Text from Mathew Gandhy Zoonotic Urbanization, April 29, 2022 10:15 AM

<https://youtu.be/M1hnTMCpxWM>

(Joined in Progress)

…on Urban. If we be on the city as a geographically bounded entity, what other relations landscapes or mobility for my conception of the urban. Certainly with urban studies, there been a lot of debate around what you might refer to as conceptions of complete urbanization. I want to raise a question at this point. When we look at the field of urban epidemiology, I would suggest a highly globalized conception of the urban can be counterproductive in terms of making sense of the micro ecologies of urban epidemiology. Precisely the kind of arenas that she has been working on. How do you reconcile the local specificities with global did the mix of urbanization. I think it's an analytical challenge. Nevertheless, in terms of zoonotic urbanization, there are various examples and of elements that we can point to which are actually important for us to reflect on. I am having some trouble with the slideshow. Sorry about this. There seems to be some sort of compatibility issue. It suddenly worked. Maybe if I press enough buttons. I was talking about these Zika virus which is spread by mosquitoes. With this part of the vector to Central and Latin America, the virus suddenly became a major focus concern but among the interesting questions that can be raised in relation to the Zika virus, it can thrive in poor neighborhoods. But also the chaotic response of public health authorities with these high-profile as a bio political displays of power and things of that kind. So that these public health crises then are never simply about the simple epidemiological dynamics of disease vector but a whole host of other contributory factors and developments. Another example. I am going to try something different. It's very mysterious. More control functions appeared on my computer. Another example is the West Nile virus which is also related to specific kinds of topographies. Also abandon swimming pools in the wake of the North American foreclosure crisis provided an environment for the insect vector to thrive. Here I think is another entry point, potentially, for urban ecologies and metabolic explorations of the flow of capital through open space and creation of particular kinds of micro ecologies. The emergence then of new mosquito landscapes. Then another related to the example of a mosquito borne disease which is a truly us to consider. It is that of dengue fever which has been steadily spreading since the early 19 '50s and very interesting example of Zoonotic Urbanization. The first outbreak in Manila and then the '50s and then in Bangkok in 1958. There were major outbreaks in the global South signaling the beginnings of a global pandemic which has multiple factors. Again, in terms of the microbe topographies to flourish. There are four types of dengue fever and dengue fever itself has been undergoing a degree of evolutionary change and recombination between different types. Dengue fever is interesting from an epidemiological perspective because it is a disease that is become worse and more threatening. This narrative that we see in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic inevitably that disease has become more denied and also need to worry about. Dengue provides a counter which is important to consider. Also, dengue, like Zika, has been responding to climate change. Like many of these insect borne diseases, the insect factors are present in an extended geographical range beyond where the disease is currently recorded. That is another element of uncertainty in terms of future and urban epidemiology. Malaria carrying mosquitoes are present in parts of Europe but with the change of circumstances, malaria can returned as has happened in Greece in the wake of the recent posterity crisis. I am having another problem. >>NIDA: Maybe if you don't do full-screen, the buttons might be on stock. I don't know. >>MATTHEW: I might try that. I'm sorry about this. >>NIDA: Matthew, are you on Keynote? >>MATTHEW: Are you able to override me and stop me from sharing? >>NIDA: I I don't know. But I think if you click on hide floating controls. I am not sure where to do that. >>MATTHEW: That does not come up, unfortunately. I am sorry about this everybody. Thank you, for your patience. Mysteriously, something has happened. We can carry on for the moment as it is. I wanted also to mention in the context of new and emerging diseases, Ebola provides another extremely important example of a disease which appears to have transitioned, if you like, from predominantly a rural disease to a significant urban disease through the most recent outbreak. Which was a matter of global public health concern. Here again, I think we need to be careful of this distinction between the rural and the urban in terms of the zoonotic landscapes that contributed to this transition. In particular, the forestation near to human settlements that is being talked about. The third topic I want to look at is that of rescaling urban epidemiology. A number of interesting debates around the question of scale in urban studies and planning urban geography which I briefly touched on. In particular, some of the new Lefevrian that many of you will be familiar with. Part of the question for me, however, is how can we develop a multiscale approach. How much we conceptually combine some of the insights from the other perspective with the small-scale, socio- ecological specificities that are so important to understanding urban epidemiology. In terms of thinking about, particular the fieldwork referred to as urban with which my own work has been closely associated, if we were to develop this toward a sense of extended urbanization. What kind of patterns of urbanization might we contend with through a notion of extended urbanization? Clearly, one of these would be the proliferation of edge landscapes and other types of zoonotic spillover zones. A second element, which isn't widely explored is that of the accelerated, evolutionary dynamics occurring within modified or subdivide environments such as infrastructure systems or other kinds of closed ecosystems devoid of natural predators. Just an example here. The so-called brain-eating o amoeba which has contaminated water in Pakistan and Louisiana and has thought to be associated with specific kinds of poorly maintained infrastructure systems within certain temperature ranges within which microorganisms, such as the brain-eating amoeba can flourish. Also, thinking about the extended urbanization patterns, the need to engage very directly with the ecological sciences to make sense of some of these newly emerging socio- ecological assemblers. Additionally, in terms of extended urbanization, we can think in terms of zoonotic time space compression in terms of the global and biosphere as a commented element that is familiar to us through debates of the postmodernism condition. And metabolic reading of epidemiological risks inevitably, I think, draws us to look at a variety of extractive frontiers and the intensified commodification of nature. Not just through the extension of plantation agriculture but also through the zoonotic dynamics of urbanization in relation to the illegal trade in wildlife. Bushmeat, for example. There are multiple factors here in terms of extending the commodification frontier in relation to zoonotic urbanization. I think that we can think about deforestation hotspots to get a sense of where some of these extractive frontiers begin to intersect with potential zoonotic spillover zones. I want to stress that in many ways we can confront a triple crisis spanning climate change, biodiversity loss and the growing threat of new and emerging diseases. One of the analytical challenges is really to bring these three different facets together in an effective way. Thinking then about extended conceptions of urbanization and its relationship to the zoonotic city means that we need to move away from these closed or systems based conceptions of urban space. Which is worth pointing out that the system is based conceptions of urban space remains the dominant epistemological perspective across most of the disciplines we currently work in. It challenges how do we open up these discourses to a wider range of perspectives? Not just urban political ecology but other alternative perspectives such as the multi- species city or other dreInteresting conceptual frame. I'm moving on to my final part of the talk. I seem to have lost the controls. The final part of my talk then, tThe pandemic imaginary. I'm sure many of us have gone back to the somatic representations. The contagion from 2011 present an imaginary panic and confusion but also calling on now familiar epidemiological jargon such as the dash rate. But also in the context of contagion, reproduce a certain topographical tropes which I will return to shortly. At the start of my presentation, I mentioned the idea of the pandemic imaginary in which he builds on the insights of Cornelius as an instituting force of the social as a way of understanding and responding to complex aspects of social and cultural change. In essence, looking at his and other scholars, the sense of the pandemic imaginary emerges from pervasive anxiety over loss of control. After a number of scholars have wrestled with this question about the loss of control or boundary over modernity. Esposito is a key figure here in terms of the immunological paradigms of governmental structures and responses. Equally, the recent work from Henry and Eric looking at the way in which latent modernity generates crises which is incapable of controlling or responding to in a coordinated fashion. Possibly also we could link to the work of -- and modernization as well. A moot point is whether we are now entering what we could refer to as late eternity. Being based in Germany at the moment, I have followed some of the debates in German sociology in the dust seem to be a sense of confidence about the notion of late modernity as an identifiable periodization that we are currently in. In terms of the sense of preparedness that sociologists and others have referred to, there is a sense of developing operational criteria for response. One of the key elements here in terms of thinking about the pandemic imaginary and various forms of preparedness, either to nationstates or to an international level of c coordination is that preparedness raises systemic concerns with indicators such as hospital surge capacity rather than the structural determinants of vulnerability. It's a heavily circumscribed way of understanding public health threats. In terms of the pandemic imaginary, this perhaps relates back to the contagion from 2011, the question of how the pandemic imaginary maps onto urban form. There has been a particular emphasis on the cultural motif of the Chinese city or the East Asian city as a prominent location within the Euro-American epidemiological imagination. But as I mentioned at the start of my presentation, we need to be extremely careful about the topographic locust of the epidemic pandemic imaginary. Simply because the causes of zoonotic it threats are so varied and complex and extend into the landscapes of capitalists agriculture in the global North as well. We need to keep hold of these multiple geographies and be very cautious of the rendition of the urban other. I have used this example. -- is a prominent architecture Journal in Germany and it intrigued me that the representation of Hong Kong in this instance 10 years after his postcolonial transition really featured so many photographs of these extremely confidence honeycombed structures that form this architecture imaginary. It's being revamped in a contemporary context. Want to think about this carefully. To conclude then, I think that implicitly in developing a notion of a zoonotic good city, I feel in terms of ,periodization, it's a tool that a more generalized notion and quite possibly through developing a critical epidemiological perspective, we are contributing to debates which are effectively against it as a hegemonic, conceptual perspective. I wanted to leave you with a sense of the complexity of urban . As well. When we talk about the health public optimism through the 1950s and 1970s that is quietly and perhaps not really noticed in the context of the world health organization or the global North major public health threats were already gathering. In particular, dengue fever in cities of Southeast Asia before its global spread. Additionally, a narrow topographic reading of with a density trope risks obscuring the structural relations that underpin these is not dimensions of a global public health crisis. Just as a final remark and will open up to some questions and discussion. The question that I've noticed in the literature say that the post COVID city has been cropping up repeatedly across geography and planning and literature and so on. The first point I would make is that my caution about trying to comment on things that are evolving in real time. I even held back from developing this argument that I've developed in this presentation because of a certain reticence to link together historical dynamics with Canterbury development. And the analytical and dangers that hold there. I was also a little concerned by the range of very optimistic accounts of the post COVID city and all of these transformations and work and ability in green spaces that were confidently predicted to emerge from the current crisis. My general sense that the post COVID city will be similar to the one we have now but slightly worse. That is probably probably my sense of where we are at in this ongoing set of changes. They pandemic imaginary as it connects with anxiety and isolation is an interesting cultural and ideological entry point into these debates. My apologies for technical glitches and to thank you for listening. I think we have a bit of time for questions and discussion. >>NIDA: Thank you, for bringing to our attention these other geographies and top Acre of disease and Zu do not a diseases. I was thinking of this yesterday because there was news reports from factory farms here in the United States where millions of, a large scale calling of chickens on these different factory farms in the last few days because of the avian flu outbreaks. With that, the simultaneous firing a large numbers of the workers who were there. It's and important reminder of the structural dynamics of capitalism that you been talking about and how they pertain to these other geographies and sites of extended urbanization. These conditions as well as their relationships to broader global processes. I like the reminder of the violence of those as well. Both for people and for others. I will open it up to anyone who has questions. Please feel free to turn your camera on and raise your hand or however, you would like to join into the discussion. >>MATTHEW: I like to respond to your comment about it. At the start of the presentation, you mentioned my new book and one of the things I looked at in that book was the history of violence toward nature. It was not a topic I intended to talk about but I became drawn to it. The question of the ethical aspects to the treatments of nature and beings in this case. It is something that has troubled me in the last couple of years in terms of writing about what we understand by urban nature and, of course, the political ecology of food and different dimensions. It occurs to me that the urban political ecology paradigm has not yet really engage systematically with ethical aspects of relations with the nonhuman. There been some advances in relation to agribusiness and industrialized agriculture but I think a lot more important work to be done. >>NIDA: The broader dynamics get lost. I invite anyone for questions. >>PARTICIPANT: In some of your work, you talk about or in this talk you mentioned ideas of density and how that gets a lot of blame for disease and infection. I definitely remember before college that he was it was explained to me. Climate change is due to overpopulation. I was wondering if that is something that you have come across a lot and having to fight against these ideas and how you respond to them. >>MATTHEW: Thank you, for that question. Can you hear me? Okay. Yes. Your question actually relates to something else that I have been thinking about. That is, we are developing our academic work. In some cases, our professional practice and ideas about how we want to change the world and all these different things. One of the things I wonder about is how difficult it is to change the way people think about things. In terms of the fields of work that we are in, the fact that systems based conceptions of urbanization is pretty dominant across planning and landscape design and so on. These are the kind of fields that I work with are very marginal within the dominant education structures of urban planning and so on. I think it is an interesting question. Even beyond these systems -based approaches when we are in the realm of, if you like, purely ideological, near colonial discourse surrounding the application of ideas such as other things for global crises is how do we, as you ask, how can we articulate alternative perspectives that might hold some kind of traction in the public imagination? Particularly in a context where academic discourse is effectively reduced to a sentence, if you're lucky. In terms of the attention span of the global media scapes. I would perhaps just raise two things which I think can help us a little bit. I think one is the question of food and meet. I think that discussions about the impact of meat on the planet, not just ethical aspects about the treatment of animals but environmental and zoonotic consequences. People need to piece together, not in a superficial way their personal choices but in a more structured way, changes in the diet. I think it's too was that argument in an interesting way. The other thing I would say in relation to urban and political ecology perspectives as an alternative radical perspective, sometimes I think the school of thought can be referred to in terms of following the money. Again, I think in terms of the public political imagination, it is understood what is implied by that. So that if we are looking at decisions that need to refer to with the massive firing of workers and things of that kind and we look at corporate responses to both economic change and public health risk. Following the money. Who specifically benefits from different forms of environmental degradation? I think you can hold the public profit attention and following through those arguments. In a way that if you said I am now going to give an extended discussion about urban theory, it's not going to work in terms of a public arena. I think in a round about way to answer your question, the way in which reframe arguments and our choice of terminology is important but I do believe it's possible to enrich the public realm. I don't take a fatalistic view of that. >>PARTICIPANT: Thank you. That makes sense. >>PARTICIPANT: Thank you. You talk quite richly about expanding our geographical conception from an European American centers is him. I think also important is expanding time dimension. At least in America, Americans live culturally and politically in the moment. And to take an example from public health. It took almost six years from the invention of pasteurization to the widespread requirement that milk not be allowed to kill children and that it be pasteurized. And exactly where you ended your prior comment is where pasteurization got introduced because it became clear that people are getting rich off of killing children. When you make that the narrative, pasteurization came through politically 60 years after it was invented scientifically. I wanted to add that because it's easy to feel fatalistic when you live in the moment. Particularly this moment. But if you look over time and over the course of the last century, public health has advanced significantly. You quite rightly speak about the optimism but we are supporting almost a billion people which supported 2 billion people a century ago. We are doing it in a healthier way. My question is to ask you to elaborate on the idea of the post COVID city and understanding that it is preliminary as is similar but less satisfactory than the pre-COVID city. Because cities, as a concept, however one defines the periphery of cities, which I think is an important thing to keep in mind, but urbanization is a character of human civilization. As you quite rightly observed, it goes back to Neolithic times. If I look at the city today versus the city 100 years ago, it is not clear to me that the Spanish flu had any effect on the character of urbanization. I wonder if you could elaborate a bit on that modest pessimism. >>MATTHEW: Okay. Maybe quickly on your comments about time quickly. I think it's interesting what you said about this very long time. Between these epidemiological debates and the sciences finding their way into public policy response. Another example from the realm of infrastructure is the way that catastrophic events can take decades to lead to fundamental engineering responses. In some of my other work, 1953 devastating floods took 30 years for the barrier to be complete and operational. There is a time aspect in relation to the immediacy of the moment is an issue to reflect on. Within the Academy, I very much like these discussions about slow science and things of that kind. If someone tells me that they are working on a paper or a book that has taken several years, I am very supportive of that. I want to give them the space and time to do that. In terms of the post COVID city, one of the interesting debate has been in relation to urban design, the 50 minute city and the walkable city and things of that time. There is some optimistic talk toward a shift of home working. What I'm worried about is that if I feel like the social structuring of society and the cast -based dynamics have also fed into not only the response but in a certain way, accelerated incipient changes within stratification within modern society so that in a German context, I have been reading about the new service class. People on precarious, low-paid contacts with all often repeated exposure through the nature of their work. In a way, inhabiting a separate epidemiological sphere to the middle class or professional class who have been able to restructure and withdraw from spaces of danger and so on. One of my concerns is that some of the incipient stratigraphic changes within modern societies have become more pronounced and maybe more set through the COVID pandemic. I would also add from a personal point of view that in the higher education sector, I am intrigued by the way in which higher education managers have looked very carefully at some of the changes within teaching practices. I get the sense, certainly in my own country in the UK that there will be an attempt to perhaps take advantage of some of these changing practices as we emerge fully from the COVID-19 pandemic. It's in an immensely complicated set of developments. I know that I am not answering your question as well as I should but I think that some of the discourse about the post COVID city has tended toward a kind of design perspective. What is the post COVID city going to look like and things of that kind? What will it feel like? I guess I'm worried in the final analysis whether many of these complex public health questions are essentially design questions at all. Design can worsen situations but we are not fundamentally dealing with the design discourse in relation to the post COVID city. >> Two questions. What is the name of your latest book? And also, what do you think of the future of vertical farming as a possible solution to feeding people in heavily urbanized areas? >>MATTHEW: Right. My book is called Natura Urbana: Ecological Constellations in Urban Space. It is from MIT press. You mentioned vertical farming. Could you clarify what you mean by that? >> You are using perhaps former tall buildings and sky scrapers to grow tall. You can grow role after row of greens that can be easily harvested and fed to the people. You have water that trickled down and is highly mechanized way of growing fresh greens. >>MATTHEW: In principle, it sounds interesting. I think one of my worries is that sometimes these approaches to urban greening rely on generic ecologies. In a different context, they can present a problem. An example that caught my attention was an award-winning tower block in Milan which had vertical greening, as it were. It was across the building. When the same design was used in China, the same structure became a breeding ground for dengue-carrying mosquitoes and these luxury apartments could not be sold. There was a tension between, what I refer to earlier, the social ecological specificities of a local context. I think what you're suggesting is great but I would look carefully at this question of generic ecologies and what kind of agricultural practices would work and would also not pose an epidemiological threat in a different context. >>NIDA: Thank you. I think someone had their hand up? >> I had a question. Sometimes we need media to intervene to raise some issues to make the government aware that we have some problems in a region. But how do you think it is appropriate for the media to report an issue in a region without stigmatizing the region? >>MATTHEW: Sure. If you are talking about media or media escapes, this partly relates to the question of journalism. Science Journalism in particular. We need more informed journalists who are informed and excellent writers. One of the big challenges in relation to COVID-19, but many other social environmental and health challenges is to have people who are able to understand and communicate effectively. As academics, we try, in a limited way, to achieve that but fundamentally we are not trained journalists. Maybe we would like to be in a different life. But we need people out there who really know how to get specific ideas across. Sometimes, this relates back to the speed question earlier. Sometimes there are ways of advancing a complex idea in small parts or using different modes of communication. Sometimes documentary films can be very powerful in terms of conveying very complex ideas effectively. I should maybe say affectively as well. An audience can be drawn in. I think you pose an interesting question. I don't know if anyone in this class is thinking about going into environmental journalism of some kind. If you are, good luck. I think we need you to do that kind of work. >>NIDA: I think we are right at time so unless someone has a quick question, we will try to wrap up. Thank you, Matthew. This was fantastic. I will stop the recording now. I think everyone else for being here and for joining us. Matthew, thank you for sharing and helping us think more broadly about both these relationships between the global and these other geographies that we often don't think about as well as the other frameworks where those knowledges emerge from and how they can shape those global understandings Thank you, so much. I will let you be on your way. And everyone else as well. Thank you. Maybe I will ask the students from my class to stick around for a few more minutes. But please join me in thanking Matthew. >>MATTHEW: Thank you, for having me.