



Kolloquium zur Medizin- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte

Wintersemester 2014/15

Montag, 01.12.2014, 18:15 - 19:45 Uhr

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Equivocal Innovation: Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals, Hangovers and Society

This talk will present three embedded episodes in the life of a polyherbal drug indicated as a preventative measure for hangovers. Invented and marketed in 2005 by a leading ayurvedic pharmaceutical company in India, PartySmart is a reformulated compound based on ayurvedic, biomedical and phytochemical sources. This creative process has involved multiple translations, resulting in hybrid pharmacological models, including, for instance, ayurvedic post-digestive tastes and biomedical effects on enzymatic activities. These modes of therapeutic action are conceptualizations of an active drug – i.e. a digested and metabolized drug. A problem arises, however, in the fact that the ingestion of this drug is linked to alcohol consumption in a country where it is widely considered in negative terms. For this reason, PartySmart was seen as an ambivalent presence in the firm's catalogue and thus a series of interventions aiming to uphold the image of this drug transformed both its social inscription and its materiality. This transformation also took a different, global trajectory as the drug gradually developed as a transnational pharmaceutical commodity and became a new object in new latitudes. By focusing on the social and material dimensions of this drug in these contexts, this paper calls upon science studies to expand the scope of pharmaceutical anthropology. It brings together various layers of analysis to offer new perspectives on contemporary herbal formulations as they traverse material cultures, medical epistemologies, sociopolitical borders, legal environments and social practices.

Veranstaltungsort:

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