

<http://somatosphere.net/2009/03/nordic-medical-anthropology-in-maq.html>

Nordic Medical Anthropology in MAQ

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By Eugene Raikhel

The latest issue of Medical Anthropology Quarterly is devoted to medical anthropology in Scandinavia. As Benedicte Ingstad and Aud Talle (the guest editors of the special issue) write, one of the key aspects which potentially differentiates medical anthropologists working in these states from their colleagues in the United States—and to a lesser degree, Canada and the UK—is the institutional and political economic context for medicine and healthcare:

With respect both to the underlying socially constitutive cultural values and to governmental policies and structures, Nordic social security systems—what is often referred to as “the welfare state” (a value-laden phrase that does not adequately translate outside the Nordic context)—and national health care systems are quite different from those of the United States.... The ideology of “equality” as instantiated in Nordic countries (Gullestad 1992) permeates the construction of the “welfare state” (Andersen 1996; Andersen et al. 2002; Leira 2007) and is in fact an underlying premise of all the Nordic national cultures.... The welfare state appears somewhat different in each of the Nordic countries, but its underlying ideological base of solidarity and collective responsibility for the weaker members of society through national health care systems, free education, and so forth is the same. Now, many perceive the welfare state model to be threatened by globalization, individualism, and the fragmentation of local communities and traditional family structures ([Ingstad and Talle 2009](#)).

The special issue includes these articles:

[Health Identities and Subjectivities: The Ethnographic Challenge](#)
(available without subscription)

Susan Reynolds Whyte

[Power, Trust, and Risk: Some Reflections on an Absent Issue](#)

Harald Grimen

[Emotional Experts: Parents' Views on End-of-Life Decisions for Preterm Infants in Iceland](#)

Jónína Einarisdóttir

[Grips and Ties: Agency, Uncertainty, and the Problem of Suffering in North Karelia](#)

Marja-Liisa Honkasalo

These look like very interesting articles, but aside from that, I would be interested to hear from any readers who happen to be medical anthropologists — or other social scientists — working in Scandinavia: to what degree do you find the notion of a “Nordic medical anthropology” to be a useful category either as a descriptive classification or as a basis for professional organization?

AMA citation

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