



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia

Dipartimento di  
Filosofia e Beni  
Culturali



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THE NEW  
INSTITUTE

Centre for Environmental  
Humanities (NICHE)  
at Ca' Foscari  
University of Venice

ERC HealthXCross Kick-off event

# Microbes: from technoscience to social theory (and back)

**14 September 2022, 10.00 am**  
Main Hall, Ca' Bottacin  
Dorsoduro 3911, Calle Crosera,  
Venice and online at  
<https://unive.zoom.us/j/84891549739>

**THE NEW INSTITUTE** Centre for  
Environmental Humanities at Ca'  
Foscari University of Venice (NICHE)

Please register at:  
<https://forms.gle/ahgR1U2B4qypJvXQ7>

Guests hosted by the ERC HealthXCross GA n. 949742

**10.00 am - 10.10 am**  
**Roberta Raffaetà** (Ca'  
Foscari University of Venice),  
**Introduction of the ERC  
project and the team**

**10.10 am - 10.30 am**  
**Team members' introduction**  
**Lucilla Barchetta**  
(anthropology of data-driven  
One Health - Cà Foscari  
University of Venice), **Valeria  
Burgio** (visual theorist -  
independent researcher),  
**Joana Formosinho** (history  
and philosophy of the  
microbiome - Medical  
Museion, Department of  
Public Health, University  
of Copenhagen), **Victor  
Secco** (anthropology of the  
microbiome - Manchester  
University), **Marta Scaglioni**  
(anthropology of Africa  
and of the microbiome -  
University Milano Statale)

**10.30 am - 11.15 am**  
**Jamie Lorimer** (University  
of Oxford) **Why the  
microbiome, why now?**  
**Historicising the probiotic  
turn in social theory** A range  
of commentators across the  
medical and environmental  
humanities are making

fresh epistemic alliances  
with microbiology and the  
post-genomic and ecological  
sciences. Figures like Donna  
Haraway and Anna Tsing find  
a new ontology in emerging  
scientific theories of the  
microbiome for grounding  
political and ecological  
projects. In contrast to the  
reductionist, individualistic  
and violent visions of the  
natural world offered by 20th  
century evolutionary biology,  
the microbiome offers  
them a palatable worldview  
premised on symbiosis,  
holism, and collaboration.  
This talk describes and  
reflects on this conjoined  
'probiotic turn' (Lorimer  
2020) in social theory and  
the life sciences, noting the  
tensions it generates, and  
examines its implications  
for how we understand the  
role of science studies in the  
crisis-inflected atmospheres  
of Anthropocene knowledge  
production.

**11.15 am - 12.00 pm**  
**Hannah Landecker**  
(University of California,  
Los Angeles – UCLA)  
**Compartmentalization In**

**Theory: Boundedness,  
Integrity, and Organization  
in Microbiome and  
Mitochondria Science and  
Ethics** This talk addresses  
the recent rise of theories of  
compartmentalization and  
barrier integrity as a sign of  
health. Arising in part from  
the study of their breaching  
by features and substances  
of modern life, from  
emulsifiers to detergents,  
the spatiotemporal  
organization of microbial  
communities and their plant  
and animal interlocutors  
is a site for theory building  
about the specificity of an  
"industrialized microbiome"  
and its impact on bodies and  
ecosystems. I ask how and  
why compartmentalization  
is a theory, not just a certain  
group of empirical facts about  
microbial organization, and  
how it might act as a resource  
beyond the life sciences  
for social theory and more  
practical aspects of the  
potential social use of findings  
of microbiome science.

**12.00 pm - 12.30 pm**  
**Open discussion and  
concluding remarks**



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