

## Call for Papers: Edited Collection

### Medicines for the Anthropocene: Health on a Finite Planet

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We are seeking contributions for an edited volume about health in an era of social-ecological instability and economic contraction. Below you will find an abstract of the book and an outline of section themes. To propose a chapter, please complete the application form: <http://www.healthsystemsintheanthropocene.com/application-form-edited-collection-and-transdisciplinary-workshop/> Applications are due on Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

Note: We will also be hosting a transdisciplinary workshop, “Improving health in an era of social-ecological instability and economic contraction” at the University of Waterloo, Canada, in March 2018. If you wish to attend the workshop, please complete the relevant sections of the web form when you submit the abstract for your paper. For more information, see:  
<http://www.healthsystemsintheanthropocene.com/transdisciplinary-workshop/>

#### Abstract

The Anthropocene has profound implications for the health of human beings. Paradoxically, the epoch named for the rise of humanity as a geological force is also the age in which our tenure on this planet is most precarious. To continue flourishing on Earth, we must pursue societal transitions that will be as all-encompassing as the Neolithic or industrial revolutions. For decades, we have been able to perceive the contours of a potential resilient future for humanity; a carbon-neutral society, sustained by a combination of ecological consciousness, technological innovation, ecological restoration, and stabilization of the human population. But managerial solutions have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness, especially at the global scale, where we continue to bear witness to the acceleration of resource and energy consumption alongside sharp curves of population growth and rising carbon emissions. These trends take a toll on our health and exacerbate human suffering through resource-based conflicts, air pollution, chemical toxins, the declining nutrient content of our food, and the mental health effects of environmental disasters and loss of access to nature. While global health researchers, philanthro-capitalists and multilateral organizations turn to sustainable development and global governance to improve population health by expanding universal access to Western-style health care services, we propose that we could instead arrive at a healthy future by an alternate route.

The essays in this volume argue that population health will largely be decided at the intersection of experimental social innovations and appropriate technologies that arise amid the turbulent



creative destruction of capitalist modernity. As ecological limits to economic growth bear down on social institutions established in the brief (geologically speaking) window of energy abundance that accompanied the exploitation of fossil fuels, opportunities open up to deepen community reciprocity, local self-sufficiency, and alternative ontologies that reframe what it means to live and die well in the age of human impact. On a finite earth, we have no choice but to live within ecological limits if we hope to survive the climactic transitions set in motion by uncontrolled consumption of resources and energy over the past 150 years. This is as true for health and care modalities as it is for our economies and energy systems.

Part One of this book will consider the state of human health now and what is at stake in the transition to an alternative social-ecological system guided by ecological constraints. Part Two will introduce diverse historical and contemporary social innovations that together prefigure viable approaches to health in the Anthropocene. Part Three will draw together a series of alternative ontological approaches that could lay the groundwork for living well within the earth's biophysical limits. The conclusion will synthesize the central theses of the volume and propose directions for future research and practice.

## Outline

**Introduction:** An overview of the implications of limits to growth, energy descent, and social-ecological systems change as it pertains to health in the Anthropocene

**Section 1:** Population health in the Anthropocene: what is at stake in the transition to an alternative social-ecological system guided by ecological constraints

1. Effect of climate change and other ecological crises on human health
2. Changing ecologies of disease
3. Increasing vulnerability of health systems that are dependent on fossil fuels
4. Pressures exerted on high-technology, high-energy biomedical health care models
5. Thermodynamics of modern health systems and implications for a low-energy future
6. Individualism in medicine
7. Tensions and wicked problems of applying management approaches
8. Welfare state transitions and the challenges associated with providing social goods without economic growth
9. Health effects of demographic concerns related to any of the following: aging populations, global migration, rising global populations, declining national populations
10. Diseases of modernity
11. Theories of social contagion
12. Mental health effects of ecological crises and/or loss of access to nature

**Section 2:** Historical social innovations, institutional structures that prefigure viable health systems for the Anthropocene.

1. A review of appropriate tech approaches to health in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries



2. Community-based approaches to care for mental illness (e.g. Geel, therapeutic communities)
3. Examples of health systems that involve low energy and material throughput (e.g. Cuba)
4. Fictive kinship networks in times of social upheaval
5. Social enterprises for health and wellbeing
6. Social finance for health and wellbeing
7. Regenerative agriculture
8. Guilds
9. Transition Towns
10. Indigenous medicines
11. Ecovillages and health
12. Barefoot doctor movements
13. Community nursing
14. Ecotherapies and horticultural therapies
15. Localizing the production of pharmaceutical drugs

**Section 3:** Alternative ontological approaches that lay the groundwork for living well within the earth's biophysical limits

1. Degrowth approaches for health and wellbeing
2. Multispecies ethnography as a way to understand ontologies of interdependence
3. Reframing death and dying
4. Virtue and flourishing as the basis of the good life
5. Ontologies for an age of ecological constraints
6. Aldo Leopold's land ethic
7. Ecological consciousness formation for health
8. Altruism and health
9. Ecological public health perspectives including EcoHealth, One Health, GeoHealth, Planetary Health

**Conclusion:** A synthesis of existing research and practice, and a proposal for ongoing work

**You may also propose an additional chapter theme in any section.**

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