



THINK PIECE

DIGITAL AI SUMMIT, AUGUST 27, 2019 MELBOURNE

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THINK PIECE – AI DIGITAL SUMMIT, 27 AUGUST 2019

The recent **Digital AI Summit** in Melbourne was an exemplar event bringing together business and civic leaders, technology experts, startups, academics and citizens in facilitating debate of how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is directly affecting and impacting processes and models across industries, sectors, and geographic borders.

Across the presentations, there was near consensus that the global trend of rapid AI growth, and anticipated substantial economic and social impact, is also counterbalanced by the fact that the potential future impacts of AI still remain a research frontier and relatively unexplored.

The AI universe underpinning new business processes, e.g. recommender systems, disease detection, or AI-enabled customer service assistants, are mainly being defined through research and technology development paradigms using Big Data sets. These can comprise machine learning, deep neural networks, natural language processing, 5G networks, and decision-making, among other systems.

However, the majority of the public consider AI in more general terms – associations with powerful scenarios in which functions of the human brain are replicated, and human jobs (as well as humans themselves) are steadily being replaced. Yet AI is most often a sophisticated software programme - substantially implemented in more ‘narrow’ business applications to support task- or role-based problem-solving.

Any ‘replacement’ of purpose by AI is principally a human-driven decision, not necessarily an automated one.

In this context, the Summit provided a significant opportunity to gather evidence to understand the transformative and disruptive tendencies of AI which traverse these (mis)conceptions. Enabling effective exploration of this problem space includes the need to bridge information asymmetries and possible ‘goal’ conflicts between different stakeholders (e.g., citizens, policymakers, business, academia, etc). To this end, what became particularly relevant and compelling are the inspiring stories around AI and making a pragmatic case about its impact and tangibles.

These organizational and personal stories suggested an overwhelming necessity to address AI concerns through dedicated (and authoritative) interactions in both physically and digitally co-located settings in order to advance a sense of transparency and trust building. This direction is most aptly reinforced by the notion of human-centredness or ‘human in the loop’ processes.

So how might we better support a human-centred AI universe – and what might this look like for the City of Melbourne?

Summit participants were exposed to sets of principles required for developing ethical AI - centering on responsible design that can benefit humanity – and the environment, too. This benefit can be achieved through protecting privacy and human rights, addressing bias, and providing transparency around the workings of AI-enabled machines and applications.

Among the AI Taskforce recommendations, a number of ways were suggested to support the ethical design and use of AI - including adaptive skills and literacy, data rights, security oversight mechanisms and regulation, to name a few.

Equally meaningful opportunities also abound for the Committee for Melbourne to continue to engage in these participatory futures with diverse public and business stakeholders who can contribute new and different knowledge to address complex AI challenges. Civic data trusts are among the examples of where such collective intelligence could lead to considered solutions.

The Committee is at a well-positioned intersection to foster wider and equitable participation of Melbourne's citizens (ideally across age groups, cultures, genders, literacies and socio-economic boundaries) – this might be potentially achieved through publicly accessible channels to share stories, form partnerships with Committee members, and to think differently, openly, and critically about AI and sustainable futures together for the benefit of all Melburnians.

END

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