



“Narrating the climate crisis” – an experiment in the form of a series of conversations

Elisa Vanin and Alvisè Mattozzi

Politecnico di Torino, Department of Environmental, Land and Infrastructure Engineering (DIATI), Torino, Italy

The presentation intends to reflect about the relevance of narrating the climate crisis, by taking into account an ongoing initiative promoted by the Department of Environmental, Land and Infrastructure Engineering (DIATI) of Politecnico di Torino (PoliTo) called, indeed, “Narrare la crisi climatica”.

“Narrare la crisi climatica” is this year edition of an 8-year long initiative called “Conversazioni in Biblioteca” (**Conversations in the Library**). The Conversations aim to stimulate dialogue between hard sciences and social and human sciences, on topics related to environmental issues in the broader sense. The Conversations are open to the public, but they are also addressed to the wide PoliTo student community, to enhance their transdisciplinary skills.

With this year edition (the title can be translated into “**Narrating the climate crisis**”), we, as curator of the initiative, decided to invite, besides hard and social-human scientists, also people coming from what is usually called the “creative” domain (art, design, storytelling and writing, music, filmmaking, theater, etc.).

The presentation will analyze and discuss the way in which these three different forms of knowledge come together to dialogue around climate crisis and the way to narrate it.

We, as curators, have chosen the words “narrating” and “storytelling” knowing that human beings think, reason, understand and plan by telling stories to each other, and also knowing that the stories they tell themselves are not necessarily lies, quite the contrary. Even a scientific article, when it has to give an account of a transformation, a process, and the actions that have led to circumscribe it, highlight it, describe it, compare it, define it and perhaps explain it, will inevitably rely on a narrative.

We know that one of the strengths of narration is precisely its capacity to involve, to affabulate, to engage in a world, shared between the storyteller and those who participate in the narration and enjoy it, in order to come out, in the end, somewhat transformed - a transformation, therefore, that does not only concern the characters, events and facts narrated, but, on another level, also those who narrate and are narrated by them.

We know that these properties of narration do not only take place through words, which is why we decided to include in the conversation other expressive languages capable of creating a point of

contact between scholars and the public.

Our interest in narration started also by considering Amitav Ghosh's reflection about the inability of literature and art in general to deal with climate change and to narrate it, as a real imaginative failure (see Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2017)). We somehow wanted to probe if from 2017, when Ghosh published his reflection, up to now something was changed and if further change could be initiated by putting together three people for two hours discussing their experiences with the issue.

The presentation will analyze and reflect upon the interaction between the three forms of knowledge generated through the conversations.