

Social Consequences of Technology in a Cyberpunk World

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These are possible themes for use in cyberpunk writing, and things that as a writer you must take into account. As a realist writer, you have to take them all into account for the setting, if not the story itself.

- **Obsolescence.** Job replacement. No accountants, secretaries, computer programmers. Everything replaced by hardware and software. Some discussion about who and what and to which degree. What is overall impact ? Everyone find new jobs or does the software replacement overrun everything, leaving socialism the only option ? Worth a lot of discussion. What does the general population do if not work ? There is a big area here for explanation. Player Piano.
- **Crime :** most agree increase. Guns easily made, upgraded with garage tech. Crime will change to pursue available resources.
- **Data theft :** likely except the question of algorithmic encryption comes up. Can't steal what can't be decoded. need a lot of discussion to talk about this.
- **Personal armor :** varies directly with crime rate, inversely with police presence. If dangerous and no cops, you wear armor. Spidersilk, kevlar, cermet plates, polycarbonate impact plastic, specially fitted stuff, as well as military powered armor (mostly assist) or exoskeletons likely to whichever degree. Chip based stuff likely failure. EMP weakness, batteries. How will effect society ? Will searches be a common occurrence. Will guns be worn at all times ? Will they be concealed or not ?
- **Garage tech :** desktop printing-like home design increases with cheap portable tech made for small 3rd world countries. Tech providing undercutting of big corps and government. Also allows for R&D below cost of big companies. How would garage tech effect the corp existence ? Mass production is not possible, obviously, in the garage where all parts are "hand made" via CAD/CAM and chip printing. Micromass production could occur via robotic assembly in plants assembled in barns or warehouses. A few hundred a day, or something to that effect. Quality could blow out the corps, but not quantity. High tech pastoralism could become a significant factor in the future. Anything which is known could be built in these homebuilt hobbyshops. Guns, computers, microchips, automobiles, airplanes, more factories, a potentially self replicating device could be produced and updated to pursue any conceivable technology and provide the means to produce it. All in a garage. Mention hang plastic, put clean ventilator on the top, paint the floor to keep down the dust. Like a new environment for chips.
- **Supercannon :** what effect on the world will this pasture tech item have on the world ? Also discuss satellite deployment by the same. Discuss munitions as well, nukes, chemicals, viral, bio, plasma, n-bombs, etc. What will happen to worldwide violence level ? Up or down ?
- **Nuclear weapons :** proliferation is unstoppable. It is inevitable that a bomb will not be dropped on someone eventually. It is likely that this will occur in the next 15 years, probably in the Middle East or the USA.
- **Pollution :** uncertain how much will be present. Radioactive waste currently has nowhere to go. Eventually to the faulty Yucca Mtn. site. Heavy metals byproduct of chip manufacturing. Many industrial lubricants and solvents quite toxic and carcinogenic. Air pollution linked to smokestacks and autos. If no cars, or different fuels, air pollution is a dead issue. If air pollution exists in the future, to a greater degree than now, then carbon filter masks make sense and will have effect on society. What symbols, styles will evolve out of gas masks ? Household airlocks ? Moonsuits to take a stroll. Massive domes to expel the poison air ? Need discussion.
- **Fuel cells.** PEM = Proton Exchange Membrane cell. Expect 35 hp per cell, 25 kW. Uses methanol with air at 2 atm. pressure at 180°F. Not internal combustion. Currently 45% efficiency, 20% better than IC engines.

Efficiency will improve to 80%-95% by 2010 to above values. Cost probably expensive at first, but will decrease with time.

- New germs antibiotics resistant. Need mention of superplagues. Rebirth of nasty viruses too. Need more knowledge of HIV and XP genes interaction with immune system.
- Biowarfare/bioengineering of human DNA in living people. Retro-viruses may be a big deal, usurping tech. Like shapers in Schismatrix. Discuss of reshaping of human form, gene loss to commonly available retros. Gradual clonation of people looking for identity.
- Firearms likely to make rapid advances in more odd forms of projectile, different formula propellants, short, reg, special and magnum rounds more carefully designed for barrel length. Many currently used firearms will continue to be used in future. Materials in firearms will improve, including integration of optics and electronics. Ceramics, plastic, disposable, resin compounds will provide for new materials rather than just steel and aluminum.
- Armor will go to kevlar, spidersilk, lexan, polycarbonate, cermet, with padding, cooling systems, restraints.
- Electronics, especially consumer electronics applications will be cheap and accessible. Nightvision glasses, portable computers, cellular phones, etc, all become more available and less expensive as time goes by. Stereos, TV's, CD players, CD-Roms, computers (portables, desktops, mainframes, notebook, palmtop).
- New services include software improvements, digital government, more catalog shopping, etc. Online networking, 500 channel cable, movies on demand, pay per view anything movies/news/software/video games.