

CALL FOR PAPERS

Epidemic entanglements: Exploring the interrelation between cities and infectious disease

The twenty-first century has thus far been marked by emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases: malaria, SARS, FMD, avian flu, HIV, MDR-tuberculosis, MERS-CoV and dengue pose some of the greatest challenges to health care worldwide. Some areas, however, appear to be more prone to infectious disease outbreaks than others. As the example of SARS has aptly illustrated, cities, with their high population density, complex human-animal interfaces and global connectivity, seem to play a crucial role in the emergence and distribution, but also in the management of pathogens. In addition, rising poverty and often poor sanitary conditions provide a fertile breeding ground for infectious disease outbreaks. Research on the complexity of disease ecologies has shown how urban areas and their hinterlands integrate each other mutually through processes of exchange and change, taking place on various levels: norms, standards and regulations as well as flows of commodities, animals, water, people and pathogens intermingle within and among cities, questioning any attempt to understand the urban as bounded or determinate space. These flows make their distant origins present and at the same time assemble the city as a place of becoming and uncertainty. Furthermore, the messy nature of globalised infectious disease aetiologies not only poses a threat to numerous city dwellers worldwide, but might contest conventional models of urban health governance, its institutional routines and norms.

Given the complexity and fragmentation of these epidemic entanglements, serious questions remain: How do categories of space, the urban or the local impact on the way public health thinks about infectious disease control? How are human-animal-pathogen interfaces enacted differently in various contexts? How are current ontological conceptions of the city reconfigured by locating biological agents inside the social production of urban space?

The interdisciplinary conference aims to open up the interrelation between cities and infectious disease as a focal point of interest for the social, medical and political sciences. We encourage contributions from diverse disciplines such as anthropology, geography, STS, sociology, public health, political science or history. In particular, we welcome papers that investigate the complex intermingling of urban environments and infectious disease by focusing on the multitude of heterogeneous actors and practices involved in the aggregation, governance and securing of urban space.

Papers may include (but are certainly not limited to) the following topics:

- Governance of infectious spaces and borderlands
- Vectors and their ecological niches and urban habitats
- Visualising disease threats
- Risk, prevention, preparedness
- Urban natures, urban wildscapes
- Vaccination policies
- Networked cities and the globalisation of pathogens
- Surveillance of urban wildlife
- Outbreak narratives
- Food chains as disease actor-networks
- Public health, urban health
- Social ordering and social significance of infectious diseases
- Border management
- Assemblage perspectives on infectious disease
- Disease ecologies

The conference is scheduled for 24th–25th July 2014 at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology, Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main. Paper proposals (max. 350 words) together with a short biographical note (max. 50 words) and contact information should be sent to Kevin Hall: Hall@em.uni-frankfurt.de

The deadline for submission is 15th April 2014. Notification of acceptance: 22nd April. There will be no extra conference fee.

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