

Leaders TalkX: Local Voices, Global Echoes: Preserving Human Legacy, Linguistic Identity and Local Content in a Digital World

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Alfredo M. Ronchi – EC MEDICI Framework / Politecnico di Milano

Written Statement:

On the twenty years WSIS anniversary, I would like to outline the relevance of the WSIS process and its Action Lines as the key open forum where stakeholders can debate, share ideas, propose solutions.

We are facing a significant turning point; it is not under question the added value and the achievements due to digital technology; we simply look at the digital world from the humanities side.

Since the dawn of digital technology computers overlapped more and more with any activity, reshaping society, impacting lifestyles.

Social media, global content providers are “training” young generations offering all-over the world “global homogenised” content that will impact future generations and jeopardise cultural diversities.

Since more than two decades we are wrapped in our personal cyber-sphere in a kind of symbiotic relation. We experience the world through the mediation of cyber devices; the “new reality” is the one provided by them. By leveraging on laziness and relaxation citizens shop online, purchase food and drinks delivered on their table, “meet” friends on Zoom, interact with the “external environment” though social media and video clips.

The Metaverse: One of the foreseeable risks is a kind of addiction to this “parallel life” training users to shift from Real to Meta-life blurring the border between them. Meta-life may propose a new normal that once accepted in the Meta-life could be accepted in the Real-life. The same obviously applies to mainstream information and opinion dynamics. Social media have drastically changed the way opinion dynamics evolve.

While AI will benefit citizens, businesses, and public interests it will create risks to fundamental rights, due to potential biases, privacy infringements or AI proxy-based solution of serious ethical dilemmas releasing citizens from a personal ethical analysis and related responsibilities.

We feed ML systems mainly with big data from western countries this can lead to the disappearance of other “intelligence”. Citizens are increasingly using AI “bots” to carry out different activities ranging from writing a poem to creating a deep fake. How can we identify a human “product” from a machine product? “Local content” will be soon generated by “local” bots? The progress of AI has allowed the development of much more powerful nudge mechanisms thanks to the effectiveness of statistical and inferential AI systems.

Public perception is shaped more by addressing predetermined feelings and opinions rather than facts.

The challenges for the upcoming years are the ways to sustain the human’s role and the inviolable right to freedom and personal privacy in an era of unlimited collection and reuse of information.

Once again, the need to find a proper balance between humanities and technologies is omnipresent. Social sciences and humanities must establish a tight cooperation in the design or co-creation of cyber technologies always keeping humans in the focus.