

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS

Environmental Dis-ease. Co-productions of Toxic Politics University of Vienna, October 27-28, 2022

Convened by

Janina Kehr (University of Vienna, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology)
Kaushik Sunder Rajan (University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology)

With the support of Chicago-Vienna Faculty Grants

Argument

Recently, scholars in medical anthropology and critical global health have started to conceptualize a critical environmental anthropology of medicine and the body. It looks at the ways that late industrialism affects bodies and health unevenly and how large-scale biomedical efforts to cure bodies and diseases impact peoples, places and environments in multiple and unequal ways. In so doing, these studies have critically explored the current context of high social, racial and economic inequalities and exploitation, preoccupying climate change and rising environmental pollution. Other scholars have tried to grapple with the environmental iatrogenesis of biomedicine in late industrialism, exploring the ways biomedicine not only solves health problems, but also produces new ones related to environmental toxicity and pollution.

The leakage of pharmaceutical substances through bodies, institutions and industries in waters and soils is just one example. Another is the environmental footprint of increasingly resource intensive healthcare systems. Such forms of environmental iatrogenesis of biomedicine are likely to be distributed highly unevenly among peoples, communities and regions of the world. Continuous biomedicalization is dependent on local and global production, supply and discard chains (of pharmaceuticals, technical devices, energy resources) that are environmentally and socially consequential. In addition to these strands of research, other studies have tackled questions of technologically-induced ecological ruination and health related issues by engaging critically with the toxic materials, imaginaries, and exploitative relations, examining how human and more-than-human beings experience toxicity and health-deteriorated existences.

In light of such current scholarly interest, the present workshop considers the relationships between environmental toxicity, biomedicine, science and forms of racialized capitalism within long colonial histories whose afterlives continue into the present. It asks how environmental toxicity and highly capitalized forms of biomedicine and science are co-produced in ways that are to be historically and politically situated.

Call for Contributions

We invite early career scholars situated in Vienna (PhD students and post-doctoral researchers) to submit a short declaration of interest and an abstract of 250-300 words, to participate in a two-day workshop on the topic of “Environmental Dis-ease. Co-productions of Toxic Politics”, to be held at the University of Vienna on October 27-28, 2022. The workshop will include work-in-progress discussions with international colleagues, the participation in a public performance lecture, and an environment-and-health “data walk” in Vienna. While workshop participants will thus present their own work-in-progress, there will also be time for more creative and informal engagements with the workshop topic. Coffee and lunch will be provided.

For the dialogical purpose of the workshop, various formats of contribution are possible. Please let us know in your declaration of interest which format would be most suitable for you: this could be a classical 15-minute presentation with Q&A, a short ethnographic writing sample to be discussed, a theoretical argument to be probed, etc. We welcome empirically informed contributions and participants from various disciplines (Anthropology, Science and Technology Studies, Sociology, Political Sciences, Critical Global Health, History of Science and Medicine), whose expertise and interests intersect with the themes above and explore connections between health, environment, pollution, science and post-colonial relations.

Colleagues present during the workshop include Kaushik Sunder Rajan, Stacy Hardy, Ciera Kierans, Giorgio Brocco, Cameron Hu and Janina Kehr.

Please send your contributions to Janina Kehr (janina.kehr@univie.ac.at) and Mara Köhler (mara.koehler@univie.ac.at) by **30 September 2022**. Informal inquiries can be addressed to Mara Köhler.