Proposal for a talk

Undone Computer Science 2026

Radical alternatives for AI

The rapid development of generative AI systems has generated significant interest in this technology from scholars in the humanities and social sciences. When they do take an interest, it is most often from a critical perspective. A multitude of publications have called into question the manner in which these systems are developed, whether due to their ecological impact and the colonial logic they tend to perpetuate, the exploitative labor practices that underpin them, or the data and attention capture phenomena that make them possible. These critiques also emphasize the ramifications of these technologies in terms of the concentration of wealth and power, surveillance, discrimination against specific demographics, the automation of decisions that contradict democratic principles, and even the potential threat to human cognitive abilities.

In response to this critical observation, various proposals have emerged aimed at advocating for a transformation of AI production methods. The objective is to identify methodologies for the development of AI systems that are not only more economical and considerate of digital workers' working conditions, but also more democratic. The demand for democratizing AI, therefore, necessitates the consideration of more transparent and inclusive forms of development, predicated on open source and commons, and with augmented support from public authorities. At the same time, a number of academics and activists are developing more radical positions, arguing that, given the nature of this technology, it is not possible to democratize it, but that it is necessary to reject and dismantle it. In this regard, the contemporary articulation of the development of these technologies with reactionary, even fascist, ideologies appears to be increasing support for this type of position, at least in academic and activist circles.

Nevertheless, as E. Morozov (Morozov, 2024) observes, these two positions fundamentally subscribe to a shared vision of AI, characterized by its reification and the perception of its present form as the sole possible one. Regardless of whether the focus is on democratizing or rejecting it, AI appears to be substantively indistinguishable from its contemporary form. In this sense, it appears that the intellectual landscape is currently deficient in regard to the conception of radically alternative forms and trajectories for AI. Discussions have centered

predominantly on criticism or proposals for reforming modes of production, as opposed to the suggestion of alternative forms of technological development. The latter would necessitate a more radical transformation of its objectives and research program, extending beyond mere modifications in the manner of production or operation. In this regard, the objective of my presentation is to encourage the humanities and social sciences community, as well as the engineering and design sciences, to engage more fully with this reflection.

To do this, we will attempt to better characterize what this implies in theoretical terms. As a first hypothesis, it seems to us that this type of reflection must be based on three elements: an empirical and counterfactual analysis of the history of artificial intelligence, which attempts to understand its major turning points and map the various paths that have not been taken ; a proliferation of intelligence definitions, aimed at diversifying this concept to envision alternative applications ; an approach to the links between politics and technology that goes beyond the question of democratization and use. As a starting point for this work program, we will analyze two contemporary proposals for redirecting artificial intelligence. First, the proposal defended by E. Morozov (Morozov, 2024) for “eolithic” AI, which favors experimentation, imagination, and simulation over efficiency and control, and which is inspired by the work of Hans Otto Storm and the Chilean Cybersyn experiment under President Allende. In addition, the work of B. Bratton on the Antikythera program (Bratton, 2025) merits consideration. Bratton's research proposes the development of a planetary artificial intelligence that would disclose our "planetary condition" and expand our relationship with the world beyond its current state. In both cases, despite the differences between these proposals, the conceptual horizon pursued is that of a radical redefinition of intelligence with a view to its expansion, and the establishment of a new form of “ecology of intelligences,” a term that we will seek to define and establish.

Short bibliography :

B. Bratton, Antikythera, 2025, online :
https://research.antikythera.org/#planetary-computation
E. Morozov, « The AI we deserve », Boston Review, 2024.

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