Call for publications for a special issue of Human Remains and Violence 'Burial and the politics of dead bodies in pandemic times'

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Call for Contributions for a special issue of Human Remains and Violence

Burial and the politics of dead bodies in pandemic times

Guest editors:
Finn Stepputat (Danish Institute for International Studies),
Gaëlle Clavandier (Saint Etienne Jean Monnet University) and
Graham Denyer Willis (Cambridge University)

Epidemics tend to reveal the state’s management and rationalisation of public health. Crucially, too, acute mortality also reveals the what-and-whereabouts of dead bodies, and their ordering. Amidst an exceptional moment, the COVID19 pandemic has brought with it acute discussions and disturbing images of queues of people waiting to receive urns with the remains of their loved ones in Wuhan, of military trucks bringing away coffins in Bergamo, and of temporary mass burials at the potter’s field on Hart Island in New York City. Here, and in myriad places, the pace of dead bodies has outstripped the capacity of existing institutions and spaces with assumed responsibility for the proper treatment and/or disposal of dead bodies. The scale of the management of death has been reordered in dramatic ways, such that in São Paulo, Brazil, drones have become important to visualise mass burial in cemeteries from a different height.

Epidemics and the shocking imagery and discussion that surrounds them are by no means new, nor unaddressed by scholars and scholar-practitioners. However, the current and ongoing crisis carries with it a conspicuous set of conditions, and with them, a cohort of global scholars caught up in varied experiences and scales of...
uncertainty with death and illness.

With three guest editors, Human Remains and Violence seeks to gather scholarly manuscripts, critical, empirically based reflections and/or primary research reports from scholars around the world for a Special Issue that would begin to address questions about the varied management of dead bodies, globally, in the wake of COVID19. Potential contributions and collaborations might attend to the following kinds of inquiry:

1) To document patterns in the shifting treatment of dead bodies, including how under-resourced and/or unprepared state institutions attend to care; what kinds of conflicts have developed over the fate of dead bodies; how various institutions, authorities and publics have engaged in actions or discussions of (proper) disposal of the dead;

2) To identify changes and continuities in relation to former situations of ‘surplus death’ – disease related or otherwise – to see how this reflects or announces larger changes in formations of authority, power, and norms around the world. Such changes might also address the spatiality and materiality of death, burial and its governance by state or non-state organisations;

3) What kind of analytical lenses can be used for understanding continuities and changes in relation to similar past epidemics, at different scales? To reassess existing frameworks or to sketch out novel analytical tools and theories for understanding practices and discourses surrounding dead bodies in times of surplus death.

4) What does the (mis)management and irrationalisation of human remains in the current moment reveal about everyday political economy, capitalism and burial, its fractures or trajectories?

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**Deadlines:**

- July 1, 2020: Submission of abstract (1-2 pages) to fst@diis.dk
- August 1: Notification of acceptance
October 15, 2020: Submission of full paper, max. 8,000 words (all included) and beginning of the double-blind peer-reviewing process.
Autumn 2021: Publication

Abstracts are accepted in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian.

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