'Race and global science... some notes on spaciality and Singaporean genomics'

Pei Koay 'Works-in-progress' Workshop IAS-STS March 23, 2006

ABSTRACT: In this talk, I will discuss some difficulties of studying and speaking about race, global science (in this case, in the form of medical genomics), and bio-databanks. Specifically, I want to address the issue of absence: absence of 'race,' absence of human bodies, and absence of science/medicine. I'll explain what I mean by this via the 'case' of Singapore genomics. I want to highlight that while there is absence everywhere in technoscience – especially in this matter of biobanking in Singapore – this should not deter science and technology studies researchers from taking such matters in their studies. In this case, I side with using relational approaches that have often been used in science studies in recent years. I suggest that one of its most used tropes of spatiality – the network – can still be used but not without modifications. In discussions on articulating the localizing of global science, at issue, here, is visibilizing 'Otherness' – such as Asian and Singapore genomics – without reifying dichotomies: east/west, modern/traditional, natural/social.