

Health as a Safety Issue. On the Way to National Pandemic Preparedness in Reunified Germany

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Pinning Down the Hypothetical. Pandemic Preparedness since the 1990s – Historical Preconditions of Managing Corona Virus Response (PreCom)

Introduction

Based on the concepts and master plans drawn up by the WHO, Germany has been developing a pandemic plan since the 1990s that accommodates specific national conditions. It is to investigate how pandemic planning and pandemic preparedness, in the sense of preparing for an occurrence of infection, that are embedded in everyday activities were implemented in reunified Germany with its federal state structure. In this context, pandemic planning, civil and disaster management are becoming increasingly interlinked. The project explores on a federal, state, and municipal level, what actors contributed to preparedness and attempted to make plans for the control of a future pandemic, what resources, personnel and healthcare structures the planning was based on, as well as on social conditions and consequences of pandemic plans.

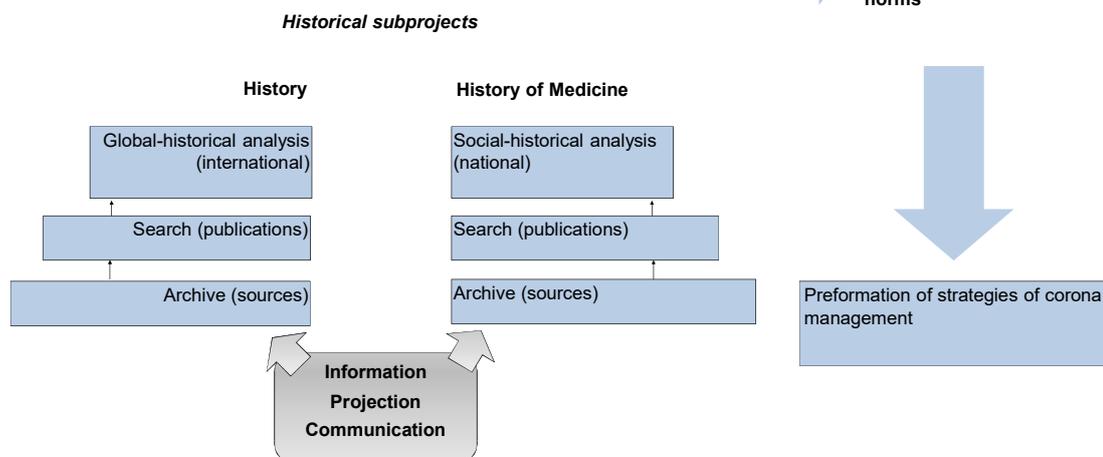
Sources

Actors and communication concerning pandemic plans on a federal and state level will be analyzed from an east-west, north-south perspective, by:

- Archival Sources in the Federal Archives in Koblenz concerning the Robert Koch Institut (RKI), Federal Health Agency, conferences of the ministers responsible for the healthcare sector
- Archival Sources in State Archives on state ministries e.g. in Hannover, Munich, Kiel, and Magdeburg and public health offices as central executing authorities
- Publications, such as the *Epidemiologische Bulletin* (RKI), publications from the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance, scientific studies concerning pandemic plans
- Public organs, such as *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*
- Interviews with selected actors

“Which conditions, structures, processes and decisions have led to the current corona management, and how and in what way?”

Historical analysis of pandemic planning and historicizing values and norms



Research Aims

Pandemic plans are regarded as preventative measures that project a possible future occurrence of infection. They aim at producing security against a presumed „biological catastrophe“ by means of behavior control and sociospatial organization in the present, taking effect in the future, and hence counteracting a „risk future“. The research focuses on the decision-making and pandemic planning process as well as its concretizations during e.g. the avian influenza and processes of adjusting the planning afterwards in Germany as a national example during the 1990s and 2000s.

The approach is threefold:

1. **Information:** Experts developed the concept of *epidemic intelligence* as a key surveillance instrument on the basis of big data. According to what criteria and based on what value-benefit considerations the data was collected and were risks marked? To what extent were categories of difference (e.g. gender, ethnic membership, globalization-related migration experience) reflected on?
2. **Projection:** The national pandemic plan projected the provision of vaccines as the main coping strategy for future influenza pandemics. To what extent was working with the „phase of a lack of knowledge“ (time until effective vaccines became available) as well as uncertainties included in pandemic plans? Did the plans include the possibility of an „irresolvable lack of knowledge“ (Böschen 2004; Rengeling 2017)?
3. **Communication:** Risk and crisis communication are important issues in pandemic planning, mainly inherent as a „top-down process“ which is directed at regulating the behavior of and thus disciplining the population by means of strategic expert information. How was the public seen as in the planning process? What relationship between science (knowledge, risk assessment) and policy (interests, risk management) does the pandemic plan assume or develop?