

# Aesthetics of Healing: Working with the Senses in Therapeutic Contexts



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32nd Annual Conference of the Association for Anthropology and Medicine (AGEM) in  
Cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Münster

May 24-26, 2019 in Münster / Germany

Further Information: [www.agem.de](http://www.agem.de), [www.uni-muenster.de/Ethnologie](http://www.uni-muenster.de/Ethnologie)

# AGEM **Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnologie und Medizin**

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## **“Aesthetics of Healing: Working with the Senses in Therapeutic Contexts”**

**32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnologie und Medizin e.V. (AGEM)**

**in Cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Münster**

**May 24-26, 2019 in Münster (Westphalia) / Germany**

The concept of aesthetics covers very distinct aspects and meanings. In public discourse, it relates to ways of human expression including the arts, theater, music and dance and its appraisal through categories such as "beautiful" or "graceful." Taking into consideration the original meaning of the ancient Greek word "aísthēsis," the concept relates to sensory perception as delimited from rational-cognitive processes. To discuss "aesthetics of healing" thus means to focus sensory aspects of therapy and to integrate them into a theory of the meaning and effectiveness of healing practices. During the "performative turn" of the social and cultural sciences in the 1980s, this idea mainly related to symbolic practices to ritually resolve psychosocial conflicts. Since the 2000s, it also depicts an integration of medical and sensory anthropology: the capacity of the human sensorium to perceive and to react to stimuli from the environment or the proper organism is central to perception and interaction in the therapeutic context. Healing practices can address, intensify or diminish different sensory functions, and meaning and assessment of the particular senses differ in distinct cultural and social frameworks. Research on the interrelation of culture and the sensorium has produced the insight, that humans consist of more than the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touch) reproduced in public discourse. Bodily sensations like interoception, pain, empathy or mediumship thus constitute another vital source for the comprehension of health, illness, and healing. The intersection of religious/spiritual and therapeutic practices is of particular interest here. Religious-spiritual healing practices require the acquisition and cultivation of specific perceptual processes, including the shift of sensory attention and bodily expression. Consequently, coping strategies and explanatory models of illness often do not refer to cognitive/rational, but to bodily/sensory perceptual forms. Further, contemporary popular healing and health practices like yoga, meditation and mindfulness training focus on multiple bodily sensations and are increasingly integrated into the psychotherapeutic context. This tendency also unfolds perspectives on mechanisms of the institutionalization and commodification of these practices and related political and economic dynamics.



With a few exceptions, the current interdisciplinary discourse reduces to the insight that culture, embodiment and emotion are interrelated without really opening the "black box" of bodily and sensory processes and dynamics. We thus have little knowledge on how sensuality and sensory manipulation influence health-seeking behavior, therapeutic decision-making and the establishment of healing cooperation in the context of increasing medical diversity. In a conference in Berlin in September 2018, the CRC "Affective Societies" introduced the theoretical approach of "affective arrangements" in therapeutic environments, initiating an interdisciplinary discussion of sensory-emotional factors of (mental) health, well-being, and therapeutic potentials and deficits in the context of current cultural, social, (health-)political, and economic developments. In cooperation with the CRC "Media of Cooperation" at the University in Siegen/Germany, AGEM carries out two conferences on "Preparing for Patients" (June 2018) and "Preparing for Physicians" (June 2019). Further developing related approaches, our aim is to now explore the mentioned aspects, questions and problems with the focus on "aesthetics of healing." We thus invite you to participate in our discussion on "working with the senses" in the context of health, illness, and healing. We want to investigate how sensory modalities influence therapy as a transformation of self, perception and experience and how they are embedded in social and hierarchical relations and political and economic dynamics. Our broad spectrum will integrate diverse approaches to sensory experience in the context of health, illness and healing. The conference will be inter- and transdisciplinary: cultural and social scientists, medical professionals, psychotherapists, physiotherapists, nurses, music and art therapists, practitioners of complementary and alternative medicines, as well as patients and relatives are welcome to contribute with their experience, expertise and evaluation.

**Questions of interest include, but are not limited to:**

What is the importance of sensory perception in different healing practices?

To what extent are sensuality and aesthetics relevant factors for illness experience, health behavior and therapy decision?

How do different therapeutic practices address the particular senses?

Which patterns of (self-)perception are generated and cultivated?

What is the importance of place, equipment and substances?

Is there a difference between treatment at home and out- or inpatient treatment?

How do sensory aspects of therapy contribute to the diversity of the health sector?

Which social, political and economic dynamics are involved?

What is the importance of "aesthetics of healing" for the integration, complementarity or competition of different health and healing practices?

**International Conference “Aesthetics of Healing: Working with the Senses in  
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**Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2019**

12:00 – 13:00 **Registration**

13:00 – 14:00 **Basu, Helene: *Welcome* & Kurz, Helmar: *Introduction***

14:00 – 15:20 **Dance**

**Lüpken, Anja:** *The Tamalpa Life/Art Process As Aesthetic Practice of Healing: Artful Expression As Communication Beyond Words. (D)*

**Lindner, Svea:** *Vimbuza: Controversies Around A Healing Dance. The Path Of A Formerly Suppressed Practice Of Healing In Malawi To Intangible UNESCO Heritage. (D)*

15:20 – 15:40 **Coffee Break**

15:40 – 17:00 **Music**

**Menegola, Leonardo:** *Sensory Experiences In Contemporary Music Therapy: From The Aesthetics Of The Senses To The Politics Of Healing. (I)*

**Brabec de Mori, Bernd:** *Does It Make Sense To Talk About Aesthetics In The Context Of Music Therapy And Auditory Anthropology? (A)*

17:00 – 17:20 **Coffee Break**

17:20 – 18:40 **Spirituality**

**Kühn, Johanna:** *'That's Where The Magic Happens': Sensual Self-Perception In Alternative Healing Practices In Beirut, Lebanon. (D)*

**Bodynek, Tessa:** *Healing And The Senses: The Relevance Of Senses In Contact With Spiritual Entities And Orixás In The Brazilian Umbanda Religion. (D)*

18:40 – 19:00 **Coffee Break**

19:00 – 20:00 **Keynote**

**Harvey, Graham:** *Trusting Senses for Wellbeing / Countering Cartesian Disassociation. (GB)*

20:00 – 21:00 **Reception**

## Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2019

9:30 – 10:50 **Technology & Movement**

**Freigang**, Felix: *Evocative Technologies Of Self-Disclosure: Unraveling The Therapeutic Aesthetics Of Mobile App-Assisted Mood-Tracking*. (D)

**Chubb**, Shirley: *Significant Walks: Aesthetic Articulations Of Walking, Data And Place*. (GB)

10:50 – 11:20 **Coffee Break**

11: 20 – 13:00 **Indigenous Practices**

**Waldram**, James B. & **Hatala**, Andrew R.: *The Role Of Sensorial Processes in Q'eqchi' Maya Healing: A Case Study Of Depression and Bereavement*. (CDN)

**Bekkum**, Dirck v.: *Beauty And Grace In Co-Creating Transitional Spaces: Cultural Translation Of Active Ingredients From First-Nation-Rituals To Therapy Into Families*. (NL)

(incl. Workshop during Lunch-Break)

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch Break (Alternative: Workshop 'From Aesthetics of Healing To Co-Creative A/effective Spaces' by Dirck van Bekkum, Theresia Bernet and Marijke Steegstra of MOIRA CTT)**

14:00 – 16:00 **Arts**

**Dieppe**, Paul: *'How Are You Healing?' Using Art To Create Healing Spaces In Hospitals*. (GB)

**Erkkilä-Hill**, Jaana: *'Slow Labs' For The Facilitation Of Healing In Groups And Organizations Through Utilization Of Art And Creativity*. (FIN)

**Pollmann**, Tynne C.: *Sense-Making: Artistic Research Meets Psychiatry*. (D)

16:00 – 16:30 **Coffee Break**

16: 30 – 17:40 **Psychiatry**

**Del Sarto**, Sabrina: *In The Mirror Of Institutionalization: A Hospital Ethnography*. (BR)

**Khan**, Jahangir: *Anthropological Investigation Of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder*. (D)

17:40 – 18:30 **Festschrift In Honor Of Ekkehard Schröder (D)**

20:00 **Conference Dinner** (on your own expenses)

## **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2019**

09:30 – 10:50 ***Hospital***

**Van der Geest**, Sjaak & **Shahaduz**, Zaman: *Defecating In Hospitals: Working With The Senses In Therapeutic Contexts.* (NL & GB)

**Sabernig**, Katharina: *Aesthetics Of The Inner Body.* (A)

10:50 – 11:10 ***Coffee Break***

11: 10 – 12:30 ***Substances***

**Drayson**, Hannah: *A Phenomenology Of Tablet Taking: Pre-Reflective Experiences Of Healing Encounters.* (GB)

**Harriman**, Natalie: *Homeopathic Prescribing As An Apprehension Of The Whole: Can This Model Inform Our Concept Of Healing?* (GB)

12:30 – 12:45 ***Coffee Break***

12:45 – 13:30 ***Final Discussion***

13:30 – 14:30 ***Lunch Break***

14:30 – 16:00 ***General Meeting AGEM (Mitgliederversammlung)***

**Prof. Dr. Basu, Helene** (hbasu\_01@uni-muenster.de)

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Emertus Professor of Health and Wellbeing, University of Exeter, **Great Britain**

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Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Department of Religious Studies, Open University, **Great Britain**

**Dr. Hatala, Andrew R.** (andrew.hatala@umanitoba.ca)

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Emeritus Professor of Medical Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, **Netherlands**

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**International Conference “Aesthetics of Healing: Working with the Senses in Therapeutic Contexts”**

**May 24-26, 2019 in Münster (Westphalia) / Germany**

**Please register until May 17, 2019 with your name and affiliation with Jonas Eickhoff (jonas.eickhoff@t-online.de). Further information: [www.agem.de](http://www.agem.de).**

Participation is for free, but limited to sixty persons. The conference language will be English.

Please let us know, if you want to participate in the chargeable conference dinner at Saturday night, so that we can reserve a suitable location.

There will be a workshop (see announcement) at Saturday noon. Please, let us know in advance if you want to participate.

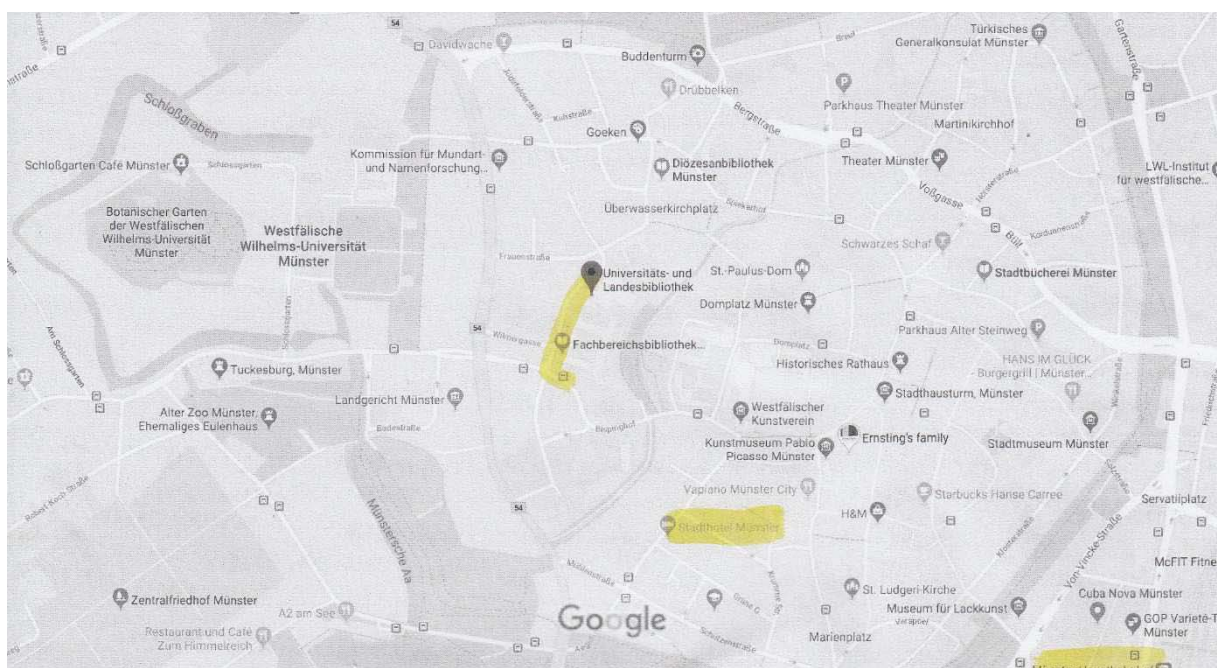
**Venue:**

The conference takes place in the city center of Münster in the buildings of the university's library.

**ULB (Room ULB 1), Krummer Timpen 5, 48143 Münster.**

The closest bus station is **Krummer Timpen**. From there you walk 3 minutes (see yellow mark in the center of the map).

From Münster central train station (Hauptbahnhof, see yellow mark at bottom right) you can take the buses 1, 12 and 13 departing from bus stop B1 or buses 11 and 22 departing from bus stop C1. Both stations are opposite of the main entrance of central station and buses take about 10 minutes.



**Hotels:**

There are plenty of hotels in Münster, one of the closest is Stadthotel (city hotel), also marked yellow.

Here is a link to an overview with prices for two nights at the conference date:

<https://www.google.com/travel/hotels/M%C3%BCnster?ap=SAE&g2lb=4207876%2C4208993%2C4223281%2C4240602%2C4242081%2C4242836%2C4242898%2C4243604%2C4248641%2C4244079%2C4244566%2C4246255&hl=de&gl=de&un=0&q=hotels%20m%C3%BCnster&rp=OAFAAEgC&ictx=1&ved=2ahUKEwj56sjZx67hAhVhSxUIHe3zDi8QtgN6BAGKEEE&hrf=CgUIrweQACIDRVVSKhYKBwjDxAFGBgSBwjDxAFGBBoYAiACsAEAWAGaAQoSCE3DvG5zdGVyogEVCgkvbS8wMTQ5bXESCE3DvG5zdGVyqgEKCgIIIRICCBUYAaoBBgoCCGIYAJIBAiAB&tcfs=Ei8KCS9tLzAxNDltcRIITcO8bnN0ZXIaGAoKMjAxOS0wNS0yNBiKMjAxOS0wNS0yNIIA>

Stadthotel Münster (170€) is right in the center of the map and about 10 minutes walk to the conference. The city center of Münster is very beautiful and historic with many churches, museums, parks and traditional restaurants, which are worth visiting. Also close to the venue is the castle of Münster, which is part of the university's administration and has a botanic garden in the back.

**Airports:**

Münster/Osnabrück (FMO), from where a shuttle bus (S 50) drives to the central station, which takes about half an hour.

Düsseldorf (DUS), from where 13 minutes after every full hour (8:13, 9:13, 10:13 ...) a train with final destination Münster leaves, taking 1h 35min.

Please do not hesitate to ask for further information!!!

**Workshop offer for “Aesthetics of Healing: Working with the Senses in Therapeutic Contexts”, 32nd Annual Conference of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnologie und Medizin e.V. (AGEM) in Cooperation with the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Münster**

**May 24-26, 2019 in Münster (Westphalia) / Germany**

This workshop is held after my – Dirck van Bekkum – presentation on Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, during lunch hours in transitional space with participants of the conference (60 minutes).

**'FROM AESTHETICS OF HEALING TO CO-CREATING AFFECTIVE SPACES'**

A workshop/performance from clinical anthropology and educating mental health professionals

In the Netherlands a small group of transcultural system therapists, social workers, psychotherapists, psychiatrists has, the last 15 years, developed, from their clinical/educational experiences, anthropologically informed, 'collective learning/healing practices'.

During this collective learning/healing practice 'transitional spaces are co-created'. The practice of co-creating transitional spaces in groups is used in both helping families to help them (Van Bekkum & Limahelu 2017) and educating transcultural groups/system/family therapists. Transitional spaces occur in different levels and intensities due to intentions and groups composition. The educational 'transitional' settings offer students, being part of families themselves and of professional organizations working with families, moments of deep-learning, of solution realization and of healing in non-therapeutic 'ritual' ways.

Based on shared non-European 'ritual' experiences and on Scheff/Turner/Bateson/Rappaport conceptions we constructed a 'mise en scene' and process protocol for multicultural, multi-religious and multi-gendered groups of families and students (Van Bekkum et. al. 1996: Migration as Life-Phase-Transition and Van Bekkum et. al. 2010: Rituals and Protective Wrapping).

We invite everybody to participate and observe/reflect emotionally/cognitively in the workshop experience. This enhances the participants' learning (embodying) experiences.

The workshop will be co-performed by Dirck van Bekkum (clinical-systemic anthropologist), by my wife/business partner in Moira CTT Theresia Bernet (organizational expert) and by fellow anthropologist Dr. Marijke Steegstra.