

Looking forward – return to the SB Dialogue



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What's in a name?

Applying engineering to biological systems

- People found the idea of treating nature as parts to be assembled as problematic – nature was seen as too complex – gene and environmental interactions too dynamic and stochastic to predict in a precise way.
- Engineering also anticipated the idea of being able to specify, replicate and develop on an industrial scale. The implications of this, in terms of magnitude of impacts if there were found to be problems, was a concern.

SBD (2010) p.9 Executive Summary

<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/1006-synthetic-biology-dialogue-pdf/>



The responsibilities of scientists

- “Overall, there was a sense that the science was both exciting and scary. There was great uncertainty as to what synthetic biology would do and where it was going. Who was driving development of synthetic biology?” p.7
- “scientists (may) focus on the positive outcomes of synthetic biology, and miss the potential risks, or take short cuts” p.8
- “need for scientists to consider the implications of their work more effectively” p.8



Cui bono?

Conclusion => The early questions posed by scientists, social scientists, NGOs, & publics alike have not gone away, remain relevant and require investigation.

- What is the purpose?
- Why do you want to do it?
- What are you going to gain from it?
- What else is it going to do?
- How do you know you are right?

