

Grote, M. (2016). Das Patchwork der Mikroben. Bio-Technologien, Leben und Wissenschaft jenseits der großen Erzählungen. N. Güttler, M. Pratschke, M. Stadler (eds.) Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte 12 Wissen, ca. 1980, 35-51.

Biotech around 1980 was far more than the much debated commercialisation of biological knowledge. As a technology taking its inspiration from the living, biotech brought with it the vision of a different social and technological future, too. This is illustrated at the example of the West-Berlin based bionics engineer Ingo Rechenberg, who devised a symbiotic bioreactor for an alternative way of biosolar energy production. Rechenberg does not fit into any of the existing historiographical categories of biotech, and his microbe-based technology can be read as highlighting the powers of small forms of life: Microbes' cooperation and their hybrid genealogies stand in for a programmatic ontology, which thrived around 1980 not only in biology. The teeming of the „good microbe“ has inspired biological concepts of technology ever since as much as it has allowed to undermine monolithic narratives of heredity and evolution.