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Using human-in-the-loop and explainable AI to envisage new future work practices

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we discuss the trends and challenges of the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) methods in the workplace. An important aspect towards creating positive AI futures in the workplace is the design of fair, reliable and trustworthy AI systems which aim to augment human performance and perception, instead of replacing them by acting in an automatic and non-transparent way. Research in Human-AI Interaction has proposed frameworks and guidelines to design transparent and trustworthy human-AI interactions. Considering such frameworks, we discuss the potential benefits of applying human-in-the-loop (HITL) and explainable AI (XAI) methods to define a new design space for the future of work. We illustrate how such methods can create new interactions and dynamics between human users and AI in future work practices.

KEYWORDS

Human-AI Interaction, Future of Work, Explainable AI, Human-in-the-Loop

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Future of Work (FoW) is being shaped by the growing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the workplace. AI-based systems, methods and approaches have been deployed in several workplace contexts, including but not limited to, automation and industrial settings, human resources management, as well as remote work. The main goal of AI is to increase efficiency and productivity in the workplace. Despite the possible benefits of the digital transformation of the workplace and the transition to the FoW, there are many concerns related to ethical considerations, safety, and trust between different human users and artificial agents.

There is a growing interest in designing, developing, and evaluating methods to ensure that human users can safely interact with a transparent and accountable AI system which makes fair decisions with respect to ethical considerations. To this end, Explainable AI (XAI) methods have been proposed to enhance trust in human-AI interactions. Moreover, fairness has been introduced as an evaluation metric for AI models, in order to mitigate bias, either due to pre-existing bias that is captured in the data, or due to technical bias introduced during data processing and modeling. Model cards and reports have been proposed to ensure transparency and intelligibility for developed AI models. Human-in-the-Loop (HITL) methods aim to engage users during the interaction by enabling them to provide feedback to the system which can be used either as an evaluation metric for the system's performance, or as an additional feedback for the learning algorithm to facilitate learning. Most of these methods aim to "correct" possible problems that may arise from the integration of AI in real-world applications with human users, e.g., fairness evaluation of an (explainable) AI model before deployment with human users.

In this paper, we discuss the possible benefits of defining a new design space for human-AI interactions and the future of work. This is driven in part by the turn in post-industrial design – rather than thinking in terms of individual products, there is a shift to services, product service systems, and then ecologies and networks. In particular, design work “shifts toward more fluid flows of interaction between people and processes” than discrete product functions [9]. This opens up a rich space for thinking about what we would like such systems to do; in this paper, our goal is to expand the range of design strategies available to AI system designers, given that these systems may have fuzzy boundaries and complex effects. More specifically: (i) data-driven AI systems may use data from several sources, (ii) their deployment may include a network of stakeholders and users, (iii) the socio-legal situations where they are deployed are likely to adapt to the impacts of technology, so that machine operations drive human behaviour and vice versa. Each of these points gives rise to possibilities for new interactions between human and artificial agents, which we aim to unpack in the form of a design space for human-AI interactions. As additional background, we highlight two important aspects of thinking about technology as *fluid*. Firstly, *co-performance* [13] refers to the synergistic interaction between a human and a machine, and thinking in this way gives an opportunity for the different abilities of the two parts to be combined in complementary ways. Secondly, *responsibility* [9, 10] covers both the ability to respond – the cultivation of a sensitivity to situations and action in response – and the way that



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responsibility for a decision or an operation is diffused through a system rather than centered on a person. Together, these allow a sensitivity to the needs and rights of the network of people involved with an algorithmic system to point towards opportunities to create richer, more supportive interactions.

From a human-centered design aspect, we focus on human-centered AI methods, including XAI and HITL, arguing that the combination of these approaches can create new design possibilities in human-AI interaction and the future of work. We are interested in the beneficial, ecosystemic possibilities given by the introduction of XAI and HITL methods in the particular situation of future work practices. This is an area where use of AI systems becomes part of everyday life, mediating between people and organisations with differing powers and agencies, but of deep importance to the quality of life of many people and the performance of many organisations. In order to do this, we engage with the existing trends within AI and the future of work, as well as guidelines for how human-AI interactions should be designed. From this, we look at the new possibilities offered by HITL and XAI, and illustrate with short examples the kinds of new interactions and configurations that are possible.

2 BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

2.1 AI and the Future of Work: Trends and Challenges

There is an increasing need to investigate the potential benefits and challenges of the digital transformation and the integration of AI systems in future work practices [14, 22]. Applications of AI in the workplace may pose several implications related to the AI capabilities, i.e., learning and predicting human behavior, as well as establishing new values, ethical considerations and morals. A research study highlights the possible concerns of AI in the workplace, taking into consideration the emerging challenges raised by COVID-19, as well as insights for the future of work [7]. The authors suggest that explainability and accountability, as well as digital literacy among all stakeholders and users (decision makers, employers, employees), are important features towards a policy agenda and implementation strategy for future AI practices in the workplace. For example, an application of AI that may pose ethical, technical and societal implications in the workplace is the management of the employees in an organization, i.e., AI systems which enable organizations to monitor, coordinate, and make decisions about their employees, including recruitment, promotion, task allocation and others. AI prediction models have been proposed to estimate the level of personnel competence in order to optimize job performance [5]. A proposed AI model is used to predict job performance, as a function of job competence, based on job knowledge, self-motivation, self-concern, and role perception. The model is then used to predict the competence of the applicants, and ultimately make decisions (accept or reject application). Another research study focuses on the applicant's perspective, conducting a user study with undergraduate students, as the main future users of such AI-based recruitment systems [11]. Based on the results from a thematic analysis, five dominant themes were identified: *efficiency, impartiality, conformity, human interaction, and uncertainty*. Based on these, the authors proposed a framework to integrate AI

methods for recruiting, focusing on the potential benefits of AI on different stages of the recruitment phase. Moreover, their results indicate that future users of such systems are still hesitant towards a complete digitization of the recruitment process, since AI decisions may be biased, unpredictable and invisible to the applicant who is being impacted by these decisions.

In order to address issues related to unfairness, privacy, and bias in such AI systems, a design agenda for AI systems for employee management in organizations has been proposed [17]. The authors present and discuss three different types of fairness in the context of an organization (distributive, procedural, and interactional fairness), as well as ways for justice to redress unfairness. Moreover, based on a literature review on AI design and fairness in organizations, they propose a design framework which consists of a set of primary components that need to be considered, including the aspect of user affordances, i.e., *"the particular ways in which an individual perceives and interacts with a system"*. Considering user affordances, a fair AI system should be transparent about its internal models and mechanics, explainable to effectively communicate its models and decisions to human users, and able to provide visualizations to represent the required information. Finally, such systems should be able to satisfy the affordance of *voice*; to give users the opportunity to provide feedback and communicate with the AI during the interaction.

In the context of manufacturing, AI has been mainly applied towards the automation of human-like and repetitive tasks. Research works focus on the interactions between human actors and automation, focusing on the capabilities of AI systems to support and augment human performance. A research study investigates the impact of Human-in-the-Loop AI methods in a manufacturing setup [8]. The authors illustrate how the integration of human-in-the-loop AI methods can create new communication channels between human and non-human actors, highlighting the need to analyse and understand the emergent outcomes of such synergistic interactions where both parts of the interaction can augment and support each other. Focusing on the challenges that arise from the integration of such approaches in manufacturing and automation, it is essential that organizations, industries, and companies can provide sustainable training and education for their workforce [12]

In the context of human-AI collaboration, a research article investigated the use of *cobots* in managerial professions [20], arguing that *"the future of AI in knowledge work needs to focus not on full automation but rather on collaborative approaches, where humans and AI work closely together"*. In order to support human-human collaboration, AI can be applied for real-time analysis of meetings, brainstorming sessions and digital collaboration. A research study presented Meeting Mediator; a real-time AI-supported self-reflection tool for online meetings [16], which visualizes estimations of key metrics, including group and individual performance, speaking time and influences between the participants. which can be used by the participants to self-assess their own contribution to the meeting. AI-based digital tools can trigger behavioral change and can offer immediate feedback to participants which can help build and develop soft skills required to succeed in a new digital environment, e.g., increase perception of dominance and contribution during virtual meetings.

2.2 Design Guidelines and Frameworks for Human-AI Interaction

Designing fair and transparent human-AI interactions can lead to the involvement of human users to the decision making, learning, and adaptation process of an AI system for several reasons. Such interactions can augment the users' perception about themselves, the system mechanics, and their (common) environment. Moreover, interacting with transparent, fair and explainable AI can also enhance trust, fairness, and reliability, enabling users to learn how to efficiently collaborate with AI systems towards hybrid intelligence. A recent research article [23] defines Human-AI Interaction as "the completion of a user's task with the help of AI support, which may manifest itself in non-intermittent scenarios". The authors present three main types of Human-AI interaction: intermittent, continuous, and proactive, highlighting "how differences in initiation and control result in diverging user needs". These three paradigms of human-AI interaction can exist in parallel, however there is a need to design appropriate interaction paradigms, focusing especially on the challenges of continuous and proactive interactions and support designers in creating usable AI-driven systems.

The main goal of integrating AI methods to Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) systems is to improve the interaction between the user and the system (trust, fairness, accountability, performance, etc.). However, there is a lack of design innovation in envisioning how AI might improve user experience [25]. In their review paper, the authors identified a lack of research integrating User Experience (UX) and Machine Learning (ML) methods. Based on their analysis, they suggest a set of value channels through which the technical capabilities can provide value for users. The authors provide a schema of ML capabilities in order to increase a user's perception of the experiential values. Following the argument that ML is a design material adds value to user experience [3], designers should be able to identify how existing AI and ML approaches and methods can be integrated to the design process, e.g., which is an appropriate ML algorithm for a given design, or how to design an AI system to support given design values? Considering the different ways that human-AI interactions can be designed, a research study identifies a set of design challenges for human-AI interactions [26]. More specifically, the authors present five categories of challenges: (1) understanding AI capabilities, (2) envisioning novel and implementable AI for a given UX problem, (3) iterative prototyping and testing human-AI interaction, (4) crafting thoughtful interactions, and (5) collaborating with AI engineers throughout the design process. In order to address different types of challenges, the authors present their suggestions towards facilitating human-AI interaction design: "improving designers' technical literacy, facilitating design-oriented data exploration, enabling designers to more easily "play with" AI in support of design ideation, to gain a felt sense of what AI can do, aiding designers in evaluating AI outputs, and creating AI-specific design processes". Microsoft Research has proposed 18 applicable design guidelines for human-AI interaction [2]. We identify a set of categories which can relate to system's fairness, explainability and adaptability, as well as autonomy and shared control. For example, providing appropriate and accountable information to users requires fair and transparent ML approaches, while enabling the user to intervene to the process (e.g., ignore or

guide AI), requires the system design to enable the user to provide granular feedback, to learn from user's input and behaviour.

Focusing on the aspects of user-centric explainability, a framework is proposed towards designing Theory-Driven User-Centric Explainable AI [24]. Apart from designing explanations that can be easily perceived by human users, a key module of the proposed framework focuses on how the application of XAI methods can be used to support reasoning and mitigate errors during the human-AI interaction. Moreover, the Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (HCAI) framework [18] describes how to (1) design for high levels of human control and computer automation to increase human performance, (2) understand the situations in which full human or computer control are necessary, and (3) avoid the dangers of excessive human or computer control. Reliability requires appropriate technical practices, which support human responsibility, fairness, and explainability. The goal of reliable, safe and trustworthy AI is achieved by a high level of human control and high level of computer automation. These design decisions give human operators a clear understanding of the machine state and their choices, guided by concerns such as the consequences and reversibility of mistakes. Well-designed automation preserves human control where appropriate, thereby increasing performance and enabling creative improvements.

3 DESIGNING HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP AND EXPLAINABLE AI INTERACTIONS

In this section, we focus on the design of human-AI interactions where human users and AI communicate in a collaborative fashion through an exchange of feedback and explanations. We present a set of design aspects that need to be defined for XAI and HITL systems, including types and roles of users, level of autonomy and human control, AI learning and personalization capabilities.

- (1) **Designing Explainable AI.** Explanations can be used for various reasons and purposes, e.g., to inform or persuade users, to help programmers debug complex models, to visualize the models to domain experts for knowledge extraction, etc. The purpose of explanations is highly linked both to the sender and the recipient of the explanations. According to the goal and the parts included in the interaction, an important aspect is to communicate the explanations to the user in an effective way. The effectiveness of the explanations depends on various factors, including (a) the form of the designed explanations (text, visuals, speech, etc.), (b) the frequency or timing of explanations, (c) the level of transparency and explainability, and (d) the type of explanations (e.g., contrastive, counterfactual, local vs. global explanations). Different users may need to have different access to the explanations or with different levels of transparency. Based on the system requirements and the purpose of explanations, designing an efficient explainable AI system requires a proper definition of when (or how often) explanations should be given, considering user's cognitive overload.
- (2) **Designing Human-in-the-Loop AI.** In order to design an HITL system, the first step is to define which user(s) can provide feedback to the system, as well as the goal of including a human user in the learning loop. Human users can provide

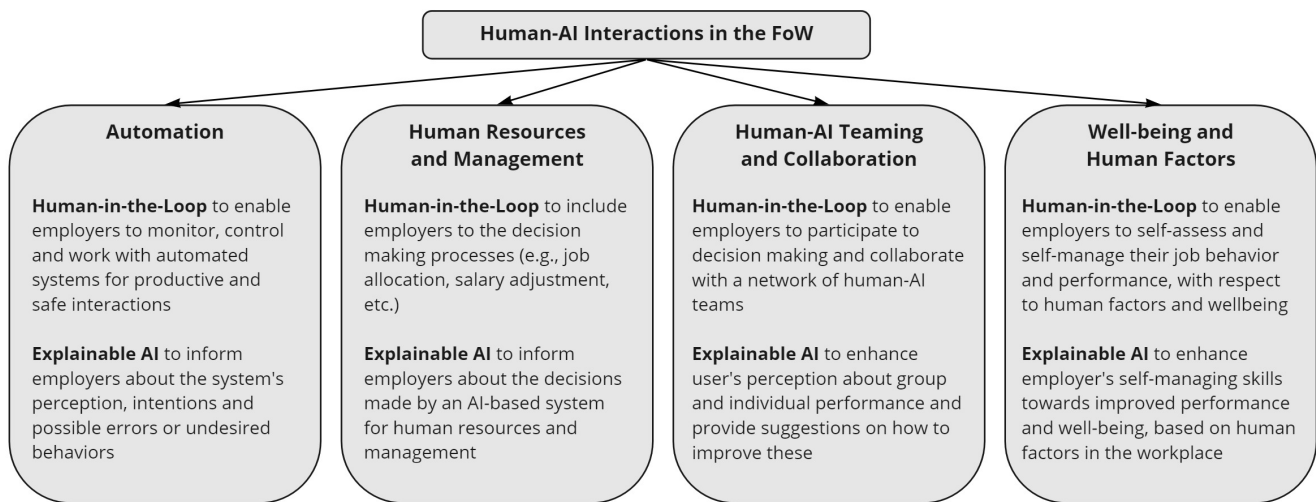


Figure 1: Human-in-the-Loop and Explainable AI in the Future of Work. We highlight the potential benefits of HITL and XAI in different workplace contexts, including automation, human resources, human teaming/collaboration, and well-being and human factors.

feedback to the system in different ways and for different purposes. For example, human users can provide evaluative feedback during the interaction, which can be used as an evaluation metric. Moreover, user feedback can be used to take control of the system during the interaction, in the form of corrective actions and interventions. Human feedback can be provided either implicitly or explicitly. Depending on the system requirements, human users must be able to provide the feedback to the system without burdening their capabilities during the interaction (mental workload). In order to ensure that providing feedback is not an additional effort to the user, it is important to answer the following questions: when does the user provide feedback?, does the system ask for feedback? is the user free to provide feedback at any point of the interaction? Moreover, human roles and expertise should be considered to ensure the validity and accountability of human feedback.

Taking into consideration such features of XAI and HITL systems, we describe how these can be applied considering key design aspects of AI systems:

- (1) **AI System Design.** A definition of the AI input/output space is essential for a proper design of an XAI/HITL system, since they play a central role in the formulation of explanations and provided feedback. Model parameters and learning metrics (e.g., accuracy, uncertainty, training error, etc.) can be used as design materials for the interaction. For example, if there is high model uncertainty for a given input, the system design can allow this information to be communicated to the user through the XAI communication channel. Additionally, the user can provide feedback back to the system through the HITL communication channel, which can be integrated to the learning mechanism of the algorithm. User

interface, buttons, speech, as well as hand gestures or facial expressions can be used (implicitly or explicitly) as an evaluative feedback for the decision of an AI system.

- (2) **Types of Human-AI Interactions and Roles.** Apart from the categorization of an interaction as intermittent, continuous, or proactive [23], it is important to define the composition of the human-AI team members, as well as their roles in the interaction. Considering the XAI and HITL channels, the role of users can be characterized by the way they provide feedback to the system or how the system provides explanations to the specific user. For example, in collaborative tasks, XAI can be used to inform the members of the team about their group performance, but can also be used to provide more personal information to each individual separately. In a similar manner, HITL methods can be used to enable each team member evaluate their individual and group performance. Each human and AI role can create different possibilities for interactions between users and an AI model and can change the way the model is used [21].
- (3) **Designing for Autonomy and Control** Integrating explanations and HITL methods in the interaction does not entirely address the issue of system autonomy and human control. An explainable system can provide explanations to the user for an automated decision it made in order to ensure trust. However, such interaction does not allow the user to have control over the decisions. When a human user provides feedback, the system can use it as a command (human control), it can negotiate it with the user for a shared-autonomy decision, or it may not consider it for its decision but rather as an evaluative feedback at the end of the interaction. It is important to define such aspects of autonomy for all possible types of users and interactions that may emerge. Explanations are important for human control, since they

can enhance user's perception and decision making in order to make an informed decision which will then can be beneficial for the interaction. Moreover, HITL methods can broaden the scope of responsibility. It can engage people to actively get involved in order to challenge the decisions or even change the the behaviour of systems.

- (4) **Designing for AI: Learning, Adaptation and Personalization** Learning and personalization are crucial features of dynamic systems and enable them to adjust to environmental changes and unseen events. i.e., different human roles and new users. While learning, adaptation, and personalization of AI models are technical challenges of an AI-based system, it is important to define the AI system capabilities and how these can be realized through design. For example, there are different types of learning based on the model's learning mechanism, including online, offline, batch and active learning. Active learning approaches, i.e., when the learning algorithm can query a user interactively for data annotation with the desired outputs, require the design of an interface (button, gestures, speech, etc.) which will allow AI and user to interact for the purpose of data annotation or labeling. If the system makes learning updates during the interaction, a design feature could be used to inform the user about it, e.g., through a progress bar or an inactive interface. In terms of personalization, it is important to consider (if and) how the system personalizes its behavior to different users or contexts. In other words, which are the control and observed parameters that should be observed and adjusted to achieve personalization?

4 HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP AND EXPLAINABLE AI IN THE FUTURE OF WORK

In this section, we provide a summary on how XAI and HITL methods can be applied in the workplace context, highlighting the potential benefits of such interactions in future work practices. Our goal is to identify the different configurations of human-AI interactions that emerge when different types of human users interact with AI in a set of different scenarios and application contexts. We present examples from four different contexts (automation, human resources, collaboration and human factors) to illustrate the potential benefits of HITL and XAI in different work practices (Figure 1).

Automation. In the domain of automation, AI plays an important role in achieving high performance (productivity) while ensuring safety and quality. While the main contribution of AI in manufacturing is automation, a central role of AI is to augment human's perception and performance while collaborating with AI systems. HITL methods have been proposed to enable collaboration between human workers and automated systems and investigate the potentials of human meta-learning capabilities in such sociotechnical systems, considering the possible physical, cognitive and mental demands for workers and how these can affect the overall job performance [8]. HITL AI agents enable human users to provide feedback to the system, guide it, or even take control of the operation if needed (e.g., AI errors and malfunctions). Achieving a high level of human agency and control while interacting with a system with high automation level is considered to ensure a safe,

reliable and trustworthy interaction with human-centered AI systems [18]. In order to enhance user's perception about the system's capabilities or intentions, automated systems should be able to provide appropriate information about their models and decisions during the interaction in order to enhance the user's ability to provide useful and granular feedback back to the system. Considering existing taxonomies of Explainable AI methods for applications in Industry 4.0, Cyber-Physical systems for production lines and smart manufacturing [1, 19], XAI methods can enhance user's trust and reliability by informing the user about the system's understanding and capabilities. Moreover, XAI can be used to enhance the user's perception about their own decisions/actions, as well as shared understanding when interacting with multiple human users or AI agents (network of interactions).

Human Resources and Management. The goal of AI systems in human resources and management applications focuses on the automation of decision making tasks related to the organizational management of the employers, e.g., job performance and evaluation, recruitment, task allocation, etc. Such models are employed to make decisions based on predictive models, e.g., hiring of an applicant with a given profile or Curriculum Vitae (CV). In order to address challenges related to bias and unfair decisions, human supervisors must be able to have control over the decisions made by the AI and intervene when needed (human control). Human-in-the-Loop methods can enable employers to participate to the decision making process by providing their own feedback to the rest of the network (coworkers, supervisors and AI system), when needed. For example, if a company deploys an explainable CV mining system for recruitment or promotion applications, the same system can be provided and used by the candidates to evaluate their own CVs. This has several possible modes of interaction: Candidates can identify weaknesses in their CV, or missing skills that the algorithmic system has missed. In this case, XAI and HITL can be utilized to enable the user to adjust their CV to ensure that the model can efficiently model their actual skills. Moreover, candidates may also utilize explainability and transparency to identify possible career development paths, e.g., identify what is required to obtain a skill or get a position. Candidates may also notice skills or qualities which are missing from the model (job description) but may be important for the job. Additionally, candidates may notice job skills and requirements that may be more demanding than the specific job should require. Such feedback opens the potential to those offering a position to rethink the requirements.

Human-AI Teaming and Collaboration. Research in AI and collaborative systems aims to analyze and model the dynamics of human-human collaboration towards developing methods to support the collaboration between human-human and human-AI collaboration [6]. More specifically, AI methods have been proposed to identify teamwork skills during collaborative problem solving. In terms of human-AI teaming, a research study investigated how people perceive AI teammates and what they expect from AI teammates in human-AI teaming [27]. Based on their findings, the authors suggest that AI should be considered as a subject in collaborative-activity design and they highlight the need to enhance user's perception about the capabilities and intentions of AI (XAI) towards effective and safe human-AI teaming and collaboration. For example, during an AI-mediated brainstorming session,

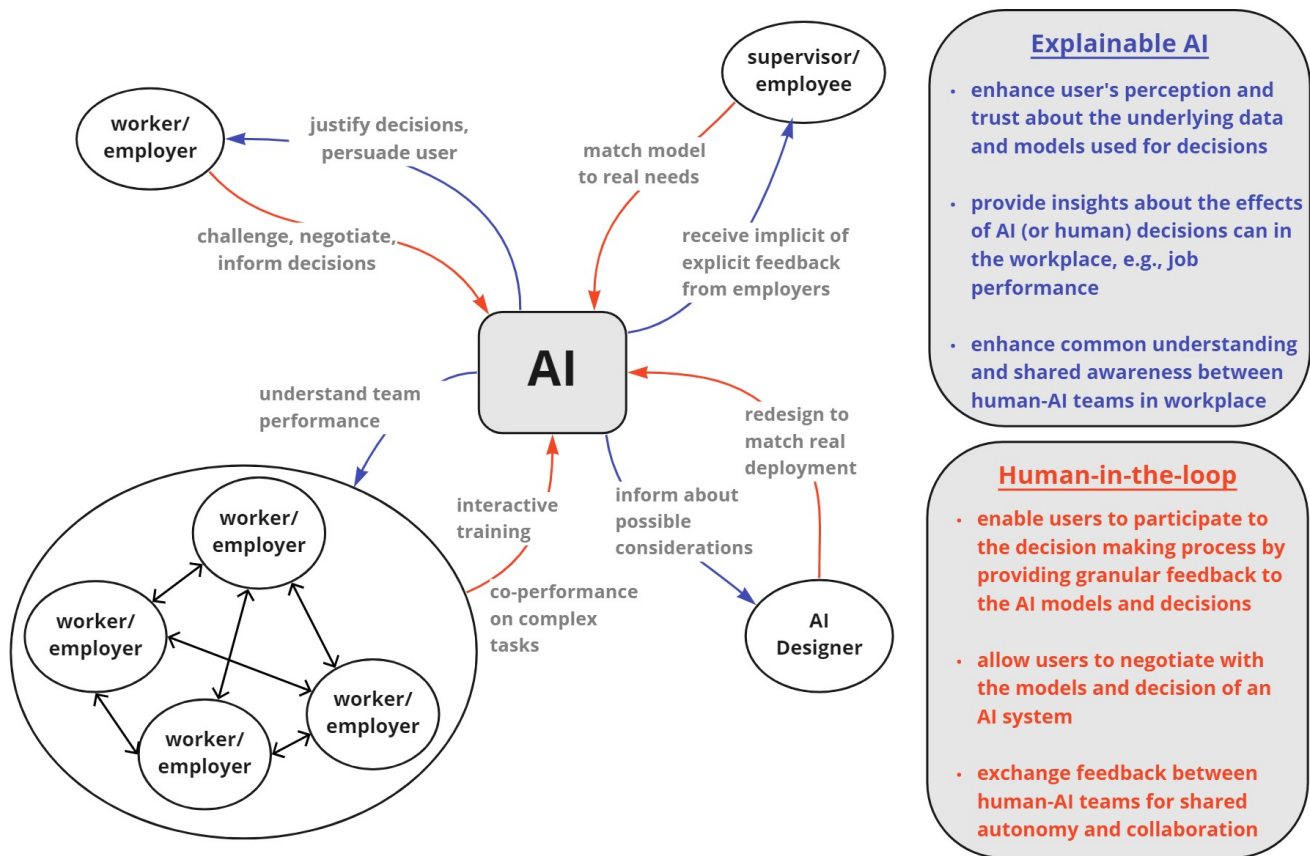


Figure 2: Designing human-AI interactions with Human-in-the-Loop and Explainable AI in the future or work.

the system can analyze the behavior dynamics and patterns and visualize them to the users. Explainability gives the opportunity to the users to get insights about the group dynamics (e.g., who are the dominant speakers), as well as the individual contribution to the activity. HITL can enable all participants (team members, leader, moderator) to provide feedback to the system to either evaluate the group performance or negotiate the visualized models.

Well-being and Human Factors. The integration of AI systems in the workplace can raise challenges considering the relationship between emerging technologies and human workers. Research in Human Factors and Ergonomics investigates the impact of digital technology on the mental health (workload and stress) of employees [4]. Human factors, including job skills, job satisfaction, and job fatigue may have a significant effect on job performance and should be considered during the design of human-AI interactions in the workplace. A recent research study investigated the relationship between worker's emotions and reliance on automated systems [15]. Human employers should be supported to self-manage the human factors that may affect their performance and well-being. Individual models of workplace wellbeing can help managers to keep track of remote workers stress levels. However, they can also serve as signals about what the organisation feels is important: a

well-being model is an encoding of the ways in which the work may be problematic for people, and as the models improve, they provide important documentation about what it is to work in a place. Similarly, the possibility for workers to contest, ignore, reject or otherwise annotate the model's description of their mental well-being can serve as a site for an organisation to better understand the needs and practices of its workers. HITL approaches offer moments to go beyond what the model is seeing, and develop context that is particularly necessary when considering the health of remote and distributed workforces. Moreover, it is essential to ensure user privacy while interacting with AI systems that can store such sensitive and personal data.

Considering the above, our motivation is to explore a new design space for HITL and XAI in the future of work, focusing on how such interaction and communication channels can be designed to have a positive impact in future work practices (Figure 2).

5 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we discuss the potential benefits of XAI and HITL methods in future work practices. Taking onto consideration existing guidelines and framework for the design of Human-AI interactions, as well as design practices for AI applications in the

workplace, we present our discussion points towards defining a design space for explainable and interactive AI systems in the context of the Future of Work. We discuss the potential benefits of the integration of HITL and XAI methods in the FoW, as well as the possibilities for new design practices that can emerge in a synergistic AI framework. Our ongoing work includes the preparation of a workshop to address the design challenges while designing HITL and XAI systems. More specifically, our goal is to address questions related to the different human roles and expertise of the stakeholders. For example, how to identify the level of human expertise? What if the human feedback is not correct due to lack of expertise or bad intentions? Human feedback can be utilized during the different stages of the system development and deployment. AI designers can guide the system during the development phase, but human users can also participate to the learning process during the deployment (interaction). Our goal is to identify such parameters that need to be properly defined to ensure an efficient and trustworthy AI system design.

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