

Title

Between the seen and the unseen: HIV in Indonesia

Convenors

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Brief description and explanation of the chosen format

Regular double panel containing 6-8 paper presentations. Discussant depending on composition of the panel.

Brief description of panel, max ½ page (in Word format)

In Indonesian political and social life, HIV is both seen and unseen in different ways. Since the first cases were discovered in Indonesia in the 1980s, HIV has come to occupy a prominent role in public life; as a reflection of diminished morality of the nation, as a symbol of the triumph of modern medical science through the implementation of widespread anti-retroviral therapy, and the reflection of mobilisations of human rights premised on access to healthcare. Yet this has regrettably had only a limited effect on expanding forms of knowledge and care for those who live with HIV or care for them. Rather, cultural understandings of HIV and AIDS in Indonesia seem to rest on something of a paradox: an increase in knowledge about HIV, accompanied by increased forms of visibility in the mass media and on social media, has not necessarily resulted in more understanding about the epidemic or the virus. Similarly, global technologies for treating HIV in the form of testing, treatment and viral load testing have had only limited efficacy, as demonstrated by high numbers of people “lost to follow up” (Lazuardi 2019). The HIV epidemic in Indonesia is in these and other ways both seen and unseen. Correspondingly, the impact of this paradox is acutely felt both by people living with HIV and those people and communities that are most affected by the virus. This panel aims to investigate the breadth of meanings given to HIV in Indonesia, in order to forge new conceptual vocabularies which can pursue new visions of social justice, empathy and care.

Recent engagement in the United States has shown how a preoccupation with the visibility of HIV as a white, urban and gay male phenomenon obscures the ongoing impact of the pandemic on gender and sexual minorities (including trans women), people of colour, black and indigenous people in the context of historical legacies of colonial exploitation (Cheng, Juhasz, and Shahani 2020). The understanding of an “undetected” viral load, now common as a measure in the global end of AIDS, relies on visibility at the microscopic level, eschewing community forms of care in favour of pharmaceutical solutions (Persson et al. 2016). Yet although shaped by globalised knowledge, understandings and interpretations of HIV—and their relationship to race, gender, sexuality and class—unfold differently in a post-authoritarian context where a dominant “regime of visibility,” is one in which “the compulsion to see and be seen is continually brought to crisis by the terror of seeing and being seen” (Steadly 2013, 262). In Indonesia, the HIV epidemic has become visible over the past three or so decades coinciding with a post-authoritarian context where “murkiness is itself a structural feature of politics” (Bubandt 2008, 812). The visibility of HIV in Indonesia thus emerges out of distinctive histories, including cultures of gender and sexual visibility and

understanding of health and illness (Hegarty 2018; Thajib 2018; Samuels 2016). The papers on this panel will demonstrate how the experience of HIV specific to Indonesia in its socio-historical context, but also offers critical theoretical insights for the expansion of HIV care globally. We aspire for the panel to be both interdisciplinary and diverse, encompassing a wide range of researchers working in different geographical areas in Indonesia, disciplinary training, and institutional affiliation. To this end, we invite papers which address HIV in Indonesia, across fields of medical anthropology, history, cultural studies, and public health.

We welcome potential contributors to contact us to discuss their proposal and its relevance to the panel.

References

Bubandt, Nils. 2008. "Rumors, Pamphlets, and the Politics of Paranoia in Indonesia." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, no. 3: 789.

Hegarty, Benjamin. 2018. "Under the Lights, Onto the Stage." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5 (3): 355–77. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-6900738>.

Lazuardi, Elan. 2019. "Navigating the Social Dynamics of HIV Care: A Qualitative Study in Urban Indonesia in the Era of Scaled-up Testing and Treatment." University of New South Wales Kirby Institute. <http://handle.unsw.edu.au/1959.4/68979>.

Samuels, Annemarie. 2016. "Seeing AIDS in Aceh: Sexual Moralities and the Politics of (In)Visibility in Post-Reconstruction Times." *Indonesia*, no. 101: 103. <https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.101.0103>.

Steadly, Mary Margaret. 2013. "Transparency and Apparition: Media Ghosts of Post-New Order Indonesia." In *Images That Move*, edited by Patricia Spyer and Mary Margaret Steedly, First edition. School for Advanced Research Advanced Seminar Series. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

Thajib, Ferdiansyah. 2018. "The Making and Breaking of Indonesian Muslim Queer Safe Spaces." *Borderlands* 17 (1): 1–24.

Double session