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How to anticipate the mediation of values with stakeholders: a designerly approach to techno-moral scenarios

To anticipate the impact of emerging technologies on our society, scenarios are a highly applied approach. They combine knowledge on technological innovation and its impact with imagination to think creatively about possible futures. To take the technological mediation of values in these socio-technical imaginaries into account, techno-moral scenarios have been developed as an approach in which the co-evolution of technology and our moral frameworks can be explored. This scenario approach is however challenged by an epistemological deficit: the method is highly expert-based and does not emphasize the involvement of stakeholders, who can bring additional situated knowledge and experience to improve the scenarios. Although stakeholder participation would suit the rationale of the techno-moral scenario approach, the prescribed method filters participation out by default, as the method depends on a high level of expertise on both ethical as socio-technical developments. To create more democratically informed scenarios, this paper explores what the techno-moral scenario approach can learn from disciplines such as participatory design and experiential futures, which combine imagination and creativity with stakeholder empowerment. Here, we learn that it is a matter of creating the right tools and settings for stakeholders to be involved in the process, and invite them as experts of their own experience. As such, this work supports a normative claim with a methodological suggestion, by arguing for adding participatory anchoring to the key considerations of the techno-moral scenario approach. This would enhance both its democratic character as lead to better informed scenarios, thereby making society better prepared for socio-technical developments.