

THE POLITICS AND ANTI-POLITICS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

June 23rd – June 24th 2010

A workshop jointly organised by the Centre for Research in International Medical Anthropology, Brunel University and the School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh

Infectious disease control has become an increasingly central component of development policy and practice. In 2000, the UN led Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets focused specifically on HIV and other infectious diseases as one dimension of increasing global equity and health. Infectious diseases have progressively become an issue articulated around global “security”, coupled with a heightened humanitarian urgency. The G8 summit of 2001 first articulated TB, HIV and Malaria as an economic and security problem for the more developed nations and requiring increased global investment. This re-articulation of the problem, and heightened interest has led to the development of a number of new funding mechanisms for these diseases, for example the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM); the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); and increasing private investment from the likes of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Bill Clinton Foundation etc. The focus on the “big three”, namely Malaria, TB and AIDS has also stimulated the development of the new category - Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) - to stimulate funding, research and control work on other infectious diseases. The billions of dollars thus invested have transformed the terrain of both infectious disease control and public health, fragmenting its approach, and stimulating the proliferation of organisations (non-governmental, humanitarian etc.) involved in dealing with them.

In this workshop we shall explore infectious diseases and their control as primarily a socio-political phenomenon. Some of the following questions will be addressed: To what extent does focusing on the biological components of infectious disease at the expense of the socio-political dimensions of control act as an “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson)? Has the recent rise in international focus on infectious disease control re-entrenched the “pharmaceuticalisation of public health” (Biehl)? What has been the implication of the increased funding for infectious disease control on both the research agenda and broader public health measures? Is the emergence of new mechanisms of funding, increasingly linked to performance frameworks, for example, the “new imperialism” of Aid? How has “philanthro-capitalism” shaped the organisational terrain of infectious disease control? What have been the implications of the new category ‘NTDs’ for research and programmatic function?

The majority of papers will either address specific diseases (such as TB, Malaria, Schistosomiasis, Trypanosomiasis for example), and / or country level responses to these issues, or they will present case studies tracking interventions from supranational to sub national levels.

The workshop will be held at the School of Social Sciences, Brunel University. For further information, please contact Dr Ian Harper at iharper@staffmail.ed.ac.uk or Dr Melissa Parker at Melissa.Parker@brunel.ac.uk.