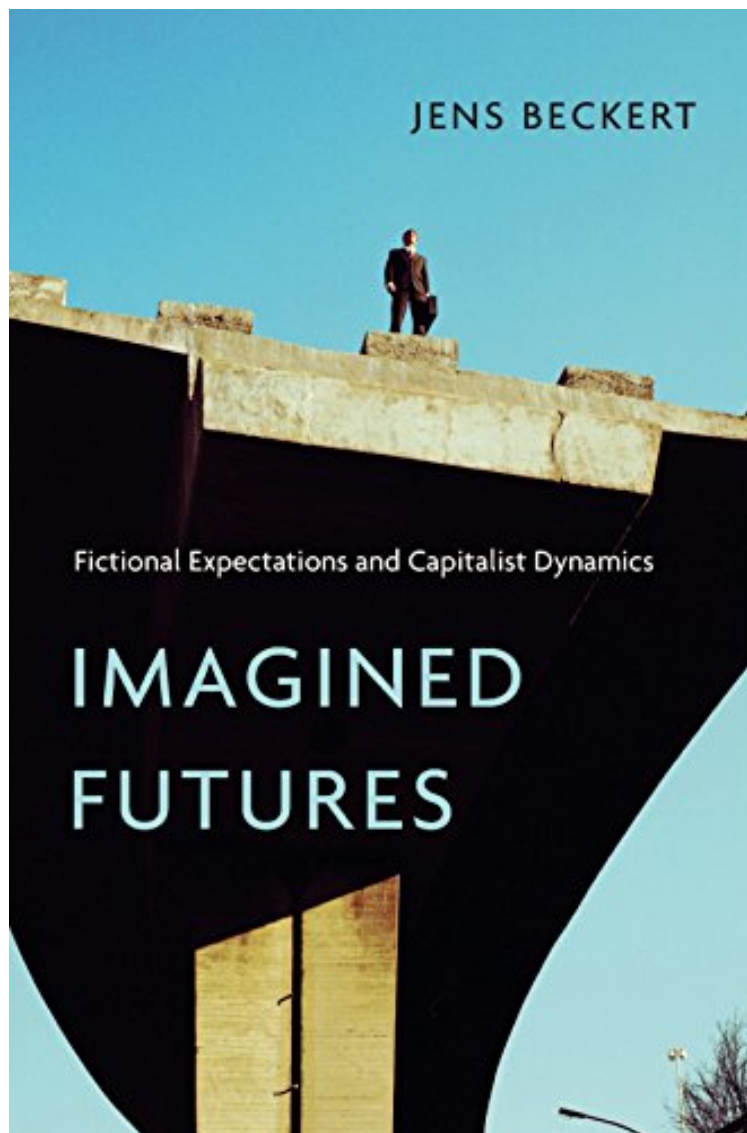


Imagined Futures

Jens Beckert

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Jens Beckert : Imagined Futures before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Imagined Futures:

Consumers, investors, and corporations orient their activities toward a future that contains opportunities and risks. How do these actors assess uncertainty? Jens Beckert adds a new chapter to the theory of capitalism by showing how fictional expectations drive modern economies—;or throw them into crisis when imagined futures fail to

materialize.

Beckert's breathtaking, erudite new book illuminates what is distinctive about modern capitalism. Traditional societies were oriented to the past and the never-ending replication of the social order?today everything we do is based on imagined futures comprising fictions about how the world might be. We innovate, build entire industries, and invest based on what we can envision. We are often wrong, but Beckert argues passionately that Homo economicus is far from a calculating actor who bases decisions on hard evidence?he is a fantasist and visionary. (Frank Dobbin, Harvard University) Much of the literature in the sociology of markets has focused on making sense of the social structuring of markets by governments, firms, networks, and market devices. Jens Beckert's book reminds us that the people who produce markets have to figure out what the future is like in order to build it. This act of imagination and the leap into an uncertain future is at the core of the dynamics of markets, entrepreneurship, and the creation of new markets. His provocative book considers how the role of imagining the future affects money and credit, investment, innovation, and consumption. (Neil Fligstein, University of California, Berkeley) How do we?as consumers and creators, investors and economic actors?approach the unknowability of future markets? [Beckert] mounts an original argument that our fictional expectations, collectively-held images, and finally dreams of the future not only guide our forecasts and choices but generate actual economic activity. (David Slocum Forbes.com 2016-05-15) [Beckert] makes a thorough, exhaustively documented argument in support of what many have suspected about capitalism: It's a castle in the air, built on fantasy shading into fraud. He makes a compelling case that no corner of the market is untouched by the process of generating imagined futures. The novelty of his work lies in offering a way to understand that process as a social system in which everyone, from individuals to institutions, is implicated. Among the most daring and distinctive aspects of this book is Beckert's argument that literary theory can be used to analyze phenomena that economics has been unable to explain or predict?Beckert does for modern denizens of capitalism what Toto did for Dorothy and her companions in *The Wizard of Oz*: He pulls back the curtain on the great spectacle that has long enchanted, bewildered, and frightened so many. (Brooke Harrington The Atlantic 2016-07-13) *Imagined Futures* achieves its objective of making a case for the significance of fictional expectations and their necessary (presumably insufficient) role in the capitalist system in a manner not previously done before. The book is therefore a great contribution to our knowledge about the sociological sources of psychological processes in knowledge creation. (Mehmet Kerem Coban LSE of Books 2016-09-07) About the Author Jens Beckert is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne.