

Epistemology of What We Want: Progress (in Science and the Useful Arts), Demand, Preferences, and Values (in IP)

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"I am beginning an interdisciplinary exploration of the following three questions:

- How do we know what we want (as individuals and collectively)?
- How and how effectively do different systems (political, market, social) manifest our demands?
- How do we understand, examine, and evaluate these questions within techno-social systems designed to shape & even determine what we want?

I intend to consider these questions at different scales and time horizons. I will use the notion of "Progress" as a framing device and ask how progress in various fields of knowledge is conceptualized, measured, evaluated, and shaped by social institutions such as intellectual property.

If time permits, I may discuss experiments collaborators and I are designing to test/challenge conventional assumptions about demand. One concerns contingent and malleable preferences. We hypothesize that a person's willingness to pay is contingent upon prior beliefs about the pricing mechanism itself, including for example, whether pricing is personalized, uniform, or regulated. Similarly, we hypothesize that a person's preferences are contingent upon prior beliefs about choice architecture, including for example, whether choice architecture is personalized, uniform, or regulated."