

## **Title of the Workshop**

### **“Technology and Culture: Genetics and its Social and Ethical Implications in Asia and Europe”**

In conjunction with the Eighth Asian Bioethics Conference, March 19-23, 2007,  
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

## **Initiators**

Dr. Soraj Hongladarom, Center for Ethics of Science and Technology, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Dr. Dr. Brigitte Jansen, European Academy of Environment and Economy, Germany

## **Organizing Institutions**

Center for Ethics of Science and Technology, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand and  
European Academy of Environment and Economy, Germany

## **Contact Address**

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## **Introduction to the topic and scientific objectives (pp. 2-4)**

Today's world is one in which science and technology play an essential role in almost every aspect of life. Almost all the changes that are taking place are due to advances in science and technology, as can be seen in the emergence of the internet, which enable information to explode exponentially in the past few years, and biotechnology, which has made such scenarios as human cloning and genetic manipulation of organisms an everyday reality.

These advances naturally create a whole set of problems that have hitherto been non-existent just a few years ago. For example, who would have thought that the internet would have grown so fast and has become so pervasive in virtually all aspects of life, so much so that it has well become lifeblood of humans' communicative activities and has the potential of 'taking over' the real world and to replace it with its own world where everything, both real and unreal, is 'indexed' (or 'googled') and has value tagged on. A clear problem is the digital divide between those who enjoy the benefits brought about by the technology, and those who are left behind. Another, well known problem is how privacy of citizens are going to be protected when every corner of reality has become item in the manipulable and calculable 'information reality' (Borgmann 1999).

Furthermore, another important aspect of today's advance in technology is evident in biotechnology. The success of cloning mammals on the one hand is a first step in research on new ways of treating hitherto intractable diseases as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease through culturing of stem cells. But on the other hand, it is well known that the possibility of getting fertilized cells of potential human beings and manipulate them to serve the needs of patients is ethically problematic. The world is now engaged in a series of wide ranging debates on the moral of stem cell research. Moreover, genetic manipulation technology has also created no less heated controversies, as plants and animals are now malleable to the needs or perhaps desires of human beings. Many very difficult problems, ones not confined to the technical nature of these advances alone, lie ahead. These problems, in addition, are compounded by the fact that information technology and biotechnology are being merged together; the very strong power of the computers and their networks are being harnessed to create technological solutions in biological sciences. This can be seen in the successful use of computers in sequencing the human genome, which has ushered a new era in the life sciences, biotechnology and medicine where almost everything is possible. The essence of human beings (their genetic code which makes up a human being who she is, at least biologically) is now a piece of information that can be stored and manipulated by computers, not unlike other type of data such as house registrations and health records.

It is well known, moreover, that this merging together of information and biological technologies have created a whole host of questions related to the social, ethical, cultural, economic and legal contexts. What is most interesting in the context of Asia and Europe Studies is that these advances in science and technology do not occur in vacuum. As the voluminous literature on the ethical, social and legal aspects of life sciences and biotechnology show, there is a very large variety of problems related to the social and cultural contexts of science and technology. However, what appears to be lacking in the literature of Asian and European Studies, especially in the former, is a sustained effort to comprehend the complex range of questions and issues that emerge when these scientific and technological advancement have found a way to the socio-cultural fabric of Asian societies, cultures and

communities. This is what the proposed panel is most concerned with.

Therefore, it is proposed that a panel be organized on the topic of “Technology and Culture: Genetics and its Social and Ethical Implications in Asia and Europe” in order to investigate the complex web of problems related to the interconnections between technology and culture regarding genetics and related sciences. The panel is going to be held in conjunction with the Eighth Asian Bioethics Conference, which will be organized at Chulalongkorn University from March 19 to 23, 2007. The main organizer will be the Center for Ethics of Science and Technology, Chulalongkorn University.

The Asian Bioethics Conference, organized by the Asian Bioethics Association, started with the initiative of Prof. Hakudai Sakamoto, who founded the Association in 1997 with the aim of promoting the study of bioethics in Asia as well as to emphasize the important role that ‘Asian bioethics’ plays in the global dialog on the topic. The Conference has been held in many countries in Asia, and the next one will be held in Salifa, Turkey in November this year. ‘Asian bioethics’ refers to the kind of bioethics that is peculiar in Asia, and in Prof. Sakamoto’s view it embodies the values that Asians have held dear, such as social cohesiveness and the role of the community in value judgments as opposed to the more individualistic tenor of the West. The Conference is highly significant in that it gathers scholars and scientists from various fields who work together for the common aim of answering the questions that have arisen as a result of the rapid advances in science and technology, especially in the past decade. The announcement by Dr. Ian Wilmut of his team’s success in cloning a mammal, for example, is a distinct milestone in history of science; however it has raised many vexing issues and problems pertaining among other things the possibility of human cloning and its wide ranging ethical, social and religious ramifications. It is important that these ethical and social problems be investigated in light of the cultural and religious traditions of Asia, and hence the aim and significance of the Asian Bioethics Conference. Another important facet of this intersection lies in the issues that are today grouped together under the rubric of ‘bioethics’. Issues such as bioprospecting, biopiracy, genetic modification of organisms, stem cell research, to name but a few, may seem remote to Asian studies, but in fact they are not, since they are generating tremendous impact on the Asian societies.

Consequently, Asian studies, and European studies for that matter as a discipline cannot neglect to include these important aspects. The key is understanding Asian and European societies in their arguably most important aspects—those emerging with the intersection between history and culture on the one hand, and these advances in science and technology in particular. Most works related to science and technology in the context of science and technology seem to be historical in character, as evidenced in the phenomenal output by Sir John Needham. However, there does seem to be a dearth of literature and knowledge on how contemporary science and technology are received by the Asian cultures or societies and what kind of impacts there are due to the meeting of the two. The recent announcement and retraction by the South Korean team of scientists who have earlier claimed their success in producing cloned human embryos appear to be a symptom whose key explanation lies in the culture of the South Korean people themselves. Perhaps the debacle might be better explained through such vocabularies as the Confucian work ethic or the drive for Koreans to become accepted in the world, etc. This requires detailed investigation into the histories and traditions and belief systems of the Korean people. And this is clearly a subject matter for Asian studies. Works such as *Genomics in Asia*, edited by

Margaret Sleeboom, is a good starting point, but surely one needs more sustained studies of this kind in order to unravel these complexities to the fullest extent.

The objectives of the panel is thus to promote interdisciplinary research on bioethics in the Asian and European region. The focus will be ethical, social, cultural, and legal implications of genetics, genomics and genetic databanking. These issues are important because they are poised to compromise the privacy of the lives of a countless number of people and are intimately connected with power. As there has not been a sustained study of this kind in the context of Asian countries, the panel would be a good stepping stone toward more research in this exciting new area of Asian and European studies.

**List of confirmed participants, with institutional affiliations and disciplinary competence in relation to the workshop’s topic (pp.5)**

<i>Asian participants</i>	<i>European participants</i>
1. <b>Soraj Hongladarom</b> , Center for Ethics of Science and Technology, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, philosophy; <i>bioethics and science in Thailand</i> .	1. <b>Jürgen Simon</b> , Lüneburg University, Germany; <i>biolaw</i> .
2. <b>Leonardo de Castro</b> , Department of Philosophy, University of the Philippines, Diliman; <i>philosophy and bioethics</i> .	2. <b>Brigitte Jansen</b> , Lüneburg University and European Academy of Environment and Economy, German; <i>biolaw and management aspects of bioscience</i> .
3. <b>Jakkrit Kuanpot</b> , Sukhothai Thammathirat University, Thailand; <i>biolaw</i> .	3. <b>Ole Döring</b> , Faculty for East Asian Studies, Bochum University, and GIGA-Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg, Germany; <i>philosophy and bioethics in China</i> .
4. <b>Nares Damrongchai</b> , National Science and Technology Development Agency, Thailand; <i>bioethics, technology foresight</i> .	4. <b>Minakshi Bhardwaj</b> , Center for Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics, Lancaster University, UK; <i>social and and political aspects of genetics</i> .
5. <b>Somparn Promta</b> , Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University; <i>philosophy and Buddhism</i> .	5. <b>Carlos Maria Romeo Casabona</b> , Cátedra de Derecho y Genoma Humano, Universidad de Deusto, Spain; <i>biolaw, genome law</i> .
6. <b>Chanroeun Pa</b> , Department of Philosophy, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia; <i>philosophy and Buddhism</i> .	6. <b>Anne Cambon-Thomsen</b> , Directrice de recherche au CNRS Inserm U 558, Toulouse Cedex, France; <i>epidemiology, public health</i> .
7. <b>Le Dinh Luong</b> , National Center of Biotechnology, Vietnam National University, Vietnam; <i>genetics, biotechnology</i> .	7. <b>Cosimo Marco Mazzoni</b> , Professor of Law and Dir. Depart. of Law and Economics, Univ. of Siena, Italy; <i>biolaw, economics</i> .
8. <b>Chan Chee Khoon</b> , School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia; <i>epidemiology</i> .	8. <b>Andrzej Gorski</b> , Polish Academy of Sciences; <i>bioethics</i> .
9. <b>Terry Kaan</b> , National University of Singapore; <i>biolaw</i> .	9. <b>Margit Sutrop</b> , University of Tartu, Estonia; <i>bioethics</i> .
10. <b>Peter A. Sy</b> , Department of Philosophy, University of Philippines, Diliman; <i>bioethics, philosophy</i> .	
11. <b>Cong Ya Li</b> , Medical Ethics Program, Peking University Health Science Center; <i>medical ethics</i> .	

Countries represented: *Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Cambodia, China, UK, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Estonia, Poland*.

## Detailed programme including paper titles (pp.6)

The three-day workshop will be a part of the Eighth Asian Bioethics Conference. Ample time will be given to each paper for questions, answers and discussions. Thus each participant will be requested to have read all the papers to be presented before coming to the workshop. The workshop itself will be held before the 8th ABC, so as to ensure its independence. Thus the workshop will be held from March 17 to 18, 2007.

*Venue:* Century Park Hotel, Bangkok

### March 17-18, 2007

“Population genetics research and power association studies: contentions of race, ethnicity and personalisation of medicine,” by Dr. Minakshi Bhardwaj

“A philosophical exploration of the concept of ‘property’ in genetics and databanking: challenges for bioethics in Asia and Europe,” by Dr. Ole Döring

“Post-genomics biobanks, from research tools to population health : dream, nightmare or reality? Points of debate at international level,” by Prof. Dr. Anne Cambon-Thomsen

“Ethical and legal aspects of human biobanking in Europe: a comparison between selected countries,” by Dr. Brigitte Jansen

“ Biobanks and the question of trust,” by Prof. Margit Sutrop

“Privacy and genetic databanking: A philosophical investigation through East and West,” by Dr. Soraj Hongladarom

“Emerging biomedical technologies and population health,” by Chan Chee Khoo

“Ethical reflection on artificial reproduction technology,” by Dr. Cong Yali.

“What should be known and what should be unknown in human genetic research: A view from Buddhism,” by Dr. Somparn Promta

“Bioethics in Asia-Pacific: How scenarios can help planning for the future” by Dr. Nares Damrongchai

“Genetics and bioethics from the view of poor people” by Prof. Le Dinh Luong

“ The ethical aspects of genomic patenting,” by Prof. Andrzej Górski

“International legal trends on research with embryonic stem cells” by Prof. Dr. Carlos Romeo

Casabona

“Genetic testing and research in Singapore” by Dr. Terry Kaan

“Does consent matter in genetic research?” by Dr. Peter A. Sy

“How someone can give informed consent without having information -- drawing from the analogy between genetic research and advance directives” by Prof. Leonardo de Castro

“The legal status of human body in the age of biotechnology” by Prof. Dr. Cosimo Marco Mazzoni

“Bioethics in Cambodia: challenges and perspectives for a better future” by Mr. Chanroeun Pa

“Biotechnology, patents and morality” by Dr. Jakkrit Kuanpot

“Property rights and personality rights within the realm of biobanking” by Prof. Dr. Jürgen Simon

## **Envisaged publication(s) (pp. 8)**

### **Book (tentatively titled)**

*Social and Cultural Genomics: Asia and Europe*, to be published by a reputable international publisher

### **Planned Followed-up Activities**

The network has been in existence for a number of years, as most of the members of the group here are already members of the ASEAN-EU LEMLIFE Project ([www.asean-eu-lemlife.org](http://www.asean-eu-lemlife.org)), a project aiming at developing a program of study in bioethics at Chulalongkorn University. The project has been given support by the European Union through the ASEAN-EU University Network Programme (AUNP), and has already expired on December 31st, 2005. The network that formed the backbone of the LEMLIFE Project had already been actively involved in many activities before the project, and will clearly continue to be engaged with one another, as the Center for Ethics of Science and Technology will host Dr. Dr. Brigitte Jansen of the European Academy of Economy and Environment, Germany to come to stay in Bangkok in order to pursue research and to strengthen networking activities with Dr. Soraj Hongladarom, who is the Director of the Center for Ethics of Science and Technology. Hence the proposed panel here is one of the activities that have been going on for quite some time.

After the proposed panel in March 2007 ends, there are a number of plans for following up activities. Firstly, the network formed by Dr. Soraj Hongladarom and Dr. Brigitte Jansen will continue its activities, as the group is also engaged in another project on running the program of study on bioethics that will have been established. And the teaching program will be an important focal point for further collaborative activities.