



IOBB

INVITATION

Internet Dialogue on "What if...?"

September 1st - October 31st 2004.
<http://www.biotech.kth.se/iobb/idwi>

Every autumn since 2000 a "Biopolicy Seminar" has taken place alternatively under the auspices of the Engineering Sciences Division of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (KVA) or the Biotechnology Division of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA). Initiated by the Biofocus Foundation (www.biofocus.org) of the World Academy of Art and Science (www.worldacademy.org) the themes have had their roots in biotechnology but with transdisciplinary outlooks via a network of networks. The overall aim has been to explore how farsighted technology assessment can stimulate innovative technology transfer efforts, as well as social innovations supporting them. With this in mind both the coming 2004 event ("Social Innovations for Development - a Case for Biopolicy"- KVA, Oct.27) and the 2005 conference ("Engineering for Global Health - Demographic Aspects"- IVA Sept.22nd) have a "learning-thrust" and are preceded by preparatory "What if...?" Internet dialogues. Both will emphasize the potential of large goal-oriented networks and of "Cafe"-type meetings as a means to stimulate creativity. The 2005-dialogue will have a broader engineering scope and its planning will draw on the experience gained in 2004. It will probably be concluded at two interlinked sessions in Sweden and in Japan in conjunction with the World Exhibition (Nagoya 2005).

The Internet Dialogue on "What If...?" is a web-forum and has 3 main activities

(a) Discussion of "What If..?" questions and statements (Sept to Oct 2004)

(b) Discussion of abstracts relevant to the "What If---?" theme from the 3rd Science Generation Symposium "Biotechnology: Possibilities, Risks, Ethics, and Society" (Sept 2004)

<<http://www.iva.se/sciencegeneration/anmalan/invitation.pdf>> "

(c) Discussion of abstracts relevant to the "What If---?" theme from the Biopolicy Seminar on "Social Innovations for Development : A case for Biopolicy" <http://www.biofocus.org/inpipeline.html> (Oct 2004)



Call for "What If...?" Questions

The Internet Dialogue calls for "What If...?" questions (max 5 lines) with an introductory brief statement (max 40 lines) about threats and opportunities that can be expected from developments in biotechnology and genetic engineering, and that have a magnitude and global reach which merits thoughts about anticipatory social innovations. One aim is to explore how the crossfertilization between biology and information technology has opened new opportunities for worldwide transdisciplinary cooperation as well as various challenges to personal integrity and privacy. Please send your contribution(s) to Mr Tommy Jonsson (tj@ekvitec.com). All contributors will be automatically added as a participant.

Your statements will be open for debate during the webforum in September and October. The Dialogue will be forward-looking but will exclude questions like: "What if the efforts to assassinate Hitler had succeeded?", or "What if Fleming had not discovered penicillin?". They should also avoid being caught in the trap of human reproductive biology. Typical questions (see examples below) and their statements can be found in <http://www.biofocus.org/id.html>

- 1) **What** if the existing stock of an effective vaccine against a serious new influenza pandemic is enough for only 25 % of the population?
- 2) **What** if there is a great benefit to be reaped by inoculating newborn babies at birth with a mixture of lactobacilli and enteric bacteria?
- 3) What if toxic volatiles adsorbed on nano-size carbon particles prove to be a major health hazard?
- 4) **What** If terrorists target the meat-and dairy industry with foot-and-mouth virus?

Selected statements and their debates will be summarized and elaborated by participants of a special session at KVA in Stockholm on Oct.27th. □

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