Epidemic Urbanism: Reflections on History

Teacher to Teacher Workshop Convened by: Mohammad Gharipour & Caitlin DeClercq

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Part 1: Urban Life and Urban Design During Epidemics

Urban Life During Epidemics

The four papers that comprise this session, "Urban life During Epidemics," collectively examine how epidemic illnesses have exploited and amplified social divisions, and how epidemic interventions were leveraged against, experienced, and navigated by different communities. These papers also explore the impact of pandemics on social practices more generally, and on inequality, racial/ethnic tensions, and displacement more specifically--and indeed, more importantly.

List of presentations:
1. Black Death, Funerary Customs, and the Cemetery in 14th-15th centuries Cairo, by Dr. Stéphane Pradines (Aga Khan University)
2. Jews, Christians, and Quarantine in the Prague Ghetto, 1713, by Dr. Joshua Teplitsky (Stony Brook University)
3. Hygiene and Urban Life in the District of Death in 19th century Istanbul, by Fezanur Karaağaçlıoğlu (Boğaziçi University)
4. Tropical Disease and Prisoners-of-War in the American Pacific, 1941-1944, by Desirée Valadares (University of California, Berkeley)

5. Response by: Sandro Galea, MD, MPH, DrPH, Boston University School of Public Health

Link to 4 case studies about urban life during epidemics: https://youtu.be/rtJJ3yASnzg
Link to response by Dr. Sandro Galea: https://youtu.be/jy_4ewGv5QE

Urban Design and Planning During Epidemics

The five case studies that comprise this session, "Urban Design and Planning During Epidemics," collectively examine the role of urban design practices and concepts before, during, and after epidemics and the factors that shaped and codified each – from the benign to the bureaucratic to the more nefarious – and their longer-term implications for urban design, urban life, climatic zoning, and the natural environment.

List of presentations:
1. Urban Design, Social Epidemiology, and the Plague of Palermo, 1576, by Carlo Trombino (Università degli Studi di Palermo)
2. Urban Restrictions and Responses to Plague in Bristol, 1665-1666, by Dr. Andrew Wells (Independent Scholar)
3. From Cholera to Reform Housing in London, 1850–1900, by Dr. Irina Davidovici (ETH Zurich)
4. Cholera and the Practice of Quarantine in late 19th Century Tokyo, by Dr. Susan Burns (University of Chicago)
5. Climatic Zoning and the Eradication of Malaria from Mauritius, 1948-1951, by Nicole de Lalouvière (ETH Zurich)
6. Response by: Dr. Richard Jackson, MD, MPH, UCLA Fielding School of Public Health

Link to 5 case studies about urban design and planning during epidemics: https://youtu.be/MhTdqtKiofM
Link to response by Dr. Richard Jackson: https://youtu.be/7M4TAC3easA

Sample questions (from Q&A)

● What can we learn and infer from the availability and perspective of different sources regarding the experience of epidemics (either by different governments, communities, social groups, etc.)? What might cause these differences? How have scholars negotiated these various viewpoints in their work? With what implications?
● What might these past epidemics--and urban responses to them--help us anticipate or advocate in terms of changes to urban design projects in the wake of COVID-19 today? For example:
  ○ What might be some potential economic effects of a new socially-distanced landscape, or of spaces labeled as healthy or not? Or of the workers involved?
  ○ How might epidemics, current and future, make an impact on sustainable design (and green and natural spaces), and vice versa?
● What has been the relationship between imperial and colonial powers and epidemic outbreaks, responses, and experiences? What can we learn about the impact of power and governmentality on epidemics more broadly?

- What are some examples of how epidemics have amplified or exploited social inequalities (race, gender, economic)? What echoes of these themes do we see in our current COVID crisis today?
- How might architects, designers, and historians help to inform and advocate meaningful changes in response to epidemic--both past and present?

Sample assignments

- Define basic key terms and articulate their importance and implications for architectural interventions. Key terms might include: endemic, epidemic, pandemic; disease vector, intervention; pathogenic, salutogenic; social determinants of health
- Compare and contrast interventions seen in historical proposals presented here, in texts like Snowden's *Epidemics and Society*, or in COVID today?
  - Relate these to another recent epidemic (AIDS, SARS, Ebola, COVID)
  - What were successes and limitations of urban interventions enacted in each case? Why did they succeed or fail, and for whom?
  - What might a more successful spatial and social intervention look like? What additional social challenges might such an intervention address (e.g., social inequality, income inequality, social connection, etc.)?
- Research an epidemic or outbreak of illness that impacted your own city (this could include COVID or be something more historic).
  - Identify an intervention proposed or implemented.
  - How was this intervention justified?
  - Who conceived of it, and who was subjected to it?
  - How does this attempt to change or control behavior?
  - Was this effective? For whom?
  - Propose your own redesign based on and justified by an insight gained from one of the sessions presented here.

Suggested readings

- Compassion in a time of COVID-19, by Sandro Galea, in The Lancet, May 2020 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7255177/).
- "What Tuberculosis Did for Modernism", by Margaret Cambpell, in *Medical History*, 2005: https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/0A67A6945CA135FCDD7B1D2AB838A990/S0025727300009169a.pdf/what_tuberculosis_did_for_modernism_the_influence_of_a_curative_environment_on_modernist_design_and_architecture.pdf
- Thomas Fisher, "Viral Cities," in Places: https://placesjournal.org/article/viral-cities/
- Justin Davidson, "Coronavirus Threatens Everything that Makes New York City Great," in New York Magazine, https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/03/coronavirus-threatens-everything-that-makes-new-york-great.html.

Part 2: Urban Governance and Urban Infrastructure During Epidemics

Urban Governance During Epidemics

The five papers that comprise this session, "Urban Governance During Epidemics," collectively examine how urban interventions during times of epidemic illnesses have been justified and carried out--and with what effect, either intended and not. These papers explore the machinations of politics and city management, their instrumentality and intervention in a time of illness, and the long-lasting impact of each on cities.

List of presentations:
1. Logistics of the first Quarantine in Central Europe, 1510, by Dr. Katalin Szende (Central European University)
2. Plague and Government in the 17th century Cities of Mughal India, by Dr. Mehreen Chida-Razvi (The Khalili Collection)
3. Plague, Social Dislocation, and Urban Change in 18th century Istanbul, by Dr. Fariba Zarinebaf (University of California, Riverside)
4. Cholera and Short-termism in York, England, 1832, by Dr. Ann-Marie Akehurst (Independent Scholar)
5. The Sanitation Campaign against Cholera in Naples, 1860-1910, by Sofia Greaves (University of Cambridge)
6. Response by: Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, MD, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Link to 5 case studies about urban governance: https://youtu.be/OfBuw-uFPCo
Link to response by Dr. Joshua Sharfstein: https://youtu.be/yrbhGfsVDnA

Urban Infrastructure During Epidemics

The case studies that comprise this session, "Urban Infrastructure During Epidemics," collectively examine built urban forms and elements and how they have been created, mobilized, and/or modified in response to epidemics. As we will see, though this infrastructure was material and in many cases designed with permanence in mind, inhabitants moved to and through these structures, and at times adapted them to suit their needs. In this way, infrastructure was--and is--as permeable as it is permanent; it is as symbolic as it is material; each of these ideas take on particular significance and urgency during a time of pestilence.

List of presentations:
1. Sanitation and the Construction of Hospitals in Lisbon, 1492, by Dr. Danielle Abdon (Temple University)
2. Plague and Open Gates in Madrid, 1597-1602, , by Dr. Ruth MacKay (Independent Scholar)

3. Lazarettos, Quarantine, Hospitals, and the Plague of Marseille, 1720, by Dr. Fleur Beauvieux (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)
4. Plague and Domestic Displacement and Destruction in Bombay, 1896, by Emily Webster (University of Chicago)
5. Response by: Dr. Monica Schoch-Spana, PhD, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Link to 4 presentations on urban infrastructure: https://youtu.be/316I3HblfRQ
Link to response by Dr. Schoch-Spana: https://youtu.be/QKjBNqaSWkw

Sample questions (from Q&A)

- What role have women played in responding to epidemics in past case studies? And what has shaped the availability (or lack thereof) of these roles for women, as well as the specific experience of women during times of pestilence?
- How have infrastructures and practices of movement impacted the outbreak of epidemics in urban environments? What has been the impact of these movements, flows, and exchanges across cities, cultures, and countries more broadly?
- What are some examples of lasting urban, spatial, or infrastructural interventions that were born in response to epidemics (but that far outlasted the duration of the epidemic)?
- How have quarantines been leveraged, implemented, experienced, and enforced over time? What are some implications of quarantine?
- What can we learn about the interplay between local and national governments (and global forces) in responding to epidemics?
- How might we use these historical cases to envision more just and equitable interventions in the present and future tense?

Sample assignments

- Choose either your own city or another city of interest.
    - First, map the location of people and resources in the city. Based on this map, where do you think an infectious illness is most likely to occur? What resources are nearby to intervene and/or prevent? What are some specific vulnerabilities you can see in different spaces throughout the city?
    - Second, map the illness. Using the NY Times Map of Coronavirus (available for several countries including and beyond the US), look at how the illness is patterned across the city. Thinking about a range of social variables presented in these case studies, as well as Dr. Schoch-Spana's idea of "social infrastructure," why do you think the illness outbreak has been patterned in this way?
    - Finally, think about where you would place various social and other infrastructural elements to help intervene in COVID and prevent future epidemics? Why?
- Now, look at a map of the US (NY Times Map of Coronavirus). Where are cases rising? Where are cases falling? What accounts for each?

- ○ Why has the US had such a difficult time controlling the illness? (This article suggests some reasons: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/us/coronavirus-us.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article). What else might you add? How can architecture participate in a more effective response? What are the limitations of thinking solely of built interventions to these problems?
- Now, take a global perspective. Map out each of the countries explored here and especially in Part 2 (Global Visions on Cities and Historical Pandemics in the 20th Century). What patterns do you see? What might account for these observations? What case studies are missing? What might you add?

Suggested readings

- James Colgrove, *Epidemic City: The Politics of Public Health in New York City*
- "The Return of Fear in New York During Coronavirus," by Justin Davidson, in *New York Magazine*: https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/04/return-of-fear-nyc-coronavirus.html
- "The Unique US Failure to Control Coronavirus," in the *New York Times*: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/us/coronavirus-us.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article
- "The Coronavirus is a Disaster for Feminism," by Helen Lewis, March 2020, in *The Atlantic*: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/feminism-womens-rights-coronavirus-covid19/608302/
- Mark Honingsbaum, *The Pandemic Century: One Hundred Years of Panic, Hysteria, and Hubris*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 2019.
- "Trump Sidelines CDC in Push to Reopen Economy," Dick Jackson, in Al Jazeeer: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/trump-sidelines-cdc-push-reopen-economy-200520191135513.html