Lesson for gene editing: How do we regulate a technology when we ‘can’t imagine’ the consequences of its use?

Humanity has a method for trying to prevent new technologies from getting out of hand: explore the possible negative consequences, involving all parties affected, and come to some agreement on ways to mitigate them.

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What if technology becomes so complex and starts evolving so rapidly that humans can’t imagine the consequences of some new action? This is the question that a pair of scientists — Dimitri Kusnezov of the National Nuclear Security Administration and Wendell Jones, recently retired from Sandia National Labs — explore in a recent paper. Their unsettling conclusion: The concept of strategic equilibrium as an organizing principle may be nearly obsolete.

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What can we do? Kusnezov and Jones don’t have an easy answer. One clear implication is that it’s probably a mistake to copy techniques used for the more slowly evolving and less widely available technologies of the past. This is often the default approach, as illustrated by proposals to regulate gene editing techniques. Such efforts are probably doomed in a world where technologies develop thanks to the parallel efforts of a global population with diverse aims and interests. Perhaps future regulation will itself have to rely on emerging technologies.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: How Technology Might Get Out of Control