

Neuroscientists deride Human Brain Project as misguided, unhelpful

If you want to make a neuroscientist scoff, mention the billion-dollar-plus Human Brain Project. More or less Europe's version of President Obama's [Brain Initiative](#), it likewise seeks to decipher the network of neurons inside our skulls, but using an entirely different approach: by [creating a computer simulation](#) of the brain.

Even before it began, the project was ridiculed by those in the know. Words like “hooey” and “crazy” were thrown around, along with less family-friendly terms. Last July nearly 800 scientists signed a letter arguing, in so many words, that the project was a slow-motion train wreck that should either be overhauled or abandoned. Almost no one—except for those on the project's ample payroll—seemed to think it was a good idea.

Now, it's not unusual for scientists to disagree about research funding or methodology, but this was something else. The contempt for the Human Brain Project came from the very researchers, like computational neuroscientists, you'd expect to be excited about such a thing. In response, an independent mediator was appointed to review the project, and the director of the European Commission, which greenlighted the \$1.6-billion, decade-long project, [issued a statement](#) days after the critics' letter promising that the coming months would “see a satisfactory approach even on the issues raised by the critics.”

So several months have passed. Have the unsimulated minds of those critics been changed?

Nope. In fact, ask any neuroscientist about the Human Brain Project and you can pretty much count on a rant. In reply to an interview request, Konrad Kording, a neuroscientist at Northwestern University, wrote back: “Why do you want to talk about this embarrassing corpse?” He added a smiley emoji, but he's not really kidding. Mr. Kording has nothing nice to say about a project that, according to him, has become a reliable punchline among his colleagues. “I'm 100-percent convinced that virtually all the money spent on it will lead to no insight in neuroscience whatsoever,” he said. “It's a complete waste. It's boneheaded. It's wrong. Everything that they're trying to do makes no sense whatsoever.”

Read full, original article: [Can the Human Brain Project Be Saved? Should It Be?](#)