

Open source science or intellectual property: Should we allow patenting of synbio organisms?

[S]ynthetic biology...incorporates disparate disciplines like engineering, computer science, biotechnology, and molecular biology...[i]nstead of using engineering's discrete modules of code, transistors, resistors, and capacitors, synthetic biology builds things from sequences of genetic material. The field has remarkable potential and has already been used to aid the production of antimalarial drugs and synthetic flavorings....

But the same characteristics that make it promising also create profound questions, particularly in terms of who will profit. Can you own or patent synthetic organisms? How will researchers access the genetic materials needed to do research? Will big companies be able to dictate who can participate in research?

Craig Venter, a genomics pioneer and co-founder of Synthetic Genomics, announced that he and his team had produced the world's first synthetic life form....But the patent applications sparked a visceral response, and in an interview with the BBC, British biologist John Sulston denounced the move as "damaging."

On one side is Venter, continuing biotechnology's legacy of leaning hard on intellectual property protections.

On the other side is the open-source counterculture inherited from computer science and engineering. In those fields, researchers typically share their findings in public repositories.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Should You Be Able to Patent an Organism?](#)