

*Connection* is “a relationship in which a person or thing is linked or associated with something else.” If we consider though the more technological meaning, a connection is the set of operations and preliminary information exchanges required to establish a channel of communication between distributed systems or computing resources. An essential element to enable a connection is the protocol: an agreed set of rules the systems involved in the communication need to comply and use. But what this technical definitions of connection have enabled to a more broader sense of the meaning of “connection”? How people consider to be connected in everyday life?

Internet, Radio, Television, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Mobile Phones and many more modern instruments, all use the “technical” definition of connection to work properly, but at the same time are essential enablers of “human connectivity”. As a famous advertisement of a mobile phone producer proclaimed/promised “connecting people”, this is the final aim of the technological connectivity.

Already in the late 60s sociologists started to investigate how people were connected with each other and how close in terms of chain of acquaintances two random people were. The results of the experiments of Stanley Milgram have brought to the famous saying “6 degree of separation” that is people on the world are on average connected by a chain of acquaintances composed of just 6 people. Four decades later with indeed more people in the world, but also much more connecting-enabling technologies the distance between people could be even reduced, in a world that is indeed shrinking and becoming more global.

But having a small and global world tightened with high connectivity is always positive and beneficial? Are effects enabled by networks always providing good consequences? Almost everybody has at least once experienced how fast and lethal computer viruses are in their spread and infectious in e-mail contact list going ahead in a increasing effects. It is not only technology, but in a global and tightly connected world with countries and economies closely linked together the effects of a failure in one small part of the world may quickly spread and involve the whole world. The global economic crisis of 2008-2009 in its broad and spreading effects is an emblematic example.

With more and more device able to connect to the Internet nowadays connectivity and communication seem an essential human right. Recent experiences of civil and political crisis in the Middle-East has shown how one of the first measures used by dictatorial government to discourage or avoid protest is to stop Internet or mobile lines communication, thus treating connectivity as one of those other rights that are banned in those countries (e.g., expression, speech, print, thought).

Technology is always working on new technical forms of connection with new protocols and devices, however the final aim is always the same: unleash the power of people communicating and interacting together.

#### References:

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