

Thinking longer term about technology: is there value in science fiction-inspired approaches to constructing futures?

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'Science fact, not science fiction' is an oft-heard refrain in the world of technology assessment and forecasting. Yet, as a literary form, science fiction offers a unique approach to thinking longer term about technology: one grounded in narratives that are people-centric, future-oriented, and focused on non-linear dynamics across the interaction of multiple technologies, value-laden images of future societies, questions of meaning and identity, and enduring symbols and problem framings. Building on this approach, we suggest in this paper that new socio-literary techniques, inspired by science fiction, could offer significant contributions to the governance of new and emerging technologies by improving the capacity to reflexively assess the social dynamics of socio-technical systems.

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