

**The London School of Economics and Political
Science**

*Socio-Legal Perspectives on Biobanking: The Case
of Taiwan*

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis investigates in depth the phenomenon of biobanking from an anthropological and socio-legal approach. In recent years there has been an ever-tighter alliance formed between discoveries in life sciences and capital accumulation. The rapid advances in genomics introduce a new form of capital in the development of technoscience. In order to find biomarkers for genetic association studies in the susceptibility of common complex diseases, the generation of large-scale population resources is deemed to be an important step to support the development of genomics which now transforms its imagery from informatics to therapeutics. Biobanks - collections of human biological materials linked through genetic information - have attracted considerable attention across the globe. These global assemblages of capital and vital politics have led to innovative institutions and arrangements in fields of technoscience and ethics. Though biobanking is an apparently global phenomenon, diverse political innovations and ethical configurations emerge from the specific social and cultural milieux, in which its establishment and operation are situated. This thesis uses recent developments of a longitudinal population-based research resource in Taiwan as a specific instance to analyse the delicate entanglement between politics, capital and life sciences. It explores not only the legal and ethical issues posed by biobanks, such as consent, privacy and property, but also the political and economic aspects of the biobanks that are embedded in the broader global bio-economies. This emphasis, focusing on the way in which biovalue is produced, politico-scientific decisions are made and ethical configurations are framed, allows an opportunity to reassess law and ethics, capital and politics, as well as the role of the state and its populations in this new form of biotechnology.

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