

“Exploring The Past, Present and Futures of Environmental Biotechnology as a Field”

4 November 2024: Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ

Introduction/ background

The term ‘Environmental Biotechnology’ (EB) is central to EBNet’s activities, but its use has raised some interesting questions. It does not have universal recognition, nor do all users agree on what it encompasses; however, many see a value in the term. The [Social Science Working Group](#) of the BBSRC [Environmental Biotechnology Network \(EBNet\)](#) has, since May 2024, been examining the histories, contemporary dynamics and potential futures of the field of environmental biotechnology, drawing on insights from the social sciences, in particular science and technology studies (STS). This event provides the opportunity to learn about and discuss the findings of this research, and to contribute to discussions around the potential futures of environmental biotechnology. The outputs of the workshop will feed into the final report of the EBNet Social Sciences Working Group, to be published later in 2024.

Draft Programme (as of 26/9/2024)

The Past and Present of Environmental Biotechnology	
10.30	Coffee & Registration
11.00	<p>Introduction & Welcome</p> <p>Jane Calvert (Professor of Science and Technology Studies, University of Edinburgh) (Chair), Sonia Heaven (Emeritus professor, University of Southampton and Lead, EBNet), Adrian Ely (University of Sussex and Co-lead, EBNet Social Sciences Working Group)</p>
11:05 – 11:25	<p>Exploring Environmental Biotechnology:</p> <p>Exploring the bibliometric landscape of environmental biotechnology as a field</p> <p>Josie Coburn (Research Fellow, SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex) & Duncan Moore (Research Assistant, SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex)</p>
11:25 – 11:40	<p>Response 1 - Joy Y. Zhang, Professor of Sociology, Founding Director, Centre for Global Science and Epistemic Justice, University of Kent & Engineering Biology Hub for “environmental processing and recovery of metals”.</p> <p>Response 2 - Andrew Pickford, Professor of Molecular Biophysics, University of Portsmouth & Lead for the Engineering Biology Hub “preventing plastic pollution with engineering biology”.</p>
11:40 – 12:00	Q & A
12:00 – 12:20	COFFEE BREAK

12:20 – 12:40	<p>Exploring Environmental Biotechnology 2: Contemporary dynamics and debates</p> <p>Adrian Ely (Reader in Technology and Sustainability, SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex) & Kyle Parker (Research Fellow, University of Edinburgh)</p>
12:40 – 12:55	<p>Response 3 - Eleanor Hadley Kershaw, Senior Lecturer in Management, University of Exeter Business School & Co-Investigator “Renewing biodiversity through a people-in-nature approach’ (RENEW)” project</p> <p>Response 4 - Tom Arnot, Senior Lecturer, Department of Chemical Engineering & Co-Director Water Innovation & Research Centre, University of Bath</p>
12:55 - 13:15	Q & A (20 mins)
13:15 – 14:00	LUNCH
Futures of Environmental Biotechnology	
14:00 – 14:10	<p>Introduction to the afternoon sessions</p> <p>Jane Calvert (chair)</p>
14:10 – 14:30	<p>Provocations</p> <p><i>5-minute talks without slides, putting forward a specific vision for the future of Environmental Biotechnology</i></p> <p>James Chong, Lead Bioinformatics Training for Microbial Environmental Biotechnologies Working Group</p> <p>Meredith Barr, Lecturer in Chemical Engineering, London South Bank University, Lead: EBNet Biochar Working Group</p> <p>Tom Curtis, Professor of Environmental Engineering, Newcastle University</p> <p>Pat Thomas, Award-winning campaigner, journalist and author, Founding Director of Beyond GM and A Bigger Conversation</p>
14:30	<p>World Café (workshop)</p> <p>To include a total of 4 rounds of circulation, with 15 minutes per round.</p> <p>Dimensions/topics for discussion (see guidance for further details):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Molecular/ genetic (mechanistic) engineering vs community (system) engineering approaches - Integration across digital, biological and engineering frontiers: opportunities and risks - The changing role of the private sector and intellectual property in a traditionally “public good” field - Environmental Biotechnology: Prevention and/or cure? The role of regulation to drive types of biotechnology and other solutions
14:30 – 15:00	<p>Rounds 1 and 2</p> <p>Discussion on above topics</p>

15:00 – 15:10	Plenary 2 minutes from each of the 4 tables
15:10 – 15:30	COFFEE BREAK
15:30 – 16:00	World Café (workshop): Rounds 3 and 4 Discussion on above topics as per Rounds 1 and 2
16:00 – 16:10	Plenary 2 2 minutes from each of the 4 tables
16:10 – 16:30	Plenary discussion
16:30	Feedback & closing reflections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Susan Molyneux Hodgson (Professor of Sociology, Associate PVC for Research and Impact for the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS), University of Exeter) - Sonia Heaven (Emeritus Professor, University of Southampton and PI, EBNet) - EBNet SSWG Team
17:00	Close

The [EBNet Social Science Working Group \(SSWG\)](#) are [Adrian Ely](#), [Josie Coburn](#) and [Duncan Moore](#) (University of Sussex), [Jane Calvert](#), [Rob Smith](#) and [Kyle Parker](#) (University of Edinburgh) and [Ismael Rafols](#) (CWTS in the Netherlands).

For further information on this event, please contact EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk