

WORKSHOP CALL FOR PAPERS

*The Changing Political Economy of Research and Innovation:
Public Policy, Commercialization & Neoliberal Technoscience*

9-10th December 2013
York University, Toronto, Canada

'Science' is increasingly tasked with kick-starting the moribund economy, underpinning a new techno-economic paradigm, while tackling multiple, overlapping global challenges (e.g. climate change, food security, low-carbon transition). However, the cultural and political role of science, the political economy of its funding and the impacts of technoscientific innovation are all highly contested. How science and innovation can and do contribute to economic growth and solving global challenges are not clearly understood and, conversely, it is clear that the current dominant policy understanding of these relations is inadequate on at least four fronts.

First, the so-called 'linear model' of innovation persists as the basis of most current science policies even as it has been comprehensively dismantled by social and economic studies of science and innovation. Second, the globalization of research and innovation contradicts the national focus of much science policy with the emergence of global innovation networks, international science collaborations and mass, distributed open innovation and open science initiatives. Third, the inadequacy of current understanding of the political economy of scientific research is especially evident regarding the global challenges since many are 'wicked' problems that defy resolution through techno-fixes. Finally, the commodification, commercialization and privatization of scientific research have been key pillars of the dominant political-economic project of neoliberalism.

Regarding this last issue in particular, neoliberal globalization is in crisis with significant backlash against 'free markets' and a groundswell of political opinion calling for 'responsible capitalism'. These trends profoundly challenge the IP-intensive, neoliberal global model of science-based innovation that has dominated in recent years. Yet, notwithstanding these trends in the broader political economy, the neoliberalization of science in the global North is proceeding at an undiminished, if not accelerated, pace. The changing relations of scientific research, innovation and political economy are thus a key site for the investigation of the future of technoscience in terms of its contribution to socio-economic development and the public accountability of scientists and policy-makers.

These issues form the basis for a two-day workshop to be held at York University, Toronto, which will seek to address four broad questions:

1. Why do simple scientific and innovation narratives have such political and policy power?

2. How do public policies, projects and innovation promote particular, neoliberal forms of technoscience?
3. What are the ways we can re-conceptualize global problems in order to challenge and go beyond solutions based on neoliberal technoscience?
4. How might technoscience be democratized and de-commodified so that it better serves collective or public interests?

If you have other ideas for papers relevant to the workshop then please do get in touch.

Keynote Speakers

Professor Philip Mirowski (University of Notre Dame – author of *ScienceMart* and *Never Let a Dire Crisis Go to Waste*)

Dr Erik Conway (tbc - Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California – co-author with Naomi Oreskes of *Merchants of Doubt*)

Professor Alison Hearn (Western University, Canada)

Professor Larry Busch (Michigan State University - author of *Standards: Recipes for Reality*)

Paper Submission

Please email your abstracts (250 words max) to kean@yorku.ca and d.tyfield@lancaster.ac.uk by 31st July 2013. Feel free to contact us before the deadline to discuss your ideas.

Organization

Organizers:

Dr Kean Birch, Department of Social Science, York University, Toronto, Canada

Dr David Tyfield, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

Travel & Accommodation:

Some funding is available for speakers to cover accommodation including for graduate students. Please indicate whether you would like to be considered for this funding. Decisions about funding will be made on a first-come-first-served basis.

Output

This workshop is a follow-up to a workshop held at Lancaster University, UK, in October 2012. A selection of contributors from both workshops will be invited to contribute their papers to an edited volume on the political economy of research and innovation to be edited by Professor Philip Mirowski (Notre Dame) and Dr. David Tyfield (Lancaster).