

2. Boundary Work, Anyone? Exploring Everyday Encounters Between Winnie the Bot and Humans Around It

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INTRODUCTION

Many predict that what has been framed as the utilisation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is about to trigger a large-scale revolution in organisations, leading to a radical improvement in performance. However, as the proponents of this line of thinking suggest, these benefits can only be harvested if organisations change their cultures and adopt data-centric views, abandoning the former practices of reliance on human experience and intuition (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; McAfee et al., 2012). Applied to the human realm, the use of AI technologies implies engaging in extensive data mining and analysis to facilitate hiring, performance, and team management (Kim et al., 2021). These changes also trigger fears of massive job losses as AI takes over the jobs previously performed by humans (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Davenport, 2018).

Another common discourse is that the fantastic claims about AI are severely overblown and misguided. However, these claims often appear to be swallowed by strategically placed people in organisations who are pushing AI technologies but who are often lacking even a basic understanding of what these technologies are. This is what Thompson and Briken (2017) call *digital delusion*. The grandiosity of this discourse and functional stupidity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) from the top down are serious contemporary problems that influential thinkers, such as Zuboff (2019) and Lanier (2014), have dedicated their careers to warning us against. Indeed, those working closely with AI technologies may have a much more grounded view of things than top management, as AI is gradually being implemented in organisations (Einola & Khoreva, 2023). In fact, what is common to the popular present-day discourse is that it represents

a technology-centric point of view, sidelining the role humans play in shaping the change – for better and worse.

Regardless of the disposition towards digital transformation one has adopted (including having none at all), the results of the digital revolution are dependent on the role people will assume in channelling it. This is not only about providing strategic guidance or fostering positive outcomes of AI over negative ones. More importantly, digital transformation is about how humans interact with technology, how much they are willing to learn about it, and how much they engage in producing work *with* technology rather than *by* technology (Anthony, 2021; Raisch & Fomina 2023). In our view, people who can cross boundaries and navigate between the human and technological realms, not only adjusting to but also shaping digital transformation, are very much needed. This calls for a curious mind towards both people and AI technologies, and boundary work between those affected, as the line between the human and technological spheres begins to blur.

Following Bange et al.'s research (2022) on boundary work, we refer to the ways those associated with an organisation or community build mental, social, and symbolic boundaries related to it through speech, writing, and images. In this understanding, people in roles such as customer, customer service advisor, and AI trainer can be seen as *boundary workers* who mediate the meanings constructed in relational interactions. In organisations deploying AI, roles are being transformed quite organically. This, we suggest, requires systematic, purposeful, and continuous boundary work for people to be able to establish and re-establish their roles in relation to both AI and each other as this technology is introduced and further developed.

In this chapter, we do not highlight the potential dangers associated with the implementation of AI technologies (Cellan-Jones, 2014; Lindebaum et al., 2020; Zuboff, 2019) or how these technologies can, as some suggest, almost magically serve managerial or organisational performance goals (Davenport, 2018; Schneider & Sting, 2020; Schwab, 2017). Instead, we build on our earlier thesis that micro-level studies around the coexistence between AI and humans are essential to understand how the introduction of AI unfolds whilst the digital revolution is still underway (Einola & Khoreva, 2023; Einola et al., 2023). To make the deployment of AI technologies smoother, it is important to uncover what is missing in high-level managerial talk and what may be incorrect in the predictions of prominent technology influencers.

Here, we seek to highlight an emerging isolation or lack of boundary work both between humans themselves and between humans and a recently deployed AI technology. To avoid this type of organisational solitude calls for purposeful relational adjustment, repair work, and planning of the coexistence between the AI application (in our case, a chatbot) and the various humans who will interact with it. We draw on our expertise from managing technology

projects in the field, our prior research on AI and human interaction, and most of all on our preliminary analysis and reflections from our ongoing empirical work with a company we pseudonymously call “The Big Bank”.

Our writing is inspired by Bruno Latour’s essay “Where are the missing masses?” (Latour, 1992), which blends philosophy of technology with sociology. We thus openly seek to counter what, for us, is an unfortunate tendency of many authors in management and organisational studies to erase the voice of the author and downplay insights emanating from interpretation based on long-term involvement in the field and in-depth engagement with the subject matter (Van Maanen, 2011).

HUMANS AND HUMANISATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN ORGANISATIONS

Typically, human agency in management and organisational studies of technology is either employed to critique technological determinism (Orlikowski & Barley, 2001) or downplayed within socio-material notions of “relational” or “symmetrical” action (e.g., Locke & Lowe, 2007). Humanised AI applications can also exist in the imaginaries of managers and employees in different occupations, fuelling various fantasies, thus amplifying existing emotions and altering their affective life in organisations (Einola et al., 2023). However, relationality with inert technology is limited even though we can no longer neglect effects such as alienation. Additionally, changes to organisations can affect humanised technology and, in turn, workplace relations, having real-life consequences that are still poorly understood.

It is increasingly common, even in mainstream research, to call AI applications “colleagues” or “teammates” (Einola et al., 2023; Larson & DeChurch, 2020). Watson (2019) suggests that the name of the discipline itself – AI – dares us to compare our human modes of reasoning with the behaviour of algorithms. It is not always clear whether such language is meant to be literal or metaphorical when we speak of machines that think, learn, take our jobs, are smart, stupid, and so on (Einola et al., 2023). In our everyday speech, machines have agency. In fact, AI has, since at least Alan Turing’s work in the 1950s, been conceptualised in anthropomorphic terms. This, as Watson (2019) notes, poses an ethical problem, because such seductive rhetoric is at best misleading and at worst dangerous (for instance, consider contexts such as international finance, medicine, and the military). Watson also argues that too much emphasis has been placed on the purported structural similarities between biological and artificial neural networks. The widespread tendency, even within the discipline of AI, to anthropomorphise machines makes it easier to convince us of their intelligence (Proudfoot, 2011), a quality given to AI

simply by us accepting to brand it as “intelligent” – but a notion that should be debated and contested.

According to Proudfoot (2011), while situations and contexts differ, AI is not “just like us” and can only exercise its agency because of a socially constructed context in which we have deliberately outsourced a specific task to a machine. It is always humans who choose whether to abdicate their authority (or not), to empower some piece of technology to intervene on our behalf. Thus, the responsibility, as well as moral agency, remains with humans, especially as misguided or false digital human likeness has been said to endanger humanness or even humanity, not only in science fiction but also in research (Porra et al., 2020).

ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND HUMAN–(RO)BOT INTERACTION

Anthropomorphism refers to the attribution of a human form, human characteristics, or human behaviour to non-human entities such as robots, computers, and animals (Bartneck et al., 2007, p. 369; Latour, 1992). The effects of humans anthropomorphising robots of different types lie at the centre of the “uncanny valley” theory proposed by Mori (1970), a robotics engineer. Over the past 50 years, this theory has become popular in human–robot interaction research, not least due to the development of increasingly human-like androids and improved computer graphics (Bartneck et al., 2007). The commercial success of many artefacts, from movie characters (i.e., in *Toy Story*, 1995) to robot receptionists, entertainment robots such as Sony’s Aibo, and humanoid ones by firms such as Boston Dynamics, largely depends on how humans relate to or feel around these characters and whether they find them likeable.

In his original essay (1970), Mori presents an illustration depicting a non-linear relation between human acceptance of a robot and its appearance. He predicts that a person’s response to a human-like robot would abruptly shift from empathy and positive emotion to suspicion and revulsion if it slightly resembled but failed to attain a fully human lifelike appearance, thus becoming “eerie”. Mori hypothesised that as the robot’s level of anthropomorphism increased, humans would become wary of it, and a negative slope, reflecting a sudden lack of acceptance, would follow. Mori metaphorised this situation as an uncanny valley from which it was possible to climb up again once the robot improved its capabilities and was yet again perceived as friendly. Thus, while an industrial robot (built for functionality) or a toy robot (built on attractive design) could be likeable, a stand-alone prosthetic hand highly resembling a human hand, for instance, could be “eerie” to many and remind people of such creatures as Frankenstein’s monster. In their empirical study, Bartneck et al. (2007) found that even the most human-like androids will not be liked as much

as toy robots or perfect humanoids from science fiction, suggesting the existence of an uncanny cliff rather than a valley. Humans seem to like to interact with human-like robots as long as they are not too human-like. The drivers for humans liking or not liking AI-powered chatbots seem to be different, more diverse, and more ambiguous than those for robots with a physical presence. Here, user experiences, frequency of use, and affective exploration while using a bot help build or erode trust towards the bot, while the broader social context, individual beliefs, and user curiosity towards the technology also matter (Skjuve et al., 2021; Sugumar & Chandra, 2021).

What is common here is the emergence of new patterns of interaction and some type of impact on workplace relations, in that these technologies modify social life and even affect organisations (Einola et al., 2023). Chun and Knight (2020) found that employees' mental models of industrial robots they worked with and their ways of anthropomorphising these triggered the emergence of some form of human-machine sociability. We find the notion of *altered sociability* interesting when it comes to understanding organisational change and the ongoing boundary work needed to foster and further shape human interactions with AI technologies such as chatbots.

THE CASE OF WINNIE THE BOT: A VIRTUAL ADVISOR AT THE BIG BANK

To shed light on ongoing organisational changes triggered by the introduction of a chatbot, we shall use the case of The Big Bank and the humanised chatbot Winnie (another pseudonym), who has the role of virtual advisor and customer service chatbot at the bank. We show, through a series of narratives capturing everyday encounters between Winnie and humans, how human-AI interaction unfolds in practice and how humans and AI coexist as isolated entities in one organisation that has been affected by digital transformation.

The narratives below are based on our fieldwork in a Nordic financial services organisation operating in Northern Europe. At the time of the formal data collection (2021–23), the bank had approximately 30,000 employees and 10 million customers. The material that we collected here consists of 62 interviews with bank personnel involved directly or indirectly with the bot, our own records of our experiences as a user of it over the past years, and secondary data such as online interviews with key organisational members, press releases, the company website, and social media pages.

For the purposes of this chapter, we follow the tradition of cultural analysis and storytelling practised by such authors as Van Maanen (2011) and Geertz (1973). Hence, we have taken authorial, interpretive freedoms to narrate more freely and creatively than in conventional data analysis to convey to the reader a sense of existing boundaries and lack of any “work” to cross these.

The Big Bank

A single AI-enabled customer service chatbot, the object of enquiry in this chapter, is only a small part of a long-term plan for technology-enabled change ongoing in the banking industry – and of course in many other fields. Most traditional banks, at least in Northern Europe, are going through a large-scale digital transformation process. AI technologies are at the centre of this change, as we have learnt during our engagement with The Big Bank.

The mainstream narrative on AI in retail banking claims that AI-empowered customer services offer the best of both worlds (digital and physical) in addition to superior customer service. With AI chatbots, customers can run their banking errands 24/7 and do not need to limit their banking to business hours when human service advisors are reachable. With chatbots taking over routine tasks, the number of human service advisors has been reduced, leading to efficiency gains and cost savings – a key driver of digital transformation. Also, as our empirical work indicates, chatbots free up employees from dull and routine tasks like registering address changes or cancelling lost credit cards, enabling them to dedicate their time to more challenging tasks.

We continue our enquiry with the chatbot Winnie, then move on to a customer Susan, a customer service advisor Nick, an AI trainer Lisa, and some other enquiry members (all names are pseudonyms).

Winnie, the Chatbot

Through a long and carefully crafted metamorphosis, Winnie has changed shape and evolved into a friendly-looking, abstract figure now in the role of a virtual advisor. Winnie's language is casual yet polite and precise, fitting for a conservative bank whose continued success is entirely dependent upon preserving its premium brand. This bank relies on customer trust in an industry where the regulations are changing and smaller, more price-competitive, and leaner banks are constantly vying for the Big Bank's customers. Even though the bot's communication style strongly mimics humans, this anthropomorphism does not extend to its visual appearance. Winnie can be described as abstract and friendly.

Winnie is clearly positioned as an inhabitant of the digital universe. Whereas the functionality of early versions of the bot corresponded more to a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) service than anything that could be considered artificially intelligent, today's AI-enabled chatbot is much more sophisticated and can fulfil over half of the bank's customer inquiries. Hence, some bank personnel characterise Winnie as a junior colleague, teenager, or child. The more complicated or sensitive customer requests still call for human attention. The next section looks more closely at one such request.

Susan, a Customer

Susan, a lifelong customer of the personal banking division of The Big Bank, has for a long time wanted to close her idle account but has never managed to do so. The following vignette reflects the unfolding of her encounter with Winnie the Bot one evening:

It's Saturday, close to midnight. A bubble appears on the bottom right of my computer screen. "Nice that you contacted us today!", Winnie the Bot greets me with a wave and a mysterious smile. "What can I do for you today?", and "Remember that this is an open chat so do not write down any personal information here, ok?" I tilt my head and take another look. Winnie, my virtual bank advisor, looks a bit different today than last time I was here. A different shade of blue, angle of the head ... something has changed but I'm not sure what. Another bubble appears: "Our chat continuously learns to answer new questions. Formulate your questions as clearly as possible". "Yes, ma'am!" I nod and start writing: "Have you finally learned to close my idle account?" and, "Can you please close my account number *&#%###!?" But after a year of trying sporadically to get this simple errand done with this slowly evolving virtual advisor, Winnie still does not understand what for me is a clear question, and goes into a loop, once again. I am fed up now with my own procrastination and Winnie's poor advisory ability (she does not even offer to transfer me to a more senior colleague or promise to come back later!), so I close the chat and log on a service request into the bank's messaging service. I should have done this a long time ago. (Susan)

In this apparently mundane encounter, customer satisfaction is at play. Susan is frustrated as she cannot get a simple request answered and does not have time during the day to line up on the bank's phone service as she waits for the next available service advisor. Over the years, she has come to feel that her former privileges as a premium customer have been eroded, and she no longer gets the fast, personalised service she used to before the digital transformation was started – for her, very much a downsizing and cost-cutting exercise to boost the bank's profits. Her dialogue with Winnie is one manifestation of her increasing dissatisfaction with the bank. Her liking for and trust in The Big Bank have been compromised, and Winnie the virtual advisor becomes a catalyst for her negative feelings. Here, we get a sense of an invisible barrier between the human and the bank. This is exemplified in Susan's testimony of being left "hanging" and neglected in her midnight encounter with Winnie.

Nick, a customer service advisor at The Big Bank, has a long line of requests waiting for his attention on Monday morning. He gets to Susan's request when Susan has already tuned out.

Nick, a Customer Service Advisor

Nick's job has been to answer customer queries at The Big Bank's personal banking department for three years now. He has no virtual or (perhaps not so surprisingly) physical contact with Winnie, which is unusual as they are colleagues, doing almost the same job – serving retail banking customers when they need advice such as how to replace a damaged bank card, open a savings account, extend their line of credit, or get internet banking working. Even though customers can freely choose how they contact the bank – via the chat-bot, the phone, the mail, or visiting the nearest branch office – if the customer wants to reach a human, Nick is increasingly second in the chain of events. Customers are getting used to the bank bot. Many younger people prefer to do their banking without human contact at the time it suits them the best (Winnie is available 24/7, while humans work only during business hours), and the bot's performance has been improving dramatically over the past years.

These days, many customers tend to chat with the bot as their first choice, and if it cannot help them, Nick assists them. This is not always easy, since Nick does not always have enough time or energy to go through the record of the conversation between the bot and the customer. Instead, Nick quickly picks up on the customer's emotional state, and he instantaneously knows if the customer has been irritated by their negative experience with the bot and by the long wait to get through to a human customer advisor.

I can tell right away if a customer is already frustrated and if she or he has written not that nice words to Winnie. (Nick)

A key part of Nick's job has become not only to deal with customer service requests but also to calm customers down and make sure they leave the conversation satisfied. Even though Nick does not work side-by-side with Winnie, based on the type of feedback he gets, he is sure that the bot is improving and replying to customers in increasingly better ways.

When Nick gets to Susan's message, he immediately perceives that she is annoyed. It reads:

Dear Big Bank, I have been trying to close my idle account with number *&*&### for several times now with your fancy virtual customer service agent. No success! This is a very simple errand! I do not have time to wait for my call to be picked up during your business hours – I'm free in the evenings. Can you please now get this done – I do not have time to waste on this type of thing. Maybe you should fire Winnie!

Nick checks Susan's accounts and goes through her customer profile. He realises that Susan does not want to close all her accounts but simply to delete a

second account that was created for her under-age son that has not been used. Nick calls Susan and closes the account. Customer service advisors like Nick may not be involved in training Winnie, but interestingly they have a key role in training customers on how to use and interact with the bot. As one of Nick's colleagues says, "so many customers don't give Winnie the possibility to give a right answer" (Jonas). Nick suspects that Susan is such a person but does not think the time is right to train Susan on how to be more successful in her dialogues with Winnie (e.g., "type simple, full phrases", "ask one question at a time").

Nick then writes a message to the technology department responsible for developing the bot to recommend that Winnie's service would be improved if the bot were able to distinguish between "closing a customer account altogether" and "closing one account among many that has been opened by mistake and is not used".

Nick, just like most other customer service advisors, is not afraid of losing his job. He knows that behind chatbots, there are large teams that train them and that one day perhaps he can be one of the AI trainers. Most importantly, he believes that his role is to respond to the emotionality of the conversation and also be one step ahead of the clients so that he can offer them something, such as "I've noticed that you have a lot of money at your disposal in your current account. It gains no interest and you are eligible for a savings plan" or "I've noticed that your mother has a power of attorney over the account since your childhood. Should we now remove this?" Noticing and making connections between things and acting on these observations can greatly satisfy customers. This type of dialogue requires good communication and influencing skills that bots just cannot have – at least, not yet.

It is interesting that although the chatbot is positioned as a virtual advisor and a colleague of Nick's, the customer is the only one who gets to compare both types of advisors, the human and non-human versions, to form an opinion of the bank's overall service level. There is a virtual wall between Winnie and Nick, and Nick's only way to "communicate" with the bot is to send improvement suggestions to the technical team responsible for the bot's functionality.

Lisa, an AI Trainer

Lisa was one of the first AI trainers at The Big Bank and has been doing the job for three years now. She scans through Winnie's dialogues with the customers in search of commonly occurring errors and problems in the written language that customers send and scrutinises the ways in which Winnie interprets these. She then reports these problems to programmers who provide fixes so that the bot's accuracy is improved.

AI trainer is a new job category at The Big Bank. The job at present is strategic as AI trainers feed in information to train Winnie. Some say it is a transitory role – once the bot has learnt enough and is able to learn by itself, AI trainers will become obsolete, just like most of the customer service advisors. AI trainer is a fancy-sounding title that many are proud to put on their CVs, implying that Winnie is an entity that one can train in a similar way to a senior colleague training a new recruit. AI trainers at The Big Bank do not have a background in technology but typically are former customer service advisors who have thorough knowledge of how customers communicate and think, and what their needs are. AI trainers have been carefully selected for this new job, so becoming an AI trainer is considered a promotion or an upgrade from customer service advisor.

This is how Lisa describes her job, which appears to be more like analysis than a mere back-office customer service role:

The great thing about this job is the feeling that, for example, if you advise some person for 10 minutes and she or he gets, like, a mobile app working, you're like, "yeah, I got it". But in the AI trainer role you could get it multiplied by hundreds [...]. I could see that as a benefit and I think it's also more interesting because you have to look at patterns and think about the same problem, what kind of questions could the customer ask, and what kind of concerns they might have. Just like a unique perspective. (Lisa)

For Lisa, AI trainers possess a "unique perspective". Their work is related to thinking processes and finding patterns, almost like investigation. Lisa likes her job, and for her, the happy moments are when customers get their queries resolved. She also thinks that responding to requests such as "I lost my card" or "I need to change my card" is boring. This is where chatbots like Winnie can help in better and quicker ways than humans. For Lisa, it is more rewarding to deal with the questions that are unique and more complex:

[Customers] want high service levels and I think that when you are doing the work I'm doing, you learn every day and then you can do more challenging things. (Lisa)

Being an AI trainer seems to be like a real teaching job. Daniel, Lisa's colleague, says this:

I teach our bot. I always say it's like a process to teach a child, it's really blank in the beginning. We must teach it all the vocabulary, words, meanings, everything, every possible thing that you could think that you have to teach a child. (Daniel)

And for some, such as Maria, another colleague, there is even beauty in mixing humans and technology:

So, combining the beautiful customer service with very advanced technology, making people and the technology work together lifts everything up. (Maria)

However, most customer service advisors who have not become AI trainers feel more sceptical about always reaching a higher role, answering effectively to more demanding requests, and being better at getting the facts right. For them, preserving the human touch can be valuable. In the words of Jonas and Anna:

So personally, I feel a lot of customers that I talk to – I make their days better when they can talk to a person. And that is not the same kind of feeling that you get from a robot [...]. So the way that I would adapt to that would be like making sure that the customer would feel safe with me, talking to me instead of just typing to a bot. (Jonas)

I try always with every customer to make sure that I can do my best work and help them in the best way possible. And I also try to find something a little bit extra for them if there's anything. And if I'm feeling stressed or I know that oh my god there's a lot of customers waiting in line, I try to make sure that they don't know it. That I have all the time in the world for that person. (Anna)

Importantly, there is the matter of trust-based relations that can only be built between humans – something essential when dealing with a person's finances.

There are people who want to confirm with a human being that what Winnie says is really correct. (Anna)

If Winnie gives a too long answer, the customer straight away wants to go to the customer service person who will give you exactly the same answer, but customers trust the longer answer when it's a person that gives it, not a robot. (Jonas)

Sometimes the AI trainers can misinterpret customer messages addressed to Winnie that they monitor, investigate, and interpret. Let's go back to Susan, our frustrated customer, writing repeated, late-night messages to Winnie to "close her account". If Lisa had analysed the correspondence and interpreted that "closing accounts" is a functionality that needs to be developed in Winnie to increase customer satisfaction and Winnie's "hit rate", she would have got it wrong. It is only an idle account attached to Susan's profile that had been created that Susan wanted closed – not the account she uses.

These interactions between Winnie and humans demonstrate that positioning Winnie as a humanised virtual advisor and improving its performance is a continuous balancing act, a delicate and complicated matter that can only be dealt with in small steps, iteratively, and with utmost caution – far from what one would expect from a digital revolution of any kind.

Here we can see that while AI trainers can feel satisfied when they see their work bear fruit in terms of the bot's productivity gains and improved performance, there is a disconnect between the AI trainers, customer service advisors, and the customer. Most AI trainers "connect" with the customer only through analysing chats, not through live interaction, and with customer service advisors through messages. This builds boundaries and isolates humans from other humans, as well as from the AI chatbot. The only human who interacts directly with the bot is the customer.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, to mitigate both technology hype and doomsday prophecies, we have discussed how different people relate to an anthropomorphised AI chatbot in their daily lives.

We find it timely to address the theme of humans and AI coexisting in organisations to advance more grounded, harmonious, and congruent relations between them (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019) and to reduce the harmful present-day hype, both positive and negative, around these technologies. As our research indicates, and as we have noted in our earlier work (Einola et al., 2023), the coexistence between humans and AI depends on how humans understand and experience the technology. This, in turn, is strongly influenced by the tendency of people to humanise AI technologies such as chatbots. How humans adjust to the constantly changing boundaries in roles and responsibilities that the introduction of these technologies in organisations often entails is very much at the heart of what we see as the digital revolution.

The first important observation is that *the coexistence between humans and an AI chatbot is not a monolith*. As our inquiry shows, different humans (in our case, a customer, a customer service advisor, and an AI trainer) have very different experiences of sociability and relationality (Chun & Knight, 2020) with the AI chatbot. One key differentiating factor is how different actors experience their encounters with the bot. AI trainers train the bot who is their "pupil" to answer customer queries better. Their previous experience as customer service advisors is very much behind the dramatic improvement in the bot's performance. Their relation to the bot is analytical as they, together with the technical team, feed it with new information and create new features. Customer service advisors tend to consider the chatbot as their junior colleague (Einola & Khoreva, 2023) who works in parallel with them but with whom they never interact directly. For some, the bot is also a rival, someone who can one day steal their job – but not quite yet. Hence, for them, the bot is a rather friendly and distant figure and not at all threatening or "eerie" (Mori, 1970), at least not at the present time.

The chatbot can only satisfy customers' requests two times out of three. While this is a very good performance for a chatbot, it is a poor service level for a human customer service advisor. Overall, the humanising effect is strongest in customer communication, so the risks of purposeful anthropomorphism to customer satisfaction are not negligible. Different actors have clearly formed different mental models of the bot (Chun & Knight, 2020), further fuelled by the specific anthropomorphic form the bot has taken in their imaginaries.

Our work also suggests that *human–AI coexistence is inherently paradoxical*. AI chatbots, together with other modern technologies and banking solutions, allow customers to do their banking from anywhere at any time of the day, without the inconvenience of having to wait to get access to a customer service advisor on the phone – or having to speak with anyone. At the same time, the various technology-mediated services cannot solve all customer needs. As our case shows, not being able to solve a simple request can be frustrating, especially as personalised service and access to a dedicated human financial advisor are now increasingly rare. When it comes to customer service advisors, their chatbot colleagues have spared them from much of the routine work and simple requests that they consider boring. At the same time, the requests that customer service advisors receive now are more complicated, which can create stress, especially as their performance is evaluated by the number of customer queries they manage to handle each day. Whereas AI trainers may consider their job as an upgrade from regular customer service roles, the job category itself is likely to face extinction as soon as the chatbots become intelligent enough and the services of AI trainers are no longer needed (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

There is a clear job division between the AI chatbot and humans in customer-facing work, not based on roles or tasks but on relative advantages AI technologies have over humans – and vice versa. The AI chatbot excels at simple answers, unambiguous facts, and speedy customer service – hence the bot is considered a junior. Humans are there to create trust, which is so essential in banking, and to take care of the more demanding requests. They also excel in detecting and responding to customers' emotional states, often engaging customers after a disappointing encounter with the chatbot. There is also the notion of human touch that includes compassion, companionship, and the ability to make connections and associations between different, apparently unrelated observations (for instance, an upset customer and large amounts of money idling in their regular account, not accruing any interest).

The contemporary hype, we suggest, can be very much attributed to our habit of anthropomorphising AI technologies, a persistent trend that calls for serious consideration, as well as to a lack of careful planning of how AI is deployed *in situ*. One antidote to the hype could be to engage in purposeful boundary work as roles, responsibilities, and professional identities transform.

We suggest the need to take seriously the manifold human sense-making of AI, to shed the rigid categories of human and artificial, and to actively imagine what our futures will be like. Focusing on current AI technologies and what they might do to us distracts us from the far more interesting and important questions of how we can shape the digital future. This shaping of the future calls for breaking the silos between different roles and for purposeful boundary work expanding and even breaking our traditional understandings of coexistence, relationality, and sociability between humans and advanced technologies such as AI. We suggest that boundary work involving humans in different roles and AI technology is the action that is largely missing in many organisations now that the stage is set for the many promises of the digital transformation to bear fruit.

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