

The empirical basis of the dissertation

Cut short by Ebola, this project is based on four months of fieldwork carried out during two stays in 2014 and 2015 among peri-urban communities in the vicinity of the capital Monrovia. Ethnographic material was gathered through participant observation, individual (in)formal interviews, informal focus groups, and solicited diaries.

About Theresa Alin Ammann

Theresa Ammann is a security studies scholar and political ethnographer. She gained her BA in Political Science and Art History (Otago University) and MSc in Human Security (AU). She is the first PhD fellow of the Human Security research programme (Department of Anthropology). She is also a co-ordinator of the Gendering in Research Network that brings together gender-research enthusiasts every month.



This research was supported by the Interacting Minds Centre's seed funding.

Time and place

Thursday 16th of November 2017 at 1pm
Aarhus University, Konferencetret, Building 1421, Meeting room 2
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Towards a PostHuman Security Approach:

Exploring Entangled & Changing InSecurity Becomings of Peri-Urban Liberians in the Aftermath of War & Ebola

PhD Dissertation by Theresa Alin Ammann



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The following is a brief summary of the PhD dissertation **Towards a PostHuman Security Approach: Exploring Entangled & Changing InSecurity Becomings of Peri-Urban Liberians in the Aftermath of War & Ebola** by Theresa Ammann, Department of Anthropology (Human Security), Aarhus University.

In line with the recent posthuman turn in Security Studies and International Relations, this dissertation proposes a postHuman Security approach to explore various inSecurity becomings of the 2014-2016 Liberian Ebola outbreak.

The Becoming of the Project

When Ebola hit Liberia in 2014, this project took a radical turn. The three nontraditional security approaches and intended theoretical vantage points—i.e., Feminist, Critical, and Human Security Studies—were inadequate to capture the outbreak's complexities. Humans and nonhumans across all levels were equally involved in the ongoing becoming of (in)security. To arrive at an understanding of (in)security that considers humans and nonhumans on all levels, Ammann turns to posthumanism and more specifically Karen Barad's agential realism.

InSecurity Becomings & The PostHuman Security Approach

In combining the three security approaches and agential realism, Ammann radically redefines (in)security as processes of inSecurity becoming since both insecurity and security are continuously emerging. All matter—human and nonhuman—across time and space is entangled in, affecting, and affected by these processes of inSecurity becoming. Importantly, inSecurity becomings are relational experiences and thus carry ethical responsibilities.

This forms the basis of the postHuman Security approach through which Ammann explores inSecurity becomings of the Ebola outbreak.

Ethnographic Findings

- The Ebola crisis emerged through the entanglement of all matter (i.e., the virus, humans, states, technologies, objects)
- This emergence is influencing across, entangled in, and facilitated by time and space (i.e., historical, current, and future factors on all levels facilitated the spread and continue to be felt)
- Victim- and perpetrator-hood emerge through the intra-actions of all matter (i.e., humans and the virus emerged as “victims” and “perpetrators” of the outbreak)
- Showed processes of inSecurity becoming (i.e., while immense insecurity dominated, pockets of security also emerged)

PostHuman Security's Ethical Agenda

This dissertation concludes that our deeply entangled existence and inSecurity becoming stretches across time and space and is affecting and affected by all matter.

Consequently, such understandings should be part of our ethical considerations in security narratives and the everyday. This opens up to a plethora of future research opportunities.

Facts about the field of study

- Liberia is a West African country with approximately 4.5 million people
- Founded in 1847, Liberia was under the repressive, oligarchical rule of its settlers until 1980
- Following years of violence, Liberia plunged into war from 1989-2003
- Since 2003, peacebuilding efforts have dotted the country
- Yet, peace remains weak and most people feel insecure and unhappy with the status quo