

## **Call for panel participants**

### **WORKSHOP**

## **Healing Ecologies and Medical Diversity: Ethnographic Approaches to Wellbeing**

**Sapienza University of Rome**

**12-15 June 2024**

Please check the workshop details and panel description below. Panels will extend and deepen the key issues addressed by the keynotes.

Therefore, we invite panelists to choose one of the main themes addressed by the keynotes and discuss it through their own ethnographic research. Please send your expression of interest including a title and the panel of your choice by April 27th

to [emily.pierini@uniroma1.it](mailto:emily.pierini@uniroma1.it).

The registration for workshop attendance is free and keynote speakers and panelists will present in person in Rome.

## WORKSHOP

# Healing Ecologies and Medical Diversity: Ethnographic Approaches to Wellbeing

**Sapienza University of Rome**  
**12-15 June 2024**

Funded by the European Union

Organized by

**HEAL Network for the Ethnography of Healing**

**Marie Curie Fellowship THETRANCE-Transnational Healing: Therapeutic Trajectories in Spiritual Trance**

**Sapienza University of Rome - PhD Programme in History, Anthropology, Religions**

**CAS-E Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences on Alternative Rationalities  
and**

**Esoteric Practices from a Global Perspective, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU)**

**Convenors:** Paul Stoller, Conerly Casey, Emily Pierini

It is no secret that we are experiencing troubling times. We frequently hear news of massive wildfires, disappearing glaciers, widespread flooding, dangerous heat waves, relentless superstorms, not to forget the scourge of hunger, disease and the social and economic costs of epidemics and pandemics. What's more, these events are unfolding in a climate of political dysfunction, conspiracy theories, and the incomprehensible violence of mass shootings.

Given the persistent and socially destructive turbulence of our times, how can we restore our humanity, or, as Timothy Morton and Dominic Boyer put it, how can we once again become human? In these trying times, it is time for scholars, who have deep insight into the whys and wherefores of the human condition to share their slowly developed insights that can chart a course toward a future of less mastery, arrogance and domination and more collaboration, modesty, and constructive cooperation. The collective wisdom of social science and the humanities remains obscured in a thick cloud bank of disciplinary convention that honours the obfuscation of theoretical discourse.

One path toward a viable social future is to extend social science insights into the practices of healing—healing one another and healing the world. We intend to invite internationally recognized scholars and practitioners who have first-hand knowledge of healing practices. In this workshop we intend to give participants an empirically grounded understanding of how to transform illness and traumatic situations into states of wellbeing—a way to begin the process of personal and social healing. To meet this end, we propose a four-

day intensive workshop that focuses on issues of social trust (David Napier), the self and wellbeing (Fiona Bowie), medical diversity (Elisabeth Hsu), collaboration of scholars and practitioners (psychiatrist Mustapha Gudaji), and musical healing through songwriting (Kristina Jacobsen).

### Call for panel participants

Panels will extend and deepen the key issues addressed by the keynotes. Therefore, we invite panelists to choose one of the main themes addressed by the keynotes and discuss it through their own ethnographic research. Please send your expression of interest including a title and the panel of your choice by April 20<sup>th</sup> to [emily.pierini@uniroma1.it](mailto:emily.pierini@uniroma1.it).

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## PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE	
9.00-9.30	Introductions (by the organizing committee)
9.30-10.30	<p><b>Keynote: David Napier, <i>Social Trust: The Story of 'Nonself' Help</i></b></p> <p>Year after year social science researchers, government agencies, NGOs, and professional pollsters, log the consistent decline in social trust globally, exposing the disastrous consequences of ever-increasing social disengagement in contemporary life. In this talk, I explore what is needed to begin restoring social trust, and, just as importantly, how to rethink it. What does new research tell us about our social relations, and about how our social relations impact our health and wellbeing? Here, the willingness to engage with 'the Other' – the unfamiliar, and those who appear different from ourselves – emerges as a key driver of social inclusion and growth, constructive social change, and psychological and biological wellbeing. Drawing on historical and scientific examples and on ethnographic evidence, this talk addresses the question of how we might reverse the social alienation many of us increasingly experience.</p>
10.30-10.45	Break
10.45-12.15	<b>Panel Discussion 1: Relationality and Trust</b>
12.15-14.00	Lunch Break
14.00-15.00	<p><b>Keynote: Fiona Bowie, <i>Cosmic Consciousness, the Self, and the search for Enlightenment</i></b></p> <p>Following a personal transformative spiritual experience of the unity of all things, the Canadian psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke came up with the term Cosmic Consciousness. His book of that title, published in 1901, argued that rather than a personal spiritual event, cosmic consciousness was an evolutionary phenomenon in human development. Those who reach this stage of consciousness see the universe not as dead matter governed by laws, but as</p>

	<p>alive and interconnected. The notion of death becomes an absurdity as everyone and everything has eternal life. Mysticism is the perception of the universe bound together by love. Bucke was describing the ‘perennial’ experience of the mystic who reaches a state of non-duality. Bucke’s contention that the whole of humanity is evolving gradually into a higher state of consciousness has been enormously influential in the New Age Movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in its many and various forms. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the quest for this transformed consciousness that eliminates the fear of death and holds out the promise of peace and universal love, continues to compete with more egoistical, individualistic and materialistic versions of the Self, with the desire to satisfy its needs and desires. In this talk I will look at some of these trends, and in particular at the practice of meditation as a means of achieving enlightenment and greater wellbeing. Ethnographically I focus on two groups in which I participate that actively use meditation as a means of realising this desired transformation of consciousness. This raises questions as to how we might study phenomena ethnographically that are based on individual and collective experiences that are largely interior and do not necessarily lend themselves to linguistic description. What we can study (as with other mystical, transformative, and psychical experiences) are the effects such practices have on people’s lives and on their view of themselves and the world.</p>
15.00-15.15	Break
15.15-17.00	<b>Panel Discussion 2: Ethnographic approaches to the Self, embodiment, and wellbeing</b>
<b>THURSDAY 13 JUNE</b>	
9.30-10.30	<p><b>Workshop on Ethnographic Songwriting:</b> Kristina Jacobsen.</p> <p>This workshop focuses on health and well-being through sharing and writing life stories into songs. Focusing on cowriting, or writing a song collaboratively with someone else, the emphasis is on community-building using a trauma-informed approach. Throughout the one-day workshop, participants choose a story they will gift to their cowriter: the cowriter follows a series of prompts based on the story they were given — cluster writing, freewriting, a fairy tale and a song lyric — in order to arrive at the final song. A premium is placed on finding voice — writerly and also singing — and feeling fully seen and heard by others in the group. Workshop ends with a brief, final sharing circle of songs crafted during the day together. “My interest in music and language finds its expressive outlet in songwriting. In teaching songwriting, my role is more of a facilitator than teacher, and the focus is on helping songwriters to find their own voice — literally and symbolically — and to dig for what my songwriting mentor, Mary Gauthier, calls the "emotional truth" of a song. Thus, this workshop focuses more on effective and meaningful self-expressions and connection with others through song, rather than learning how to write a "hit" song per se.” (Jacobsen)</p>
10.30-10.45	Break

10.45-12.15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Life stories in search of song (Introduction)</li> <li>2. Collaborations</li> <li>3. Song writing prompts</li> </ol>
12.15-14.00	Lunch Break
14.00-17.00	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discussion and Take-Aways</li> <li>2. Team Song Development</li> </ol>
<b>FRIDAY 14 JUNE</b>	
9.30-10.30	<p><b>Keynote: Elizabeth Hsu, <i>In search of resonance in a medically diverse world</i></b>  What brings culturally diverse people in search of different forms of well-being together? Which of these processes, situations and events are then experienced as healing? What kinds of kin relations and relatedness come into play? We review earlier work on generating synchronicity (Hsu 2005) and cultural synaesthesia (Young 2005), and end with an exploration of Hartmut Rosa's (2019) concept of resonance.</p>
10.30-10.45	Break
10.45-12.15	<b>Panel Discussion 3: <i>Medical Diversity and Subaltern Therapeutics</i></b>
12.15-14.00	Lunch Break
14.00-15.00	<p><b><i>Ecologies of Collaboration: Quasi-Interview/Discussion with psychiatrist Mustapha Gudaji and Conerly Casey</i></b></p> <p>A quasi-interview/discussion about ecologies of healing, which includes relations of scholars, practitioners and others (spirits, healing assistants, medical staff, etc.), to one another, and to their physical surroundings—in other words, the places of healing in which anthropologists, psychiatrists and others work and collaborate, as well as the importance of ecologies and environments in healing practices.</p>
15.00-16.00	<b>Panel Discussion 4: <i>Ecologies of Scholar-Healer Collaborations</i></b>
16.00-17.00	Performance 'Heartstrings' by Kristina Jacobsen and Dair Obenshain
<b>SATURDAY 15 JUNE</b>	
9.30-12.00	<b>Roundtable Discussion: <i>Perspectives on Global Health</i></b> (Social Trust, Bodily Practices, Medical Diversity and Healing Ecologies)
12.00-12.30	Concluding Remarks by Paul Stoller, Conerly Casey, and Emily Pierini

**Dr Fiona Bowie** is a Research Affiliate in the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography at Oxford University and a Member of Wolfson College, Oxford. She has a BA in Anthropology from the University of Durham and a DPhil in Social Anthropology from the University of Oxford. She conducted her original fieldwork in Cameroon, West Africa, looking at the relationship between missionaries (particularly the Focolare Movement) and the Bangwa people of SW Cameroon. She has continued to keep contact with both the Focolare and the Bangwa, both within and outside Cameroon, over a period of more than forty years, addressing mission history and ethnography, gender, notions of witchcraft and cosmology, kinship, spirituality, and new religious movements. A second period of fieldwork in North Wales, while teaching at the

universities of Bangor and Lampeter, led to publications on Welsh language and identity, pilgrimage, and religion in Wales. After moving to Bristol University, Fiona Bowie developed an interest cross-cultural and particularly Western notions of death and the afterlife. This led to the development of the Afterlife Research Centre as a network for those attempting to develop an ethnography of the afterlife and related phenomena using data that includes mediumistic, shamanistic, and telepathic sources, as well as out of body experiences, near death experiences, and mystical experience. The notion of apprenticeship and participation is encouraged where appropriate as a method of gaining a greater understanding of these phenomena. Fiona Bowie's recent research and publications touch on mediumship, spirit possession and spirit release, forms of meditation and angelic healing. Inspired by Edith Turner, Fiona Bowie has taken up the challenge of incorporating these various forms of human experience into our ethnographic data with the aim of reaching a more wholistic notion of what it means to be human.

**Dr Conerly Casey** is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). She holds a PhD in Anthropology (UCLA), with specializations in psychocultural and medical anthropology, and an MEd in Counseling Psychology (USC). Prior to her degree in anthropology, Casey worked as a Crisis Clinician in the Emergency Departments of the University of Vermont Medical Center and South Shore Mental Health Center. She directed multiple programs for Addiction Services at Boston City Hospital, including the first acupuncture program. With Consultant Psychiatrists at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital in Kano, Nigeria, Casey developed a "Culture and Medicine" program for resident doctors, while teaching medical students at Bayero University. Her research interests include medical and psychocultural diversity, sensory studies, globalization and comparative religion, global health and the environment. Extensive archival and ethnographic fieldwork in the predominately Muslim region of northern Nigeria (1991-2017) and in Kuwait (2006-2009) has enabled Casey to contribute vital perspectives on Bori and Islamic healing and divining; spirit possession, witchcraft affliction, evil eye and evil words; relationality, and the well-being of Sahelian ecologies; trauma and the politics of health and state in northern Nigeria.

**Dr Mustapha Gudaji** is a Consultant Psychiatrist with the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital in Kano, Nigeria, and a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychiatry, College of Health Sciences, Faculty of Clinical Sciences at Bayero University. He is an examiner with the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria, responsible for training psychiatrists in the country, and has trained a number of consultants in the 'almajirai' system over the past six to seven years. Dr Gudaji is also a clinical psychopharmacologist with an MSc in pharmacology and currently involved in a PhD programme with a special interest in Neurodegenerative disorders with ethnobotanical native plants. He is a faculty in the African center of Excellence for Population Advocacy and Policy (ACEPHAP) in the College of Health Sciences, Bayero University, Kano, and took courses on "Policy Briefs" with the University of Washington e-learning in Global Health under the ACEPHAP center. As a resident doctor, Dr Gudaji participated in the Culture and Medicine program at Bayero University, and the development of the community-based Kumbotso Comprehensive clinic, working closely with people who had epilepsy. He also worked in the Bayero University Student Health Counseling Clinic. Dr Gudaji's research interests include neurodegenerative disorders and plant-based medicines; HIV/AIDs and

depression; the quality of life among patients with schizophrenia and other major mental illnesses; differential diagnoses in presentations of catatonia; sociocultural demographics associated with psychoactive substance use; and trauma after the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

**Dr Elisabeth Hsu** is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oxford. In 2001 she joined the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Oxford as University Lecturer in Medical Anthropology in order to set up the Medical Anthropology Master's of Science and Master's of Philosophy courses. In 2005, she co-founded the ongoing Berghahn book series on "Epistemologies of Healing", specifically to increase the reach of doctoral-research-based monographs. In 2006, she co-established the ongoing "Anthropology Research Group at Oxford on Eastern Medicines and Religions", Argo-EMR, for post-doctoral researchers interested in medical anthropological approaches to 'traditional medicines' and scholarly medical traditions. Elisabeth Hsu's research interests concern Chinese medical practice and textual learning; body and personhood; treatment modalities and their efficaciousness; pulse diagnosis and esp. tactile sensory experiences, feelings and affect, cognition and emotions. Her latest ethnographic monograph is *Chinese Medicine in East Africa: an Intimacy with Strangers* (Berghahn, 2022).

**Dr Kristina Jacobsen** holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from Duke University, the MPhil in Ethnomusicology from Columbia University, a Master's in Ethnomusicology from Arizona State University, and a Bachelor's degree in Music (flute performance) and History (concentration: Native North America). Dr. Jacobsen is an ethnographer, singer-songwriter, and cultural anthropologist. An Associate professor of Ethnomusicology with a Secondary Appointment in Anthropology (Ethnology), she is the coordinator for the newly founded Songwriting Focus Area within the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts degree within the College of Fine Arts and the founder and co-facilitator of the UNM Honky-Tonk Ensemble. Jacobsen's research focuses on language reclamation, expressive culture, popular music, and arts-based research methodologies. Her first book, *The Sound of Navajo Country: Music, Language and Diné Belonging* (UNC Press, 2017), is based on 2 ½ years of singing and playing steel guitar with Navajo (Diné) country-western bands on the Navajo Nation and was the winner of the Woody Guthrie Award (2018 IASPM-US) for most outstanding book on popular music. Her research interests merge the fields of cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and ethnomusicology, with specializations in music and language, anthropology of the voice, politics of authenticity, Indigeneity and belonging, vernacular music of Native North America, Sardinia and the Appalachian Mountains, race and musical genre, language reclamation, and working-class expressive cultures.

**Dr David Napier** is Professor of Medical Anthropology at University College London and Director of its Science, Medicine, and Society Network. He has authored several books and articles on health resilience, vulnerability, indigenous healing and health agency, and co-authored three Lancet commissions (Climate Change and Health, Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine, and Culture and Health, this last for which he served as lead author). He has written widely on the anthropology of religion, indigenous cosmologies, and ritual studies, including

*Making Things Better: A Workbook on Ritual, Cultural Values, and Environmental Behavior.* Napier also specializes in health vulnerability, developing health assessment strategies and policy protocols in more than thirty countries for the UN, the WHO, and the European Commission, among others. He serves as Global Academic Lead for Cities Changing Diabetes (now in more than 40 cities), and is the lead academic advisor for The Economist Impact Unit's Health Inclusivity Index. He is currently writing a book on social trust.

**Dr Emily Pierini** is Assistant Professor in Anthropology at Sapienza University of Rome and coordinator of the HEAL-Network for the Ethnography of Healing. She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology (University of Bristol) and she was awarded a Marie Skłodowska–Curie Global Fellowship with a project on *Transnational Healing: Therapeutic Trajectories in Spiritual Trance*. She has been Visiting Professor at UFSC in Brazil and CRIA-ISCTE-IUL Lisbon University Institute, and Research Affiliate in the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, University of Oxford. She has conducted ethnographic research in the Spiritualist Christian Order Vale do Amanhecer (Brazil, Europe, and the US), in Afro-Brazilian religions (Brazil), and on Goddess Spirituality (UK and Italy). Her work addresses mediumistic trance and possession, embodied knowledge, healing, religious experience and learning, body and self, emotions and senses, and transnational religions. Author of the books *Jaguars of the Dawn: Spirit Mediumship in the Brazilian Vale do Amanhecer* (2020, Berghahn), and *Other Worlds, Other Bodies: Embodied Epistemologies and Ethnographies of Healing* (2023, Berghahn, co-edited with Alberto Groisman and Diana Espírito Santo).

**Dr Paul Stoller** is Professor of Anthropology at West Chester University and a Permanent Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Friedrich Alexander University, Erlangen-Nuremberg. He is the author of 16 books (ethnographies, memoirs, biographies, essays, and novels). Since 2010 he has blogged for *The Huffington Post* and *Psychology Today*. In recognition of his research and writing he has received numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, The American Anthropological Association's (AAA) Robert Textor Award in Anticipatory Anthropology (2002) as well as the AAA Anthropology in Media Award (2015). In 2013, the King of Sweden presented him The Anders Retzius Gold Medal in Anthropology. For more than 15 years he has facilitated writing workshops in Europe, North America and West Africa. His latest book, *Wisdom from the Edge*, considers how in turbulent times scholars can write accessibly and sensuously about contemporary social life.