How to Conceive of and Implement a Third Way for AI?

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Human life is multi-community

Our lives unfold across countless communities, often transversal and ephemeral [Buber 2018], to mention only interpersonal social communities (this reflection could be extended to the communities we also form with non-human actors [Latour 1989]).

These communities are not static; they evolve, overlap, and recombine. Grasping their diversity helps us understand the complexity of social life and the many ways in which human beings seek social connection.

To illustrate community diversity, let's venture a very simplified representation:

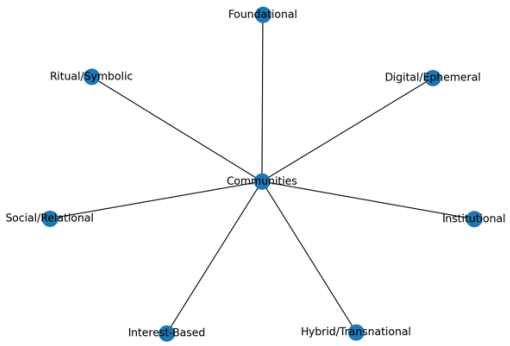

Fig. 1 : Human societies are structured by a vast array of communities—some enduring, others ephemeral. These communities provide identity, belonging, support, and meaning. This figure presents a simple overview of these diverse forms of human association.

1. Foundational and Long-Term Communities:
   - Family and Kinship Groups: Nuclear families, extended families, clans, lineages;
   - Geographic Communities: Villages, towns, neighborhoods, rural-urban clusters;
   - Ethnolinguistic Communities: Groups united by language, culture, or ancestry;
   - Religious and Spiritual Communities: Congregations, orders, faith-based associations.
2. Institutional and Organizational Communities:
   - Educational Communities: Schools, universities, alumni networks.
   - Professional Communities: Occupational groups, trade guilds, scientific associations;
   - Corporate and Workplace Communities: Enterprises, teams, departments, corporate cultures;
   - Political and Civic Communities: Nations, Parties, advocacy groups, local councils.
3. Interest-Based and Creative Communities:
   - Artistic Communities: Writers, musicians, visual artists, digital creators;
   - Hobbyist and Enthusiast Groups: Gaming communities, makerspaces, collectors;
   - Cultural Communities: Film clubs, theatre groups, folk traditions.

4. Social and Relational Communities:
   - Friendship Networks: Informal yet deeply influential groups;
   - Support and Care Communities: Mutual-aid groups, caregiving circles;
   - Life-Stage Communities: Parent groups, retirees' clubs, student groups.
5. Digital and Ephemeral Communities:
   - Online Platforms: Forums, social media groups, virtual worlds.
   - Temporary Collaborative Communities: Hackathons, online challenges, co-creation events;
   - Event-Based Communities: Festivals, pop-up gatherings, conferences;
   - Fandom Communities: Shared interests around media, games, or public figures.
6. Ritual, Cultural, and Symbolic Communities:
   - Communities of Practice: Groups built around shared craft or expertise;
   - Ceremonial Communities: Gatherings for rites, traditions, or shared memory;
   - Narrative or Mythic Communities: Groups linked by stories, heritage, or collective identity.
7. Hybrid and Transnational Communities:
   - Diasporic Communities: Maintaining ties across borders;
   - Hybrid Professional-Cultural Groups: Tech-culture intersections, art-science communities;
   - Global Digital Communities: Distributed yet cohesive networks.

Defining these community networks would only be meaningful by situating them, which is another way of discussing human cultures (in the sense of [Jullien 2016]).

Of course, human cultures exchange and adapt, particularly to technological transformations: for example, the rapid digitization of our content, practices, and tools, by impacting our territorial engrams, our temporalities, and our relationship to work, as well as our ways of thinking, profoundly transforms our social life ([McLuhan 1964]).

Individual uses of generative Artificial Intelligence for general purposes favor certain communities, with a tendency towards hegemony

Since its invention at the beginning of the Cold War and its American debut at Dartmouth College [McCarthy et al. 1956], Artificial Intelligence (AI) has challenged the primacy of computation in favor of the fundamentally heuristic interplay of human representations. The challenge was to develop an interpretive aid capable of scaling to the vast scale of multi-source, multi-channel military intelligence and addressing new needs, primarily linked to the characteristics of the Cold War or to civilian equivalents.

AI researchers at the time were often Americans, frequently recent immigrants to the US, or even Europeans, most influenced by continental and metaphysical philosophy, familiar with the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers (Thales, Heraclitus, Parmenides) and classical philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Porphyry), as well as German (Husserl, Heidegger), French (Merleau-Ponty), and South American (Varela, Maturana) phenomenologists.

Following the Imitation Game proposed by Turing (1950), so-called symbolic AI research (as opposed to the connectionist approach) is based on the modeling of human representations and, consequently, on the corpus of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Critics of this approach (Terry Winograd, Hubert Dreyfus, Roger Schank, with the exception of John Searle and his famous Chinese Room) are directly inspired by phenomenologists and primarily concern the lack of bodily engrams in AI systems.

Even though it has always contained a connectionist component (referring to neural networks), the symbolic component of AI research—majority, even hegemonic, until 2012—drew heavily on the social sciences and humanities tradition to produce representations and models of knowledge and computational calculation, and thus of the multi-community fabric of human life.

Starting with [Krizhevsky et al. 2012], the trend reversed, and connectionist AI gained prominence, culminating in its mainstream success in November 2022 with the release of ChatGPT, three years ago.

This connectionist approach to AI differs fundamentally from the historically dominant approach, as it relies on computation on massive datasets (rather than knowledge modeling) defined as agnostic (independent of the theories of the domains considered), based exclusively on statistical processing and numerical transformations of probability distributions ([Mallat 2025]).

Breaking epistemologically with the scientific tradition of falsification and critical validation of theoretical domain knowledge, and still unable to explain its results in these terms, what is now commonly called AI is disrupting our traditional relationship with expertise and the humanities and social sciences.

Which communities are now privileged by the intensive individual uses of generative Artificial Intelligence for general purposes? Individuals tend to experience a feeling of omnipotence, which puts them in direct contact with a kind of universal knowledge, without the sometimes humiliating mediation of scholars, experts, know-it-alls, and professors.

The very large American tech companies also constitute highly defined communities, as do nations when they concern themselves, often in rivalry, with regulating AI technologies, hoping for regained sovereignty.

Omnipotent individuals, rival nations, giga-corporations, a universal abstract world (and, more recently, innovative startups): This is the cosmology implicitly promoted since 2022 by the intensive use of connectionist AI. Furthermore, a false promise of general AI and large language models (LLMs) trained on gigantic example databases—also often implicit—contributes to the desertification of communities, solely for the benefit of an extremely reductive game: LLMs, by virtue of a "who can do the most can do the least" principle, are supposedly spontaneously capable of convincing at the local level, being recognized as capable of convincing at the global level. This intuition, however, is misleading: to be locally relevant, nothing can replace training based on local data (which may be scarcer and therefore difficult to collect in sufficient quantities). General aptitude cannot be a mechanical guarantee of local aptitude, lest all particularities be diluted in favor of a homogenizing, globalized mush.

Thus, contemporary AI—which we have known and used with the general public since 2022—tends to make us consider as negligible the communities that constitute the richness and nuance of our human lives. Rendered invisible and unequipped by AI systems, these communities are deemed non-essential.

A Third Way for AI

The *AI Action Summit* in Paris (February 2025) opened a path that is being further developed by the *AI Impact Summit* in Delhi (February 2026), and which partly involves re-evaluating human communities as potential sites of renewed focus for AI applications. Local Learning Machines (LLMs), which concentrate many of the difficult problems raised by contemporary AI (resource consumption, weaponization, concentration of data (and therefore power) by Big Tech or Chinese surveillance companies, opaque management of personal data), would no longer be the only objects worthy of AI's attention.

By returning to AI systems of a reasonable size, trained on controlled learning datasets, and hybridized with traditional information systems and symbolic AI systems, it is possible to alleviate a significant portion of the tensions in the field. Claims of sovereignty over the entire AI value chain could then give way to reasoned and collaborative strategic autonomy, with the diversity of communities and use cases fostering cooperation.

In this new perspective, AI could finally become a tool used to address our pernicious problems, rather than risking becoming just another one.

India naturally has a significant role to play in this open landscape, given its experience with Public Digital Infrastructures (DPIs) which, when applied to the sharing of training data for AI (this is the raison d'être of the open-source DEPA architecture, for Digital Empowerment and Protection Architecture, see www.depa.world), can help regulate these AI technologies through the traceability of their large-scale implementation.

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