



URBAN STUDIES JOURNAL

Call for Papers

Call for Papers

Special Issue of Urban Studies

on

URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Editors

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Introduction

On December 31, 2019, Chinese health officials informed the World Health Organization (WHO) about a new coronavirus disease first reported in Wuhan, China. A month later, as China confirmed about 10,000 cases and more than 200 deaths, the virus spread globally and WHO declared a global public health emergency. Three months later, COVID-19 has now been reported on every continent except Antarctica. By the end of April 2020, the total number of cases worldwide surpassed 3.12 million and the death toll surpassed 217,000.

Across the world, governments have issued travel advisories, “shelter-in-place”, “stay-at-home” mandates, and even quarantine orders in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19. In the short-term, the pandemic has changed the way we live, work and travel, and, longer-term, will change social attitudes concerning surveillance, as well as patterns of food provisioning, employment laws and health regulations. The impacts of this pandemic for cities and urban communities are likely to be long lasting and far-reaching.

Urban Studies Journal is calling for paper submissions for a special issue that theoretically and/or empirically examine COVID-19 and other pandemics as urban public health emergencies. The special issue will compile a series of contributions which will improve our understanding of the new and emerging relationships between urbanization and infectious disease. The five broad themes outlined below have been identified as framing topics of interest although other substantive urban issues will be considered.

Topic Themes

- **Urban infrastructure development:** the connections between accelerated urbanization, transportation, compactness and population density have led to quicker transmission of

disease in urban contexts. But not all cities are affected the same and the importance of factors such as density can depend on local context. Certain key infrastructure facilities such as airports and hospitals have been the focus of much attention, but it has become apparent that care and nursing homes, prisons, stadia and public venues and open spaces can also be important sites of infection. What are the impacts of urban infrastructure on the spread and control of infectious diseases and how can these be mitigated in the future?

- **Smart city and big data applications:** an emerging theme in the current pandemic is the potential roles smart city applications and big data could have in helping to control the spread of the disease through the identification of infected people and near-live monitoring and contact tracing. South Korea has been used as an example of best practice and it has been suggested that emerging digital infrastructure may become the sanitation of our time. But what are the technical, governance, ethical and privacy issues that need to be addressed if this is to be the case and how will this change urban life?
- **Population change and mobility:** infectious disease is understood to be articulated through global cities both in relation to both its transmission and health responses. In their early stages, global outbreaks of infectious diseases been associated with rural-urban migration (e.g. SARS, Ebola), whereas later stage transmission has been linked to city and regional connectivity and the space of flows that crosses urban regions and continents, and this has been particularly the case with COVID-19. A key intervention to control the spread of infectious diseases has been to curtail urban in-migration and movement, but this has had a huge impact on urban productivity. If future pandemics are to be prevented what long-term changes are needed in relation to population movement, mass transportation and urban mobility?
- **Urban governance and civil society:** the relationships between the governance of urban areas and the control of infectious disease are not new but COVID-19 has exposed both the shortcomings and potential opportunities of governance at different levels and responses by civil society. Although a pandemic may be global, local responses will differ and may be driven by factors that are related to future economic outcomes, as well as differences in the quality of local institutions, such as healthcare, and the extent that local governments work, or do not work, with local community groups and third sector organisations in their responses. In recent years, many local governments and regional/state authorities - the front line of defence in public health emergencies – have been starved of funding due to a policy of austerity. Public authorities and health care systems have almost everywhere been caught short-handed by COVID-19. Emergency disaster measures introduced to control transmission could have long-term impacts on society if these measures become normalised, or even made permanent (e.g. increased surveillance). What lessons need to be learnt to ensure a better response to future pandemics and what are the barriers to achieving these responses? In what ways will the pandemic result in the reshaping of the boundaries of state/civil life?
- **Social and spatial inequalities:** pandemics tend to reflect and reinforce existing inequalities and COVID-19 exhibits all the characteristics of a class, gendered, and racialized pandemic. The reasons for these inequalities are myriad and concerns factors such as the ability of individuals to self-isolate, enact social distancing measures and to work from home; it reflects how the composition of the workforce in front line occupations is divided on gendered class



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and race lines; it is related to characteristics of poverty such as the likelihood of having a pre-existing health condition or living in overcrowded multi-family, multi-generational households; and it is exacerbated by the inter-relationships between poverty, race, and class and spatial factors such as urban density, morphology and configuration. If COVID-19 is exposing the socio-spatial fragmentation of cities, how can these divides be healed so that the impacts of pandemic are not most severe on those least able cope?

Instructions

Urban Studies encourages researchers to respond to this call through existing paper submission mechanisms at the Journal as soon as possible if you have a full-length paper ready for submission. In addition, we encourage researchers who are still in the process of data collection, analysis, and/or writing to submit an abstract of 500 words outlining your research by **Friday 3 July 2020** or earlier to Scott Orford at orfords@cardiff.ac.uk. Abstracts will be reviewed on a rolling basis and those selected for advancement to a full manuscript invitation will be informed by **Friday 17 July 2020** or earlier. Submission of the full manuscript will be by **Friday 30 October 2020** or earlier. All invited manuscripts will be peer-reviewed following the standard USJ guidelines.

Note that we strongly encourage authors to submit abstracts and papers before the suggested deadlines. We will process abstract and paper submissions as and when received. All submissions to this call will be prioritized during the internal screening and external review processes at the Journal to facilitate rapid response. In addition, unlike standard special issues that are published as a group when they are ready, the Journal is committed to the timely publication of the accepted papers under this call. The Journal will curate the accepted papers as an online collection and publish them individually in hardcopy as and when they are ready.

The Journal welcome all three types of submissions in response to this call, including standard research articles of between 4,000 and 8,500 words; debates papers of between 8,000 and 10,000 words; and critical commentaries of between 4,000 and 6,000 words. For more information about these submission types, please visit <https://www.urbanstudiesonline.com/journal/#submission-types>.