

'The Globalisation of Agricultural Biotechnology: Multi-disciplinary views from the South'

A Two-Day Workshop

Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at the University of Warwick

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Biotechnology, in general, and agricultural biotechnology in specific, presents itself as a pertinent site for a cross-disciplinary analysis of the relationship between technological systems and institutions and how this relationship is historically and spatially configured. In analysing agricultural biotechnology it is useful to recognise that it is not *just* a technology and that technology in itself is not a panacea to the challenges facing world agriculture. Much like the Green Revolution, though with distinct socio-political and techno-economic differences, this is a technological system that is being globalised. This 'transfer' of agricultural biotechnology (and its institutions) has become the focus of a global war of rhetoric and a site for political resistance that reflect contesting visions of global futures. Underlying these contestations are questions concerning the nature and direction of techno-economic change; equity and access; and participation in and governance of technologies. It is to these issues that the workshop is directed. In addition, the workshop is dedicated to changing the frames of reference and analysis by bringing different regional perspectives from the South to the forefront.

Among the themes concerning agricultural biotechnology that will be addressed, the following are noted:

- Innovation systems: Agricultural biotechnology in the North has developed within a 'Triple Helix' formation of government, academia and the private sector. This raises questions concerning the institutional form of the innovation system as agricultural biotechnology is 'transferred' to the South. Further, as many products and processes integral to the technology are protected through intellectual property rights, there are issues concerning the possible 'scientific apartheid' of the South.
- Enframing the South: Much of the 'global war of rhetoric' concerning and political resistance to agricultural biotechnology centres on the question of how the 'South' is being implicated in and conceptualised by the frame(s) of agricultural biotechnology. This makes us address issues of representation, equity and participation and how they have evolved in the context of agricultural biotechnology.

- Governance and regulation: Agricultural biotechnology is accompanied by its own unique issues of risk and safety in relationship to humans, the environment and other species. This raises challenging questions concerning governance and regulation, such as the role of actors in negotiating these issues and the use of 'science' as a rhetorical device. Pertinent in this mix is the position occupied by Southern actors.

The workshop will bring together individuals from a variety of epistemological perspectives (e.g. social anthropology, law, economics, technology studies, politics and international relations, etc.), practices (e.g. academia, business, civil society and bureaucracy) and geographical regions. This diversity will make the workshop a critically important contribution to the debate on agricultural biotechnology both in a theoretical sense and also in terms of policy. The papers presented at the workshop will be eventually worked up to be produced in an edited volume.

The workshop is organised by a team involving Upendra Baxi, Elizabeth Dowler, Wyn Grant and Dwijen Rangnekar.

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