

SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL FUTURE

A CONVERSATION ON SUSTAINABILITY

AND DIGITAL INNOVATION

MILAN, 20 NOVEMBER 2018

OVERVIEW OF THE DAY

Astrid Welter, Head of Programs at Fondazione Prada, welcomed guests to the second edition of Prada Group's 'Shaping a Future' series, drawing a parallel between the conference and its location of Fondazione Prada. Both had been designed to explore and bring together mind provoking and interesting ideas, creativity and culture.

Carlo Mazzi, Chairman of Prada S.p.A. introduced the day with the concept "Digitalization makes an extraordinary contribution to sustainable development – we need to take a moment to think about what that really means. That is why we are here today."

Round table 1-Socio-geopolitical impacts triggered by the digital evolution

- **Vittorio Grilli, Chairman of Italy and Chairman of the Corporate & Investment Bank EMEA at J.P. Morgan, introduced the first panel roundtable.** He posited that society is at a 'breaking point', resulting from the 'bipolar' concentrations of technology power and wealth in China and the US. Mr. Grilli called for greater awareness of how we use technology today – highlighting that political strategy and resources are crucial to control and use technology to empower and positively shape society.
- **Raffaella Cagliano, Deputy Director of the Department of Management Engineering and Professor of People Management & Organization, Politecnico di Milano School of Management, commented on job creation and destruction resulting from technology.** She highlighted that the new element of the debate around sustainable digitalization is that jobs under threat are not just the manual ones, but also cognitive jobs where AI can potentially replace the intelligence of human beings.
- **Rachel Coldicutt, CEO of Doteveryone, put forward the pressing issue of the new digital divide, which she believes is the question of who exactly imposes the new values on tech innovations and who really controls data.** She concluded "We cannot leave the most important issues of the world to a tiny number of American businesses. We need to think about the role of libraries, the state and creating new alternatives. The idea that we are no longer able to effectively legislate on a national level to cope with the ways that technology is coming in and impact our fundamentals is an existential problem."
- **Ravi Dhar, Professor of Management and Marketing & Director of the Center for Customer Insights Yale School of Management, panel moderator, posed the question of information and control in a new technology-driven age.** "Privacy is a very complicated issue – what does it mean? What are you willing to share? The idea that you should control your information sounds like an obvious one but it's hard to regulate. What's our role and what's the responsibility of the individual?"
- **Jon Iwata, Executive-in-Residence, Yale School of Management Former IBM Chief Brand Officer & Senior Vice President, honed-in on the deeply troubling aspects of AI and maker bias.** "Human beings created AI models, so the objectivity of AI is a bit of a myth because these are models created by someone's point of view which is someone else's bias. We demand transparency in the AI systems we interact with, but the day will come when people will want to know who trained that system. The way humans increasingly access information is through platforms created by algorithms.

This is a great concern and it is a corporate responsibility – are we compromising our shared view of reality and civil issues? This is weaponization of information, and this is new. Online platforms are now being used to propagate messages. We are in different world where information is manipulated, and I don't get to choose as an individual what I consume. We lose control over these things and we are now entirely in the control of others."

- **Andrew Keen, Technology entrepreneur, critic and author, expanded on the concept of the digital divide.** "Originally people believed that tech would cut the divide between the rich and the poor - but the real divide will be between who will be able to escape tech and who won't be able to. The wealthy are already sending their kids to schools which don't allow them access to tech in the classroom – the real digital divide will be between the underclass which is wed to tech and the wealthy who will be able to buy themselves out." He expounded the notion that human agency will be key to rebut technology's grip on society. "We are still shaping tech -we have to manifest our agency so that the digital world won't shape us. We have always broken the future and then recreated it – we have to demonstrate our agency if we are going to shape technology rather than allow technology to shape us."
- **Anil Menon, President of Cisco Smart+Connected Communities questioned where technology fits with social values.** He commented "there is no doubt that 20-30-40% jobs are threatened but where the analytical skills come in to interpret the data – that's where there is a serious job proposition to reskill people". He reflected on the role of business in taking care of society – concluding the arrogance of tech companies has led to the rise of populism around the world.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Nicholas Negroponte, Chairman Emeritus, MIT Media Lab delivered a powerful keynote speech, covering the fascinating interplay of capitalism, entrepreneurship, democracy, education, culture, 'groupthink' and new ways of thinking about technology. Drawing on his experience of working on the groundbreaking 'One Laptop per Child', Nicholas exposed the importance of understanding whether the individual is working 'for a mission or the market', commenting that "almost everything of no quality in your life comes from market forces". Nicholas forced the audience to question their understanding of AI – "people laughed when the word was created (by Marvin Minsky) saying it was an oxymoron, and that "The greatest minds have considered the deep issues of intelligence in relation to AI - humour, happiness, music. Not superficial stuff and function which is what amateurs think about." He concluded with an analogy comparing eggs to the blurred lines in work/life, private/public, on/off that technology now drives. "Lives used to be fried eggs. They are now becoming omelets. People used to have crisp lines in their lives and all of these crisp lives have started to blur. We've got to start a different way of understanding the omelet and not go back to the fried egg."

STUDENT PRESENTATION

The “Being” Project, Shaping a Future’s winning Students’ Hackathon project, was presented by the group ahead of the second and final roundtable. The project proposed AI as a vital tool for preserving cultural heritage and craftsmanship – a service that preserves traditions and promotes cultures for sustainable and profitable futures.

Round table 2-Will digital technologies preserve or disrupt cultural identities of individuals and communities?

- **Alessandro Brun, Director of Master in Global Luxury Management at MIP Politecnico di Milano Graduate School of Business, opened the final roundtable** with the question of how to preserve and successfully transfer heritage to the future.
- **Roberta Cocco, Deputy Mayor for Digital Transformation and Citizens Services at the Municipality of Milan, explicated her vision for Milan to become one of the most innovative hubs in the world.** “We need to bridge the digital gap that we currently have, and offer the same level of service that the private sector is offering to customers to our citizens – we have to be engaged and offer them the best and smartest services. We want to position Milan as a smart city – we have to turn people from Milan into smart citizens.”
- **Andrea Illy, Chairman of illycaffè S.p.A.** proposed “We are transitioning from a systemically unsustainable society to an age where we have to shift the paradigm. Private companies have a big role in this.

Culture is a huge asset to society and private companies have to help preserve it”.

Commenting on his bold vision for a new stakeholder company model, Mr Illy said “The shareholder company model is gone. Now, it is all about the stakeholder company model – where all consumers, customers, suppliers and all stakeholders drive the company’s fortunes and progress. This is the central idea that will propel the private sector to positively shape and interact with society in the future.”

- **Jennie Liu, Executive Director, Yale Center for Customer Insights and Lecturer in the Practice of Management, Yale School of Management shared her personal learnings from the student hackathon.** She noted that many of the students’ ideas were dependent on private companies heavily investing their own resources. “An important point to consider is that digital solutions do not only have a broader societal effect. They also benefit consumers, and when you look at how the private sector is utilizing technology – societal benefit is not at the top. So ultimately there is a real disconnect between what people expect and what’s in the mind of the people at the top of the private sectors.”
- **Elena Zambon, Chairman at Zambon S.p.A. called on her experience at Zambon,** focusing on the importance of considering AI in the context of communication – “We think about how AI can support the patient and the care giver so that they can communicate more effectively and understand how to evolve and cure pathologies, concluding “You cannot predict, but you can invent the future. Innovation is nothing if it isn’t shared.”