Narrative-based human–artificial collaboration: A reflection on narratives as a framework for enhancing human–machine social relations

SERBANESCU Anca*; CIANCIA Mariana; PIREDDA Francesca; BERTOLO Maresa
Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano, Italy
* anca.serbanescu@polimi.it

This paper aims at reflecting on human–artificial intelligence (AI) collaboration in the process of cultural production and depicts the collective socio-cultural imaginary focusing on humans’ intrinsic vulnerabilities related to AI systems, which are often perceived as a way of reshaping human presence within contemporary society. Abandoning an anthropocentric perspective, contemporary ecosystems should include non-human and AI systems, and our hypothesis states that the interactions among them could be reshaped adopting a narrative framework. Humans are social animals: thanks to narratives that welcome plurality, sociality can be extended to include AI systems. Considering such premises, relationships between humans and AI may also enrich existing relational ecosystems with new meanings that challenge and redefine the limits of what is considered socially acceptable. The intention is to propose an integration of narrative tools and world building practice within interaction design processes: reading storytelling as a mindset and as a tool, to underline the crucial role of narrative in supporting the emotional dialogue among humans and AI systems, creating an overall sense of belonging between human and non-human actors.

Interactive digital narratives, Micronarratives, Human-AI collaboration, Communication Design
About the Authors:

**Anca Serbanescu** She graduated with honours in 2018 in Communication Design at the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano, with a thesis on territorial promotion through cycling tourism. She is a PhD candidate in Design, a member of Imagis Lab research Lab and a member of ARDIN Graduate Research Committee. Her research investigates Human-AI social relation through interactive digital narratives, she currently works as a teaching assistant at the School of Design of the Politecnico di Milano.

**Ciancia Mariana** Ph.D., Researcher at Department of Design, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano. She is a member of Imagis Lab research Lab and Deputy Director of the Specializing Master in Brand Communication. Her research deals with new media and participatory culture to understand how multichannel phenomena (crossmedia and transmedia) are changing the production, distribution, and consumption of narrative environments. National and international publications include books, book chapters, journal articles, conference proceedings on transmedia phenomenon, communication strategies, narrative formats (interactive narratives), and audiovisual artifacts.

**Piredda Francesca** Ph.D, Associate Professor at Design Department, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano; Scientific Director of Specializing Master in Brand Communication, Master in Art Direction & Copywriting, Master in Design the Digital Strategy at POLI.design, Politecnico di Milano. She is a founding member of Imagis Lab and collaborates with DESIS International Network. Her research activities and international publications deal with brand communication, audiovisual language, participatory video, digital media and the narratives. Being committed to the transformative power of stories, she leads research and educational activities such as community TV and social media, content strategy, worldbuilding and storytelling techniques both for social inclusion and brand communication. Being interested in action-research and participative design approaches, she develops and experiments participatory video and narrative-driven processes and tools for co-design. In 2017 she received the XXV ADI Compasso D’Oro award.

**Bertolo Maresa** Assistant Professor, Department of Design, School of Design, Politecnico di Milano. She is a founding member of Imagis Lab research Lab, faculty member of the PhD School of her Department, founding member of the Lusory Warp inter-department research group and member of the Game Science Research Centre of IMT Lucca. Her research deals with Game Studies and Game Design, with a specific focus on Games for Social Change and on the relationship between game artifacts, players and culture. She contributes to national and international research through publications of books, book chapters, journal articles and conference proceedings. among which "Game Design. Gioco e giocare tra teoria e progetto" (Bertolo M, Mariani I; Pearson, 2014), "Boardgame Interior Design" (Bertolo M, Scullica F, Zamporri R; FrancoAngeli 2016) and "La Cicala e le formiche. Gioco, vita e utopia" (Suits, B; curatorship Antonacci, F, Bertolo, M; Edizioni Junior, 2021), the Italian translation of B. Suits’ “Grasshopper. Games, Life and Utopia”. 