

MAYS "founding mothers"
by
Susann Huschke and Claire Beaudevin

Susann – MAYS was a fortunate coincident, really. My PhD supervisor suggested that I put myself up for election as the student representative of the EASA Medical Anthropology network. The room was crammed full, and I was late, as usual. Standing by the door because there were no seats left, I met Claire. She introduced herself and said: should we both put ourselves up for election together, it sounds way more fun to share the position? And so we did, and the rest is history.

One of the key ingredients for a successful network or event of any sort seems to be, to me at least, to collaborate with people you actually like. With people you can rely on and people whose work style you like. Everyone's got their way of doing things. Having organized events together with various different people over the last years, I have learned that working with a friend and colleague who has a similar way of doing things makes everything run so much smoother, and much more fun, too. At the same time, Claire and I work in very different areas in terms of our research and have different ways of looking at the world, which is also very important because it means you get to see things (such as abstracts to be evaluated, topics to focus on, methods to be selected) from multiple perspectives. Last but not least, it is useful if the team members have different practical skills. Claire, for example, is an IT wizard, whereas I am rather useless with any sort of technology. Much of MAYS could not have happened the way it did without her expertise!

Claire – I could not agree more with Susann about the importance of working with people you like and respect and with whom you can team up with complementary skills (and with fun)! It may seem obvious and/or trivial, but it's not always that easy to implement ;-) It's also a motto I've tried to follow since then, as applying it makes my professional life so much better!

Once upon a time, before Susann came up with a good name for it, MAYS was named StuMedAnth (I might be good for IT, but I was not that good when choosing this initial Gmail login!). And since these early days, one of its great features is fluidity, flexibility (that has been allowed by EASA, the umbrella institution): to be in, one only needs to subscribe to the listserv. This has a price, of course: the absence of a running budget. But it has also an advantage: we had to learn how to organize events with a high scientific value and very few expenses. And it also led to having highly motivated people onboard each time we co-organized events (Oxford, Berlin, Warsaw, and Paris)!

MAYS brought a lot to my life, besides tons of hours of volunteer work: first of all, I gained a great friend. As of different practical skills, I have to say Susann's great English helped me a lot to move beyond weird French-English! Over the years, we have learned how to work closely together despite the fact we never lived in the same country. We have thus coordinated MAYS from Germany, France, Northern-Ireland and the Sultanate of Oman.

Now that MAYS counts almost 500 members (10 times the initial membership!), we both hope it will continue to expand, to link up young medical anthropologists wherever they work, foster new initiatives and to organize groundbreaking events! We would like to emphasize another key feature of MAYS that keeps it going year after year: the will to strengthen a friendly, informal work atmosphere in its conferences, and to truly engage with each other's work.

Longue vie à MAYS ;)
Susann Huschke and Claire Beaudevin