

Big Science Fiction—Nuclear Fusion and Popular Culture in the United States

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Since its beginning in the 1950s, nuclear fusion has promised an ultimate solution to the world's ever-increasing energy demand and its associated environmental problems. But in spite of enormous investments and continuous international cooperation, civil energy production by nuclear fusion has remained a moving target.

As a publicly funded Big Science project, it is subject to social and political debates about the desirability of its results and the appropriateness of its costs.

Drawing on a historical contextualization and comparative analysis of the discourses about nuclear fusion and its cultural representations in the United States during the Atomic Age, I explore how the arguments for and against this uncertain investment relate to unique historical circumstances, as well as changing visions of the future, social preferences, and attitudes.