



May 16th 2023 | 6.30 pm | HSA

Overcoming antibiosis: rethinking biopolitics after the antibiotic era

Discussion with Dr. Christian Haddad (Universität Wien)

Modern societies are built upon a decidedly antibiotic biopolitics. Empirically, the “war against microbes” and the multiple ways of controlling, disciplining and regulating microbial populations within and outside of bodies and populations are mainstays of modern societies. But also conceptually, biopolitics is inherently antibiotic. Foucault’s proposition of biopolitics – making life, letting die – has always-already rested upon antibiosis as a key principle: an antagonistic relation between organisms, in which one has to kill the other in order to live and thrive.

The growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) – i.e., the fact that bacteria develop resistance against the drugs that are used to treat the infections they cause – calls for a break with the “biomedical arms race” model of pharmaceutical research and innovation. This model propels the idea of a ceaseless war between humans and microbes that has been waged (quite successfully for some time) by humans by technological means: developing ever-more “super-drugs” effective against an ever-growing population of multi-drug resistant “superbugs”.

But despite the insight in the urgency of AMR as a global (health) crisis, and despite the recognition that the antibiotic pharmaceutical market is broken and utterly inapt to provide sustainable solutions for AMR, there are hardly any visions of how to exit and exnovate from the biomedical arms race model of antibiotic control. In this talk, I will draw on classic and new materialist social theories to sketch the contours of what could be termed a “eu-biotic politics” – an alternative to biopolitics, as a means to re-imagine a livable, sustainable and viable future after antibiotic high modernism.

Dr. Christian Haddad is a researcher at the [Department for Science & Technology Studies](#) at the University of Vienna and a visiting research fellow at the Center for Global Health Policy at the University of Sussex.

Haddad's main research interests are in biopolitics of pharmaceutical innovation. His doctoral research explored 'post-pharmaceutical health' as the primary value form of regenerative biomedicine. His current work focuses on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the concomitant 'global antibiotics crisis' as a keyhole to make sense of changing regimes of health, growth, and security deeply rooted in pharmaceuticals.



The discussion will be held hybrid. Please register via e-mail to miriam.schwaiger@univie.ac.at