

# The purpose of innovations

Advice from  
Agnis Stibe,  
Transformational  
Designer



**Artificial intelligence (AI) is going to be just another buzzword if we won't try zooming out and locating it within a bigger picture of our lives. What is AI? What is the purpose of AI? This discussion is currently missing from the discourse around AI. To a certain degree, everyone is interested in talking about AI, many say it is important, but why? How? For whom? How AI will influence our daily routines? Finding answers to these questions is essential already today.**

**Agnis is a Social Engineer at MIT Media Lab: [transforms.me](http://transforms.me)**

Nowadays, there are experts in technology, experts in sensors, data analytics, machine learning, and so on – we have this fragmented expertise and we are just refining technology, but there is no one really thinking about and defining the purpose and contribution of these innovations. Is there anyone responsible for painting such a big picture, containing all the emerging innovations and their interplay in the future?

I'd like to address a concern that many people have – that AI is going to be a threat. For thousands of years the mankind had a very simple evolutionary driver – to survive. Now, we have collectively evolved to a different level of intelligence. We have escaped from the worries that we had hundreds of years ago. However, it is very likely that the same mechanism of fear that helped people to survive back then, now triggers us to be afraid of these unknown new technologies. We naturally look out for danger whenever we face uncertainty. Today, many don't know what AI really is, thus are becoming scared of it. Quite commonly, our thoughts shape how we feel. Both positive and negative thinking continuously influence and determine our lives and wellbeing. While fear can be powerful behavioral motivator, it is important to recognize that fear crowds the mind with negative emotional beliefs. Thus, the opportunity today is in building forward-thinking and technology-supported societies by minimizing fear driven aspects and maximizing the behavioral drivers of positive pursuit.

I have a strong opinion that intelligence is something that people have developed over centuries of evolution.

Thus, for machines to be able to resemble anything similar to human intelligence is almost impossible, because people create machines. Consequently, there will always be people at the very inception of any technology, so there will always be traces of human footprints and the biases of creators in AI. Nevertheless, machines have multiple strengths, such as abilities to process big data, compute much faster, and store large volumes of fine grain details. Undoubtedly, those are great benefits machines can provide to people. But, for intelligence to emerge, any machine has to become creative, right? So, the question is – if or when a machine can become as creative as a human? It is essentially important to explain to everybody that machines can get only as intelligent as we make them. Complete intelligence needs to have high levels of independence, and I don't believe that machines can reach that state of being independent of human support. We always direct machines to complete certain tasks that we want them to perform.

While working with machines, we also have to understand how technology influences our behavior. New technological advancements may also enable negative behavioral impacts, for example – digital addiction, distracted sense of reality, inactivity, cyber-crimes, etc. Nevertheless, let's be mindful as, in the end, we are making our final choices. Therefore, let's design our future environments as ones that orchestrate more positive, encouraging, and fulfilling series of daily interactions. The opportunities – and challenges – are right there in front of us to guide our future in a more purposeful yet rewarding way. **LV**