, and the future of work and A.I. lies in our hands. Therefore we'd like to finish off with a thought "Automation might make us more human", because whatever is left after automation is what is inside us as humans.

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