

SDGs and fictional energy utopias: gauging sustainable energy transitions against Ecotopia (1975) and The Ministry for the Future (2020)

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Abstract-

Strategic narratives about the transition to sustainable energy systems, including those influenced by the United Nations's sustainable development goals (SDGs), frequently incorporate utopian elements. These ambitious targets encapsulate future-oriented visions and postulate implications of technological advancements; they also often underrepresent or even bypass the multifaceted nature of socioeconomic diversities, planetary constraints, and persistent energy disputes. The genre of utopian science fiction can offer a valuable heuristic to elucidate the heterogeneous and occasionally unsatisfactory projections that emerge from the SDGs. Two seminal novels—Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) and Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future* (2020)—which we classify as "fictional energy utopias" (FEUs), present incisive critiques of contemporary energy mechanisms and practices and envisage equitable, resilient, and robust renewable energy systems and socio-technical structures. Through an approach that combines narrative and discourse analyses, these literary works are juxtaposed with selected indicators of three SDGs. The ensuing study underscores the primacy of the topic of energy in policy and its concomitant narratives in fostering collective endeavors toward sustainable development. It also amplifies the pivotal interconnections between SDG 7 "Affordable and Clean Energy," SDG 13 "Climate Action," and SDG 16 "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions." Employing FEUs to evaluate sustainability policies can substantially benefit researchers, policy architects, and public engagement coordinators by highlighting lacunae and limitations within prevailing strategic narratives and proposing potential enhancements to fortify their capacity to motivate collective action.

Index Terms- Sustainable development goals, energy humanities, science fiction, strategic narratives, energy and climate policy, narrative analysis, discourse analysis

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