

Title: A new socially distributed (bio)economic growth? Some theoretical reflections.

Abstract.

The concept of bioeconomy is often reduced to the political economy of biotechnology and the organization of biotech industry as a market. The economic exploitation of biovalue - “the yield of vitality produced by the biotechnical reformulation of living process” (Waldby 2002, 310) – it was connected to the neoliberal ideology, as the epitome of the process of commercialization of science. Some economists have redefined scientific knowledge and its material embodiments as private goods and forms of investment. The commodification of knowledge and life itself was seen as the normal outcome of the alleged natural laws of the market economy, testified by the growing application-oriented and commercialized nature of scientific knowledge production, especially in the field of biotechnology. Against the neoliberal hegemony and the economic colonization of the (life) sciences, ethical, political, and also economic concerns have been raised: the fear that the process of commodification may generate irreversibility and therefore undermines the development of scientific knowledge itself. Nevertheless, more recently, experiences such as the active engagement of patients’ groups in research activities, hybrid forums, scientific commons movements and the creation of large transnational public-private consortiums are calling into question the irreversibility of commodification. This paper aims to explore theoretically and critically the possibility of novel forms of bioeconomy, knowledge production, and economic growth no more based on the market economy but rather on redistributive and gift economies, where knowledge and living processes and materials are considered commons and public goods, exogenous factors for a socially distributed economic growth.

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