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Beyond Public Health: The Cultural Politics of Tobacco Control in Hong Kong

This paper examines how and why cigarette smoking has increasingly become an object of intolerance and control in Hong Kong. Since the 1980s, the smoking population has been falling. Smoking behavior, sales and promotion of cigarette products have been under close surveillance by the government, medical experts and society at large. What are the conditions that make the growing intolerant discourses and practices against cigarette smoking possible and dominant? Why is tobacco singled out from other legal but harmful substances, such as alcohol, as an imperative object of intolerance and control? Adopting a Foucauldian discursive approach and the theory of articulation developed in cultural studies, I take tobacco control as a historical and contextual practice that takes place under and in response to particular context and culture. My paper ultimately aims to illustrate the cultural politics of risk construction and management and the implications of this mode of governance in Hong Kong.