

## 'Before Biopolis: Representations of the Biotechnology Discourse in Singapore' by Axel Gelfert, *East Asian Science, Technology and Society (EASTS)*

Axel Gelfert (Philosophy) examines how Singapore's biotech ambitions have been pitched as the country moved towards modernization.

Singapore's foray into biotechnology is generally considered an economic and scientific success, its most visible sign being Biopolis, launched in 2003 as an integrated cluster of research facilities in an urban setting. Biopolis, however, is itself the result of a long-term effort to build up capacities for biotechnological research. The present article analyzes the early (pre-Biopolis) biotechnology discourse in Singapore, with special emphasis on its representations in the official media and on its strategic uses by the various stakeholders involved. Against the backdrop of the global emergence of biotechnology from the late 1970s



onward, the article traces the motivations for Singapore's formulation of its own biotechnology policy, paying attention throughout to the dynamic between scientists and policy makers. It is this relationship, along with the ambiguities that characterize it, that is responsible for the sustained establishment of biotechnology in Singapore. At an interpretative level, an attempt is made to compare the case of Singapore's biotechnology policy with competing discourses of technology and modernity. The discourse on biotechnology can thus be recognized as a means of mobilizing its intended audience for the various stages in the country's path toward (real or perceived) modernization.

Gelfert, A.H. (2013) 'Before Biopolis: Representations of the Biotechnology Discourse in Singapore', *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 7:103–123. DOI 10.1215/18752160-2075527

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