



Cultural route
of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel
du Conseil de l'Europe



Once Upon a Byte: Bridging Collective Imaginary and Technology

26 October 2024

Online via Zoom

Conference theme

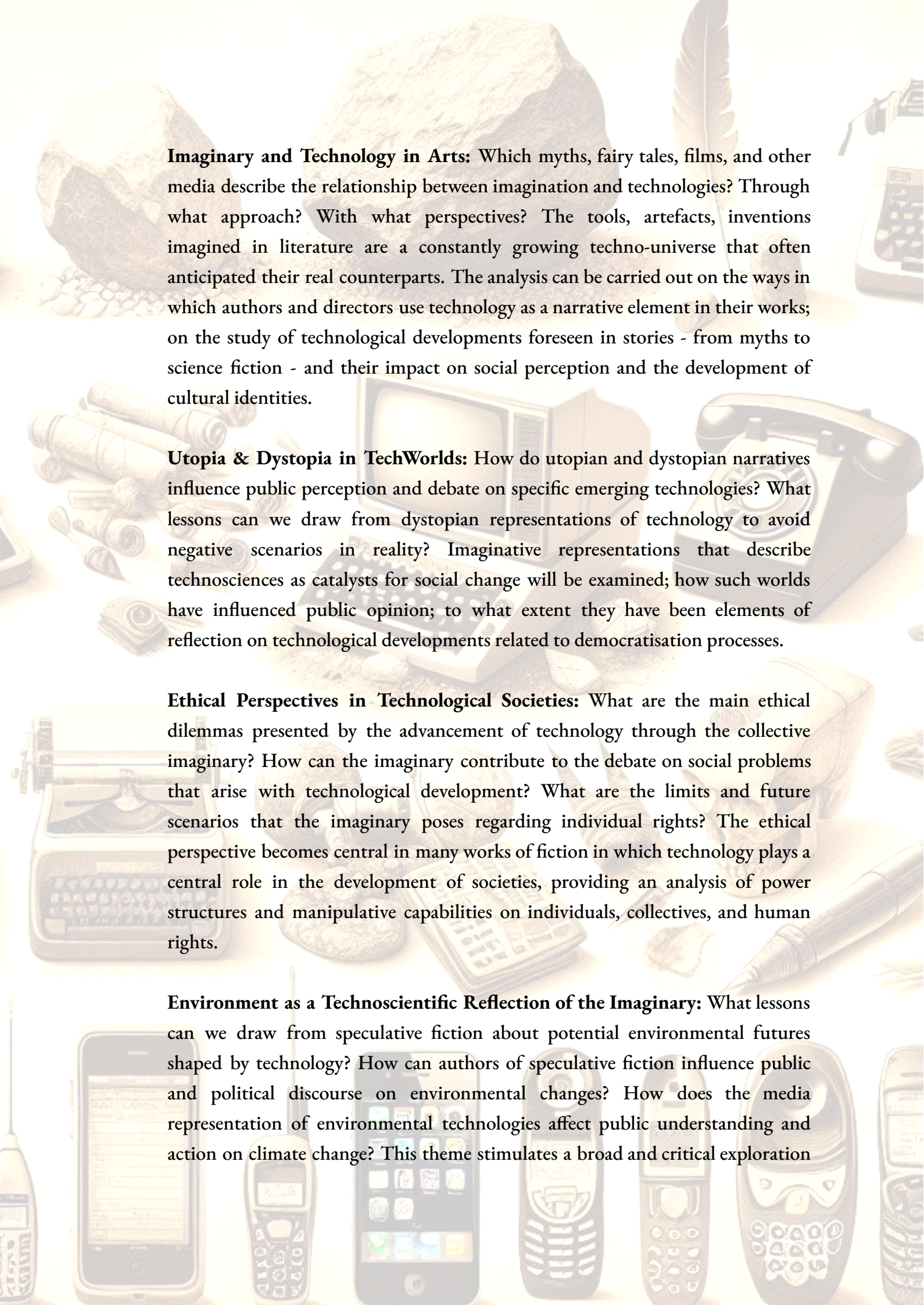
Collective imagination plays a distinctive role in the foundation and articulation of human societies to understand the construction of our cognition of the world. Imagination not only reflects the world but actively contributes to creating it through the representations and perspectives we develop as individuals and as societies.

In light of this, myths, legends, stories, as well as political ideologies, ethical norms, and cultural practices are relational and behavioural models that mutually influence each other and contribute to the formation of socially shared identities and values.

To analyse this perspective, we will examine the relationship between imagination and the technoscientific apparatus - from fire to artificial intelligence - which has always brought about radical transformations in categories of belonging, institutional architectures, behaviour models, through expedients that we could define as "techno-magical."

The call is open to all disciplinary fields and to those who investigate the relationships between the imaginary and technosciences as a field of discovery, interpretation, anticipation, and analysis of social constructions. Starting from myth, fairy tales, literature, cinema, comics, manga to new technologies, theoretical and empirical contributions will be accepted that allow reflection on the potential of the imaginary and its function as a poetic act of new tools, models, ethics, cultures, and societies.

Within this broader theme, we encourage the discussion of:

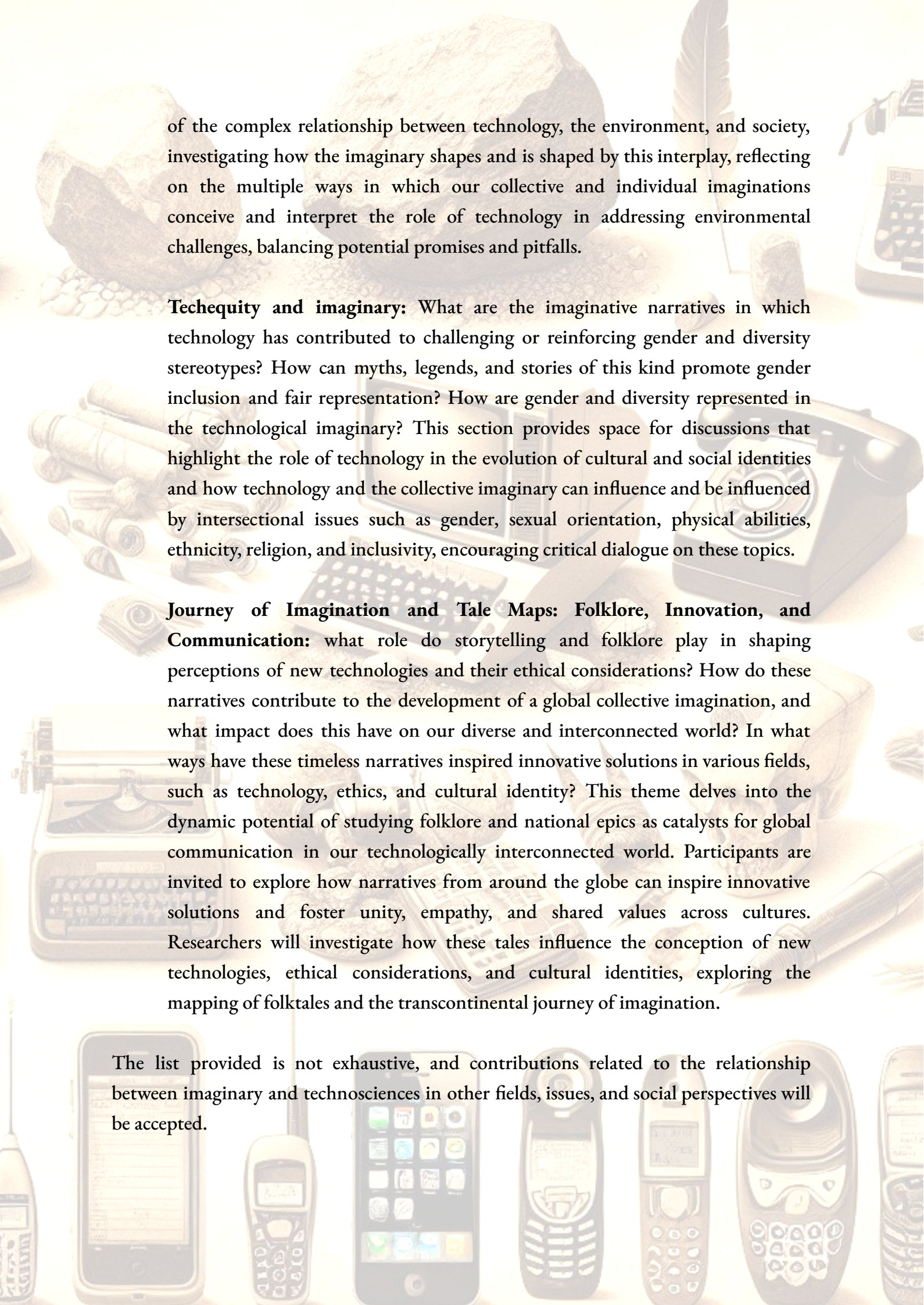


Imaginary and Technology in Arts: Which myths, fairy tales, films, and other media describe the relationship between imagination and technologies? Through what approach? With what perspectives? The tools, artefacts, inventions imagined in literature are a constantly growing techno-universe that often anticipated their real counterparts. The analysis can be carried out on the ways in which authors and directors use technology as a narrative element in their works; on the study of technological developments foreseen in stories - from myths to science fiction - and their impact on social perception and the development of cultural identities.

Utopia & Dystopia in TechWorlds: How do utopian and dystopian narratives influence public perception and debate on specific emerging technologies? What lessons can we draw from dystopian representations of technology to avoid negative scenarios in reality? Imaginative representations that describe technosciences as catalysts for social change will be examined; how such worlds have influenced public opinion; to what extent they have been elements of reflection on technological developments related to democratisation processes.

Ethical Perspectives in Technological Societies: What are the main ethical dilemmas presented by the advancement of technology through the collective imaginary? How can the imaginary contribute to the debate on social problems that arise with technological development? What are the limits and future scenarios that the imaginary poses regarding individual rights? The ethical perspective becomes central in many works of fiction in which technology plays a central role in the development of societies, providing an analysis of power structures and manipulative capabilities on individuals, collectives, and human rights.

Environment as a Technoscientific Reflection of the Imaginary: What lessons can we draw from speculative fiction about potential environmental futures shaped by technology? How can authors of speculative fiction influence public and political discourse on environmental changes? How does the media representation of environmental technologies affect public understanding and action on climate change? This theme stimulates a broad and critical exploration



of the complex relationship between technology, the environment, and society, investigating how the imaginary shapes and is shaped by this interplay, reflecting on the multiple ways in which our collective and individual imaginations conceive and interpret the role of technology in addressing environmental challenges, balancing potential promises and pitfalls.

Techequity and imaginary: What are the imaginative narratives in which technology has contributed to challenging or reinforcing gender and diversity stereotypes? How can myths, legends, and stories of this kind promote gender inclusion and fair representation? How are gender and diversity represented in the technological imaginary? This section provides space for discussions that highlight the role of technology in the evolution of cultural and social identities and how technology and the collective imaginary can influence and be influenced by intersectional issues such as gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, ethnicity, religion, and inclusivity, encouraging critical dialogue on these topics.

Journey of Imagination and Tale Maps: Folklore, Innovation, and Communication: what role do storytelling and folklore play in shaping perceptions of new technologies and their ethical considerations? How do these narratives contribute to the development of a global collective imagination, and what impact does this have on our diverse and interconnected world? In what ways have these timeless narratives inspired innovative solutions in various fields, such as technology, ethics, and cultural identity? This theme delves into the dynamic potential of studying folklore and national epics as catalysts for global communication in our technologically interconnected world. Participants are invited to explore how narratives from around the globe can inspire innovative solutions and foster unity, empathy, and shared values across cultures. Researchers will investigate how these tales influence the conception of new technologies, ethical considerations, and cultural identities, exploring the mapping of folktales and the transcontinental journey of imagination.

The list provided is not exhaustive, and contributions related to the relationship between imaginary and technosciences in other fields, issues, and social perspectives will be accepted.

Submission Guidelines

Proposal submissions should be in the form of a single Microsoft Word document and must include the following:

- Speaker information (Full name, affiliation, city/country, email address)
- Title of presentation
- 5 keywords
- Abstract up to 500 words (including spaces)

Submit and questions: info@europeanfairytaleroute.eu ; edmondo.grassi@uniroma5.it

Language: English

Length of the presentation at the conference: 15 minutes.

Website: <https://criticalinterpretations.wordpress.com/>

Deadlines:

Abstracts submission: 15 June 2024

Notification of acceptance: 30 June 2024

Scientific and Organizational Committee

Edmondo Grassi (Università San Raffaele Roma)

Varduhi Baloyan (Hovhannes Toumanian Museum)

Patrick Ryan (European Fairy Tale Route)