



EASA MAE Seminar Series 2026

Health at the Human-Environment Interface: Microbial Entanglements

prof. Roberta Raffaetà

June 26th | 3 PM CET on Zoom [\[LINK HERE\]](#)

This lecture advances an expanded understanding of health that includes both humans and the environment, while critically interrogating the tensions and challenges such a shift entails. It engages with contemporary debates on the entanglement of human and environmental health in an era marked by planetary toxicity and postgenomic science, taking microbial worlds as a key empirical entry point, drawing from some of the results of the ERC HealthXCross project. Moving beyond a view of health as confined to human bodies, it approaches health as an emergent and relational process unfolding across interconnected biological and ecological systems. Rather than celebrating microbial interdependence as inherently progressive, the lecture critically examines how microbial relations are shaped by political economies, historical inequalities, and geopolitical regimes of knowledge production. Central to this argument is the claim that understanding health across human, environmental, and microbial worlds is inseparable from the technoscientific systems through which microbes are made knowable. From metagenomics to data-intensive biomedicine, microbes are not simply discovered but constituted through infrastructures, instruments, and computational practices that shape what can be seen, measured, and acted upon. These dynamics reconfigure biopolitics beyond the regulation of bodies and populations toward the governance of complex ecological milieus, increasingly mediated by technoscientific interventions. Focusing on technoscience reflects a dissatisfaction with approaches that merely celebrate ontological entanglement without adequately addressing its political conditions. By foregrounding health as a deeply political problem, the lecture calls for a more forceful engagement with questions of care, responsibility, and power, contributing with ethnographies that both complement and challenge abstract posthuman and multispecies theorizing.

[OPTIONAL REGISTRATION](#)



About Roberta Raffaetà: I am associate professor of Socio-cultural Anthropology at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and Deputy Director of NICHE (The New Institute: The Centre for Environmental Humanities), where I coordinate the research cluster 'Technoscience, Health and Justice in an Interdependent Planet'. Since obtaining a PhD at the University of Lausanne (Laboratoire d'anthropologie culturelle et sociale, Faculté des Sciences Sociales et Politiques), I have worked at various universities in Italy (Milano-Bicocca, Bologna, Verona, Trento, Bolzano) and abroad (UCLA, UCSD, Monash Melbourne, Lausanne). My research has been funded by the European Commission (Marie Curie and ERC), Fulbright (Schuman), The Italian Ministry of Research (FARE, PRIN, PNRA), Wenner Gren and Parco Adamello Brenta.

Medical Anthropology Europe
A NETWORK OF EASA



My research lies at the intersection of medical anthropology, environmental anthropology, and the anthropology of science and technology. I am interested in ethnographically exploring and anthropologically theorizing how scientists and different communities produce knowledge about the relationship between humans and other-than-humans, and how this configures socio-political worlds shaped by tensions between cosmopolitanism and nativism. As knowledge production becomes increasingly mediated by technology, I have focused on how technoscience - the inextricable intertwining of scientific production and technology - creates both possibilities and power dynamics. I examine these transformations through a critical interrogation of the limits of secularity - a colonial legacy grounded in the sacralization of reason - and what exceeds it. Ethnographically, in recent years I have focused on two main topics: (1) microbiome science across human and environmental health, and (2) environmental conflicts, in particular bear reintroduction in the Trentino Alps.