

Editorial

This special issue of *Genomics, Society and Policy* is devoted to the theme of intellectual property.

The papers explore the ongoing ethical, legal and social concerns about intellectual property policy in genomics. They show that in addition to the longstanding questions about the moral justification of, and future of, intellectual property, new questions are emerging.

Duncan Curley compares the nature of the debates on the patenting of stem cells in the USA and in Europe, and the effect of the introduction of notions of morality into legal argument. Bram de Jonge produces another comparison, in his paper on two institutes involved in research into genetic resources, knowledge and technologies related to the potato, arguing that public research institutes need to find new ways of co-operating. Chris Hamilton explores allegations of biopiracy, analysing how the discourse(s) of biopiracy presents a challenge to the categories which underwrite the bioeconomy.

The dramatic rise in the use of race in biotechnology patents prompts Jonathan Kahn to explore how the rise of racial patents is producing new and highly problematic understandings of race as genetic, taking race out of culture and locating it in nature. Finally, observing that over the past 20 years large numbers of human genes have been the subject of thousands of patent applications, Theo Papaioannou examines whether human gene patents can be justified in terms of liberal theories of morality such as natural law, personality development, just reward and social utility.

GSP is grateful to Nadja Kanellopoulou (Ethox Centre, Oxford) for her work on this special issue. The editors welcome proposals for future special issues.

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