

Stanford researcher's online map pinpoints cigarette factories around the world

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Stanford anthropologist Matthew Kohrman says the goal of the Cigarette Citadels project is to share information that he hopes will motivate people to think in new ways.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Cigarettes are on track to kill 1 billion people by the end of the century. Anthropologist Matthew Kohrman is sharing information he hopes will bring that number down.

They sit on sprawling campuses right off American interstates, pop up in the middle of crowded Chinese cities and fill Australian industrial parks just a short walk from tidy residential neighborhoods.

They're among the hundreds of cigarette factories around the world – nondescript, benign buildings that largely go unnoticed. But when their

manufacturing power is combined, the results are overwhelmingly deadly. Cigarettes accounted for 100 million deaths last century and are expected by global health experts to kill a billion more by the end of this one.

About 6 trillion cigarettes will be made this year, and they'll turn up everywhere: dangling from people's mouths, stubbed out on sidewalks and packaged for sale in supermarkets, pharmacies and corner stores.

But few people know where they come from, and Stanford anthropologist Matthew Kohrman wants to change that. Using web tools including Google Maps, he's plotted the international whereabouts of more than 300 cigarette factories so far. Their names, addresses and some information about the plants now can easily be found thanks to Kohrman's [Cigarette Citadels](#) project.

The largest clusters of pinpoints are in Europe and Asia. But Africa, Australia and the Americas are home to major manufacturing facilities as well.

"This map allows us to have a good understanding of how the [tobacco](#) industry has grown, where it has set up shop, where it sees its growth potential and where the big players are," said Kohrman, who is also a senior fellow at Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. "The public has a right to know where cigarette factories are if, as the World Health Organization tells us, the cigarette is the single biggest cause of preventable death right now."

Cigarettes already come with health warning labels and carry horrific nicknames like cancer sticks, coffin nails and lung darts. But consumer demand for tobacco is still strong, and the world's five biggest tobacco companies – British American Tobacco, Philip Morris International, Japan Tobacco, China Tobacco and Imperial Tobacco – continue to

flourish, Kohrman said.

One of the biggest surprises to Kohrman, who together with undergraduate Rachel Lee has been compiling mapping data from news stories, public documents and tobacco company reports, was found in the Netherlands.

He clicks on the Cigarette Citadels map and calls up information on a factory run by Philip Morris, not far from The Hague. He zooms in on the map to show a complex of ordinary-looking buildings surrounded by a highway and tree-lined roads.

"This one place has produced as many as 96 billion cigarettes a year since it opened in the mid-1980s," he said. "It's massive. And here it is, under bright lights.

"How many people living in Philip Morris' target markets are now watching their sons, husbands, sisters, wives and aunts die from tobacco-induced diseases – because of this one production line running over the last 25 years? Probably as many as 80,000 deaths are now occurring each year, according to conservative epidemiological estimates – 80,000 deaths per year from a single factory nestled at The Hague's doorstep."

Will activists use the project's map to speak out in front of factories they can now easily locate? Will the map be used by Big Tobacco as a way to promote the number of jobs they provide? Kohrman doesn't know.

The goal of the project is neither to agitate nor defend, he says. The point of the project is to share information that he hopes will motivate people to think in new ways.

"Speaking and writing about these products distances us from the immediacy of them," Kohrman said. "But the evocative imagery in this

map places us back in the realm of the object. We see where [cigarettes](#) come from, where they're produced. They come from specific factories, often tucked into communities behind anonymous façades and industrial park fencing."

Provided by Stanford University

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