The Influence of Ideology on Innovation as Manifesting Imagination: The Case of Tescreal and AGI

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In this paper, we introduce an extended version of the concept of innovation as manifesting imagination. In the original concept, imagination has a key role in the preparation, diffusion and success of innovations. Now, we are integrating ideology and illustrating how it acts as a filter: Ideology not only defines what is desirable and what is not, as a complexity-reducing filter it also enables the argumentative reduction of future expectations by focusing on a specific narrative. We propose that the preferable futures that key entities like imaginators recognize, factor in and push are not purely economic in nature but driven by a rather rigid system of beliefs, imaginations, ideals and expectations, an ideology. While research has pointed to the role of institutions as well as the role of internal dynamics in shaping (organizational) behaviors, the role of ideology has been relatively neglected. Presenting the case of TESCREAL and AGI we are shifting the focus from media and the role of social entities to shared systems of believe, the combination of imaginations and ideals. Finally, implications for the formulation of alternative tech visions and strategies are discussed, especially with regards to sustainable development.

1   Introduction

"We wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters." Peter Thiel

Concepts of innovation processes are frequently framed as starting with a problem to solve or an idea to be realized. But is that really the case? What about expectations of future developments, socially shared desirable, preferable and dystopian visions of the future? Maybe there is more to the success of innovation than just finding and applying a solution or realizing a specific idea or wish. Where are these ideas to be realized and the solutions stemming from? Which role does the social imagination play in this process and what influences it? Bucher (2019) and Bucher and Hüsig (2024) introduced the concept of innovation as manifesting imagination arguing that imagination has a key role in the preparation, diffusion and success of innovations. They have highlighted the roles of sedimented social imagination as well as specific social entities in this process. Science Fiction has been conceptualized as a medium that discusses, develops and diffuses concepts of the future of a certain period in time. It has been used to illustrate how concepts and expectations of the future are developed and diffused, preparing markets for future innovation, creating desires and priming future customers (Michaud 2017, Bucher 2019, Michaud and Appio 2022, Bucher and Hüsig 2024, Appio et al 2025).

Wernher von Braun and Elon Musk were presented as entrepreneurial "imaginators", social entities (in this case individuals) that use multi-modal representations of the future to promote and frame a set of scenarios of the future in which they define a desirable one to pursue – in order to realize a certain future goal on their own, such as their shared vision of a Mars project (Bucher and Hüsig 2024).

"I am enough of the artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world" Albert Einstein

2   Objective / Theoretical Background / Literature review

In this paper, we introduce an extended version of the concept of innovation as manifesting imagination, integrating ideology and illustrating how it acts as a filter: Ideology not only defines what is desirable and what is not, as a complexity-reducing

filter it also enables the argumentative reduction of future expectations by focusing on a specific narrative. Ideology as a filter allows for social alignment, frames futures scenarios and highlight key aspects within these futures (inherently muting alternatives). Historically, economic and technological development have been related to forces such as religion (Weber 2014 (1904), Merton 1938). Later social and economic welfare had been identified as a driving force of innovation (e.g. Rudolf Diesel's "Solidarismus", 1903 as one of the early proponents in which an engine was envisioned to free the people and lift them up to higher levels of prosperity). However, we propose that the preferable futures that key entities like imaginators recognize, factor in and push are not purely economic in nature but driven by a rather rigid system of beliefs, incorporating imaginations, ideals and expectations, an ideology. While research has pointed to the role of institutions as well as the role of internal dynamics in shaping (organizational) behaviors, the role of ideology has been relatively neglected (Foss and Klein 2024). It is easy to forget ideology in a "postideological" society when there actually is no space free of ideology (Žižek 1989, 1994). Ricoeur (1991) holds that the imagination often "operates as an 'ideology'" (Ricoeur 1991, p. 475) and thus not only creates the elementary symbolic structure of society but also continuously reaffirms and reinforces it through ideology.

Looking at the spectrum of competing concepts of the future, we were wondering why certain futures and future technologies are more prominent, reiterated and evolved than others. Therefore, we propose the following research question:

What is filtering the concepts and expectations of the future and setting what is preferable and undesirable, possible or preposterous?

Presenting the case (Eisenhardt 1989, Yin 2013) of TESCREAL we're shifting the focus from media and the role of social entities to shared systems of belief, ideologies, in order to get a better understanding of the process of imagination manifesting as innovation. Ideology is defined as a system of beliefs, a specific combination of imaginations, ideals, and expectations. TESCREAL is presented as a techno-optimistic ideology that combines the concepts of Transhumanism, Extropianism, Singularitarianism, Cosmism, Rationalism, Effective Altruism and Longtermism.

As theoretical lens we're using the futures cone by Gall et al. (2022) to discuss how ideology influences what we perceive and interpret as a preposterous, possible, plausible or probable future, not merely which future is preferred.

In the context of future and scenario planning, it is argued, that reimagining the future and with it, shifting ideals and expectations of the future and establishing novel ideologies are key to overcome the so-called "Clarke-Dator Boundary", the porous boundary between what are deemed possible and preposterous futures (Gall et al 2022, Candy 2010).

TESCREAL as an ideology and object of discourse is used to illustrate that the classification and interpretation of future scenarios are based on ideals, expectations and imaginations that aren't separate, unrelated factors but form a more or less cohesive, rigid system of beliefs – an ideology (Blili-Hamelin et al 2024, Torres 2023).

Artificial General Intelligence or AGI refers to the idea of machines reaching a human level of intelligence, a rather vague concept that still is missing a definition that is agreed-upon (Morris et al. 2023, Mitchell 2024, Blili-Hamelin 2024). Disagreements about AGI, AI and intelligence in general stem from their inherent connection to values. Diverse political, social, and ethical perspectives influence how we define both intelligence and AI, leading to a lack of consensus, as seen in debates over intelligence itself and AGI (Blili-Hamelin 2024 et al, Blili-Hamelin and Hancox-Li 2023).

3   Methodology

A case study research strategy (Eisenhardt, 1989, 1991; Yin, 2013; Dubois/Gadde, 2002) was used to abductively investigate TESCREAL and how it influences AGI. TESCREAL, operationalized as an ideology is influencing the public as well as institutional perception of artificial general intelligence (AGI), expectations regarding the potential capabilities and perils of the technology and subsequently the formulation of technology strategy and r&d budgets. A single case study design was chosen to investigate this phenomenon in a comprehensive way, utilizing secondary data like interviews, promotional material, articles and social media content. This kind of publicly available data seemed appropriate for the investigation, since

ideologies inherently aim to influence social behavior and create alignment using various forms of media, media that is intended to be shared and propagated.

4   Results

TESCREAL as an ideology and object of discourse is used to illustrate that the classification and interpretation of future scenarios are based on ideals, expectations and imaginations that aren't separate, unrelated factors but form a more or less cohesive but rigid system of beliefs – an ideology. The original concept of innovation as manifesting imagination introduced imagination a key factor in the preparation, diffusion and success of innovations. In this study we've enhanced the concept by integrating ideology, illustrating how it acts as a filter for what is deemed a preposterous, possible, plausible or probable future, framing, and highlighting futures as desirable or dystopian: Ideology not only defines what is desirable and what is not, as a complexity-reducing filter it also enables the argumentative reduction of future expectations by focusing on a specific narrative which is in this case TESCREALism as a "techno-utopian" vision of the future driven by "AI accelerationists" with the promise of producing radical abundance, reengineering humans, becoming immortal, colonizing the universe, creating an expanding interplanetary "post-human" civilization among the stars with trillions of people. The most straightforward way to realize this utopia, regarding to the TESCREAL ideology, is by pursuing the creation of super intelligent AGI (Artificial General Intelligence). They refuse the fear of AGI being able to surpass and potentially destroy humanity if something goes wrong, the dystopian version of their proposed future, and frame opposing positions and critics as alarmists, calling them "AI doomers". As an ideology, TESCREAL is offering a systems of belief that is reducing complexity and uncertainty by setting a certain future as possible and preferable and framing opposing ideologies (and their components) as negative, unrealistic or simply unattractive alternatives not worth considering.

5   Discussion & Conclusions

We propose that the preferable futures that key entities like imaginators recognize, factor in and push are not purely economic in nature, but driven by a rather rigid system of beliefs, based on and framed by a specific set of imaginations, ideals and expectations, an ideology. Now, we are integrating ideology and illustrating how it

acts as a filter: Ideology not only defines what is desirable and what is not, as a complexity-reducing filter it also enables the argumentative reduction of future expectations by focusing on a specific narrative which is in this case TESCREALism as shown above. We suggest further exploring the possibilities that imaginations of the future, such as science fiction, offer to value creation as well as sustainable and responsible decision-making. Moreover, we suggest considering the predictive potential of imagination-trends. Further considering the role of the imaginator in the process of imagination manifesting as innovation – e.g. imagination and social movements, imaginator as fraudster (e.g. Warren and Theranos). Finally, also the research community in innovation and technology management should foster a more design science-oriented paradigm in order to create which science fiction and future visions could inspire alternative social imaginations and imaginators. Future research should therefore also develop alternative technology visions and strategies since alternative desirable futures start with thinking about new possible alternative options. Without deconstructing the inherent flaws of current ideologies and future visions, strategies are doomed to follow a predefined script.

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