

Hype and the Cyberlibertarian Transition: A Call for Hype Assessment

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ETAC 6 – Vienna – 4th June 2025



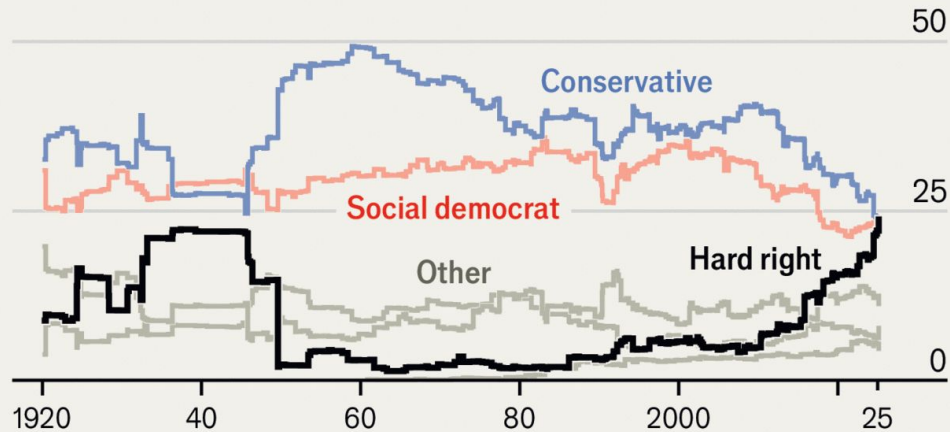
**SHOULD TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT BE NON-PARTISAN WHEN
HEGEMONIC TECHNOFINANCIAL ACTORS ARE PUSHING TOWARDS
ANTI-DEMOCRATIC, AUTHORITARIAN FUTURES**

Graphic detail | Fighting over the firewall

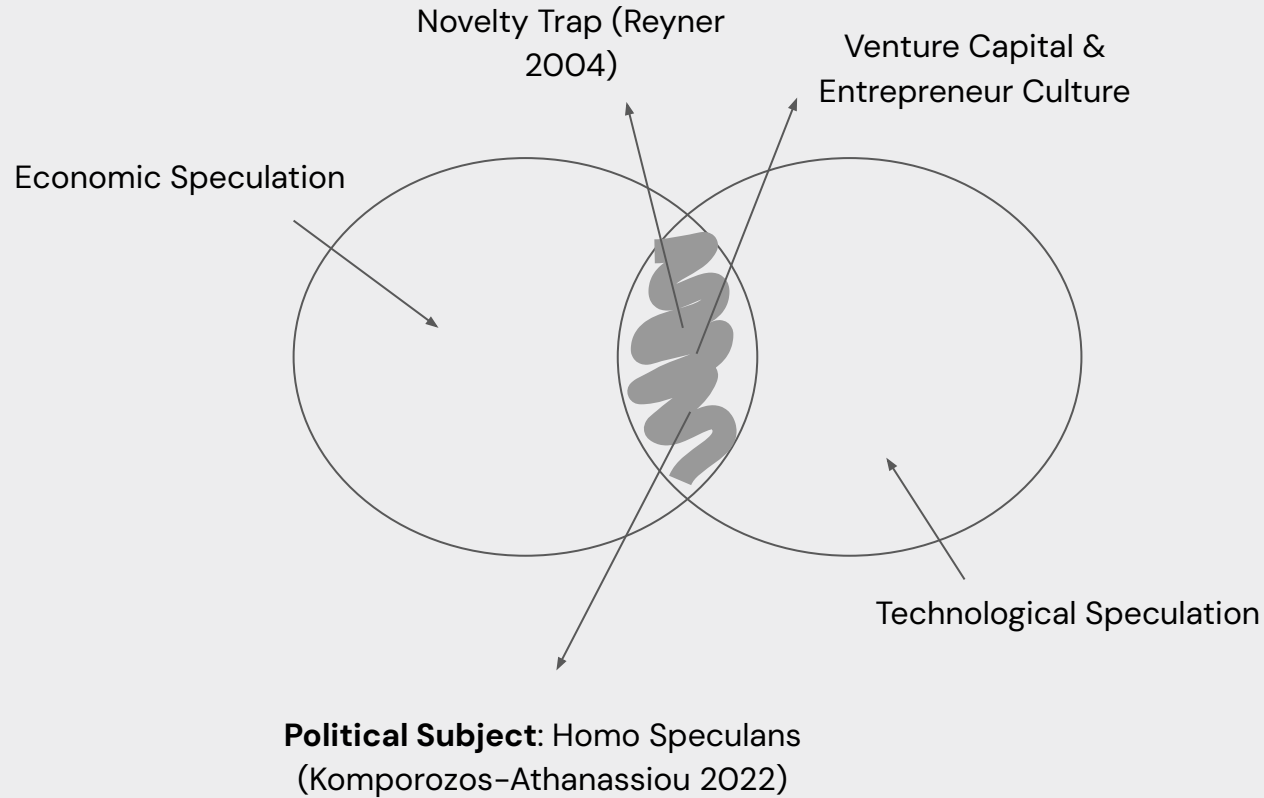
Hard-right parties are now Europe's most popular

But our number crunching shows that they have mostly been kept out of power

European democracies, vote share by party type, %



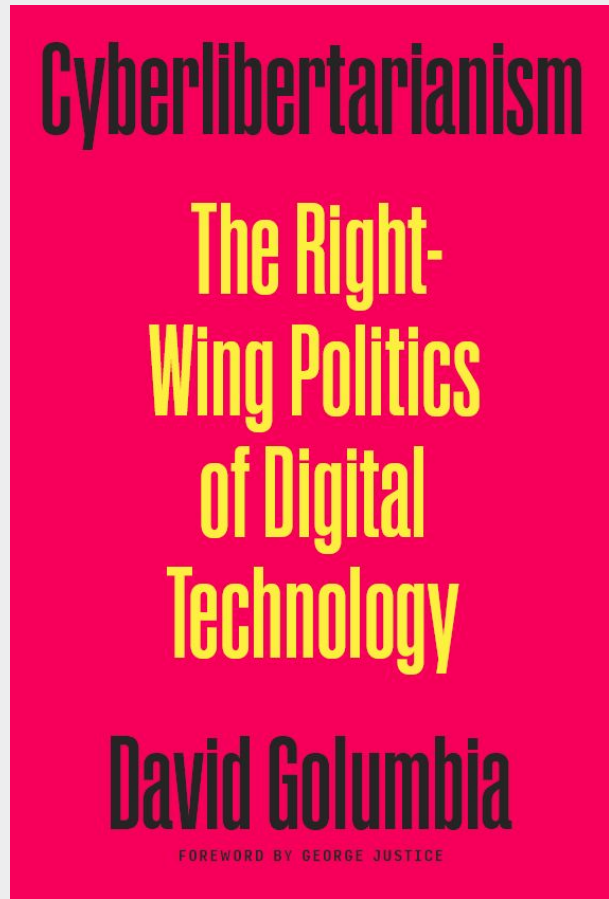
TECHNOFINANCIAL CONTEXT OF HYPE



CYBERLIBERTARIANISM

Winner (1997); Golumbia (2016, 2024)

- Techno-Elitism
- Anti-State Ideology
- Free-Market Supremacy
- Radical Individualism
- Depoliticisation Through Code
- Alignment and Rebranding of the Far-Right
- Conspirational Thinking
- Antagonism to Social Justice Movements



HYPE IS PERFORMATIVE

Epistemic	Constructs a sense of certainty about inherently uncertain futures. It projects speculative futures as inevitable and collapses the space for doubt or alternative framings.
Informational	Undermines responsible communication by producing false inferences and unreliable predictions. It fails to meet evidentiary and ethical standards appropriate to contexts involving risk, public understanding, and decision-making.
Discursive	Driven through exaggeration, buzzwords, and charismatic storytelling. Interpretative flexibility and ambiguity are strategic resources.
Affective	Build-up: excitement, hope, anticipation, and urgency. Decline: fear, frustration, and disillusionment. Affective charge sustains participation and belief in promissory visions.
Normative	Frames specific futures as desirable, necessary, or inevitable. It implicitly de-legitimises alternatives, reinforcing dominant values and closing down plural futures. Implies alignment of agendas and resources among stakeholders.
Material	Influences the allocation of resources, shapes innovation agendas, and mobilises investment. Shape infrastructural commitments and urban landscapes.
Temporal	Accelerated chronopolitics pressure actors to act quickly to avoid missing out. It generates urgency by compressing temporal horizons and projecting imminent breakthroughs.
Political	Benefits specific actors (instead of others), shaping regulation, public discourse, funding, and innovation agendas.

Two fields for Hype Assessment

SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION

Kristen Intemann (2022)

- Whether something **counts as hype** depends on **how we judge** what counts as a **benefit** or a **risk**, and which ones are important to talk about.
- Avoid that possible **benefits and risks encourage** false inferences and unreliable predictions.
- Define which risks and benefits matter most for **decision making** to **avoid downplaying important risks**
- Define criteria that allow for the **highlighting of particular benefits**
- Make sure **claims are backed by enough evidence**, especially when mistakes could be risky.

AI R&D

Savannah Thais (2024)

- Diversified Funding and Research
- Regulatory Action
- Technical Literacy and Best Practices

Entrepreneurial culture stimulates
hype to maximising profit



Media creates hype to attract audience

Entrepreneurial culture stimulates
hype to maximising profit



Hype is not
accidental but
constitutive

Media creates hype to attract audience

HYPE AS A CYBERLIBERTARIAN TRANSITION INSTRUMENT

World / Worldcoin

Belsunces (Forthcoming)

Surfing Web3, DeFi, cryptocurrencies hype

- Anti-State Ideology
- Builds Para-State infrastructure
- Undermines monetary democracy by eroding public legitimacy in redistribution and accountability
- Financialisation of digital identity
- Offers libertarian UBI
- Accelerates democratic destabilisation



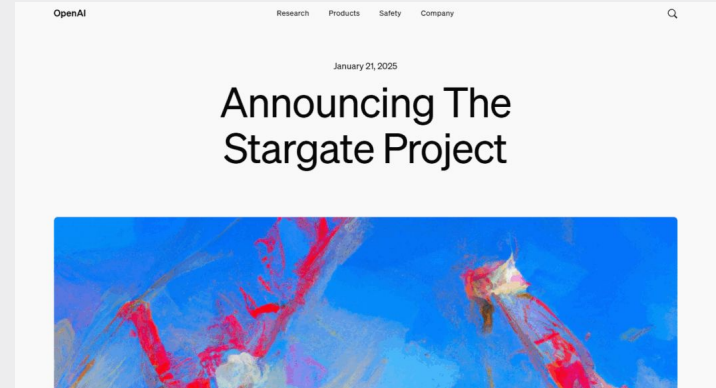
HYPE AS A CYBERLIBERTARIAN TRANSITION INSTRUMENT

Artificial General Intelligence

Belsunces (Forthcoming)

Surfing AI & GenAI Hype

- AGI as a civilizational change: capital intensive
- Result of Venture Capital Speculative imagination: high risk-high reward
- Hype as a governance strategy
- Ideological alignment with longtermism and effective altruism: moral imperative beyond democratic values
- Presented as a geopolitical need
- Labour disempowerment and economic displacement



Joe Rogan & Sam Altman

TOWARDS A TECHNOPOLITICAL HYPE ASSESSMENT

- Strengthen the political economy approach to emerging technologies
- Clear anti-anti-democratic TA approach and futures literacy
- Consider lock-ins and path dependencies in relation to the anti-democratic visions
- Observe what alternative imaginaries and forms of knowledge are marginalised
- Catalogue strategic ambiguity in technical descriptions
- Include criteria for democratic validity: public debate, capacity to contest future visions, power concentration, democratic governance of the technology, openness to deliberation, transparency and consent

FURTHER QUESTIONS

- How Hype assessment can be complemented or enrich **technology assessment** and **vision assessment**?
- How hype participates in regulatory capture by private actors?
- How pressures of financial markets creates different kinds of hype dynamics in different technoscientific fields?

Thanks

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Two fields for Hype Assessment

SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION

Kristen Intemann (2022)

- Whether something **counts as hype** depends on **how we judge** what counts as a **benefit** or a **risk**, and which ones are important to talk about.
- Avoid that possible **benefits and risks encourage** false inferences and unreliable predictions.
- Define which risks are serious and **imminent**
- Define which risks and benefits matter most for **decision making** to **avoid downplaying important risks**
- Define criteria that allow for the **highlighting of particular benefits**
- Make sure no important information is left out when making predictions or decisions
- Make sure **claims are backed by enough evidence**, especially when mistakes could be risky.

Two fields for Hype Assessment

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Savannah Thais (2024)

→ Diversified Funding and Research

- Prioritising funding for more diverse research areas that **complement**, rather than compete with, industry.
- Use more precise language to describe ML and AI instead of **vague, magical language**
- Avoid making **unsubstantiated claims** about an AI system's reasoning abilities and instead work towards developing **rigorous tests** to characterize such abilities

→ Regulatory Action

- Standardized third-party audits
- Mandated transparency
- Rely on existing consumer protection, product liability, and fraud law to address harmful AI hype

→ Technical Literacy and Best Practices

- Reporters covering AI should have technical knowledge to avoid spreading AI hype
- Improved technical literacy amongst population to interrogate AI promises and make AI systems accountable