The concept of ‘neighbourhood effect’ is well established in public health literature. However to date comparatively little attention has been paid to the public health implications of the spatial aspects of the lives of people who are homeless and highly mobile. In this talk, I describe some findings from my dissertation project, a mixed methods exploration of the inter-relationships between judicial status, uses of space and place, and utilization of needle exchange among a group of young injecting drug users in San Francisco.

Peter Davidson received his PhD in medical sociology from the University of California, San Francisco in 2009. Dr Davidson has been conducting research and harm-reduction based intervention development around heroin-related overdose, hepatitis C transmission, and sexually transmitted infections among drug users in Australia and the United States since 1997. Dr Davidson’s dissertation project explored the influence of policing practices on the movements and economic activities of a highly mobile group of homeless young injecting drug users in San Francisco, and how these in turn affect the willingness and ability of young injectors to utilize needle exchange services. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the division of Global Public Health at the University of California, San Diego.