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Fear of and anger against the Other - the strange, the sick and the imaginary struggle for survival

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# D I G I T H U M

A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURE IN LATE MODERNITY

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## Dossier “Emotions from a relational perspective”

### Fear of and anger against the Other - the strange, the sick and the imaginary struggle for survival

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## Abstract

This article wants to explore the associative relationship between epidemics, lack of hygiene and foreignness that German people, politicians and the German press have made repeatedly during the recent wave of migration from Syria to Germany. It wants to especially look at the emotions of *fear*, *anger* and the resulting hate that not only pull these two things together but that combine being a health risk and being a stranger in a way that they create a vicious circle in which one perpetuates the other and creates a condition in which one always serves as a justification for the other.

We will present the relationships among fear, anger, and hate empirically by reflecting on a few interviews carried out in Germany, three press articles and people's comments in the press, on Facebook and other social media that have surfaced after a small outbreak of scabies in a refugee camp in the Jenfelder Moorpark in Hamburg. The outbreak was neither medically meaningful nor caused by a lack of the refugees' hygiene, but rather as a consequence of the bad hygienic conditions that were to be found in the provisional refugee camp. However, this little but crucial part of information never really entered into the wider public debate –partly because the local German press only focused on the outbreak itself rather than on its causes and partly because the current social context has created a lack of confidence in the press, from both sides of civil society. Instead of critical reflections on causes and backgrounds, the majority of commenting readers pronounced publically the hypothetical link between their fears of both foreigners and epidemics and used the story as a bond-maker, allowing them to create a collective emotional reaction with others based on their projected fears. Within this process of collective projection fear turned into anger, as a collective form to face individual fear, resulting in the sensation of a need for collective self-defence, a sensation that their *Society Must be Defended* (Foucault, 2003).

## Keywords

epidemics, governmentality, hygiene, social Psychology, Sociology, emotions, anger, fear, refugees

## Por i enuig amb l'altre: l'estrany, el malalt i la lluita imaginària per la supervivència

### Resum

*L'objectiu d'aquest article és explorar la relació associativa entre epidèmia, falta d'higiene i el fet d'ésser estranger que ha fet repetidament el poble alemany, els seus polítics i la seva premsa durant la recent onada de migració des de Síria cap a Alemanya. Especialment té com a objectiu investigar les emocions de por i enuig i de l'odi resultant que no només fa que aquestes emocions s'uneixin, sinó que implica que el fet d'ésser un risc per a la salut i, a més, ésser un estrany es combinin, de manera que es crea un cercle viciós en el qual un perpetua l'altre i es crea una condició en la qual un serveix sempre com a justificació per a l'altre.*

*Es presentaran empíricament les relacions entre la por, l'enuig i l'odi a través d'algunes entrevistes realitzades a Alemanya, tres articles de premsa i els comentaris de la gent a la premsa, al Facebook i en altres mitjans de comunicació que han sorgit després del petit brot de sarna en un camp de refugiats a Jenfelder Moorpark a Hamburg. El brot no va ser ni significatiu des del punt de vista mèdic ni causat per la falta d'higiene dels refugiats, sinó més aviat conseqüència de les condicions higièniques dolentes que van trobar als camps de refugiats provisionals. Tanmateix, aquesta breu però crucial notícia realment mai no va anar més enllà en debats públics. Això va ser en part perquè la premsa alemanya local només es va centrar en el brot per si mateix, més que en les seves causes; en part perquè el context social actual ha fet que la societat civil no tingui confiança en la premsa. En comptes d'una reflexió crítica sobre les causes i els contextos, la majoria dels lectors que hi van comentar van posar de manifest públicament l'enllaç imaginat entre les seves pors envers els estrangers i l'epidèmia; van utilitzar la història com una manera d'establir un vincle, permetent-los de crear una reacció emocional col·lectiva amb altres basada en les seves pors projectades. En aquest procés de projecció col·lectiva, la por es va convertir en enuig, com una forma col·lectiva d'enfrontar-se a la por individualitzada, la qual cosa va donar lloc a una sensació de necessitat d'autodefensa col·lectiva, la sensació que cal defensar la seva societat (Society Must be Defended, Foucault, 2003).*

### Paraules clau

epidèmia, governamentalitat, higiene, psicologia social, sociologia, emocions, enuig, por, refugiats

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"[...] Such as the issue of hygiene, eg, I mean,  
I clean my toilet at home.  
So why should they not self-organise cleaning  
their toilets as well?"

Thomas de Maziere, Minister for Internal Affairs talking on  
the TV program Phoenix about the bad hygienic conditions in  
German refugee camps relating it to the lack of hygiene of the  
refugees

## Introduction

This article wants to explore the associative relationship between epidemics, lack of hygiene and foreignness that German people, politicians and the German press have made repeatedly during the recent wave of migration from Syria to Germany. It wants to especially look at the emotions of *fear*, *anger* and the resulting hate that not only pull these two things together but that combine being a health risk and being a stranger in a way that they create a vicious circle in which one perpetuates the other and creates a condition in which one always serves as a justification for the other.

We will present the relationships between fear, anger, and hate empirically by reflecting on a few interviews carried out in Germany, three press articles and people's comments in the press, on Facebook and other social media that have surfaced after a small outbreak of scabies in a refugee camp in the Jenfelder Moorpark in Hamburg. The outbreak was neither medically meaningful nor caused by a lack of the refugees' hygiene, but rather as a consequence of the bad hygienic conditions that were to be found in the provisional refugee camp. However, this little but crucial part of information never really entered into the wider public debate –partly because the local German press only focused on the outbreak itself rather than on its causes and partly because the current social context has created a lack of confidence in the press, from both sides of civil society. Instead of critical reflections on causes and backgrounds the majority of commenting readers pronounced publically the hypothetical link between their fears of both foreigners and epidemics and used the story as a bond-maker, allowing them to create a collective emotional reaction with others based on their projected fears. Within this process of collective projection fear turned into anger, as a collective form to face individual fear, resulting in the sensation of a need for collective self-defence, a sensation that their *Society Must be Defended* (Foucault, 2003).

The short exploration of the reasons why such a link between the fear of foreignness and the fear of sickness is easily made will

lead us back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which new mechanisms of social and political control became at least partly constructed on a myth of hygiene that differentiates between a civilised, hygienic "us" and "the other" as an uncivilised unhygienic threat to our "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006). In such myths the stranger from another world is turned into a threat to society, not only in terms of his or her uncivilised otherness but also in terms of being an uncontrolled creature that threatens society's bios and the lives of those inhabiting society on the deepest level by secretly bringing a threat to life beyond existing frontiers.

The link between being a stranger and bearing a heightened risk of infections for others has been perpetuated during the last 150 years in various forms. But it is especially the role of the media that is mentionable, as here factual and fictitious stories meet, overlap and intertwine with each other relatively freely. In a situation of presupposed risk in a moment of heightened fear the Western viewer combines both fiction and reality, which contributes to the production of a scenario of risk in which the Western bios needs to defend itself, or needs to be defended. Fear and collective anger become the crucial vehicles for the marking of inside and outside deconstructing and reconstructing the imaginary boundaries of civilisation.

## 1. The *Dispositif*<sup>1</sup> and myth(s) of hygiene

*An airplane lands at the airport and the passengers leave. Someone coughs suspiciously but airport life seems to go on smoothly until suddenly the coughing passenger falls down, shakes uncontrollably from some strange muscle cramps and dies. Suddenly people are filled with fear, start to panic and run as if they could manage to get away. But it is already too late, the disease starts to spread, showing its cruel face reflected in an always-growing number of sick or dying people.*

This could be the typical beginning of a movie on epidemics, a classic beginning, if we want to say so. Where the plane came from and where the people got infected are usually the answers that are slowly discovered and revealed to a shocked audience that fearfully receives the images of what could happen at any larger airport, in any major city of the world at any moment. The plane with the contagious passengers comes from a foreign country, a place far away, beyond the limits of what we consider our community.<sup>2</sup> In other cases we are simply left in the dark, which does not mean that people will imagine nothing, about the origin of the threat. In fact, leaving cause and source to people's imagination is done to foster associations with similar stories that have already been told, and perpetuates, therefore, similar projections from movies in which the origin is explicitly presented.

1. Giorgio Agamben (2009, p. 14).

2. In *The Contagion* the source of the pandemic is found in Asia (in the movie it is asked various times for sick passengers on the plane by the help of which one primary protagonist brought the disease to the US). In *Outbreak* the source is in Africa even if here it is probably introduced by the military.

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At the end of the movie it is usually some courageous (white Western) scientist that discovers the origin or the cause of the disease and finds a cure, exploring thereby the territory of the source, like the Colonialist explorers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century explored many parts of the “non-civilised world”.

Fictitious, imaginary stories like the one here described symbiotically engage with one of the important modern myths that allowed modern society, as we know it, to be built: the myth of hygiene. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shattered by illnesses and poverty, the constantly growing cities became a place in which contagious diseases became a major problem. London might be one of the most prominent examples. Perceived by many as a city of strangers (Sennett, 2002, p. 47ff) it must have been a common perception that the flux of strangers was connected to a lack of control over diseases.<sup>3</sup> In order to govern the risks of this “new” society a different form of technique to govern the risks became necessary, a new form to control diseases in the earliest possible stages, even before they actually appeared and spread. In order to govern the always richer and more complex social body, no longer was it enough to govern the boundaries and borders of that society by creating specific institutions that isolated and treated those parts of society that were about to go or had already gone beyond society's limits, or by violently excluding them from the normal social body. Instead society was now to be governed by softly, argumentatively inviting and convincing all of society's members to participate in the practices of power, to become a part of the power themselves and to apply techniques of power upon themselves. Good examples are the discourse and practices of hygiene that started to arise in that time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the practices of hygiene as a way of preventing disease became an increasingly more important issue for the health system and for the population; perpetuated by governmental actions, in newspapers and in moralising stories.<sup>4</sup> They were also a form, a seductive narrative, by the help of which governance practices started to reach out to every individual body and invited individuals to apply the practices of governance on themselves, turning themselves into agents of the *hygienic dispositif*.

What is interesting is that already in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, only two footsteps away from the birth of the *hygienic dispositif*, disease became associated with a lack of hygiene and lack of hygiene with a lack of civilisation. Within cities this meant that certain illnesses became mainly associatively connected with the poor.<sup>5</sup>

On a global level it meant to relate the image of epidemics with the uncivilised other in exotic places. As always, there was some empirical truth to the idea. It is true that many explorers became sick when they went to other continents but not primarily due to the lack of hygiene of those living there. It is also true that a lacking medical knowledge of some illnesses made their effects stronger in the non-Western world. On the other hand it was colonialists and explorers who brought many deadly diseases to other continents, made them spread and killed many more people than those from the non-Western world ever did in the hygienic West.<sup>6</sup> The many dead from such sicknesses helped to confirm prejudices about those differences rather than extinguish them.

This and the stories about the “unbelievable conditions” in which people lived that helped to perpetuate a colonialist image of the world, dividing the healthy and hygienic from those “irresponsible barbarians” who had a higher risk of getting life-threatening infections.

From the perspective of the hygienic West, the source of epidemics was in this new imaginary outside on which fears could be projected and which further helped to create and justify the idea of a relatively secure inside. The new form of governmentality with its need for constant awareness of society's members and for the regular application of hygienic rules was backed by the threat that major consequences of an outbreak could return to the West, further underlining the danger that strangers could bear. The stranger had fully turned into a threat to Western community and to life/bios in the West. Building on the mythologised narration of the sick and healthy, the new horizon of possible risks presented in the emerging mass media fostered thoughts of fear in which the stranger and especially the uncontrolled flux of strangers became strongly associated with the rise of diseases and a higher risk of infection.

Whilst the new regime and the new mechanism of governmentality might mean relative great freedom for those in the West, the rest of the world was turned even more into a mere object of control, observation and exclusion in order to maintain Western standards and in order to allow Western people to believe that they were secure and protected. On the one hand this meant control of movement from one side of the world to the other but it also meant exclusion from resources (medicine, material) for those on the other side, which in the long run affirmed some of the prejudices about the other.

3. In fact, the possibility to simply shut the gates had become impossible.

4. Compare eg with the link between hygiene and morality in the Struwwelpeter.

5. The TV Series *The Knick* tells us in one episode about the spread of a disease that is difficult to trace because no one would expect it to come from the richer city districts but this is exactly where it came from. Although the source is finally discovered, the host for the source is a scrupulous servant, which twists the plot once again and locates the source with the uncivilised. It should also not come as a surprise that the first ones who were affected by control practices regarding hygiene were prostitutes who suddenly became synonymous with venereal diseases.

6. Sheldon Watts (1997).

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This is how the myth of hygiene created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued to fulfil its role throughout the following 150 years: On the one hand, because the hygienic conditions of the poor in the non-Western world became worse and verified the supposed difference; on the other hand, because the media helped to transport the image of the “hygienic difference”. Fears stirred up by fictitious stories combined with fears and resentments caused by ideologised facts and data created a symbolic universe, a mythologised narration for the *hygienic dispositif*. In fact, the mass media in their form of nation building, of creating *Imagined Communities* contributed to the endurance of wrong prejudices regarding strangers and the distribution of illnesses. The media's production of Africa as the “AIDS continent” is just one example of the wrong linking between epidemics and presupposed underdevelopment, in which naming had a crucial effect on perceptions on both sides.

## 2. From myths and media narratives to emotional reality

That our emotional universes are strongly impacted by the mass media and by myths and stories that we are being told in the mass media does not come as a surprise (Luhmann, 2000). In fact, the strong effects that fictitious stories have on our perceptions and our emotional universes are well studied (Mulvey, 1975, 1996; Denzin, 1995; Izod, 2003). The same is probably even truer for supposedly non-fictional programs (news and documentaries) as has been successfully shown by authors like Andersen (2006), Dayan/Katz (1992) and Couldry (2003).<sup>7</sup> In fact, emotions related to specific, collectively received and as collectively, relevant perceived stories and images are a strong social bond-maker. For example, collective sadness seen and demonstrated during the mourning ritual of Princess Diana increased people's feeling that they belonged to the same society.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, emotions allow each individual to pull images and information from different sources and contexts together. In fact, emotions can become important links between different non- or loosely related issues, images or topics. In the process of interpreting and emotionally relating to one image or story, existing emotional memories (Hochschild, 1987) might look for other events that emotionally or associatively fit. The individual can so relate collective images to her/his life story and experience them as very personal whilst at the same time she/he can see and feel that their life stories are connected with those of others at least on a subliminal level. It also means that the more relevant,

emotional, collectivising media stories people share regarding a specific topic the more likely they will react in an emotionally similar way when confronted with an image or with a strong emotion that relates to that topic.

Confronted with a certain image that relates to other collectively relevant images and information of the past, a community or a society can react almost instantly with the same kind of emotional reaction that might then lead towards a second step: collective action (Illouz, 2009, p. 382). In fact, if a group becomes aware that they share the same emotions regarding an image, news or event they become confident that their emotional reaction is correct and justified. Although, in general social or discursive terms this might not be the case. A context is created in which normally impossible collective (re)actions become possible.

Having these theoretical ideas about emotions as links in mind, we can now return to the hygienic *dispositif* and to its concrete effects on people's emotions. The debates on refugees and the risks that might arise with their increased presence in Europe are very real and transnational phenomena. In fact, the European community shares serious doubts and fears regarding the increased flux of migrants that took place during the last decades: the threat of terrorism and the risk of pandemics are only two discursive fields that surfaced in relation to migration in the press and which is reflected in the new turn towards the far-right in many European countries.

After a recently increased movement of immigrants from the Arabian peninsula, especially from Syria to Europe, fears on a political and especially on a social level have increased. It is obviously always easy to blame the discourse for how people act and react. However, we should not lose sight of the triggers and motivators for people's (re)actions and perceptions, of what gives their thoughts and perception credibility and legitimacy and to look then how individual and collective reactions coincide and relate to the discursive level of the media.

It has only been one year since the phenomenon Ebola frightened the world. However, the presentation in the West, eg in the media, postulated from the very beginning that it was their problem, the people in Africa, those strangers that might come to Europe and so bring the disease with them. Although such an idea has been proved wrong, the only infected person that escaped the control of the authorities was a nurse that became infected in a Spanish hospital. The established governmentality practices of monitoring and self-monitoring based on the hygienic *dispositif* increased people's awareness of the invisible threat and turned their view once again on those who might supposedly

7. In relation to Durkheim's account of emotions in rituals (Durkheim 1995, pp. 212, 222)

8. The same can be said about other collective events that are linked with emotions, eg the yearly events related to La Diada in Catalunya or the nationalistic feelings during and after the World Championship in football. But it can also happen in relation to a completely fictitious story, eg the death of Jon Snow in *Game of Thrones* or of Carter in *Person of Interest* created strong collective emotional reactions that people shared and that they can refer to when they look for moments of sadness in their past.

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come from an affected country. In a city of strangers, complexity can be reduced to such a point that only the most probable cases are visible to people: by reducing people to those significant attributes that makes them appear foreign –their skin colour. It is almost obvious that all of a sudden a black person appeared speculatively as a higher risk to people than someone who is white. This epidemic racism allowed people to suddenly feel good about not sitting close to people with dark skin in the Barcelona metro.

The same is true for the threat of terrorism that is anchored in the same governmentality practices of monitoring and self-monitoring and that has lead people to focus on signs like believing in Islam, or coming from a country that is supposedly Islamic, in order to differentiate between potential threats and those that are not. The stirred up fears created by those recent cases, calling for a higher awareness, for practices of monitoring and relating to many other previous cases relate perfectly with potential dangers in successful apocalyptic fictitious productions such as *The Walking Dead*, *The Contagion*, *World War Z*, *Fear the Walking Dead* or reflections on the current situation in the world such as *Homeland*. They have contributed to a context in which the fear of the stranger and the fear of epidemics not only coincide but demand action and mechanisms of selection between good and evil on the level of civil society.

A social reflex to this discursive field that is closely related to the *hygienic dispositif* was seen in the context of an outbreak of scabies in the Jenfelder Moorpark in Hamburg. We will try to analyse people's reactions by giving a brief analysis of the media discourse during the course of events and the respective public opinion found in the commentary section of some respective newspapers and on Facebook.

It was at the beginning of August when in the context of the turmoil of the foremost Syrian and Kurdish migration to Germany the outbreak of scabies became breaking news. As before, fears about the future of Germany regarding the increased number of expected immigrants searching for a place to live in Germany had surfaced. The press<sup>9</sup> and politicians used the topic in order to get attention, and to make their statements about the future of Germany. First, emotional reactions in civil society appeared almost simultaneously. This meant that many people experienced a sensation of overall fear about the future. In fact, when asked about the imagined future of their hometown and of Germany in June 2015 the topic of immigration was very present in the discourses of the German population:

"I know that they will be brought to this neighbourhood and find a place in a sports pavilion at the school and to be honest I somehow find that scary. It frightens me..."

"Ah ok..."

"Well.... That is how I feel."

Interviewee 1, woman, 35 years, Germany

This undefined fear of strangers, on a social level, had strong effects. We will not discuss here new extreme right wing anti-immigration movements like PEGIDA because they would "deserve" an extra article. But even outside the closer circles of PEGIDA, disappointment and anger were slowly increasing in people's discourses and they were usually backed by this undefined, objectless fear of those strangers that had come or were about to come and which we have already discussed.

When finally by the end of July the first news channels started to report about an outbreak of scabies in several refugee camps, emotional reactions were strongly directed towards the issue. Whilst the local TV channel MDR simply reported on *Some Cases of Scabies in the Camp*<sup>10</sup> and provided some background information and critical comments to the hygienic conditions in the refugee camp, the German *Morgenpost* came out with an article titled "Scabies – Alarm: Jenfeld is stopping the reception of refugees"<sup>11</sup> in which some information about the outbreak was presented but important information about the causes, such as the bad logistics and the difficult circumstances in the camp were not discussed.

On the contrary, emphasizing that "all people that had contact with the camp or its people have been warned" gave the impression of a strong risk of infection. The choice of tone and wording allowed people to imagine a possible "epidemic outbreak" in the area around the camp and the spread of the disease in German society. As one worried reader expressed his concerns:<sup>12</sup>

"Of course! I live in the area and I have not been informed and they [the refugees] get in and out of the camp."

A brief explanation of scabies in the second part of the *Morgenpost* article presented some basic information about scabies, suggesting a scientific outlook that gave further credibility to the first lines and the suggested risk:

"Scabies is a skin disease, created by mites. It is transmitted via skin contact or via the clothes that is worn on the skin. Mites can be killed by applying a medicine one or two times."

9. *The most Dangerous Street in Germany* – a sensationalist documentary on Eisenbahnstrasse in Leipzig, the comments on the money that immigrants receive and the comment on hygiene in refugee camps (mentioned at the beginning) by de Maziere are some important examples that made use of immigration in order to come forward with effective messages relating to those Germans filled with fear and anger.

10. See: <[http://www.mdr.de/sachsen/hygiene\\_zeltstadt\\_dresden100\\_zc-f1f179a7\\_zs-9f2fcd56.html](http://www.mdr.de/sachsen/hygiene_zeltstadt_dresden100_zc-f1f179a7_zs-9f2fcd56.html)>.

11. See: <<http://www.mopo.de/nachrichten/moorpark-kraetze-alarm-jenfeld-stoppt-fluechtlingsaufnahme,5067140,31366518.html>>

12. See: <[https://disqus.com/home/discussion/mopode/moorpark\\_kratze\\_alarm\\_jenfeld\\_stoppt\\_fluechtlingsaufnahme\\_nachrichten\\_hamburger\\_morgenpost/newest/](https://disqus.com/home/discussion/mopode/moorpark_kratze_alarm_jenfeld_stoppt_fluechtlingsaufnahme_nachrichten_hamburger_morgenpost/newest/)>

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This scientific or scientifically looking element in the newspaper article has a double function: Whilst it gives further seriousness to the article and the newspaper and underlines the importance of the news piece, it also helps to spread the message about the disease itself (because it is taken seriously) and calls for an adequate reaction from the people, like applying necessary hygienic practices. For our reflection, the first article is of greatest interest in that it not only drew power from medical discourse but that it was these definitions and associations with medical discourse that allowed people to create, out of a few scabies cases, an emergency situation in which the information about a spreading disease and necessary counteractions by citizens became crucial.

The previous objectless fears of German citizens had become related to this new object and allowed people to show and experience collective anger and to publically give hate speeches against refugees. Within these actions and speeches underlying discursive pairs like hygienic/unhygienic, healthy/sick found their expression. For example in an article in *Die Welt*<sup>13</sup> on the scabies cases someone commented ironically:

"In the end refugees might need to flee from Germany from the bad conditions in their camps."

Pink Rose

The message, discursively producing refugees as unthankful beneficiaries from other countries that worsen the situation in Germany, resulted in a direct reply by Egon 349 –affirming Pink Rose's anger and co-performing with her/him a desire that has hate as its foundation:

"That would be great!"  
Egon 349

This perception was further fostered by other articles that stated that the situation was out of control and related the scabies cases to other scenarios and fictitious stories that allowed people to imagine a real epidemic:

"The sanitary and health service in Hamburg's refugee receptions is, according to sources, worse than officially known. According to information from the NDR scabies has been discovered in a variety of camps, besides the camp in Jenfeld. In the camp in Hamburg Schnackenburgallee a variety of people are infected with scabbies. Approximately 2000 refugees live here. In other cases the officials talk of exceptional cases."  
NDR 20.08.2015

The mediatic given justification for collective fear and anger resulted quickly in the collective demonstration of hate, in which

quite a high number of people joined in, and had the *hygienic dispositif* as its foundation. In fact, it is the ideological link between scabies and lacking hygiene and the language employed in the articles that allowed people to directly link a mite-based skin disease with epidemics, to make the refugees responsible and to project fear, hate and anger on them:

"Scabies, tuberculosis, all those beautiful things that we have missed so much for decades is what we now receive. Not to speak of the stream of moneyless HIV-infected especially from central-African countries that arrive here under the label "refugee", just because their health system is insufficient and expensive whilst here it is first class and free."

Welt Leser Guest

"First scabies and then what? Cholera, malaria, ebola?..."  
LoCuTu5

"You forgot to mention TBC, HIV and Hepatitis. All of these have increased all of a sudden. You can read that in various scientific articles."

dersitzenbleiber's reply to LoCuTu5

That the link between different infectious illnesses is made on the basis of an assumed lack of hygiene related to underdevelopment cannot be shown by solely looking back to the underlying discourse of the Secretary of the Interior. The link between scabies and HIV/AIDS that *Welt Leser Guest* presents clearly points out how completely different illnesses with completely different forms of spreading and infecting are taken as synonymous and treated as equals on the basis of one denominator "coming from a non-Western country". Other's comments were even more explicit, presenting a direct relation on the basis of hygiene:

"I wonder what you expect if you accept people from undeveloped countries as refugees. It has been reported from scabies but also from lice, bed bugs and other parasite-based illnesses. The Robert Koch Institute indicates that a good part of the rising HIV infections in Germany, has happened thanks to foreigners. This little piece of information does not get picked up or published by the press."

Pidder Lüng

"The arriving containers and bed sheets were all clean!!"  
Dresdnerin 31.07.2015

Opening up the link between scabies and a lack of hygiene, the resulting emotional chain between fear, anger and hate

13. See: <<http://www.welt.de/regionales/hamburg/article144736656/Mehrere-Fluechtlinge-an-der-Kraetze-erkrankt.html>>.

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allowed projecting collective emotions on two sides. On the one hand, on the arriving refugees not individually but in their general role as others: something we can see clearly reflected in the undifferentiated and generalised way the term "they" is used and applied to refugees from Syria, central Africa, and other groups of foreigners coming from non-Western countries. However, anger and hate especially, were also projected on the German authorities. Not for their lack of provisional and caring actions in the camps but for their inadequate protection of German society:

"How are the shops (Aldi, Netto) in the area, shop assistants and citizen shoppers protected from those spreading illnesses?"

Dresdnerin 31.07.2015

"We can be glad that there are not any worse illnesses like Ebola or Dengue yet. The responsible people do not take very seriously who gets in and who does not. I wish for more protection for the German population..."

Flower4

"To put them all under quarantine would be the least they could do!"

LoCuTu5

We can see here how the emotional mixture of fear and anger allowed self-declared "good German citizens" to reproduce the discourse of a policy of emergency and declare their society as a society that must be defended against the flux of diseases and threats to (the bios of) the German population and the lives of the German people. It is quite obvious that they leave the chain of logical assumptions that an outbreak of scabies allows behind and relate to the discourses that they have learned from in the past, either through other cases, from fictitious stories with which they emotionally connect, or through the general assumptions regarding hygiene on which Western society is built. Imagining that they have an obligation to a ritualised demonstration of collective anger and that they are heroically defending society, they feel that they have every justification to desire and act outside common law and normality. Their desire for justice through revenge is an almost obvious consequence because how else can a society react if it is under attack?:

"Now we already have enough of everything here. It just needs to be distributed fairly so that everyone can have a part.

I hope that the sicknesses will affect most of those who have screamed the loudest in favour of the refugees!"

Edel Traud in reply to Pidder Lüng

"Carefully asked: Who is paying for the health system with all the doctors and caretakers? Ah, you and me and the others who pay monthly rates? I don't know how your situation is but I have to fight every month in order to get around with my family and do not have money to live out humanism and for further increases in monthly payments. If I see the existence of my family in danger because of the costs of this mania of saving the world, I become very angry. And I am not the only one who thinks this way..."

Chris in reply to Sabine Abbel

How dangerous such perceptions are is not only seen in the general despair about the future combined with distrust and anger with legal authorities and the press that some people expressed:

"When last winter a protester was interviewed in Dresden and mentioned that he was scared of diseases and epidemics people laughed at him and the media turned him into a scaredy-cat ...!!! The here written opinions are all sceptical. I ask myself why the fear of citizens is not taken seriously. What is it like with other illnesses, do we still have control??"

Frank 01.08.2015

We see it also in the underlying discourse of various extreme rightist Facebook entries during demonstrations of growing rightist movements against foreigners and various violent acts of nationalist movements and individuals justified as acts of defence of German society. Hate-based racist webpages<sup>14</sup> and forums further fostering a climate of estrangement, hate and fear lead those emotions in an always wider concentric circle.

## Conclusions

Within this article we have tried to analyse the interplay between objectless fear and collective anger and hate by looking at the mechanisms of the *hygienic dispositif* during a small outbreak of scabies in Germany. What we discovered was, on the one hand, the power of the *hygienic dispositif* not only as a general myth upon which modern Western society is built but also as a narrative that is deeply anchored in people's thoughts and everyday life interpretations of reality and of a globalised world.

14. See: <<http://kraetze-ratgeber.de/kraetze-in-fluechtlingsunterkuenften/>>. In fact the blog not only links scabies with lacking hygiene and refugees but with a strong ideological message and with visual material that fosters the association between scabies and being from another race and being a foreigner. The scientific language used in the introductions wants to mediate objectivity and veracity and make readers believe in the accurateness of the information on the page. The word *Ratgeber* (advisor – usually used for medical, psychological and self-help websites) in the title further underlines the strategy.

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On the other hand, we have seen how the fear of diseases is fundamentally linked to a fear of the other (strangers, refugees). Both fears play, therefore, easily into each other, especially if there is a possibility to associate both fields with each other (like in the case of the outbreak of scabies). We can therefore argue that our emotions that we feel are deeply interwoven with existing structures of power and with specific forms to look at the world. They are racist and discriminating. Taking emotions, therefore, as something pure that must not be touched or discussed appears to be a crucial mistake. Instead, emotions as social elements should be the object of constant discussion, criticism and evaluation.

We also saw that objectless fear felt by a high number of subjects in society is a dangerous social phenomenon that develops its full capacity as soon as it can be projected onto an object that seems to give plausibility to that fear. It then allows people to connect with each other, to engage on the basis of that fear and to create collectiveness. Furthermore fear, at the moment of becoming directed at an object, turns into anger as a way to cure the fearful subject of its fear. The Internet with its capacity to connect people and to weave collective bonds over distances, not only allows a communication about the projection onto an object but also an expression/demonstration of anger. It facilitates collective bonds on the basis of fear and the resulting anger and helps to legitimise illegitimate positions that can then turn into collective hate, as a form of a collective emotional demonstration of anger, and in corresponding actions beyond the norm of normal judicial society.

We also saw that the media can play a key role in these linking processes, not only because images and texts associate real events with fictitious universes on epidemics and foreigners and with scientific explanations, not because they allow the emotional identification with the course of events, but also because they serve as platforms that create collective emotional experiences that can then become the basis for a collective projection of fear through comments and Facebook posts a weaving of collectiveness on the basis of fear, anger and hate.

A critical work on people's emotions as social ties and social objects is therefore of greatest importance, from the media, newspapers and within society's side. In this context a clearer distinction between fictitious and scientific elements in

newspaper articles and images, a decided and adequate non-spectacular language use and a careful reflection on the underlying assumptions of presented links are demanded. Reflection on the false assumptions of the *hygienic dispositif* and a distancing from the link of foreigners, unhygienic, source of disease and risk might help to dismantle emotional processes and allow an adequate public debate and humanistic and logistic measures that we all need.

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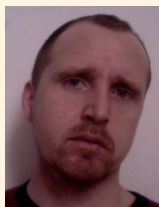
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