

ICS SEMINAR SERIES 2024

Engineering Futures through Synthetic Biology: A Technofix Imaginary

20 June 2024 | 11:30am - 1:00pm

Room: EZ.G.22 Parramatta South Campus

Abstract

In recent years, synthetic biology has emerged as a potentially ground-breaking new technology, promising breakthroughs in healthcare, agriculture and global warming mitigation. In particular, synthetic biologists envision a radiant future for both humans and more-than-human beings by engineering ad hoc lifeforms that will perform specific functions, such as reducing existing and future levels of greenhouse gases. In fact, proponents of synthetic biology regard it as a viable and desirable means of mitigating climate change. However, such promises are yet to be realised, and translate into a technofix imaginary whereby a future existence of human and untold more-than-human life is contingent on the realisation of such promises. This means that synthetic biology is upheld not only as a good practice, but also as necessary to avoid climate catastrophe. Such an imaginary is not limited to life alone, but is rather the byproduct of an aspiration to control global ecosystems and climates, and even the course of evolution, via the manufacturing and control of life at the microbial level. However, this technofix imaginary remains incommensurate with fundamental aspects of life that elude human control, and will arguably continue to do so.

Biography

Daniele Fulvi is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University Node of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology. He specialises in modern and contemporary continental philosophy and environmental ethics, and his current research focuses on the ethical and social dimensions of synthetic biology applied to climate change mitigation. He is also a member of the editorial team of the journal *Environmental Philosophy*, and associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene* (forthcoming, Springer).

Presenter: Daniele Fulvi

Discussant: Paul James

Chair: Henry Dixon

Research Alignment:
Environment & Technology

**NEXT SEMINAR:
27 JUNE**