

International Symposium
Biomedical Technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa:
Technology Transfer, Transnational Networks and Appropriation of Practices

24-25 March, 2014

Lisbon, Portugal

at

Center for African and Brazilian Studies
Higher School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Lisbon

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Globalization and development in the field of medicine and health in African contexts are closely bound up with the distribution, use and embedding of biomedical technologies, like ultrasound machines, amniocentesis, radiation and chemotherapy, technologies for assisted reproduction or for organ transplantation, telemedicine, CT scans, X-ray and blood testing equipment (e.g. for HIV/AIDS), to name but a few. These technologies are disseminated by different actors (such as institutions, associations, private corporations and individuals) within certain global power geometries and linked (health) policies and in a context of growing middle and higher income classes in sub-Saharan Africa - aspects influencing how these technologies are locally applied. These travelling technologies often encompass the transfer of artifacts and things, specific knowledge and skills, treatment and counseling practices into various health domains. Next to affecting clinical organization and practices, biomedical technologies potentially have an enormous impact on patients' and users' understandings and experiences, as well as the meanings they attach to health, illness and care. In addition, technologies may affect the way patients relate and interact with each other, with healthcare providers, their relatives or policy makers. Conversely, locally specific configurations of socio-cultural, economic, historical and health policy aspects interact and influence form and praxis around these technologies in subtle or more obvious ways. Providers and users are creative in adopting technologies to local needs or re-organizing associated issues, like hygiene in operation theatres or criteria for the use of ultrasound machines. Not to forget, new (bio)socialities and practices around biomedical technologies may emerge, like self-support groups and social movements. So far, the above raised topics, dynamics and processes around the transfer and use of technologies to sub-Saharan Africa are still a rather under researched area.

The aim of this symposium

This international symposium wants to make a substantial contribution to further explore the issues surrounding the transfer and use of biomedical technologies in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, we want to bring together scholars providing historical and ethnographic insights into the various ways in which the transfer and use of different technologies in arenas of health and biomedicine in Sub-Saharan Africa take shape. We aim to exchange our research results with other scholars interested in similar topics in Sub-Saharan Africa. We intend to explore various phases of the transfer and use of different biomedical technologies, their characteristics and their impact on health related practices, understandings and relationships, from a variety of angles, empirical and theoretical. In particular we are interested in papers providing insight in:

- different ways in which biomedical technologies and associated knowledge and skills travel: how these formats specifically impact on clinical practices and the organization of treatment and care arrangements, counseling practices and ethical procedures

- the mobility of health staff and patients within and to sub-Saharan Africa; existing and emerging transnational networks, resulting from and affecting the transfer and use of biomedical technologies (North-South, South-South, and South-North movements)
- how locally specific aspects (in socio-cultural, economic, religious, historical and political terms) shape implementation and praxis of those technologies; how they influence the implementation, form and praxis of and around biomedical technologies
- how different logics and regimens of knowledge and practice interact when biomedical technologies travel and become embedded in new contexts; resulting kinds of appropriations, knowledge and forms of relations
- creative adoptions by patients and users of biomedical technologies; how they make sense of biomedical technologies; resulting appropriations, production of knowledge and new forms of relations
- which forms of organizational and entrepreneurial options, of training and educational formats emerge through the use and implementation of biomedical technologies within sub-Saharan Africa; accompanying networks and connections on transnational levels; their impacts on biomedical practices and health arenas in sub-Saharan Africa

This list is not exhaustive; we also appreciate contributions to further linked topics or more theoretical oriented papers on issues around the transfer of biomedical technologies.

Format of the symposium

Depending on the abstracts accepted, **we will group the papers** along thematically and theoretical lines **into 3-5 panels**. **Cristiana Bastos** and **Marcia Inhorn** will give keynote lectures and handle the final wrap up of the panels and discussions.

How to apply

Scholars and researchers from various disciplines (anthropology, sociology, African Studies, History) are invited to send **abstracts (max. 300 words)** to **Inês Faría** inesdffaria@gmail.com and **Giulia Cavallo** giulia.c@hotmail.com **before October 30, 2013**. Acceptance of abstracts will be **notified by November 20, 2013**. Participation in the international symposium will be **cost free**, but no travel funds are available.

The organizers

This international symposium is organized by the research team of the project ***Dynamics and differences of Assisted Reproduction in Sub-Saharan Africa: Technology transfer, transnational networks and appropriation of practices*** funded by the *Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia)* and hosted by the *Centre for African and Brazilian Studies (CEAB)* at the *School for Social and Political Sciences (ISCSP)* at the *University of Lisbon*. (See also <http://ssaart.wordpress.com>). The research team consists of:

Viola Hörbst, head of the research group – CEAB-ISCSP, University of Lisbon; Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen

Trudie Gerrits, researcher - Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam

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Cristiana Bastos, consultant – Instituto de Ciências Sociais, University of Lisbon

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