

PREFACE

On a bright and warm day of winter in Buenos Aires, in 2014, some 15 panellists met under the rubric of *(Re)thinking the bioeconomy* to discuss through a reflexive and empirical lens, the meaning and significance of that increasingly ubiquitous concept. The conversations generated by that panel had a galvanizing effect on this book project; but they also mirrored and extended conversations between Vincenzo and Joanna that had been occurring since 2008. Those earlier conversations triggered our long-lasting interest in the bioeconomy. In November 2008, researchers from the New Zealand project “Constructive Conversations” and invited researchers from Europe and North America, met in sunny Nelson to learn, discuss, reflect and write together, drawing inspiration from the results of a project that had grappled with different ways of studying what would now be called the bioeconomy. Some of the contours of the bioeconomy as a political project began to emerge from those discussions of empirical studies of relationships among research institutions, government, industry, indigenous communities and biotechnologies in New Zealand. Although it was hardly known at the time, and few scholars had addressed it by then, we soon realized that the bioeconomy concept was here to stay. Since 2008, references to the bioeconomy in the academic literature have skyrocketed, and many countries around the world, as well as the EU and the OECD, now have a bioeconomy strategy. We have been concerned ever since with the politics of the bioeconomy concept: how it encodes power, how it enables and constrains political choices, how it redraws boundaries between the political and

the technical, how it extends the principles of economic rationality and economic competitiveness to previously protected domains, and how it makes and unmakes communities and collectives.

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