



TITLE **Tell them anything but the truth: they will find their own**
How we visualize the map of the future with respect to the audience of our story

This paper presents our research in the visualization of complex systems. It focuses on the emerging need for a narrative approach for the understanding of complex networks. We consider narrations as tools with the paramount function of myths <to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience>¹

The listener (in fables or music) or the observer (in cinema and theater) plays a fundamental role in the narration process. The narrator evokes whereas the observer interprets through his imaginary. The more qualitative is the narrator evocation, the more the observer becomes co-author of the story.

In the visualization of complex networks, the designer should use a narrative mode of thought, giving to the audience a *good story* more than a *sound argument*².

As the movie director, the designer aim to choose the visualization that more preserves the complexity of the environment. As a result he takes a political stance: he directs actors (the elements of a system), he decides the light design (the choice of the elements to visualize), the set designs (the imagery to evoke), the different optical lens (the power of focusing) and most important, the critical point of view of the camera (intentionality).

We present the case of the Map of the Future we designed for Wired³. The goal of the map was to represent an imaginary future resulted from an IFTF research⁴.

As designer in order to deal with the qualitative nature of social, political and technological forecasts (i.e. “democratization of philanthropy”) we decided to tell a story where socio-technological coordinates play as actors on a retro futuristic set; lights spot the network most important links and the optical lens zooms in from abstract to tangible and figurative level of scale and a faraway viewpoint communicates our distance from the future.

AUTHORS Michele Graffieti, Politecnico di Milano, michele@graffieti.it
Luca Masud, Politecnico di Milano, lucamasud@gmail.com
Mario Porpora, Politecnico di Milano, mario.jfc@gmail.com
Donato Ricci, Politecnico di Milano, donato.ricci@mail.polimi.it
Gaia Scagnetti, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, gaia_sca@mit.edu

URL <http://namedgaia.com/index.php?/projects/we-will-be-here/>
<http://www.densitydesign.org/2009/10/02/we-will-be-here-map-of-the-future/#more-1346>

¹ Eco, U. (1994). *Six walks in the fictional woods*. Harvard University Press, pg. 87

² Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Harvard University Press

³ Wired Magazine Italian Edition, n.07 September 2009 <http://www.wired.it>

⁴ Institute for the Future, Palo Alto, CA <http://www.iftf.org/>