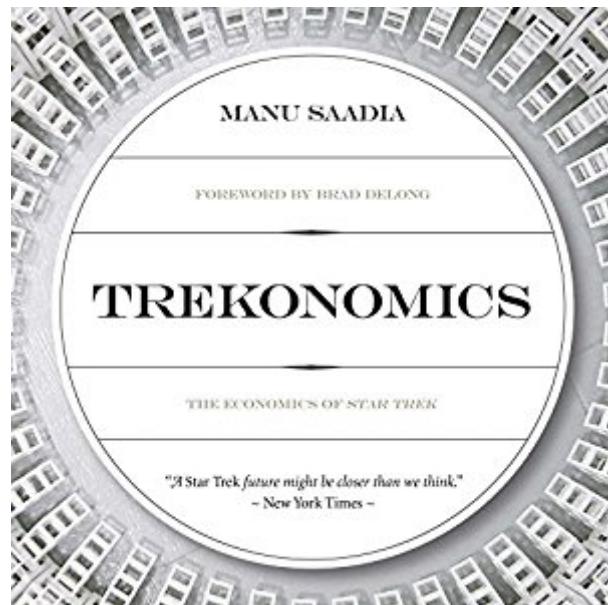


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Trekonomics: The Economics Of Star Trek



Synopsis

What would the world look like if everybody had everything they wanted or needed? *Trekonomics*, the premier book in financial journalist Felix Salmon's imprint *PiperText*, approaches scarcity economics by coming at it backward - through thinking about a universe where scarcity does not exist. Delving deep into the details and intricacies of 24th-century society, *Trekonomics* explores post-scarcity and whether we, as humans, are equipped for it. What are the prospects of automation and artificial intelligence? Is there really no money in Star Trek? Is *Trekonomics* at all possible?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was excited about this book, and extremely disappointed. First, as other reviewers have noted, he doesn't actually delve into how the economy functions. He touches on various aspects, then moves on without explaining anything except occasionally an episode of Star Trek he feels like criticizing. And he even contradicts himself (e.g., are people motivated by self-improvement or some kind of base arrogance? And why does it have to be one thing? Can't we be nuanced about this?). Second, his tone is unbearably negative and intellectually dull. He criticizes everything from Star Trek plots and their foundation in other science fiction to technologies he clearly doesn't understand, even theoretically. Is the replicator more valuable than a transporter because the transporter just does one thing? Can you imagine what it would mean to be able to transport from San Francisco to Beijing in the blink of an eye? That would change everything. Maybe a replicator is more valuable, but does it always have to be one is better than the other? Saadia is very black and white, very

critical, and strangely married to negative imaginings of how the Star Trek future would work. Should we be excited about the pursuit of humiliating one's intellectual opponents in the pursuit for top reputation? What? Unfortunately, Saadia substitutes thoughtful and interesting exploration of this topic for negative, nasty black and white portrayals...and lots of personal opinion. Third, this is a book of tangents. We touch on economic issues, and then Saadia goes off on some story about this or that Star Trek episode or this or that friend of his. Name-dropping much? Fourth, speaking of name-dropping: Saadia doesn't come across as a Star Trek fan at all.

This rating was a tough call between 2 and 3 stars. I have been for a very long time fascinated by the everyday world that exists in Star Trek, economically, politically, and governmentally. When I heard about this book, I was eager to read it, as I always wanted to delve more into these ideas. I was really hoping this book might stimulate some notions I had not thought of, and in some ways it did, but in many ways I felt the author did not deliver depth on the intent. Despite a couple of typos (and his example of using Rene [Picard's nephew] to prove a point doesn't make sense since we know what happens to him later) his writing style was good; easy to read. I also appreciated learning some of where Star Trek's philosophy was influenced by prior science fiction novels and authors. However, upon completion of the book, I realized, to quote James T. Kirk from "Star Trek: Generations", "Something... is missing." Star Trek's core principles stem from the concepts of representative government through personal responsibility enshrined in the United States Constitution. The Original Series makes this clear in many of its episodes. However, admittedly, the TNG-VOY era did veer from this and begin to take somewhat different approach...but not by much. That being said, the author often uses the term "equal distribution of wealth" as the fundamental reason why Star Trek's future works, because his view (not surprisingly since he states he was raised in France, which the culture there often has very socialist-leaning tendencies) seems to be that once all is dispersed equally, all will be utopia.

The problem I have with this book is that author never really delved into the economy itself... he gave a brief summary about some aspects of it, then moved on to the next topic. For example, he briefly describes how the replicator makes food, and how we'll all have one, and that this means we won't have to buy things. But he doesn't really talk about the inputs needed to make the replicator work: feedstock, energy, patterns, and maintenance. He basically says "robots will do it", and moves on. I was hoping for a description of how the Federation's economy worked, and I didn't get that at all. How do they attract laborers for the tasks that require Human labor? What about large, public

works projects? None of that is discussed. Instead, he just says that it happens and moves on to another point. For example, let's talk about shipbuilding projects. There's no way society can support an infinite number of building projects, so how do the shipyards decide what ships get built? How do they allocate resources for those builds? The Enterprise wasn't replicated. It was built, much the same way we build oceangoing ships today. That ship used hundreds of thousands of hours of Human labor and tons (literally) of resources. According to the Star Trek technical manual, things like ships and buildings are too big for replication, so we still need labor for projects like that. The author mentions Risa, for example, but never answers his own questions. How do you get reservations on Risa? How do the Risans decide who to grant reservations to so that the planet doesn't have a centuries-long wait list? Those are the kinds of questions I wanted answers to. Instead, the author just says "they do it somehow."

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