

Digital Stance

Man, Machine — Reflections On Digital

a **whitepaper**

executive summary

Tour d'horizon of the **current digital landscape**, philosophical extrapolation, identification of risks and opportunities. Why **design is important** and how designers can further the **success of your business**.

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Cause and Effect

"Digital", the world murmurs... or moans depending on circumstance. Most people don't question or reflect the word correctly, everyone "knows" what "digital" means. What they forget is the analogous, the material, the visceral ramifications in real life intrinsically tied to most digital action.

With the exception of immersive gaming and virtual reality-experiences designed for entertainment, all digital activity aims for concrete physical results, a somatic consequence: a user of the (well done) uber-app might be pleased by design and usability (UI and UX), however, the desired effect will always be the fast appearance of a vehicle taking him to his destination in the real world.

So mostly **digital is a means to an end**, not the end in itself. And so the paramount task of communications design in 2017 is the weaving and fusing, the coalescence of the digital-virtual and the analogous, physical world. It's all about communication, messages, data, the digital part is only a channel.

Big Data

gamification

Theater of Operation

LBS

Location based services

AR/VR

Augmented/Virtual reality

The concepts mentioned on this page will be decisive drivers of technological and social development, each individual in weight and direction but still all influencing each other and aligning in time to form **"the great convergence"** (≠ "singularity"). Probably the most influential concept here being the blockchain.

blockchain

cloud

autonomous mobility

SaaS

Software-as-a-Service

AI

artificial intelligence

The vector of innovation will move within these "induction fields" and influence and disrupt all areas of human existence — **short- mid- AND longterm.**

3D/4D printing

smart cities/
environments

robotification

alternative interfaces

gestures, voice

IoT

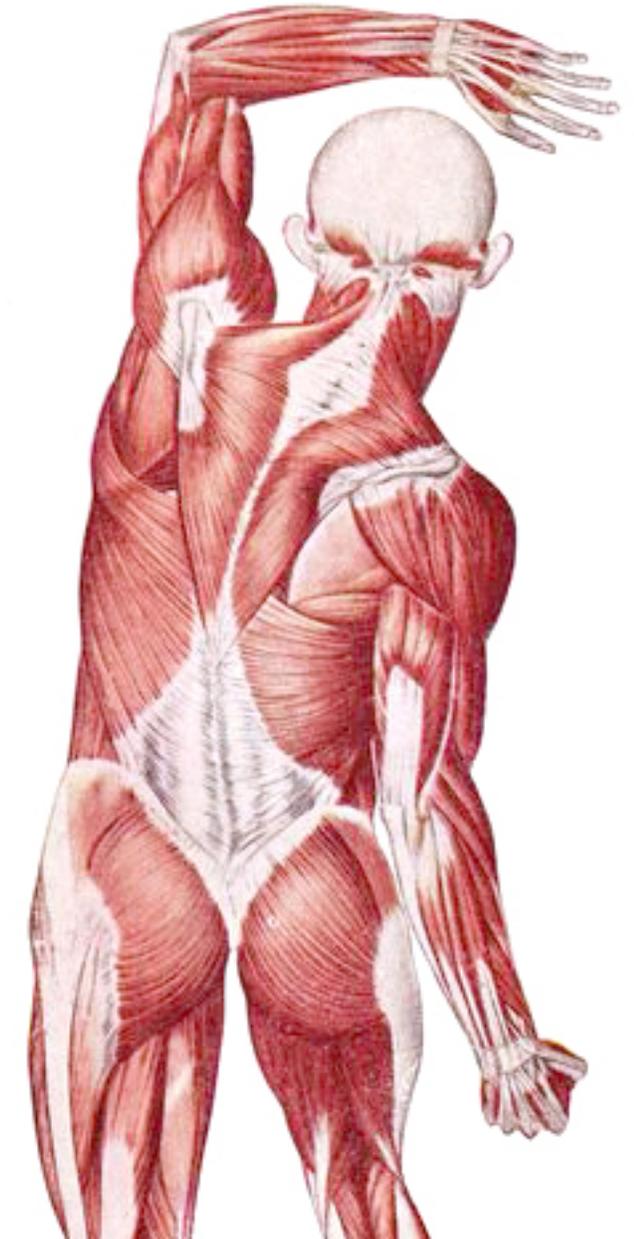
Internet of Things

Digital Skeleton

There's been a lot of talk about the "digitalisation" of companies or institutions, there's a need to be "represented in the [inter]net"; usually meaning having at least a website, most likely enhanced by profiles on various social media platforms like facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat et al. Pretty basic stuff. Hardly ever does it mean generating innovative ideas, **breaking the mold of communicative interaction**.

Here's an image: every single entity using any shape or form of electronic means to communicate — basically made commonly available with the spreading of the commercial telegraph mid-19th century — by that fact evolutionary developed a natural "Digital Skeleton". Meaning that today's companies and institutions always had that digital base, and — just like in sports — it is a matter of intent and consequence to train it like a pro athlete, stay fit on amateur level or be a couch potato and let sloth take over.

Phone, email, text .. you get in touch with clients and vendors. Even previously strictly analog media like posters and flyers are subject to disruption and convergence (eg **interactive billboards**), so again, digital.



Future of Work



It's only the beginning of the 2nd digital revolution: operating, as well as the role of machines will change dramatically, lots of human workplaces will simply disappear. Of course new jobs will emerge through this technological advancement but smaller in numbers and demanding different and more sophisticated skillsets than those made redundant possess.

Obviously this will have massive political, social and philosophical implications — a janiform situation where your accumulated skillset will determine whether you experience it as Utopia or Dystopia — which cannot be covered in this paper; just one major prompt here: the **Basic Income**.

The subject-matter the innovative communications designer has to focus on is the advancement of artificial intelligence and the availability of new user interface-technology; he/she should strive to keep up, help develop and put to use these technologies.

From the command line, through joysticks and trackpads to mouse and graphical user interfaces we can see interaction moving on to "touch", "voice" and **gestures**, developments UX and UI professionals must take in consideration.

MMRPRLs*

Extreme-splintering of user behaviour in focus.

From the world of gaming we know the term MMORPG — “Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games” — virtual and near infinite worlds a player can roam with his avatar. This representative manifestation can be customised with character traits, features and equipment to the preference and intentions of the user.

Convergence and interdependence will make technology become invisible, funnelled and amalgamated in the background of the physical world (smart environments). Alternative interaction systems like bionics, implants, exoskeletons, cyborg-tech will become feasible. The social acceptance and speed of implementation of these various technologies will split communities along social and regional lines into a **fractal caste system**, resulting in — *Massive Multiplayer Role Playing Real Lives.

Naturally this development will be accompanied by a turf war **open source systems vs proprietary corporation standards** (Google / Android, Apple / iOS, Microsoft, IBM, every single player in the automotive industry, electronics majors, Elon Musk, et cetera). As usual for the best practice to emerge there will be a lot of dead ends and trial and error until eventually a critical mass will establish facts.



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Digital Significance

Humans are children at heart. Controlled by ludic drive they yearn for control and instant gratification triggered by their actions — as demonstrated by the “Like”-culture of various social communities. The more direct and individual the address (or the feedback) the more accessible the recipient. Which incidentally explains the current hype of **-> programmatic advertising** (as prime example Cambridge Analytica, the “data-strategic-enterprise” that allegedly brought us the presidency of Donald Trump and the Brexit; alternatively Parisian start-up Liegey Muller Pons (LMP) with Emmanuel Macrons “En Marche!”).

AI and big data will drive this trend even further resulting in absolute unique and personalised addressing of the individual, which in turn raises the question of **Digital Significance** within the addressee: how significant am i / is my status in (connected) life, how relevant is a product / website / offer / community / service for my situation?

Digital Nation

Websites, apps, and other digital touch points will morph into AI-dominated connected systems of interaction. A user's input will become a (valuable) drop in big-data oceans. What is hidden beneath hysterical privacy paranoia today will be discovered as tradeable stock **by users**, data will be assigned a much higher status (user-data and -interactions as a new currency, the **blockchain-technology** again being the prime example: a closed network in which all users check and confirm each interaction, thereby validating it. A true digital-democratic Utopia. According to a lot of experts this will be **the** disruptive technological shift in the near future; and potentially the subject of a future **whitepaper**) companies who already trade in this business today and get this data for next to nothing will have to significantly ramp up their war chest.

When people realise the weight and value of active participation in the connected realm the focus will be set on **reflection of each digital action**, also they will become more selective: whom do i trust with my data? Which group represents my values? Who appreciates my interaction, which Digital Nation do i want to belong to ?

Welcome to the future. What's the reason for your stay?



About the Author



Harald Weber was born in the Styrian city of Leoben in 1973 — way before the introduction of facebook. He loves the technology of the 21st century, but introduces the term of the "**digital ancestor**" to counter the ubiquitous "digital native": "Our first computers used the command line, we knew about the machine code behind the tech, and learned advanced languages. GUIs (graphic user interfaces), joysticks, mouse, touch grew up with us, the first websites were our (monochromatic) Big Bang. No digital native had an MSN messenger account. When we needed the internet, we had to call it, damnit!"

He lives, works, and **can be hired** as "designer of everything" in Vienna and engages with socio-technological development and its' impact on art, culture and everyday life.

touch me.

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