Preface

This book is a documentation of the summer school “Analyzing the Societal Dimensions of Synthetic Biology” which took place in Berlin in September 2014. It was organized by the EA European Academy of Technology and Innovation Assessment in co-operation with the Center for Literary and Cultural Research Berlin.

Given the wide variety of disciplines and perspectives, it is almost a little surprising that all summer school participants sat together peacefully—and actually with a lot of fun—for one week. This setting made vivid and intensive communication with other disciplines and stances possible and resulted in an atmosphere of mutual learning and appreciation. As one participant has put it retrospectively, “We’re being too nice to each other, we’re trying hard to downplay our disagreements”. Nevertheless, the different views of the participants are certainly reflected in the contributions to this book. We think that this diversity will be of interest to many of those working in synthetic biology, its societal evaluation, and its philosophical scrutiny.

We are grateful to the summer school participants for their insight, enthusiasm and willingness to share their ideas. Special thanks go to the external experts (Michael Böcker, Nediljko Budisa, Ellen-Marie Forsberg, Christian Illies, Sheref Mansy, Arnold Sauter, Röbbe Wünschiers) for their talks, tutoring and—in the case of Nediljko Budisa—for opening the doors of his laboratory. We would also like to mention that we benefited from synergies with the interdisciplinary European Academy project on synthetic biology (funded by the Klaus Tschira Foundation, results forthcoming in this series). The summer school and the publication of its results have been funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler Kristin Hagen
Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler Margret Engelhard
Berlin Georg Toepfer
Ambivalences of Creating Life
Societal and Philosophical Dimensions of Synthetic Biology
Hagen, K.; Engelhard, M.; Toepfer, G. (Eds.)
2016, XVII, 335 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-21087-2