

**Author:** Edoardo Occa, [e.occa@campus.unimib.it](mailto:e.occa@campus.unimib.it) / [e.occa@cuamm.org](mailto:e.occa@cuamm.org)

PhD Candidate Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Milano Bicocca –

Head of Community Health Interventions,

Doctors with Africa CUAMM NGO, Mozambique [www.cuamm.org](http://www.cuamm.org)

**Title:** Hatuna mali lakini tunashirikiana yakutosha. A case study from rural Tanzania

## **Panel: Well-what? Navigating discourses of ‘being well’ in medical anthropology and beyond**

### **Short abstract**

The paper stems on nine years of managing community health programs / ethnographic work in Tanzania where still influential Ujamaa social structures and mind-set re-define the meaning of personal wellbeing and social disease. Paradigms of health development strategies are under critical lens as well

### **Long abstract**

Between 1967 and 1985 Tanzania experienced the social engineering known as Ujamaa the “African way to socialism”. In Swahili, it means "brotherhood / familyhood" and still it frames the understanding of well-being. This is felt as a symbolic dimension, which is stratified across generations, visible between the faults of structures of power.

The vernacular expression chosen means " we don't have much, but we cooperate well"

Where showing off excessive wealth is linked to destabilising forces, the concept of well-being appears in bas-relief on the narrative plot of relationships, meaning the circularity across cohesion, values and behaviours.

Consolidated mutual aid practices deriving from the setting of Ujamaa are still in place, such as fields worked collectively for poor families and community health agents exempted from local fees.

Vital organs of this process are the dialectic between elder’s council and institutional government, as well as an urgent exogamy between languages and ethnic groups. The social body and the state of well-being question the paradigms of public health interventions which, while acting on the ganglia of society (maternal and child health), assess the results in terms of quantitative outcomes only. Accessing to services, being an indicator of equity, defines a hermeneutic grid parallel to the value scales of the communities. On the horizon of anthropology of development, an ethnography that resolves the dichotomy between the frame of cultural materialism and the “thick description”, opens to auroral scenarios for re-elaborating the concept of wellbeing and of the responsibility that social anthropology entails.