JOURNAL OF PRAGMATIC CONSTRUCTIVISM

Editorial: The world of changing actors

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1 The world of changing actors

In December 2025, the managers of the platform that hosts this journal approached us and asked the editors to formulate and post an artificial intelligence (AI) -related policy on our journal website. We decided to lean up against the policies used by leading publishers, such as the Emerald Publishing. We believe that these policies make sense, and we also believe that we should build on the policies identified and continuously refined by the wider academic community and thus reflected indeed in the policies of some leading publishers. This approach provides our policy also with some form of authority. Our AI-policy will be posted on the journal's website in a short while. Forming the AI-policy as requested represents the surface level of the phenomenon at hand. Naturally, solving this request concerning the AI-policy initiated some reflection among the co-editorial team; this reflection we would like to share with you here. When we talk about AI, we refer, for instance, to the large language models like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude. Since the development of the AI field happens at high speed, we prefer to use the broader term AI to be able to embrace various future technologies and their use, as they might become real already in the near future.

Our first concern was that we basically had to formulate policies that we cannot control, and would have to sanction misconduct related to them if necessary. We also rather promptly realised that AI is already here in an active and extensive form, in the grammar and spell checking that Microsoft Word, for instance, provides to its users. The software automatically makes suggestions for finishing sentences and perhaps, e.g., Microsoft Copilot functions as your personal assistant for several daily tasks of research work. So, we are formulating policies regarding something that has already surrounded us in our daily work in ways we may not even be aware of – and often we must make an effort to actually avoid using AI! This means that in reality, our policies can be essentially an appeal for good ethical research practice – instead of a full set of controls and policies.

An ethical approach to using AI in general is a concept with several ambiguities. In her book *The atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence*, Kate Crawford (2021) accounts for a number of ethical dilemmas that the AI-industry gives raise to: the environmental cost of mining lithium for the hardware needed for AI; the precarised people who provide the data on which the AI-models are trained, including you, every time you must click on pictures with bikes, pedestrian crossings, or similar items to get access to certain websites; and the centralisation of wealth created from these AI-technologies. These are just to mention a few ethical dilemmas that come with the AI-industry in its current form. So, entering the scene of AI-technologies also means that we loosen our social contracts and leave the scene also to less regulated actors beyond public control. From a pragmatic constructivist perspective this may conflict with the ambitions of constructing good lives (e.g. Nørreklit and Paulsen, 2023, Nørreklit

et al., 2024). Having this in mind, AI is here to stay, and somehow, we must develop forms of life, and particularly functioning practices within organizations and academia, where we can co-exist and make use of this technology in good ways, exactly for the "good lives".

The phenomena, where we as human beings draw from different technologies to boost our performance are not new (e.g. Huxley, 1968). In a research community where the pressure to publish is increasingly becoming higher and higher, and where the metrics of research output have moved from qualitative assessments of the research ideas to quantitative accounts of publications, the use of AI to boost research performance seems like an obvious answer to comply with the requirements set by different authorities, who hold the destiny of researchers in their hands. Formulating AI-policies is therefore a matter of finding good and fair practices around AI-technologies without violating core academic values.

In an earlier issue of this journal, Thomas Bolander (2019) gave a brief, yet interesting introduction to different forms of AI, and he gave us his view on how we can prepare for these techniques. He argued that we need the following competences:

1. *Competences in seeing the potential and selecting the tasks to be automatised by AI, and, equally important, deselecting the tasks that cannot reasonably be automatised.*
2. *Competences in implementing AI techniques for the tasks selected under 1.*
3. *Competences to operate and collaborate with AI systems.*
4. *Competences in areas that cannot be automatised.*

(Bolander, 2019)

Apart from the situation where we let AI write entire papers, which is in fact out of scope regarding our ethical guidelines, how can we then reasonably use AI for a research process? One task could be using AI for idea-generation. We seldom know where ideas come from initially anyway, so why not ask for assistance on this matter? Problem is that research ideas require some form of novelty, and AI-models are based on data, i.e., something that exists already. From a pragmatic constructivist perspective, we are looking for research possibilities among a wider set of ideas. Indeed, as AI-models produce their suggestions on data that already exists, that contains some form of facts (or illusions). Therefore, we cannot expect AI to help us develop novel research ideas in a straightforward manner, despite the fact that new connections between existing phenomena might hold novelty for future research. Thereby, altogether, this part of the research process is not that likely to be automatised fully. One can for instance chat with AI to spar with a novel idea they have, and AI might give productive new viewpoints to consider. However, that consideration needs some human involvement, and cannot be AI-produced in the end – otherwise we humans outsource perhaps too much of our critical thinking capabilities, thus making ourselves lazier and lazier, teaching our brains to ask surface-level questions rather than profound ones.

However, once we have found a good novel research idea (on our own or in cooperation with other human actors or through some inspiration from AI), AI is likely to become a helpful assistant for making suggestions for literature we can contribute to, or disagree with, because AI is likely to point at facts based on past publications and research contributions. However, these suggestions cannot be used without professional assessment. It is well known that AI-models are biased either due to the data fed to the models or due to the training of the model (e.g. Navigli et al., 2023). Again, professional assessment is called for to ensure that values are in sync with the author's values and the intention of the research idea.

Another place where AI could come handy is in relation to the language, in which the research is written. English has become the language to use for communicating research. However, many find it is easier to write in their native language and thinking can be more elaborated and nuanced, when working in one's own language. AI can afterwards translate the original text and polish the English in scientific writing style, but the final proofreading is still in the hands of human actor. Also, it is not ethically correct to take a publication published in some other language and fully translate it in English and publish again. Some sort of improvement and development should take place before another version of the same paper is published.

These are just a few examples of how we as researchers may make use of AI in our work. There are aspects of our work that can be automatised. As these techniques become increasingly reliable, we can probably turn our focus towards the areas of research that cannot be automatised, such as curiosity, idea generation, critical thinking, reasoning, caring for something, etc. Of course, different academic traditions exist, but in search for a common denominator for the phenomenon of new knowledge creation, the verbs above somehow gather the essence of doing research, and probably why we as scholars stick to this profession. If there is some form of truth in this claim, then AI can become our friend rather than an enemy. However, we must be cautious to avoid any kind of slippery slopes. AI can help us in

doing what we do best, because AI can take over some of the trivial, routine work tasks related to doing research, without violating the ethical guidelines of research.

Based on the above considerations we will post the following text as our AI-policy (to be updated when considered relevant or necessary):

- AI can be used in the papers submitted to the journal, but the authors must report what tools and how they have been used. There needs to be extensive transparency in all AI-usage.
- The following examples of AI-usage are found to be acceptable:
    - Assistance in literature review searches.
    - Grammatical assistance and polishing of paper.
    - Translation of (parts of) the text from one language to another.
- The paper (or parts of it) must not be produced by AI. Text generation and automatic writing of the paper is prohibited (e.g., expanding into a full paper from an extended abstract or a presentation or a list of notes etc.); and as the result, of course, fully AI-generated papers are not allowed.
- For conducting reviews or editorial work, any use of AI is forbidden. We deem it important that human intelligence should assess research published in our journal. We also prohibit feeding the AI-models with submitting authors' original work, because the journal at this point does not hold the intellectual property rights of their scientific work they have sent us.

Altogether, the AI-policy of Journal of Pragmatic Constructivism, as formulated in this issue, follows the more specific guidelines set forth by Emerald Publishing: https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/publish-with-us/ethics-integrity/research-publishing-ethics#ai. We encourage our contributors to read also these detailed guidelines when preparing their papers and submissions.

2 The content of this issue

It is with great pleasure that we can present Sten Jönsson's paper "A micro-contingency theory required!" in this issue. By analysing video-taped material of a car manufacturer's research and development activities, Sten points our attention towards what happens in day-to-day conversations and interactions. As cars are a commodity and targeted both to organisations and individuals as customers, produced in high quantities and within model series, with facelifts and yearly updates, it is meaningful that each car model has a specific design framework. This means that engineers cannot make their design choices in a vacuum but rather, in adherence to a common plan. However, sometimes unexpected things happen in these practices, e.g., a market segment signals new kind of demand, sparking discussion whether a new feature should be engineered into that one market only or for all cars produced, making things more standardised and thus efficient (Korhonen et al., 2016). However, different functions of the organisation might have quite different viewpoints to following or not following the plan exactly, and discussion and debate are hence key in order to make decisions that support the business overall (Laine et al., 2016). Jönsson's paper is about such a debate. By showing the individuals' responses to surprise and others' support for them – or lack of support – the paper showcases that study of actors benefits from an inquiry of the grass-root-level interaction. Intentionality, opposition, demand, surprise – even shock – those are parts of the dramaturgy of the paper. Managers of different levels, protocols, and market dynamics meet at the battlefield of design choices, carefully wielding their weaponry of argumentation, charisma and power. Later on, who wins can (re)write history – or can they? If the battle, or in this case, research and development meeting is videotaped, later on we can see what really happened. Of course, rewriting of history is still possible, but at least a fact-based objective analysis (or narrative) of how the events unfolded in reality enables a more truthful account of what was true and pragmatically functioning. Indeed, we pragmatic constructivist researchers could well learn from Jönsson's work, which of course connects to his early call for focusing ethnomethodologically on what really happened, via video and audio recordings (Jönsson, 1998).

In addition to Sten, our gratitude goes also to the Anonymous Reviewer who gave excellent, constructive comments on how to improve the original manuscript submitted to our journal. As it should, our reviewer base is what our journal relies upon when assessing the quality of manuscripts received, and we are grateful for every insight received from our voluntary yet hardworking reviewer workforce.

3 Future plans for our journal

With this issue, we also outline the future of the journal as we see it today. It is now already 5 years ago that we changed the name of our research outlet from *Proceedings of Pragmatic Constructivism* to the current title, *Journal of Pragmatic Constructivism*. The initial objective of the research outlet, *Proceedings of Pragmatic Constructivism* (2011-

2020), was to create an arena where we as a research community could exchange ideas by means of working papers, presentations, short essays, and other forms of research output that would probably not find their way through more established journals. Changing the name of our research outlet to *Journal of Pragmatic Constructivism* (2021-) also meant that the requirements for the papers to be published in this outlet have increased. We now only accept full papers that have gone successfully through a standard peer-review process.

Now we find that it is time to take further steps with our journal. For the last 6 months, we have had an autonomous working group that has been investigating realistic possibilities for developing our journal further. We have set two goals to be achieved within the next 5-years period. The first goal is to become recognized by and indexed in more databases than what currently is the situation. The second goal is to become recognised as a scientific journal more broadly in different countries, within their specific publication outlet classification systems.

Our journal is currently being hosted via the webpage: www.tidsskrift.dk. Tidsskrift.dk is the Royal Danish Library's portal for the publication of professional, scientific and cultural journals in digital full text. Journals at tidsskrift.dk are indexed in Discovery (Primo), which is the Royal Danish Library's library search engine, as well as WorldCat, which is the world's largest database of library resources. Our next move is to be indexed in DOAJ, that is a database of Open Access journals with more strict requirements than the two others.

Our journal is currently registered in the bibliometric systems in Finland and in Norway. The journal used to be registered in the Danish system as well, but the Danish government does not use this system anymore. Because we have a substantial amount of highly esteemed scholars in different countries, who work and contribute to pragmatic constructivism, we find that seeking recognition in those countries is to show respect for the work by many scholars within our community.

Both of these steps for journal development require that we as a research community invest in our journal. We do have to adjust some of our current mindsets around the publication practice to fulfil the requirements set by different organisations in the academic community. At the moment, our major obstacle is that we need a higher number of manuscripts of good quality. Explicitly, 5 full papers per year is the minimum requirement we have set for this. Therefore, we encourage you to consider *Journal of Pragmatic Constructivism* as a research outlet when your research involves some form of contribution to pragmatic constructivism, it applies its conceptual and methodological traditions, or for example connects its philosophical foundations to some other philosophies, disciplines, theories or methodologies. We welcome empirical, methodological and purely conceptual work.

Finally, to strengthen our organisational setup, we are happy to welcome Pinar Guven-Uslu (University of East Anglia), and Fabio Magnacca (University of Pisa), as co-editors of the journal. In addition, we will seek to expand our editorial board to enable further commitment to and development of our journal. We hope that You, the network constituting the development of pragmatic constructivism, will support our ambitions, and help us develop this journal. We are looking forward to receiving Your contributions!

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