

The ChatGPT hype as a medium to popularize and jeopardize social debates about values and virtues in education.

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Backgrounds

- All representations simplify their target systems. This makes the use of narratives, models, and images in political debates not neutral but value sensitive.
- “Appealing stories” simulate experiencing how values matter *from within* and allow to bypass the rational assessment of their ingredients and composition *from outside* the story world [1]. This makes them suitable for science communication and manipulation (fig. 1).
- Perceived values at stake and medial avenues for critique follow **narrative accelerators** and a biased **attention economy**. Narrative accelerators are events or artifacts that orchestrate & accelerate the generation and dissemination of stories [2].
- **Hyping** means to inappropriately exaggerate benefits or worries [3]. **Exaggerations are inappropriate** when they hinder communication aims, such as accuracy or predictive relevance, e.g., for the sake of enthusiasm or attention, or when they (implicitly) suggest harmful but unsupported inferences, e.g., by omitting or bypassing information (fig. 1.).

Vision Assessment

The futuristic debates on “grey goo” and “nanobots” first revealed the problems of engaging with “speculative ethics” [3] and overly “*futuristic communication*” in Technology Assessment [4]. In generating attention while being too detached from present knowledge, “*tunnel visions*” rather distract than help for responsibly deliberating values in public. Closer examination revealed different functions of visions to orientate, motivate, coordinate, and consider what values people consider at stake [5,6,7]. In order to modulate stories and transform practices, a vision assessment [8] must explain the *dissemination, persuasion, and colligation* of evidence and other objects which, *similar to the “veto right” of sources in historical studies*, allow for learning and negotiating what counts as a “realistic” or “desirable” scenario in practice [9].

How do you know what values matter?

Introduction

The arguments in recent debates about AI in education were not entirely new. But, by November 2022, OpenAI, ChatGPT3, and Midjourney provided **props** and thrilling playgrounds that allowed literally everyone to **make-believe** future scenarios and disseminate simulated first-hand experiences about the relationship between AI technology and attainable or threatened values. As only the most thrilling and garnished but also *most efficient stories* stand out, buzzwords and hashtags triggered a **hyperbole spiral** towards *familiar stereotypes, folk history, and science-fiction tropes* that *simulate an inconspicuous agreement: Robots take over our jobs, students will cheat, authenticity will be blurred, and our freedom or skills degenerate.*

However, having new props and playgrounds does not mean that these stories are near to being true or represent the most pressing values. And here comes the problem: *Even if we do only pretend so for the sake of excitement, issues that were less specific to generative AI, such as labor rights, sustainability, and other harms AI is already causing fade into the background and we might soon find the wrong things and stereotype solutions on top of our agendas.*

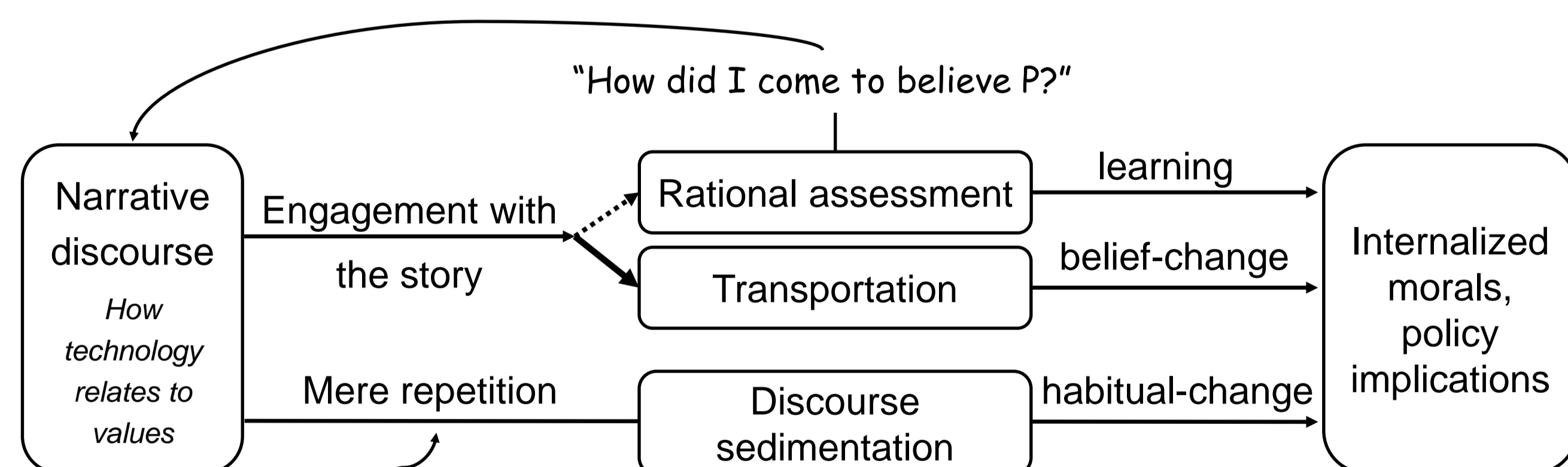
The dissemination and power of hype stories to shift normalcy expectations

Narratives instruct imagining a story, which is **a sequence of events** organized by the **plot**. Utopian and dystopian plots linguistically highlight selected **features, uses, and consequences of technology** as a **deviation from normalcy** that demands **either punishment or a reward** as a response. This deviation and response structure makes a story’s **moral or policy implication**:

- to either **preserve or re-establish values** (e.g., avoid actions or technology features)
- to **aspire to virtues or new normalcy** (e.g., develop and apply technology, but wisely).

We tell stories mostly without deliberating about their moral intent or epistemic value.

Instead, we want to share the excitement, communicate novelty, or just be part of a buzz and entertain ourselves – these values dominate narrativization, platform design, and mass-media communication, leaving little space for counter-narratives or more nuanced responses.



“what makes some stories disseminate?”
→ Attention economy, hype, buzzwords, platform design
→ Narrative accelerators, politics of expectation

Figure 1: Three pathways of powerful visions

Conclusion

As a **narrative accelerator**, the chatGPT3 release orchestrated the dissemination and the **nature of stories worth telling** incentivized hyperbolic deviations from an ever-shifting normalcy expectation towards popular tropes. *Therefore, the ChatGP3 hype was no surprise.*

The stories we tell indicate what values matter – but obviously not what should matter to us. A critical understanding of the dissemination and role of narratives is crucial for RRI when techno-hypes popularize tunnel visions and jeopardize democratic deliberation. The topicality of wishful worries makes a tempting stage for speculative technology ethics “in service of society”. But topicality is no good indicator to direct attention, funding, research efforts, and public engagements away from other challenges.

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