

# Maria Farrell.

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*I write and speak about how to imagine and build technological futures we actively choose to live in.*

A couple of years ago, I wrote a viral blog-post about the hurt of being an Irish immigrant in the UK following the Brexit vote. One of my sisters said it was well-written, but asked 'What about the duty of hope?' I'd never heard of it. She said Irish diplomats working on the Northern Ireland peace process kept themselves going through many dark nights that eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement, by invoking the duty of hope. They believed in a moral duty to act as if there is a future worth having, even if, rationally, it seems impossible.

Those three words, the 'duty of hope', changed how I work and what I do. I came to believe that ["hope is not a feeling, and it's not a dream. Hope is a muscle. It gets stronger the more you work it, and working it is not optional. The duty of hope means despair is unethical."](#)

I no longer just critique technology. I write and speak about how to change tech so it supports us as individuals and as a species, and helps us fix the huge challenges we collectively face. I work on and with storytelling; as a writer of fiction, as a skillset to better understand how metaphors shape possibility, and as a direct way to imagine the future and build it.

Sometimes that involves writing commissioned, near-future science fiction stories for clients; sometimes it's giving speeches with stories embedded in them – both fiction and nonfiction – and sometimes it's using the storyteller's toolkit to better understand false narratives and why they have such a hold on us.

*"I heard a speech by an Irish writer, named Maria Farrell. Something she said has stuck with me. 'Despair is unethical', she declared, 'We have a duty to hope.'"*

**Tim Cook, CEO, Apple**

Everything I do is grounded in deep technological knowledge and experience of Internet infrastructure and its complex interaction with economic, political and social life. One recent speech threaded together Winston Churchill, stockpiled security vulnerabilities and an ethical dilemma guaranteed to keep you up for many nights to come. Another used feminist insights into unequal power relationships to view our smart devices in a wholly new way. My professional speeches are typically described as passionate, funny, surprising, counter-intuitive and mind-expanding.

I have spoken at the Royal Society, Chatham House and the Royal Institute in London, the European Forum Alpbach, and the European Data Protection Supervisor's annual conference in the European Parliament. As a professional keynote speaker, I start from a deep grounding in the technical infrastructure of the Internet and my passionate belief in its ability (still!) to be a progressive force for good around the world.

## **Biography**

A graduate of University College Dublin, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the London School of Economics, Maria Farrell worked in technology policy for twenty years, including at The World Bank, ICANN, the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris, the Confederation of British Industry and The Law Society of England and Wales.

Based in London, Maria works for clients. She previously taught Internet governance to policymakers from around the world, and was an instructor in cybersecurity policy at Oxford University's Centre for Doctoral Training in Cyber Security from 2014 - 2018. Maria is completing a PhD in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths University, London. She has written for The Guardian, the New European, Slate, Medium, the Irish Times and Irish Independent, and appeared as a tech expert on BBC, Sky News, NBC and TRT.