Review of: "[Commentary] Service Sector Work Under Pressure From New Technologies and Artificial Intelligence – Lessons From a Number of Foresight Studies"

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The worries are quite justified in a world where social and work relations are continuously accelerated by introducing new technologies. However, no specific emergent technology could be blamed or chosen as a focus. Artificial Intelligence (AI) went through different “booms” in the 50s, in the 80s, and now. Each time, a different part of AI could be pointed to as responsible for bringing new challenges to social life, but a similar approach can be directed to data spaces, natural language processing, or smart phones, just to mention a few.

The big challenge at work is really bringing new technology to an environment dominated by social differences, first of all. That affects negatively the effect of AI and automation on “creating new jobs” and “saving people from tedious work,” because they create new jobs that are not reachable for the same worker. Social position would make work recycling quite difficult, except by replacing the worker with a younger and better educated one (more familiar with computer systems).

From a social relations point of view, the challenge is to change to new social and work relations where humans and robots interact collaboratively - human-machine symbiosis. That will be a demand not just to save money, but for surviving, taking into account the new demands brought by climate changes, epidemics, etc.

Production and value-creation would be changing too. In this case, the problem is Service Engineering Design, which is just emerging and is not practiced in the market. New engineers are not prepared to do that, either to combine stakeholders' and users' viewpoints or to deal with value co-creation, which includes work conditions. However, Service Engineering cannot be reduced to AI.

Finally, AI is not just machine learning, and cognitive systems, including CRPA, can be based on symbolic logic as well. The point seems to be flexibility, and automation and robotics are not good at that. Thus, new jobs would require more decision capacity to face unusual situations (not repetitive ones), and again, the problem is how to recycle the mass of workers prepared to make simple tasks, even if they have the cognitive capacity to do more. So the worries go beyond AI, RPA, Cognitive Robotics, quantum computation, or any specific technology.