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HIV, Sexuality, Community: New Biosocial Practices and Analyses

While sexuality and eroticism are conventionally represented as the obverse of community, for queers they often feature as the basis of community. From this perspective, community does not precede the expression of sexual interests; rather it is enacted through them. But what happens when HIV becomes part of the equation? How does HIV interfere with, arrest or reanimate community? In this panel we consider recent practices of community in the context of HIV/AIDS and gay life. Paul Rabinow coined the term biosociality to describe how biotechnological categories can transform human relatedness to create new bases for affiliation and kinship. In some recent scholarship, the virus itself features as a way of creating kinship networks – for example, in barebacking subculture, where intentional transmission has been interpreted as a means of biologizing relations with strangers. But we believe the relations between the biological and the social are multiple. In this panel we focus on community as enacted and practiced, to reveal some of the multiple ways in which HIV positive people broach the biological, the sexual and the social.