

Recent dissertations on health, culture and society

This section informs you about PhD dissertations in the broad field of medical anthropology, recently defended at European universities. If you want to be included in this section, contact Erica van der Sijpt: e.vanderSijpt@uva.nl.

Nora Engel

Tuberculosis in India: A case of innovation and control (287 pp.)

Defended at 20-04-2011
Maastricht University, the Netherlands

Summary – India is the country with the highest number of tuberculosis patients. This thesis draws on innovation studies and science and technology studies to examine innovation dynamics in organizational, strategic, technological and service delivery aspects of public tuberculosis control in India. The results reveal that innovation for TB control is not a linear process of improvement, but rather a complicated, continuous undertaking across many worlds, as different actors have different perspectives and practices. Furthermore, control practices are ubiquitous and at the forefront of all TB-related activities. They are geared at the disease, healthcare providers, bacteria, data, processes of treatment and diagnosis, public opinion, etcetera. Actors are engaged in various control practices through supervision of healthcare providers, patients or data; through technologies such as drugs or diagnostics; through standardisation of guidelines; or through redefinition of problems. The results reveal that the dynamics of innovation and control in coping with tuberculosis are a complex interplay of mutual influence and requirement. This is often disregarded by actors in the field. The mechanism that would need to be fostered to strengthen innovation capacities are situated assessments of the relation between different practices of innovation and control. The thesis provides suggestions how this could be done.

Full-text is not available online.

A copy of the dissertation can be obtained when the book will be published by Orient Blackswan in 2013.

Janneke Peelen

Between birth and death. Rituals of pregnancy loss in the Netherlands (219 pp.)

Defended at 20-01-2012

Radboud University, the Netherlands

Summary – This thesis discusses contemporary rituals of pregnancy loss in the Netherlands. It stresses how bereaved parents wittingly create and use rituals to signify their grieving experiences and to claim certain meanings of pregnancy loss versus their social surroundings. Starting at the end of the 1960s and proliferating in the 1990s, the possibilities have increased to openly express emotions after a pregnancy loss and to share memories of a prematurely dead baby. The thesis unravels the background of this development. The implications of the increased possibilities and social consent for farewell and commemorative rituals for deceased babies for the grieving experiences of parents are thoroughly discussed.

There still is a field of tension between the experiences of parents and general perspectives on and reactions to pregnancy loss. Moreover, despite many changes pregnancy loss remains an exceptional juxtaposition of birth and death. The author argues that the significance of the rituals is embodied in these ambiguities. Pregnancy loss poses a persistent problem: how to create an existence for a child who is physically non-existent. Rituals provide tools to seek and find solutions for this problem. When creating and performing these rituals, parents question the taken-for-granted subjects of child, parenthood and the beginnings and endings of human existence.

Full-text is not available online.

A copy of the dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an email to Janneke Peelen (jpeelen@gmail.com)

Susann Huschke

Kranksein in der Illegalität. Eine medizinethnologische Studie über undokumentierte LateinamerikanerInnen in Berlin (Illness and illegality: Undocumented Latin American migrants in Berlin. A medical anthropological study) (384 pp.)

Defended at 8-05-2012

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Summary – Despite national and international laws, undocumented migrants *de facto* do not have access to regular health care in Germany; not even emergency treatment is provided in every case. This dissertation analyzes the illness experiences and health-seeking strategies of undocumented Latin American labor migrants in Berlin as shaped by these structural constraints. The study is based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork (2008-2010), includ-

ing interviews and informal conversations with approximately 35 Latin American migrants, participant observation in people's homes, doctor's and lawyer's offices, churches, and at cultural events, as well as 15 semi-structured interviews with hospital staff. Furthermore, the author is a member of a Berlin-based political grassroots organization that engages in lobbying work and provides healthcare for undocumented/uninsured migrants.

Based on this methodology, the study critically examines the current NGO-based healthcare provision and offers concrete suggestions how healthcare for undocumented migrants in Germany could be improved. In this study, illness is not reduced to the physical level. Rather, social, emotional, spiritual, legal, economic, and cultural aspects of the individual's experience of suffering and healing are included in the analysis. Fundamentally, the exclusion and criminalization of migrants from the global South in Germany is viewed as historically produced political and social constructs, supported by hegemonic conceptualizations of (not-)belonging.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation will be published by *Transcript Verlag* (Bielefeld, Germany) in Spring 2013 and can be ordered directly through the publisher or via www.amazon.de for the prize of approximately 38 Euros.

Imtiaz Shaikh

Young men in a colourful city: Masculinity, young men's sexual practices, and HIV/AIDS in Dhaka, Bangladesh (236 pp.)

Defended at 27-06-2012

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Summary – The intention of this study is to understand HIV/AIDS from a holistic perspective. It discusses the construction of hegemonic masculinity and its connection with sexuality; young men's sexual practices and HIV/AIDS responses; and vulnerability of young people (irrespective of sex) resulting from the intersections of hegemonic masculinity, HIV/AIDS responses, and sexuality. While there is an incorrect understanding of HIV/AIDS amongst individuals in Dhaka, young men continue to embody hegemonic masculinity by expressing virility while practicing unsafe sex. The author argues that when the larger structures such as policy and programmatic responses fail to acknowledge such misconceptions and ignore the social reality and societal changes in relation to gender and sexuality, they will fail to create a positive environment for the individual to listen and learn new things that might shake age-old perceptions regarding the enactment of masculinity through sexual practices. Yet, referring to the 'subjective constructions' of the young men who manage to escape hegemonic masculinity, the author concludes that there *are* possibilities for change in men's hegemonic masculine construction and for reducing the vulnerability of young people to HIV/AIDS.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation (5 €) can be ordered by sending an email to Nicole Schulp (N.Schulp@uva.nl).

Aschale Siyoum

Broken promises: food security interventions and rural livelihoods in Ethiopia (160 pp.)

Defended at 17-09-2012

Wageningen University, the Netherlands

Summary – This thesis deals with the impact of food security interventions implemented by the Ethiopian government and its development partners on the lives and livelihoods of chronically food insecure households in Ebinat district of Ethiopia's Amhara region. It captures the experiences, views and perceptions of households and analyses how people's livelihoods are affected by chronic situations of food insecurity and how current food security interventions, in particular the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and Other Food Security Programmes (OFSP), impact on households' food security situations and livelihoods.

The author uses the livelihoods concept to understand the impact of the government's Food Security interventions on the lives and livelihoods of rural households. A livelihood is understood as comprising a set of assets, activities and the access to these assets and activities that determine an individual or household means of making a living. Moreover, the author uses the Food Availability Decline, Food Entitlement Decline and Response failure approaches to understand the food insecurity situations of the case study households. These approaches provide a full understanding of why food insecurity is still a key problem despite a decades long quest to address issues of food insecurity in the country.

Full-text will be available online from September 2013 onwards.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an email to Aschale Siyoum (aschaled@yahoo.com).