

# Securing cities against global pandemics

Dr Elisa Pieri

Simon Fellow

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Lecturer in Sociology, School of Social Sciences

elisa.pieri@manchester.ac.uk

**AIM** investigating how cities in the West securitise against global pandemics, focusing principally on the social implications that arise.

Pandemics pose new and **difficult challenges**, not least in relation to **mapping and controlling contagion** beyond the immediate locations of disease outbreak. The unfolding of the Ebola crisis, the 2002-3 SARS epidemic and the 2008-9 H1N1 flu pandemic illustrate some of the implications and added complexities of **increased connectivity**.

Initially discussed as a humanitarian health crisis, the Ebola pandemic was rapidly re-framed, in media and policy discourse in the West, as primarily a **security threat** (President Obama's speech, Reuters, 16th September 2014). In the West risks associated with the spread of pandemics generate **intense and high-profile speculation in the media**. **Crowded cities and large airports** are seen as significantly increasing the risk of contagion beyond initial outbreak locations, however geographically remote. Critical studies of security contend that cities respond to a wide range of threats by **embracing pre-emptive strategies**.

Much research and financial investment is devoted to **medical treatment, humanitarian aid**, and the pursuit of innovation (especially aiming at developing viable vaccines). A considerable body of medical knowledge is accumulating on individual pathogens, and great effort is placed on **tracking and modelling the spread of pandemics**. Alongside these initiatives, in the West governments and a wide range of non-governmental bodies, from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to the World Health Organisation, actively endorse prevention and preparedness responses. They **diffuse best practice for containment, quarantine and securitisation** of Western sites designated as vulnerable.

Yet little sociological attention has so far been paid to the social, ethical and legal implications of these measures.

## Mixed Methods

- **analysis of media archives**
- **semi-structured and elite interviews** with experts, policy advisors and practitioners
- **site visits** (incl. in Singapore & Hong Kong)
- **ethnography** (e.g. observation of simulation of outbreaks)
- **desk-based research** (review of international and national policy guidelines, measures and technologies deployed during previous and current pandemics)

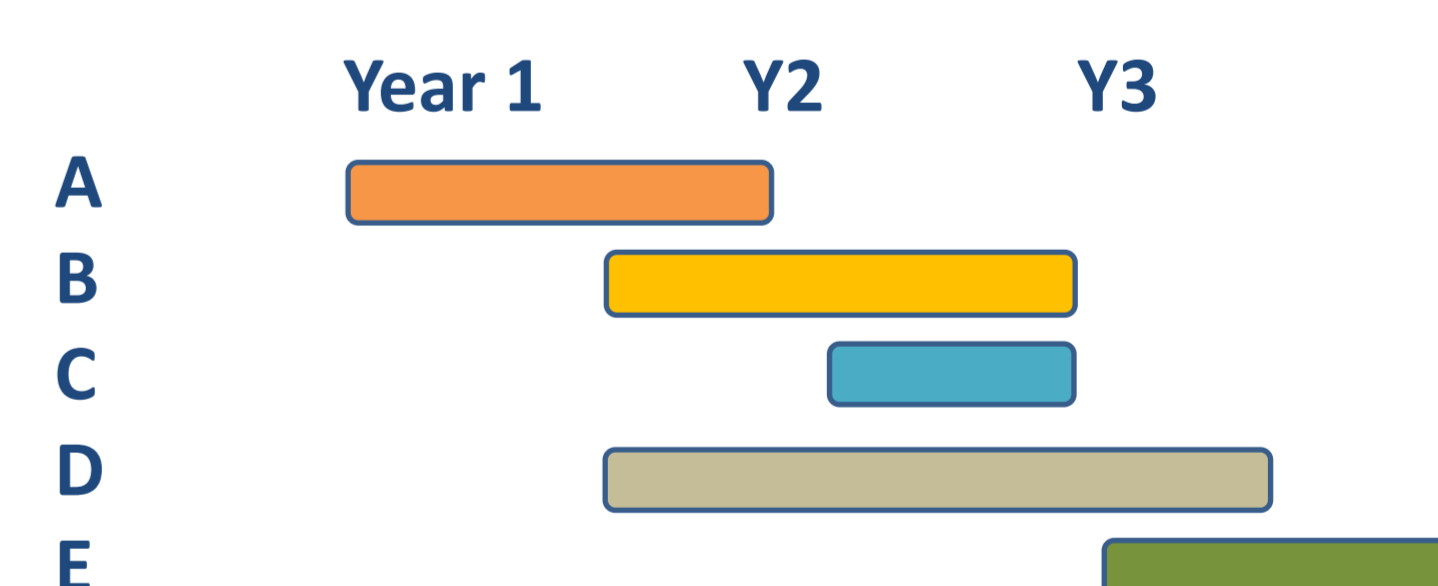
**A. How is pandemic risk framed in media and policy discourse in the West?**

**E. Vaccines: role of vaccine research in the securitisation of Western cities**

**B. What protocols and best practices are circulated in the West?**

**D. Technoscience: role of technology in securitising Western cities against pandemics today**

**C. Smarting up cities: lessons from other cities (e.g. Singapore and HK). Implications for implementation in the West**



## Outputs & Impacts

- **book contract**
- **peer-reviewed articles in impactful outlets** (e.g. BioSocieties; Science Technology & Human Values Sociology, Information Communication & Society)
- **non-academic briefing** for practitioners and research participants
- **conference presentations, seminars, talks at non-academic events** (for the public, policy makers and/or practitioners, or co-organised by NGOs)
- **workshop** to launch findings