



Ecologies of Fear

Spatial Politics and Imaginaries
of Crisis and Danger

A »Narcotic City« conference in the FEAR+ series (hybrid event)
2–4 September 2021, Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut (KWI) Essen

THEME

What happens when we attribute anxiety to specific environments? With the global spread of a novel virus, the question of how fear factors into the production of public and private spaces has gained new urgency – yet it did not take the ongoing pandemic to bring this topic to the surface. Such emotional geographies have been generated throughout history, and distinctive ecologies of fear have already emerged in the early twenty-first century.

Spatial imaginaries of crisis and danger are inextricable from the politics of territory. In the nineteenth century, the fear of unruly living quarters led to the implementation of urban infrastructures such as sewers and public lighting. In the twentieth century, when the notion of “spaces of fear” emerged in Western public planning, some embraced this category as a way to “design out crime” while others saw it as a vehicle of spatial essentialism and the concealment of power relations. These isolated examples highlight how territorializations of danger play into public debates, raising the question of whose fears and anxieties are acknowledged, and whose are ignored.

While the nature of actual threats differs dramatically based on position and perspective, factors of uncertainty proliferate for all. Out in the world, with dangers often trumped-up for the political purposes, fear of the other feeds on differences. At the same time, many of the most persistent anxieties arise in the home, among ourselves. Ecologies of fear manifest on different scales, from elevators and underpasses to cities and entire regions. Given the facts of climate crisis and specters of economic collapse, as well as deepening political divides, such ecologies increasingly encompass the planet as a whole.

Inviting perspectives from the humanities and social sciences, this conference seeks to explore how spaces and anxieties become entangled, and how these entanglements are represented and addressed. By focusing on historical as well as contemporary dynamics of various dangerous spaces – real, imagined, projected – we aim to zero in on how it is that ecologies of fear emerge, and where it is that we are afraid.

THURSDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2021 (all times CET)

1:30–2:00 p.m.

Check-in at KWI

2:00 p.m.

Welcome and introduction

Sage Anderson and Stefan Höhne (KWI Essen)

2:30–4:00 p.m.

Nina Schuster (TU Dortmund)

Queer Perspectives on Urban Fearscales and Danger

Maria Sulimma (University of Duisburg-Essen)

Where is Everybody?

The Agoraphobic Imagination of Gentrification in Times of COVID-19

Moderation: *Hanna Engelmeier (KWI Essen)*

6:00 p.m.

Matthias Gründig (Folkwang University)

Angst + Sichtbarkeit. Präsenz in der Absenz im Kino

Ein Abend in der CineScience-Reihe "Angst + Film" (in German)

Moderation: *Anja Schürmann (KWI Essen)*

Filmstudio Glückauf, Rüttenscheider Straße 2, 45128 Essen

FRIDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2021

10:00–11:30 a.m.

Emily Bereskin (Brandenburg University of Technology)

The Preservation of Fear and the Performance of Futuring in Protracted Ethnic Conflict: A Case Study of the "Occupied Municipalities" of Cyprus

Marian Burchardt (Leipzig University)

Policing Misfortune: Spiritual Insecurity, Law and Harm in Cape Town's Urban Fringes

Moderation: *Britta Acksel (KWI Essen)*

FRIDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2021

11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne) and Jens Gurr (University of Duisburg-Essen)
Changing Fearscales in Climate Change Fiction

Julia Hoydis (University of Graz)

Risk, Borders, and Dangerous Others: Fears of (Spatial) Transgression in British Fiction

Moderation: *Sage Anderson (KWI Essen)*

1:15–2:30 p.m.

Lunch boxes at KWI

2:30–4:00 p.m.

Lena Mattheis (University of Duisburg-Essen)

Queer Pandemic Fear

Sage Anderson (KWI Essen)

A Break from the News?: NYT Decameron Project and Short Fiction in Times of Fear

Moderation: *Stefan Höhne (KWI Essen)*

4:30–6:00 p.m.

Boris Michel (MLU Halle-Wittenberg) and Jan Winkler (FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg)

The Reason of Fear: Political Emotions and Experiential Subjectivations in Climate Activism

Boris Vormann (Bard College Berlin)

The Apocalypse is a Downer: Why Democracy Needs Infinite Space

Moderation: *Ricarda Menn (KWI Essen)*

7:00 p.m.

Tobias Zielony: "The Fall"

Exhibition visit (registration required), Museum Folkwang,
guided by *Thomas Seelig*

SATURDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2021

10:00–11:30 a.m.

Gemma Blok (Open University of the Netherlands)

Taking a “Kriminal-Safari” to Amsterdam: The Open Drug Scene as Site for Dark Tourism in the 1980s

Frederieke Westerheide (MLU Halle-Wittenberg)

Mapping and Concealing the “Hotspots”: Governing Drugs and Tourism in Contested Urban Environments

Moderation: *Thomas Bürk (IB Hochschule Berlin)*

11:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Moritz Rinn (University of Duisburg-Essen)

Revanchism Revisited? Urban Development, Policing, and Everyday Racism in the “Dangerous Neighborhood” of Essen-Altendorf

12:30–2:00 p.m.

Individual lunch options

2:00–3:30 p.m.

Guided visits to Essen-Altendorf in small groups (registration required)
led by *Julian Lennartz, Lena Wiese, and Till Hartwig (KWI Essen)*

3:30–4:30 p.m.

Final discussion and farewell (in Essen-Altendorf)

ORGANISATION

The conference will take place in a hybrid format, allowing for digital participation via Zoom as well as physical presence in the open-air conference venue in the courtyard of the KWI (Goethestr. 31, Essen), where hygienic protocols and social distancing measures will be carefully implemented.

The on-site events at the conference include a CineScience event on Fear and (In)visibility by Matthias Gründig (Folkwang University), a visit to the exhibition "The Fall" by Tobias Zielony at Museum Folkwang, as well as guided walks through Essen-Altendorf, a local neighborhood stigmatized as crime-ridden and dangerous.

PARTICIPATION

Participation online via ZOOM. Please register via emily.beyer@kwi-nrw.de until September 1st, 2021.

ORGANISERS

An event by the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut (KWI), *Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, Essen* in cooperation with the HERA research *project Governing the Narcotic City*

CONTACT

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