

South American country. In particular, it has been noted how the State and the public institutions have taken very different roles, depending on the different historical periods. This discontinuous evolutionary trajectory seems to have led to what the authors identify as the main unresolved problems in the country: the continuing phenomenon in wide areas of the nation of low degrees of integration between public services and private structures, which tends to exclude a large part of the population of Argentina from access to health services.

\* \* \*

**Helga Nowotny and Giuseppe Testa**  
**Naked Genes: Reinventing the Human in the Molecular Age**  
Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2011, pp. 152

**Federico Neresini, *University of Padova***

This book – originally published in German in 2009 – is a good book for many reasons, but one of them prevails over all the others: it was written really together by two different authors, a crucial aspect for assessing the quality of the book, not so much in terms of style as in terms of content. There are obviously many other books written by two authors, but this one is a real novelty as the authors belong to two different fields of study, which are often, and wrongly, contrasting. It is also true that books co-written by authors coming from two different disciplinary fields are not so uncommon; however, those in which the two authors do not simply apply their own individual knowledge or offer the reader a mere juxtaposition of their points of view, and instead create a text that is the genuine result of amalgamation and harmonization free from compromise, that is a real rarity. And such is the case of this book.

Helga Nowotny, in fact, is one of the best examples of what happens when Science and Technology Studies (STS) take science seriously; Giuseppe Testa, on the other hand, belongs to the much smaller group of scientists that take STS seriously, considering them worthy of attention without superficially dismissing them with the accusation of being relativist and without unreasonably snubbing them as enemies of science. As Latour noted, to claim that STS scholars are against science would be the same as calling “biologists anti-life, astronomers anti-stars, immunologists anti-antibodies” (1999, 2).

STS being taken seriously by a scientist produces, among other things, a balancing effect that we are not used to, since STS are becoming an “object” of study the same way that science is an “object” of study for

STS. This is perhaps the only possibility to realize in a balanced manner the same principle of symmetry once introduced by Bloor: the sociology of scientific knowledge would be reflexive and “its patterns of explanation would have to be applicable to sociology itself” (1976, 7). This principle was often abandoned, as it appeared inconsistent and therefore inapplicable, causing STS to fall into an endless relativistic spiral. This spiral was interrupted, however, when a scientist and an STS scholar made the field of research of the other their own “object” of study, reaching a synthesis that surpasses them both. For this reason, *Naked Genes* may not entirely convince neither scientists nor STS scholars, but the book opens up the possibility for a genuine middle ground, precisely because it leaves both sides not completely satisfied.

So what is this book about?

The central theme of the book is biomedical innovation, and focuses on recording the coexistence of transition and continuity, with a strong emphasis on the latter to support the view – not always explicitly declared by the authors - that wishes to counterbalance the excessive emphasis usually given to transition when describing and discussing biomedical innovation. Some passages are enlightening in this regard, for example when it is stated that “the synthetic design of life orients itself toward the social design of society” (p. 83), or when it is pointed out that “the scientific superorganism that is composed of worldwide consortium, networks, companies, and universities with their private and public modes of financing, management, and governance has become astonishingly similar to the object of investigation – genetic organization” (p. 104).

The continuous cross-reference between transition and continuity in the process of innovation is persistently expressed in two dimensions: the temporal dimension (before/after), and the synchronic dimension (part/whole).

Biomedical innovation is, therefore, the guiding principle used by Nowotny and Testa to develop seven themes:

(a) the most important feature of molecular life sciences is that “they make things visible that could not previously be seen”(p. 1 ); (b) the “geneticization” of achievement; (c) the relationship between identity, property and affiliation; (d) the social integration of new forms of life analysed in the context of discussions on innovation, risks and values; (e) the contribution to the stabilization of social order through the standardization processes that accompany the introduction of both material and social technology; (f) the relationship between standards created by scientific research and moral standards.

The seventh theme - “the conviction that we stand before an epochal breakthrough with revolutionary possibilities is nothing new. It accompanies every technological vision” (p. 103) – represents, lastly, the application of the central theme to the common belief that regards innovation as an epochal transition.

The overall argument of the book is developed by combining and ex-

panding on the standardization processes from various points of view, processes that are an integral part of innovation and, as is well-known, a crucial element of STS.

It is also worth mentioning the special attention given to social technologies of standardization, such as law, governance and bioethics, especially when the authors argue that their success in stabilizing social order “is based mostly on a relatively successful standardization. It distances itself from pinning common goals and instead creates procedures that permit advances on many different paths” (p. 82).

This reflection offered by Nowotny and Testa is full of meaningful passages like those cited above and many other interesting ideas that make it a dense and stimulating reading, even for non-specialized audiences. Another merit not to be underestimated.

## References

- Bloor, D. (1976) *Knowledge and Social Imagery*, London and Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Latour, B. (1999) *Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

\* \* \*

## Cécile Méadel

*Quantifier le public. Histoire des mesures d'audience de la radio et de la télévision* [Quantify the public. History of audience measures of radio and television]  
Paris, Economica, 2010, pp. 283

## Paola Pallavicini, University of Torino

The French scholar Cécile Méadel presents in this volume a first interpretative synthesis of over twenty years research work on the history of audience measurement in the French broadcasting system. Precious for many aspects, this study represents in some way the missing link between media studies and socio-technical studies, and a very useful key for media researchers to access the field of techno-science.

Méadel defines the audience measurement in the broadcasting field as a typical example of performative device (“object techniques performatif”). While this may appear as a normal statement in the young field of socio-technical studies, such is not in the field of media and communication studies, which founded their own theoretical apparatus