

THE TECHNO LIFE METHOD

The TECHNO LIFE method maps ethical issues at early stages of S&T and represents social imaginaries relating to these issues. It is a suite of exploratory, qualitative and quantitative steps:

1. A scoping exercise that defines **hot topics** in relation to the technological fields. Hot topics are issues of concern that involve unsolved social, moral or political tensions and that are immature for regulatory definition and resolution.
2. Deliberation within **KerTechno**, our specially designed online open-source software in which citizens and stakeholders discuss the hot topics. The purpose of the deliberation exercise is to elicit arguments, concerns, imaginaries and alternative frames of understanding with respect to central policy issues seen in the light of broader cultural developments.
3. An online KerTechno **voting system**, allowing for quantitative analysis of results.
4. A qualitative, analytical procedure that identifies the **arguments, concerns, imaginaries and alternative frames of understanding** elicited by the participatory exercise and defines their relation and relevance to early stages of S&T and policy development.

Both the theoretical framework underlying it and its balance between approaches are essential features that give TECHNO LIFE its innovative character and robustness.



TECHNOLIFE is a research project on the ethics of emerging science and technology, coordinated by the University of Bergen. Its partners include Univ. of Copenhagen, Lancaster Univ., Univ. of Manchester, Univ. de Versailles-St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, Univ. of Tartu, Univ. Autònoma de Barcelona and EC-Joint Research Centre (Ispra, Italy)

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TECHNOLIFE on YouTube:
<http://www.youtube.com/TechnolifeDebate>

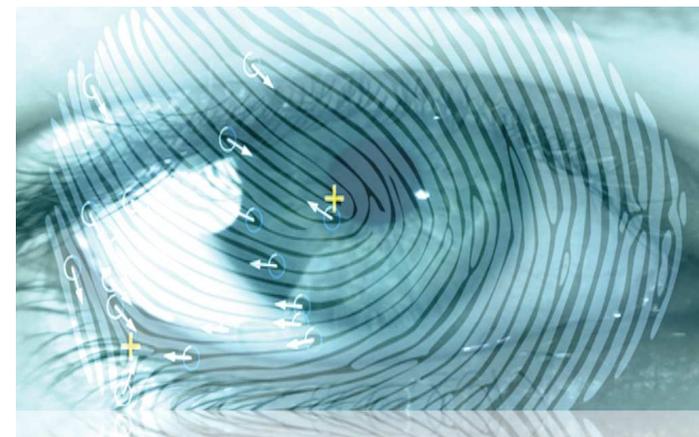


**Centre for the Study of the Sciences
and the Humanities
University of Bergen**

P. O. Box 7805, N-5020 Bergen, Norway
e-mail: post@svt.uib.no
URL <http://www.uib.no/svt/en>

Connected to the System? Biometrics and Mobility in the EU

TECHNOLIFE: Ethics with People Key Results



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HOT TOPICS FOR BIOMETRICS

In the TECHNOLIFE paradigm, hot topics are issues of concern that involve unsolved social, moral and/or political tensions and that are immature for regulatory definition and resolution. In the case of **Biometrics**, the following hot topics were identified:

- a) **Social justice** - Can biometrics promote freedom of movement, security and justice? Could new mechanisms of exclusion and discrimination be built into these systems?
- b) **Surveillance and privacy** - What does “privacy” mean for you? Could biometrics improve privacy and security at the same time?
- c) **Trust in technology and in government** - Can governments and operators be entrusted with keeping our personal and biometric information?

The topics were presented in the form of a short movie, see:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0rWXi79f3Q>

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DEBATING (IN) A POLICY VACUUM?

In the Western world, the introduction of biometrics was intimately connected to the fight against terrorism. This greatly stimulated corporate and government security activities. Policies have been marked by secrecy and a **lack of information**, rendering biometric futures uncertain. Great urgency coupled with **legal and technical complexity** also contributed to **poor conditions for communication and public debate**.

“I am not saying that biometric tech is corrupted in western countries. But it is much more prone to fundamental corruption than in underdeveloped ones. It’s much harder to harm (with biometrics) those who live in tents and are poor but pretty independent than those whose lives are infinitely entangled with housing/banks/politics/advertising/consumption/job/markets/media... The role of biometrics in developed world should be exactly the same as in third world just on a different scale.” (MarkoK, TECHNOLIFE Forum participant).



CONNECTED TO THE SYSTEM?

Citizens, immigrants, travellers and users of critical infrastructure are increasingly connected through a number of information systems. Biometric devices such as fingerprint readers and face scanners radically scale up the potential for **connecting individuals and groups to centralised systems**. Governments looking for new ways to keep track of dangerous individuals have embraced biometric information systems, such as the VIS, SIS II and EURODAC. But biometrics may also be used to **give rights to people**: If the state does not know who you are, it cannot grant you access to social services and basic human rights, such as voting.

MORE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS?

Conventional approaches to governance of technologies rely on the **metaphor of “balancing” privacy and security**. Many TECHNOLIFE participants were more concerned with **social, economic and political issues**. In an ever-more interconnected world, it is not sure that privacy, the right to be left alone, is representative of citizens’ desires or concerns. TECHNOLIFE offers methods for embedding debates over applications and purposes within the systems themselves. For distributed systems, such as biometrics, ICTs may provide valuable tools for communication and dialogue. The best way of promoting sustainable innovation in biometric technologies is a **precautionary attitude** oriented towards **openness, transparency and the safeguarding of civil rights**.

... I do wonder about our increasing desire for more information and speed, [...] I can only guess in the haste to implement this programme no thorough review of EU law was conducted. My point is, I suppose, this stuff often doesn’t work; [...] I question how we handle and manage, in this case, information and speed (“Keith”, TECHNOLIFE Forum participant)