

ASU Tempe campus

School for the Future of Innovation in Society

Innovations Talk

Matthew Kearnes & Declan Kuch

Magic Materials: On the transformation, animation and crises of nanomedicine

Sept. 9, 2019

Noon – 1 p.m.

Memorial Union, Gold Rm

The seemingly magical promise of a *therapia sterilisans magna* – a “treatment which could, in a single dose, destroy all microorganisms in the infected organism ... without affecting the host’s cells” (Bosch and Rosich 2008) – constitutes a horizon of imagined possibility across contemporary biomedical research. Well before the overtly militaristic tone of the ‘War on Cancer’, and Susan Sontag’s warning of the ‘distortions in the military rhetoric about cancer’, visions of the precise targeting of therapeutic interventions had been popularised in the mid-twentieth century fascination with the concept of the magic bullet.

Contrary to the widespread notion of the disenchantment of nature – and Weber’s famous riposte that the a modern scientific vocation “need no longer have recourse to magical means” – this talk builds on a recent revival of studies of magic, arguing that magic is neither antithetical nor incidental to modernity but pivotal to its central institutions. Based on ongoing ethnographic research focused on the development of nanomedicine, we interrogate the concept of the ‘magic bullet’ from its inception in ‘receptor theory’ and chemotherapy through to its ongoing use in contemporary nanomaterial and nanomedicine research.

RSVP: eiseverywhere.com/it-kearnes

ASU School for the
Future of Innovation
in Society
Arizona State University



Matthew Kearnes,
Assistant Professor
ARC Centre of Excellence in
Convergent Bio-Nano Science &
Technology (CBNS)
Environment & Society Group
School of Humanities and Languages
University of New South Wales



Dr. Declan Kuch
ARC Centre of Excellence in
Convergent Bio-Nano Science &
Technology (CBNS)
Environment & Society Group
School of Humanities and Languages
University of New South Wales