The Software Society - Cultural and Economic Impact

Description: Today, everything seems to be digital, driven by software. Advances in software are powering rapid changes in technology, impacting us as individuals and through our economy. On the positive side, we have increasing access to computer intelligence and all it can do for us (our fondness for Web services being one obvious example). The Software Society expands on current trends to show how our connection with computers will increase and benefit us daily, with interaction through language and other means, and particularly through mobile devices. This increasingly tighter connection is an important part of human society today. The trend creates an opportunity for innovation that can be the next big driver of economic growth.

But The Software Society also warns we must address the potential downsides of the rapid advances in software and institutional dependence on software. One example is our vulnerability to cyberwarfare. Less obvious is the danger of over-automation, replacing people in the workplace with increasingly intelligent software rather than enhancing productivity by giving people better software-based tools. Meisel argues that we are seeing this effect now, with a preference for full automation in the current recovery rather than re-hiring workers. Even with slow job growth, median incomes are falling as many middle-class jobs are being taken over by software. The author suggests a controversial solution, an “automation tax” that encourages productivity enhancements through better jobs rather than eliminating them.

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