

Redefinitions of Health and Well-Being

Medical Anthropology Europe
Conference Vienna

Sept 16-19
2025

Call for Panels and Roundtables

Medical Anthropology Europe
EASA Network
easaonline.org/networks/medical

Health Matters
University of Vienna
health-matters.univie.ac.at

Deadline for Panel and
Roundtable submissions:
January 15, 2025

Submissions are to
be made via the website
mae.univie.ac.at

The Call for Papers will
be opened in **March, 2025**

Recent events of global importance have accelerated the need to redefine ideas of health, healing and well-being: the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of healthcare systems, questioning the hegemony of the so-called Global North in addressing global health issues; and the intensification of previous conflicts and wars and the emergence of new ones are shaping socio-cultural and political relations in postcolonial societies in all parts of the world.

On the one hand, the changes in the geopolitical landscape continue to exacerbate existing economic and political inequalities and divides, both globally and locally, which include access to quality healthcare. On the other hand, these tumultuous events alter the intricate connections and movements of people, objects and ideas, leading to the intensification of racial, cultural and religious tensions around concepts of health and well-being. As a result, the power relations that shape the way biomedical knowledge and scientific data are produced, administered and implemented have also shifted. In addition to tackling climate change and cognate challenges of the late industrial age, societies are pushed to redefine social, political and cultural ideas that constitute people's relationships with their bodies and the environment. These developments foster a necessity to re-evaluate how health and well-being are imagined, cared for or neglected, prompting various actors to critically examine existing practices, and to imagine alternative, even radical, modes of medicine and caring. The many issues demand novel responses – scholarly, political and activist alike.

In these intricate contexts, technoscience, biomedicine and (global) public health try to address these pressing challenges and shape the trajectory of future ideas and practices. However, these institutional domains are themselves called into question from divergent standpoints. Critical voices often point towards the inability of modern healthcare systems to provide equal as well as quality access to the services they offer. Various interrelated aspects of the hegemony of biomedical approaches to health and healing are scrutinized, such as a strong focus on the treatment of symptoms, their reluctance to address chronic conditions, their framing of disabilities as “defective conditions” or their colonial approaches towards non-Western knowledge systems and groups of practices.

Taking note of emergent and persistent practices, ideas, experiences, technologies and discourses related to healing, health and well-being in troubled times, the EASA Medical Anthropology Europe network invites you to a conference on **“Redefinitions of Health and Well-being”**. Centred around anthropological and critical research on health and well-being, the conference will serve as a space of encounter for scholars, practitioners and activists alike. We therefore invite all those who seek to navigate and understand this complex terrain to submit proposals for this conference. In an era defined by global interconnectedness, postcolonial dynamics and calls for planetary health, the conference aims to foster dialogues within and beyond the discipline of medical anthropology, which itself transcends geographical boundaries and disciplinary forms of belonging. In doing so, we hope to illuminate our critical intersections with other disciplines that engage in questions of health and well-being, such as environmental studies, science and technology studies, critical disability studies, gender and feminist studies as well as critical global health, among others.

To create space for dialogue and discussion, the conference is structured around seven streams that speak to some of the challenges and questions as outlined above. We invite panel and roundtable proposals across the following themes:

1 Health and/in Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has irrevocably altered individual and collective perceptions of health and well-being. As we emerge from the immediate crisis, it is imperative to reflect on the impact the pandemic has had on our healthcare systems, social structures and individual experiences. This stream invites panels that explore the multifaceted dimensions of post-pandemic health, and other contexts of crisis, such as emergency healthcare delivery, mental health programmes, addiction epidemics, quality and accessibility of public services, healthcare in war and conflict, or a growing presence of complementary and alternative treatments under these circumstances.

2 Health and Environment

Environmental pollution and climate change constitute existential threats to human and more-than-human health and well-being. We seek to examine the disproportionate impacts of environmental degradation and everlasting contaminations and intoxications on marginalized communities as well as identify innovative approaches towards building sustainable societies. We also wish to interrogate the limits of biomedicine and its etiologies in the treatment of health and disease, and reimagine new possibilities to remake liveable lives.

3 Disability and Chronicity

This stream aims to amplify diverse voices and perspectives on health, shedding light on the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions in different times and places. By engaging with issues of critical access, justice and advocacy, we strive to advance discourses and practices surrounding disability rights and well-being. Panels in this stream should thus also explore temporal dimensions of chronic conditions and various forms of disability vis-à-vis biomedical and technoscientific treatments, changing ideas of bodily normality/normativity and biogenetic advances and constraints.

4 Gender, Sexuality and Reproduction

The efforts of social movements as well as technological and medical developments have opened up novel opportunities for expressing, living and practising different forms of sexuality, gender and means of reproduction, understandings of which have, in turn, been challenged within and beyond the cisheteronormative binary. This stream aims to provide the basis for addressing ongoing discussions and approaches to sexual and reproductive health that consider the fluidity and queerness of gender, sex and kin as well as the contested grounds on which these discussions take place.

5 Medicine and Technologies

Carrying the promise of providing solutions to a variety of health problems, technoscientific developments tend to foster salvatory visions of cure. However, such issues as the problem of access to technological novelties in the light of economic inequalities, or embedded normative ideals of what bodies are and how they should function, require anthropological attention and call for documenting such phenomena ethnographically. This stream aims to bring together panels that address highly technologized and digitalized forms of medicine, their promises and epistemologies, and their differentiated and unequal effects on peoples and communities.

6 Plural Perspectives on Health and Healing

Concepts of health and healing are multifaceted and shaped by different epistemologies, socio-cultural contexts and practices, and power relations. This stream encourages the exploration of diverse cultural perspectives on health, illness and healing and well-being practices. By highlighting such plurality, within this stream we aim to foster a global dialogue that transcends traditional academic boundaries, engaging with indigenous knowledge systems, traditional medicine and alternative healing modalities in postcolonial contexts.

7 Doing Medical Anthropology

As the field of medical anthropology continues to evolve, so must its methodological toolbox. This stream invites contributions that share novel and imaginative approaches to conducting fieldwork and teaching medical anthropology. In particular, we aim to engage with the critique of colonial methodological legacies and with the dismantling of structures of intersectional discrimination within the field of medical anthropology and critical global health. We welcome panels that present concrete ideas and experiences of how to improve research practices, not only by pushing disciplinary boundaries, but also by suggesting pathways towards decolonizing methodologies, and amplifying marginalized voices, advocating for equity and justice in research and practice.