

Forum Editor: Kean Birch

Economic assumptions underpin an enormous range of expert judgements regarding technoscience and beyond. Such assumptions frequently remain implicit, meaning that they are unaccountable despite being powerful influences on an array of decisions, policies, media representations, public engagements, professional expertise, etc. Examples of these assumptions include the following: how livelihoods relate to rising GDP; how human behaviour relates to competitive individualism; how government policies relate to notions of efficiency and cost-benefit analysis; how innovation relates to capital-intensive technology; how technology relates to social progress and societal benefits; how technoscientific development relates to financial returns; how successful product development relates to price, quality, public acceptance; etc. (Muniesa 2014; Birch 2016; Roy and King 2016). For all such issues, the underlying assumptions are normative and constitutive, even if claiming to be merely descriptive.

Some time ago scholars like Michel Callon (1998) and Donald MacKenzie (2001) turned an STS lens onto forms of economic expertise and knowledge; they highlighted how the economy is performatively constituted by economic ideas. Philip Mirowski (2011) and David Tyfield (2012) have sought to examine the changing political economy of research and innovation that has resulted from particular political-economic regimes, especially neoliberalism. Sunder Rajan (2012) and Collard and Dempsey (2013), have sought to understand the materialities of economic actors, objects, and understandings of the world. These perspectives represent only some ways that the constitutive relationship between economic assumptions and technoscience have been theorised in STS, e.g. as academic capitalism, neoliberal technoscience, or technoscientific capitalism (e.g. Berman 2012; Pellizzoni and Ylönen, 2012; Birch 2013).

These various perspectives highlight how economic assumptions increasingly (re)configure technoscientific priorities, funding regimes, organizational governance, politics and policies, artefacts and bodies, etc. In particular finance, financial markets, financial governance, and financialization are bound up with specific configurations of technoscientific research and innovation process, strategy, outcomes, and normative framings of the world. There is a growing need for STS to engage more with economic assumptions and their pervasive manifestations. If we do not develop our own critical competency, then by default we end up reproducing implicit or dominant economic assumptions.

Given that technoscience and economics are increasingly entangled as ontological and epistemic objects, as knowledges, and as practices, more work is necessary to unpack the economic assumptions underpinning technoscience. This raises two important questions for STS: How might STS scholars theorise the economic assumptions implicit in technoscience? And in its academic analysis? In what ways are the logics, subjectivities, and publics constituting economic assumptions and technoscience increasingly blurred?

This forum seeks to engage STS scholars in an analysis of economic assumptions, especially their roles in science, technology, innovation, and expertise more generally. For this *SaC Forum*, articles should address the above questions, which can be elaborated through these topics:

- How economic assumptions underpin particular expert and policy judgements
- How economic assumptions are kept implicit, made explicit or actively contested

- How economic assumptions configure and reconfigure technoscience, and vice versa
- Normative stances implied (or made explicit) in economic assumptions, especially as regards technoscience
- Co-production of specific economic assumptions and specific technoscience
- How STS can engage with economic claims, expertise, and assumptions
- The political and normative role of STS in challenging different forms of economic expertise and assumptions
- Theoretical value of concepts like *technoscientific capitalism* or *neoliberal technoscience*
- Constitution of concepts like technoscientific capitalism by specific logics, expertise, subjectivities, and publics

As an example, please see Kean's recent article "[Rethinking value in the bio-economy: Finance, assetization, and the management of value](#)" in *Science, Technology, and Human Values*.

Details

- Deadline: end of January 2017.
- Length: length is flexible, ranging between 2k-6k words.
- Format: author's contact details (postal address and email address) should be at the top of the file; articles should contain an introduction and conclusion, but are otherwise flexible.
- Contact: please email Kean Birch (keanbirch@gmail.com) with queries about suitability and such like.
- Submission: send submissions to both Les Levidow (L.Levidow@open.ac.uk) and Kean Birch (keanbirch@gmail.com); articles will be reviewed by both Les and Kean, but will not be sent out for peer review.

Full-scale papers (10k words maximum) are also welcome. But these would need to follow the SaC editorial guidelines and undergo the normal referee procedure. If not ready in time for the Forum, they could be published in a later issue. See [here](#), especially the [guidelines for authors](#).

References

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- Collard, R-C. and Dempsey, J. (2013) Life for sale? The politics of lively commodities, *Environment and Planning A* 45 (11): 2682-2699.
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- Sunder Rajan, K. (ed.) (2012) *Lively Capital: Biotechnologies, Ethics and Governance in Global Markets*, Duke University Press.
- Tyfield, D. (2012) *The Economics of Science*, London: Routledge.