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From the Editors-in-Chief

HOPES FOR A BETTER (TECHNO) FUTURE

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Abstract: *During the last few months, we have seen plenty of discussion about text-generating AI chatbots like ChatGPT. We have also seen many different kinds of affects and emotions connected to these tools. People are curious, suspicious, intrigued, or maybe even afraid of what our future will be like. Therefore, we need hope. In this editorial we want to stress the importance of hope and argue that people should not be left alone with suspicion, fear and doubt about how technology will change their future.*

Keywords: *hope, future, AI, affects, emotions.*

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Technologies have always been loaded with plenty of positive expectations and negative fears (Boyd, 2014), alongside narratives of utopian and dystopian futures. This is the case with digital technologies, too. They are considered helpful, but many studies reinforce a pessimistic view of digital technologies as harmful, addictive, and even toxic for people (Lavis & Winter, 2020). Different kinds of affects are connected to digital technologies. In this issue of Human Technology, for example, Andrea Bencsik and Timea Juhasz write about technostress in worklife, and Julia Siderska, Moh'd Alsqour, and Sameh Alsaqoor, discuss employees' attitudes towards implementing robotic process automation technology in service companies. They argue that people need to rely on their digital co-workers. Still, it is evident that many humans are suspicious of digital technologies. The debate around social media usage is one such example, too much social media is considered dangerous for youth and young people, but on the other hand, older people are strongly encouraged to take part in digital worlds for not to be marginalized from society.

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner (2016) has suggested that to understand the foundations of well-being and a good life, we need to study more than just the "harsh dimensions of social lives". However, we tend to get stuck on these harsh dimensions instead of thinking about how hope, well-being, and a good life are created in everyday contexts. People should not be left alone with suspicion, fear and doubt about how technology will change their future.

We need hope

Hope is vital for our well-being and an essential element of our daily lives. Anthropologist Ghassan Hage (2004) has argued that society's main task is to create and offer hope for its members. Hope is also connected to our ability to imagine our futures. Psychologically, hope – the personal rainbow of the mind – can be defined as "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals and to motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder, 2002, p.249). Anthropologist Hirokazu Miyazaki (2004) conceptualizes hope within a more cultural frame as a method of knowing and connects hope analytically with desires, arguing that these two are not necessarily distinguishable. In Miyazaki's research, hope is not seen as an endpoint of some process. If you approach hope as an endpoint, "the newness or freshness of the prospective moment that defines that moment as 'hopeful' is immediately lost" (Miyazaki, 2004, p.8).

Hope and future expectations have an essential role, especially in young people's lives. Youth are often described as the makers of the future, with the sense of hope as a basic element of their everyday life. Hope relates to a recognition of continuity and trust in achieving one's goals. In general, hope encourages and moves young people forward. It can also be strengthened through concrete activities connected to creativity, culture, or a relationship with another person and the environment (Tikkanen, 2012.)

Hope is connected to an awareness of the ability to receive support and help from others, if needed. In this way, hope becomes a collective, shared achievement or goal. Even minor actions can add and strengthen hope. By focusing on small but significant actions, we may understand what hope means in everyday life context. Hope is often connected with positivism because they both are future-oriented and future-minded. However, Bruininks and Malle (2005, 354) have shown that people think about hope and positivity differently.

Different interpretations occur when considering features like importance, likelihood, and perceived personal control. These differences are likely to predict different behaviors.

Hope is both individual and collective, and it may become visible as a hidden counterforce. Scrutinizing hope within everyday technology use is vital because otherwise important encounters may remain hidden, and hope becomes an empty word. As an affect, hope identifies the hotspots that need to be supported to reach a good future. When thinking about people's hope in digital environments, we need to consider who can act and who has agency which does not belong inherently to humans but is produced in enactment, as a quantum physicist, philosopher of science, and feminist theorist Karen Barad (2007, p.214) has argued. Thus, agency is not the property of a person or a thing but a matter of intra-acting.

During the last few months, we have seen plenty of discussion about text-generating AI chatbots like ChatGPT. People have tested them, and even had fun while using them, but rules on how to use them have been discussed and debated. In Finland, for example, the Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics took the bull by the horns and allowed the use of artificial intelligence in studies. At the same time, teaching staff have been thinking about and writing instructions for the ethical use of chatbots and other similar tools. In Poland, several universities, including the Technical University of Lodz, are engaged in a heated discussion about the use of AI technologies in academic research and practice. Liberal attitudes, of a conscious or opportunistic part of the community, clash with approaches attempting to restrict the use of AI. Despite the introduction of a number of regulations in many universities, defining ethical principles, a reflexive observation is that technology has probably surpassed modern expectations of people who are not ready for its possibilities. This actually puts to the test the subjective hope necessary for the proper coexistence of humans and technology, and the key seems to be the explainability and regulation of technology use.

Text-generating AI tools will also affect the work of scientific editors, and we, as Editors-in-Chief of Human Technology, have also pondered what this will mean in our work. ChatGPT has already been listed as a co-author in some scientific articles, but many scientists disapprove of this and see authority as something more than "just" writing: an author needs to make a significant scholarly contribution (Stokel-Walker, 2023). However, this kind of thinking makes the more-than-human-becomings and intra-actions visible, forcing us to think further about our research's ontological and epistemological foundations.

Thus, the big question is how to use text-generating AI tools wisely? What does wisely actually mean in this case? What are the ethical guidelines to follow when using AI tools? There are many hopes connected to these tools, and you do not need to be a clairvoyant to see that there will likely be an equal amount of dashed hopes. Most probably, the discussion will follow binary logic and see these tools through the lenses of dystopias and utopias. How could we address the question of AI tools in such a way that we would avoid thinking that these technologies affect all people in all situations in the same way? How could we offer more hope than shame?

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