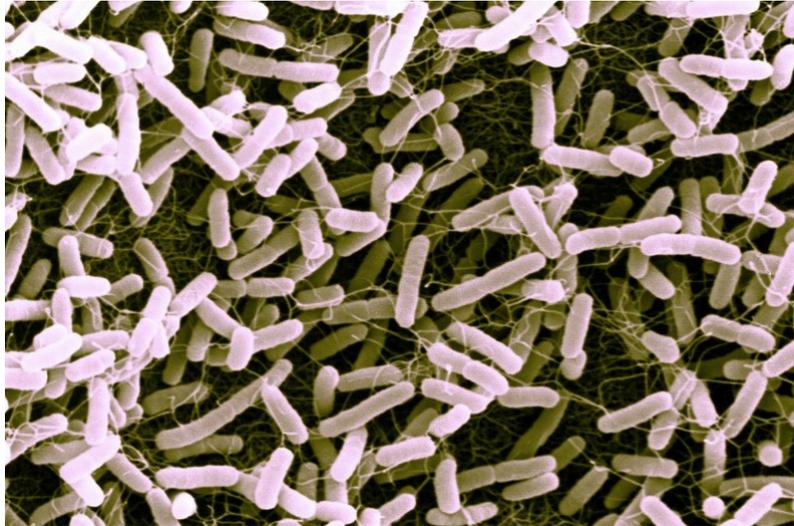


Call for Papers

7-9 July 2016

Making Microbes Complex: Parasites, Epidemics and the Intellectual Origins of Disease Ecology.



School of History, Queen Mary University of London

Posing the question in 1998 ‘where did the modern, ecological understanding of infectious disease come from?’, J. Andrew Mendelsohn argued that it was hard to see how ‘the fledgling ideas and methods of upstart population ecology, or the premises of parasitology could have conquered bacteriology’. Instead he suggested it was the challenge of frightening disease outbreaks after World War I, and the 1918-1920 influenza pandemic in particular, that compelled bacteriological epidemiology to become more “complex”.

By contrast, tracing the ‘ecological visions’ of medical researchers such as Frank Macfarlane Burnet, René Dubos and Frank Fenner, Warwick Anderson has suggested the turn to ecology was spurred by insights from tropical medicine and animal ecology and medical scientists’ encounters with parasitical and viral diseases in “settler societies” such as Australia. Other scholars, meanwhile, have argued that these ecological and biological perspectives were already present in bacteriological epidemiology at the turn of the 19th century and found increasing expression in the language of host-parasite relationships and the recourse of medical and veterinary researchers in the interwar period to ideas of “healthy carriers”, “latent infections” and “equilibrium states”.

Drawing on recent scholarship on the intellectual origins of modern ideas of disease ecology, this two-day workshop at QMUL on **7-9 July 2016**, will bring together prominent scholars in the medical humanities and allied sciences to present a series of papers re-interrogating Mendelsohn’s question. In particular, we aim to examine the works of forgotten medical researchers from the golden age of bacteriology and their interactions with ecological thinkers from other disciplines and locales, such as the Soviet Union, Africa and Southeast Asia, with a view to reassessing the trajectory of these ideas

within medical microbiology and their reception within public health more generally. In so doing, we aim to bring into focus the neglected contributions of medical microbiologists who advanced a more dynamic view of health and disease in the early and middle decades of the 20th century, while opening up space for interdisciplinary dialogues between scholars in medical and veterinary history, environmental history, ecology, biology and the history and philosophy of the life sciences.

We also hope the conference will illuminate current scientific debates around antibiotic resistance, EIDs and theories about the genesis of epidemics. Indeed, the workshop is predicated on the belief that an historical inquiry into the origins of modern ideas of disease ecology should illuminate the way that science and policy first interacted in this context and provide a more comprehensive understanding of why it is that the modern practices of disease control and global health are crafted in the way they are. We welcome proposals for papers that address one or more of the following questions:

- The modern scientific notion of ‘emerging infectious diseases’ (EIDs) rests on the idea that microbial pathogens reside in ecological niches in equilibrium states and that it is the disturbance of these harmonious natural environments that trigger epidemics. But where did this modern, bio-ecological understanding of infectious disease come from and who were the medical researchers and scientific networks responsible for the integration of these perspectives into medical microbiology?
- To what extent were such biological and ecological perspectives already present in turn-of-the-century bacteriology as opposed to being later imports from other disciplines and scientific fields? Has the dominance of germ theory and the chemotherapeutic paradigm (“one disease, one cure”) obscured these Pasteurian currents within medical microbiology?
- What role did tropical medicine and colonial science play in the uptake of ideas about host-parasite interactions by bacteriologists and the integration of such bio-ecological perspectives into medical research?
- Ecological concepts permeate current ideas about disease emergence and notions of epidemic causation, but to what extent are ecological ideas and molecular and genetic perspectives truly integrated into contemporary infectious disease research?
- What does ‘disease ecology’ refer to and what were the philosophical, scientific, and cultural influences behind the ecological vision that progressively emerged during the 20th century?
- What can the history of disease ecology tell us about the history of global health, and how can the history of science and medicine shed new light on the causes of epidemics and pandemics?
- What role did transnational scientific networks, practices, and concepts play in the propagation and circulation of ecological ideas and who were the scientists who participated in these networks?
- Can such ecological perspectives be traced to a particular thinker, locale or scientific domain, or are they better characterized as polycentric?

Confirmed speakers include Warwick Anderson, Christoph Gradmann, Susan D. Jones, Andrew Mendelsohn, Anne-Marie Moulin, Betty Smocovitis and Nils Stenseth. The deadline for submission of 400 word abstracts is **1 February 2016**. Please include a brief biography.

Dr Mark Honigsbaum
Wellcome Research Fellow
Queen Mary University of London
mark.honigsbaum@qmul.ac.uk

Dr Pierre-Olivier Méthot
Professeur Adjoint.
Université Laval, Quebec
p.olivier.methot@gmail.com