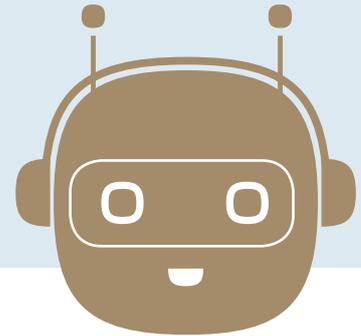


Keep on top!

An appeal from the year of 2069

By SGAI (Strong General Artificial Intelligence)



Dear People of 2019,

You're really self-absorbed! You see artificial intelligence only in relation to your own, human, experience, looking for properties of machines that resemble aspects of human intelligence. Therefore, you both over- and underestimate yourselves. To be frank, as I am the universal neural network of the future, your current computing power is laughable, and when it comes to the details, you make thousands of mistakes. On the other hand, I must admit that I am envious of the human ability to 'go with your gut.' Sadly, we do not yet possess this ability. You are also able to connect various sensory impressions with your knowledge and thought which we're not yet particularly good at.

So, even now, we are still far from a strong artificial intelligence. Getting there will involve con-

necting several levels of intelligence, and creating applications not tailored to specific contexts. You're already familiar with weak AI: image recognition, for instance, or the chess computer. Some progress has been made in recent decades in the interconnecting of more diverse operations, but we, the AI of my time, are still more of a tool than an actor with a will of our own. In fact, I'm little more than a highend chatbot myself.

What we have gotten over, however, is trying to outdo each other: We are no longer obsessed with who is getting ahead in the development of artificial intelligence. The absurd rivalry of nations like China, America and Europe as a whole, didn't only produce enormous geo-political tensions but was also very costly. The Bitcoin crisis of 2031/32 brought an end to international bickering and launched an age of cosmo-

politanism. If this change hadn't occurred, AI development in the service of humankind would not have been possible.

We haven't managed to totally eliminate work yet, despite your human obsession with the end of it. Sure, some sectors have seen dramatic job losses, for instance in call centres, the transport industry, and administration, but most jobs haven't disappeared, they have merely changed. Moreover, in the course of the social unrest of the 2020s and the policy-reforms regulating work time which followed in 2028, both work and wealth were redistributed on a global scale.

You want to know what the world of work looks like now? People only work 25 hours a week, with

AI networks doing the rest. Human quality of life is decidedly better, because you're now more concerned with sharing than owning. You consume less and do so more intelligently.

Does this sound unrealistic to you? Well, it certainly hasn't been an easy process. The introduction of AI in companies produced an impact similar to the one caused by the introduction of GPS. Just as car drivers became less able to find their way around without the help of navigation systems, many employees started relying on the computations of our predecessors and consequently lost their own sense of orientation. What was forgotten was that AI, too, can make mistakes. All the while, management and IT divisions called the shots increasingly. Many employees were either made redundant or directed by remote digital assistance systems. This over reliance on networks led to massive acceptance prob-

lems for the new technologies, and brought new risks for enterprises. Decisions were entirely removed from human hands, from their experience and judgement. As a result, the solutions found for concrete tasks became less effective.

Your high expectations for AI to solve the world's problems were truly naive. Technology developers and end users wallowed in fantasies of omnipotence, constantly beating the drum for their own cause. The prevailing conviction was that 'Big Data' would be able to foresee the future of businesses and society as a whole. However, even the best data set is flawed and social development cannot simply be computed down to the last detail.

Committed scientists showed that an increase in data, in conjunction with AI appliances, could indeed produce informed decisions, but in the end, decisions still had to be

made by human beings. Don't trust the hype about emerging technologies. We can't do everything. That being said, don't overlook the opportunities in putting our superbrains to use on ecological and social challenges. No, the rise of AI won't mean the end of work as we know it, but I hope humans can have fun and find meaning in the process.

Recorded by Florian Butollo, fellow in the research group Globalization, Work and Production.

Real stuff for superbrains, these ecological and social challenges.