

The making and unmaking of “crises” and “emergencies” in global health

Panel organized on behalf of the Work Group Medical Anthropology (German Anthropological Association) at the German Anthropological Association Biannual Conference 2015 “Crises: reconfigurations of life, power and worlds” (30 September–3 October 2015, Marburg University (see <http://dgv-net.de/home.html>))

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Keynote address: Prof. Ruth Prince (University of Oslo & Cambridge University)*

Abstract: The recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the struggles of the global health bureaucracy and humanitarian community to intervene, and the resistance these efforts were met with locally pose yet another example of the complexity of managing public health crises in an interconnected world. In this workshop we focus on those moments when health issues are defined as crises (unleashing cascades of medico-technical interventions and financial flows) and when they stop being crises or emergencies and are remade into something else. We explore the often highly contested processes of exceptionalizing and normalizing health issues, shed light on the political, social, economic, and cultural factors that influence these processes, and take into view their far-reaching social and cultural consequences.

Workshop submissions may address how newly emerging health issues are turned into crises and how they transform conceptualizations of life, health, death and the physical and socio-political body. How are social relations reconfigured and new forms of sociality conceived? How are these changes experienced by individual actors, and do they engender new forms of subjectivity? We also explore what happens when health issues cease to be framed as crises and undergo processes of normalization, which may entail reduced public, political and financial attention as recently witnessed with regard to HIV/AIDS. How do these shifts manifest themselves in the experience of health experts and the patients and people affected on the ground? Finally, papers may address the overall role of anthropologists in regard to emerging health crises. What perspective do they add to perceptions of health emergencies that are otherwise shaped by biomedicine and epidemiology? How can anthropological views and methods be incorporated more systematically in disease outbreak scenarios? Can anthropologists contribute to public health discourses that determine the emergency of certain medical topics on the global health agenda (and the irrelevance of others)?

Please submit both a long version (1,200 characters including spaces max.) and a short version (300 characters including spaces max.) of your abstract to dominik.mattes@fu-berlin.de and hansjoerg.dilger@berlin.de.

Deadline: 15 February 2015