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# History of Infectious Disease Pandemics in Urban Societies

*Mark D. Hardt*

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## HISTORY OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE PANDEMICS IN URBAN SOCIETIES

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**Mark D. Hardt : History of Infectious Disease Pandemics in Urban Societies** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised History of Infectious Disease Pandemics in Urban Societies:

Beginning in the mid-19th century tremendous gains were made in the historical struggle with infectious diseases. The emergence of modern medicine and epidemiology, and the establishment of public health measures, helped urban populations overcome a historical death penalty. The conquest of infectious disease has created a human hubris. It is a

collective self-delusion that infectious diseases, once exposed to the light of modern medicine, science, and public health would inevitably become eradicated. When these advances began in the mid-19th century the world's population was under two billion, mostly non-urbanized. At the dawn of the 21st century the world's population already surpassed seven billion. The world's once far-flung urban populations have exponentially expanded in number, size, and connectivity. Infectious diseases have long benefited from the concentration of human population and their opportunistic abilities to take advantage of their interconnectedness. The struggle between humans and infectious diseases is one in which there is a waxing and waning advantage of one over the other. Human hubris has been challenged since the late 1970s with the prospect that infectious diseases are not eradicated. Concerns have increased since the latter third of the twentieth century that infectious diseases are gaining a new foothold. As pandemics from AIDS to Ebola have increased in frequency, there has also developed a sense that a global pandemic of a much greater magnitude is likely to happen. Tracing the historical record, this book examines the manners in which population concentrations have long been associated with the spread of pandemic disease. It also examines the struggle between human attempts to contain infectious diseases, and the microbial struggle to contain human population advancement.

This text is a dense, but erudite, narrative on pandemics and their disproportionate effects on human demographics. Hardt analyzes significant infectious events prior to the explosive concentration and connectivity of urban populations to the global community that began in the late 20th century. Using theoretical frameworks, he builds the argument that pandemics are a result of human crowding, which presents ideal conditions—namely, an unlimited food supply and protective shelter—for deadly microbial life cycles.... Hardt's book is thoroughly researched and has copious notes and an extensive bibliography. His insightful discourse on the implications of the 'urban death penalty' is frightening to consider and should be read by those who care about the next pandemic. **Summing Up: Recommended.** Graduate students; researchers/faculty. (CHOICE) Taking an historical-sociological perspective, Hardt touches on many fascinating topics including demographic and epidemiologic transition theories, the discovery of germ theories of disease, and the development of vaccination. Understanding population health today requires understanding urban health, and this book gives an excellent background on how the health of societies got to where it is now. The patterns and processes (both social and biological) described by Hardt are interesting, and sometimes counterintuitive. He shows how human history has laid the groundwork for pandemic vulnerability in an increasingly-interconnected world. Readers with an interest in historical sociology, urban sociology, or public health will find this volume a thought-provoking read. (Andrew Noymer, University of California, Irvine) **About the Author** Mark D. Hardt is associate professor of sociology at Montana State University Billings.