

【Grant-in-Aid for Transformative Research Areas (A)】

The Creation of Humanities of Infectious Diseases and Recommendations for the Next Pandemic



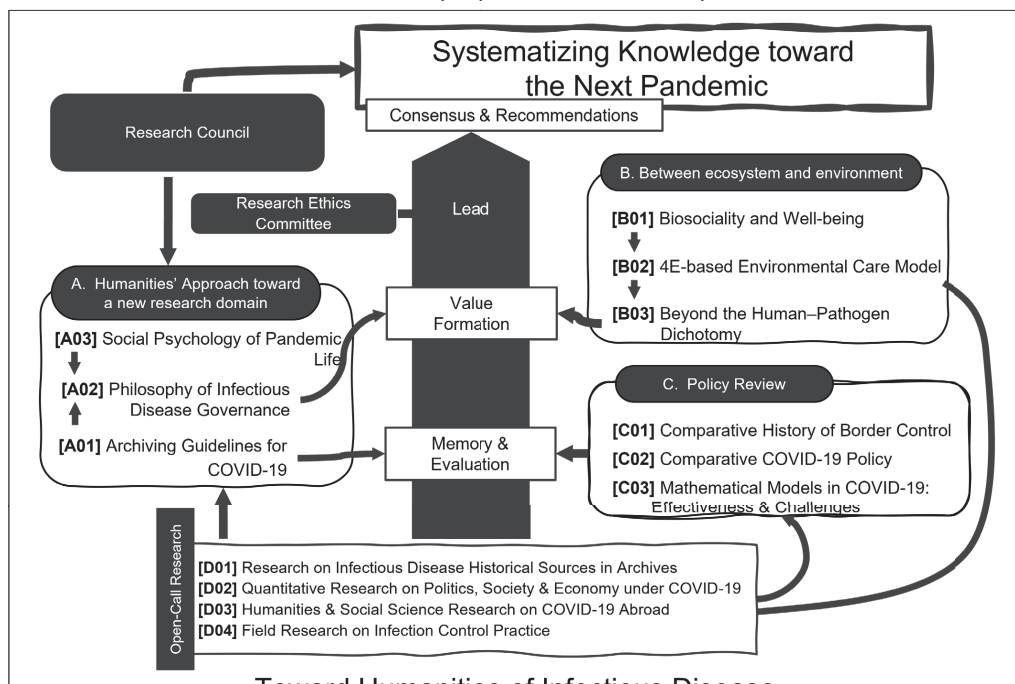
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Project Information	Project Number : 26A101 Project Period (FY) : 2026-2030 Keywords : Infectious diseases, Pandemic, archives, Records and memories, values formation

Purpose and Background of the Research

●Outline of the Research

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded even Japan—where infectious diseases had come to be seen as a problem of the past—that they remain a serious threat. The varied global responses to the pandemic revealed a wide range of unresolved challenges. These challenges must be addressed not only through medicine and public health, but also through the perspectives of society, culture, ethics, and value formation. The humanities must contribute to this effort by articulating the problems surrounding COVID-19, clarifying their structure, and building on the documentation and transmission of outbreak-related records and memories.

This research domain takes the humanities as its driving force, advancing interdisciplinary collaboration with medicine, public health, and the social sciences around COVID-19, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Its aim is to fundamentally rethink the relationship between human society and infectious diseases, and to establish a new field of scholarship—**the Humanities of Infectious Diseases**—that reframes infectious diseases within their social and cultural contexts in preparation for future pandemics.



●The Contemporary Relevance of This Research Domain and the Transmission of Knowledge into the Post-Pandemic Era

This research domain aims to accumulate interdisciplinary knowledge centered on the "Humanities of Infectious Diseases."

The Japanese term ningen-gaku (人間学) can also be read as jinkan-gaku—"the study of the space between people"—opening a framework for examining the ethics of social division and isolation, the cultural contexts of behavioral change, and the transformation of human relationships across borders that the pandemic has exposed.

COVID-19 has not disappeared. Societies have simply shifted their understanding, creating a perception that the outbreak has "subsided." Yet pandemic-related records are being discarded and collective memory is fading fast. Preserving this knowledge is one of the most effective preparations for the next pandemic, and the humanities must play a central role in that effort.

Disseminating these findings widely and building a long-term knowledge base for a society resilient against infectious disease is an urgent task.

Expected Research Achievements

The research domain rests on three core activities: (1) visualizing and articulating the challenges infectious diseases pose to human society; (2) establishing the "Humanities of Infectious Diseases" as a new interdisciplinary field; and (3) strengthening societal resilience and proposing socially acceptable policy responses.

Strategy 1: Systematic Collection and Analysis of Records and Memories

Research Cluster A (Humanities-Based Approaches to Field Creation, A01–A03) collects and preserves—using archival methods—the institutional responses, expert decisions, social reactions, and policy debates that unfolded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating history, philosophy, ethics, sociology, and social psychology, it addresses the frameworks of infectious disease records and memories, and the reconstruction of social values.

Strategy 2: Interdisciplinary Examination of Social Values

Research Cluster B (Ecosystems, Environment, and Infectious Diseases, B01–B03) reexamines values central to epidemic response—freedom, responsibility, well-being, and care—through sociology, ethics, and public health. Drawing on cultural anthropology, social anthropology, and tropical medicine, it reframes infectious disease responses from a lived-experience perspective and explores practical pathways toward resilient societies.

Strategy 3: Policy Recommendations and Dialogue at Regional and International Levels

Research Cluster C (Past and Present of Infectious Disease Control, C01–C03) conducts case analyses centered on Japan and East Asia to develop internationally applicable policy recommendations. Combining area studies, history, and public health, it examines national policy responses and social reactions in historical and structural perspective, generating insights for future infectious disease policy.

These activities are further energized by 32 open-recruitment projects introducing new methods and perspectives, including AI-driven quantitative analysis, approaches through literature and art, and field research on emerging challenges such as climate change and livestock epidemics.

Website(s)

<https://www.tm.nagasaki-u.ac.jp/hid/>