



## **STEPS Centre Epidemics Workshop, December 8 & 9 2008**

G24/25 The Freeman Centre, University of Sussex

Uncontrolled outbreaks of disease have always had the power to terrify. In recent years, such fears have grown to include the spectre of pandemic influenza, multi-drug resistant tuberculosis and virulent hemorrhagic fevers. Globally, changes in land use, migration, food production, and human/animal interaction are contributing to a startling rise in emerging infectious diseases. At the same time, diseases such as HIV/AIDS and obesity are entering endemic phases in many settings. The STEPS Centre Epidemics Project seeks to analyze the nature and meaning of epidemic disease in broad terms, including both infectious and non-infectious diseases, newly emerging and long-standing, or even endemic, diseases, and diseases of the past as well as those of the future. Through a series of disease-specific case studies on HIV/AIDS, Ebola, obesity, avian influenza, SARS, and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis, the project seeks in particular to understand better the interplay between social, technological and environmental factors that help produce epidemics. The complex dynamics of infectious diseases means that there is often deep uncertainty surrounding likely outcomes and their consequences. Nonetheless, much policy remains predicated on notions of risk management and assessment that presume linear and predictable disease models. The implicit narratives, or framings, inherent in such policies privilege certain types of knowledge while others narratives remain invisible or ignored.

The full range of multiple, and often competing, narratives represents a wide variety of perspectives on the relative importance of social, technological and environmental dynamics in both the threat of epidemics and appropriate interventions. Such diverse perspectives on the importance of short-term shocks versus long-term stresses, for example, or relatively narrow geographical factors versus global-scale changes, may provide for valuable resilience in the face of potentially devastating new epidemics as well as epidemics with an already established burden. STEPS case studies demonstrate, in particular disease examples, how certain narratives, and the framing assumptions they embody, can become dominant in a particular setting, setting parameters by which risks and benefits come to be understood and interventions are conceived and implemented.

This workshop will provide an opportunity for lively discussion of the current STEPS Epidemics case studies. The workshop is intended to be a forum for developing a comparative framework for the case studies as well as identifying ideas, strategies and collaborations for future interdisciplinary research and publication. Broadly, the workshop will foster discussion on the nature of uncertainty in relation to epidemics, the role of disease dynamics in different disease settings, the contribution of different ways of knowing to multiple framings of diseases, the effects of

technological interventions on disease dynamics, and the role of sudden shocks versus long-term stresses in shaping different approaches.

The workshop will be structured around a core set of case study presentations, with additional sessions to focus on developing a broad conceptual toolkit for thinking about epidemics from the special perspective afforded by the STEPS Centre. By including a range of invited participants from the fields of social science, medicine and policy, the workshop aims to challenge and further interdisciplinary thinking on epidemics.

## **Programme**

### **Sunday, December 7**

- 7:00 Out-of-town participants to assemble in Old Ship Hotel bar, to be met by Sarah Dry who will walk with them to dinner
- 7:30 Welcome dinner for invited participants from out-of-town at Pizza Express, Jubilee Street, Brighton

### **DAY 1: Monday 8 December - Presentation of case studies**

- 8:30 Shuttle bus to collect participants from the Old Ship Hotel and take to G24/25 The Freeman Centre, University of Sussex
- 9:00 Tea and coffee
- 9:15 Introduction to STEPS approach to epidemics and comparative case studies: Sarah Dry and Paul Nightingale
- 9:45 **Case Study 1 and 2: Haemorrhagic fevers (Ebola and Lassa)**  
Presentation: Melissa Leach—Haemorrhagic fevers generally/Lassa  
Barry Hewlett—Ebola  
Discussant: Jan Slingenbergh, FAO
- 11:15 Tea and coffee break
- 11:30 **Case Study 3 and 4: HIV/AIDS**  
Presentation: Hayley MacGregor (HIV/AIDS)  
Jerker Edström (HIV/AIDS)  
Discussant: Stefan Elbe, University of Sussex
- 1:00 Lunch
- 2:00 **Case Study 5 and 6: SARS and Avian Influenza**  
Presentation: Gerry Bloom (SARS)  
Ian Scoones (Avian influenza)  
Discussant: Philippe Calain, independent researcher

- 3:30 Tea and coffee break
- 4:00 **Case Study 7 and 8: Obesity and XDR-Tuberculosis**  
Presentation: Erik Millstone (obesity)  
Paul Nightingale (XDR-TB)  
Discussant: Melanie Newport, Brighton and Sussex Medical School
- 5:30 End of first day session  
Shuttle bus to take participants to the Old Ship Hotel
- 7.00 Drinks, Old Ship Hotel bar (leave for restaurant 7.45)
- 8:00 Conference dinner at Carluccio's Restaurant, Jubilee Street, Brighton

## **DAY 2: Tuesday 9 December - Further discussion of comparative issues**

- 8:30 Shuttle bus to collect participants from the Old Ship Hotel and take to G24/25 The Freeman Centre, University of Sussex
- 9:00 Tea and coffee
- 9:15 **Introduction to comparative analysis of case studies: Sarah Dry and Paul Nightingale**
- 9:30 **Understanding uncertainty and disease dynamics:** What are the causes of uncertainty in each of the case studies? How do the different social, technological and environmental dynamics of the diseases contribute to different uncertainty quotients? What is the role of short-term shocks and long-term stresses in each case? What comparative conclusions can be made?  
Facilitator: Sarah Dry
- 10:30 Tea and coffee break
- 10:45 **On multiple disease narratives:** How do multiple narratives arise and how and why do some become dominant? How does local knowledge get figured in various types of narratives?  
Facilitator: Melissa Leach
- 11:45 **Implications for policy recommendations and responses:** What are the practical implications for epidemics policy of a dynamics or uncertainty-oriented approach?  
Facilitator: Jerker Edström
- 1:00 Lunch and close of workshop  
Shuttle bus to take participants to the Old Ship Hotel

## Map of Central Brighton Area



Pizza Express  
Jubilee St, Brighton

Carluccio's Restaurant  
Jubilee St, Brighton

The Old Ship Hotel  
31-38 Kings Road, Brighton

## Contacts:

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