



ANGST⁺
FEAR⁺



KULTURWISSENSCHAFTLICHES
INSTITUT ESSEN

FORSCHUNGSKOLLEG DER
UNIVERSITÄTSALLIANZ RUHR

PRESS RELEASE

Essen, 18.08.2021

Ecologies of Fear: Spatial Politics and Imaginaries of Crisis and Danger A "Narcotic City" conference in the FEAR+ series

2–4 September 2021

Hybrid event

ZOOM & Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities Essen (KWI), Gartensaal
Goethestraße 31, 45128 Essen

PLEASE NOTE

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, where hygienic protocols and social distancing measures will be carefully implemented.

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

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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.

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.

PROGRAMME

Download the detailed conference programme [here](#).

PARTICIPATION

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

ORGANISATION

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

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FURTHER INFORMATION

[Event on the KWI website](#)

About the “ANGST+ / FEAR+ “event series:

Fear: between instinctive panic reaction, threatening basic emotion, pathologically defined disorder, innovation drive or longed-for state of pleasant shivering. This wide spectrum of individual and social dimensions offers ample reason to explore fear from a cultural studies perspective through a series of formats during the summer and winter semester of 2021.

We look forward to stimulating diverse contributions to our KWI blog, the conference “Ecologies of Fear”, the “CineScience” series in cooperation with the Filmstudio Glückauf Essen (fear + visibility, fear + sound, fear + digitalization), the online seminar “Fear + Exile” in cooperation with the Academy in Exile and an event on fear in art in cooperation with the Museum Folkwang.

We would appreciate the circulation of this press release.

About the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI):

The Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen, Germany, is an interdisciplinary research centre following the tradition of international Institutes for Advanced Study. In its role as an inter-university institution connecting the Ruhr-University Bochum, the Technological University Dortmund and the University of Duisburg-Essen, the institute works together with researchers and scientists from its neighbouring universities as well as other partners from the federal state NRW and places in- and outside of Germany. Within the Ruhr area, the KWI is a place to share and discuss the questions and results of ambitious research with interested parties from the city and the greater region. Currently, work at the KWI focusses on the following areas: “cultural studies of science and science policy making”, “sociology of literature and culture”, “science communication”, and a “teaching lab”. Projects in the established research field “culture of communication”, as well as individual projects, will be continued.

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Please note: If you do not wish to receive any further press releases from the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI), please send a short message to presse@kwi-nrw.de. Many thanks.

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