

**Dr Margaret SLEEBOOM-FAULKNER,**  
Department of Social Anthropology,  
Sussex University, UK

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/anthropology/profile192052.html>

## **"Competitive Adaptation: Anthropological Conceptualizations of Genomics and Bioethics in a Globalising China"**

The social meaning of molecular biology unfolds through its field of application, its politics, its history and its cultural environment. It shows how in Mainland China new developments in molecular biology, including the importation of bioethics institutions should be understood in a historical context of scientific and environmental determinisms, and in a global context of competition and collaboration.

The author argues that new applications of molecular biology in society do not affect the formation of Chinese national identities very much, as biocultural notions of Chineseness have been quite flexible since the 1980s. Although the Chinese state still wields power in crucial areas of social politics manifest in its population policies, centralized planning and its reliance on historical 'laws' of change, it has lost much of its influence in the areas of healthcare, science policies and reproduction.

What is new, she believes, is the global context in which China is both in competition with and in collaboration with what it regards as advanced technological societies.

Drawing on empirical studies of the application of new genetic technologies in China, the lecture explores how public health policies and molecular biology can be conceptualized anthropologically in a country whose dominant discourse understands itself as a developing country in competition with and in collaboration with the West.