

**Call for Papers:
Excess? Images of Body, Health, Morality and Emotions across the Media**

International ERC BodyCapital Workshop
June 7–8, 2018
Berlin

Held at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin/Center for the History of Emotions and part of the ERC Project “The Healthy Self as Body Capital. Individuals, Market-Based Societies, and Body Politics in Visual Twentieth Century Europe”

The concept of excess is ambivalent: It can signify phenomena ranging from certain religious practices to drug abuse to aspects of consumer culture; it can be an empowering self-description or a stigmatizing judgment. This openness is also reflected in a variety of closely related terms that are sometimes shared by multiple languages, such as “ecstasy,” “extase,” and “Ekstase” in English, French, and German, but which might also be associated with divergent concepts like “frenzy,” “ivresse,” or “Rausch.” The workshop seeks to analyze these facets of excess and asks how excess has been perceived and constructed in different media. It aims to explore how images of the body, health, morality and emotions varied over history, across cultures, and how the media themselves have contributed to the ways in which the concept of excess has been shaped and used.

A defining feature of excess is its liminality: It generally denotes some kind of transgression and is in this sense a relational term, referring to a normative order that has been exceeded. Often excess evokes negative associations like abundance and waste. In terms of the body and health, exhaustion, burn-out, addiction and overconsumption are phenomena that usually come to mind. Nevertheless, the transgressive dimension of the excessive, like the related concept of ecstasy, has also been seen in a positive light, viewing overflow and boundlessness as productive, enabling forces that can release unexpected potentials and bodily resources.

Defining what constitutes excess is thus itself a matter of measurement, bound up with the negotiation of social limits and norms. As a cultural practice, excess and how it is defined are closely connected to changing ideas about the body, health, and emotions. Definitions of excess based on ancient affect theory differ from nineteenth-century conceptions based on thermodynamic models of bodily functions; mechanical views on the body and its “drives” took a different perspective on the risks of overflow and abundance than did models focused on energy and nerves. Nevertheless, moral panics about practices like new styles of dancing, forms of collective leisure or party cultures labeled excessive have often been based on similar discourses that can be traced back to pre-modern times. Finally, during the twentieth century, understandings of health underwent considerable changes, shifting from a focus on protection against disease to an understanding of actively preserving and securing health. This, too, had implications for conceptions of what constitutes excess.

How are different understandings and measurements of risk and security reflected in varying conceptions of excess? How can contemporary conceptions of the “preventive self”, the “exhausted self”, or the “stressed self” be confirmed, challenged, extended through historical perspectives on excess? What do diverse images and practices of excess tell us about the cultural formation of health norms and how these norms are intertwined with moral norms and emotional practices? In which historical and cultural contexts has excess been portrayed as a figure of growth, overgrowth, or regeneration? Which sciences and fields of knowledge have historically informed images of excess?

The two-day workshop seeks to explore these questions. It places a special focus on the media through which excessive practices are portrayed and how images of excess vary or circulate across different media, such as printed texts, photographs, different film genres and television. How have these mediums themselves shaped and (re)negotiated concepts of body, health and emotions? In what ways was the medium itself part of or seen as constituting an excessive practice? Considering visual media played an increasingly important role in the run of the twentieth century, analyses of visual material are particularly welcome.

A central goal of the workshop is to open up an international exchange and to connect perspectives from the history of science, the history of emotions, the history of the body and media history in order to shed new light on a history of health as a cultural history.

Papers may focus on but are by no means limited to:

Images of excess as histories of

- body practices (sports, dance, religious rituals etc.)
- overconsumption/addiction (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, synthetic drugs, gambling, nutrition)
- normative orders/morality/security and risk (religion, reform movements, insurance)
- media perception/media usage (“reading craze,” affective effects of film, TV addiction)

Please send an abstract (ca. 300 words) for a 30-minute talk and a short CV by March 15, 2018 to schnaedelbach@mpib-berlin.mpg.de

Limited travel costs can be covered on request, if no other funding options are available.

Organizer and contact: Sandra Schnädelbach, Postdoctoral Researcher,
schnaedelbach@mpib-berlin.mpg.de

The healthy self as body capital: individuals, market-based societies and body politics in visual twentieth century Europe (BodyCapital) project is directed by Christian Bonah at the Université de Strasbourg in collaboration with Anja Laukötter at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin. The project is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Advanced Grant agreement No 694817).

