

# Collaboratory for Ethnographic Experimentation

## #Colleex

#Colleex is a network that aims to open a space for debate and intervention around experimental forms of ethnographic fieldwork. Amid profound debates in recent years on the nature and conventions of ethnography, #Colleex seeks to explore novel forms of knowledge production for anthropology. The network is organized as a collaboratory whose main agenda is to foster practical explorations alongside theoretical debates on what we call ethnographic experimentation.

### Fieldwork

Fieldwork has traditionally been understood as the cornerstone epistemic situation for the production of anthropological knowledge in ethnography. Whether as empirical practice or as disciplinary narrative, fieldwork is not what it used to be — or maybe it never has been what the canon narrates. The reputedly solitary research practice of ethnography has given way to collaborative projects, far-away locations have been replaced by close-to-home field sites, and traditional visual predominance has been expanded into a multi-sensory concern.

The anthropological imagination has traditionally understood the epistemic practice of fieldwork in observational terms. The core trope of participant observation has worked both as description and prescription for the kind of social relationships and epistemic practices through which anthropologists produce knowledge in the field. The entry of anthropology in novel empirical sites and the construction of new objects of study in the last decades require us urgently to revise and devise other forms of practising fieldwork.

### Experimentation

Invoking the figure of the experiment acts as a provocation to investigate alternative epistemic practices in ethnography. #Colleex intends to explore the infrastructures, spaces, forms of relationships, methods and techniques required to inject an experimental sensibility in fieldwork. Nevertheless, there is no intention to oppose experimentation to observation. On the contrary, #Colleex seeks to discern the multiple forms of relationship between these two epistemic forms — and their correlate modes of relationality — that in different circumstances and situations may be complementary, adjacent or substitutive.

Not alien to the anthropological endeavour even then, experimentation was invoked decades ago as an opportunity to renovate the discipline through novel forms of ethnographic writing and representation. #Colleex network would like to further develop the experimental impulse present in anthropology, but shift its locus from the process of writing to the practice of fieldwork. The intention is to work on a question: What would ethnographic fieldwork look like if it was shaped around the epistemic practice of experimentation? Hence, Collaboratory for Ethnographic Experimentation.

#Colleex fieldwork experimentation is not being invoked just for its own sake but because there is a prospect that doing so could help foster new forms of anthropological theorization.

### **Collaboration**

The network seeks to connect with anthropologists and other practitioners of ethnography interested in discussing their fieldwork practice. It could be of interest for specialists in the fields of visual anthropology, sensory anthropology, digital ethnography, design anthropology, social scientists, researchers using participatory methodologies, creative intersections of art and anthropology, or anthropology and STS. The network also seeks to include specialists from other domains like artists, cultural producers, designers and practitioners of any discipline interested in creative experimentation with ethnographic practice. The inventive unfolding of ethnography already taking place in those areas could greatly contribute to strengthening the reach of anthropological fieldwork practices.

#Colleex is established as a collaboratory, a project that aims at promoting forms of collaboration among all those interested in the topic under discussion.

In contrast with permanent networks, from its very inception #Colleex would like to work with a temporary horizon of 5 years, after which we expect to deliver a contribution of the work done by the network in appropriate formats, be it in conventional academic and/or more experimental formats faithful to the collaboratory sensibility we are invoking. Four convenors will develop their task for periods of two years. The network will only continue after the first period of five years if a defined program for its continuity is agreed by its members and passed by the EASA Executive Committee.

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## Network convenors

Eeva Berglund, Adolfo Estalella, Anna Lisa Ramella, Tomás Sánchez Criado (alphabetical order).

### **Eeva Berglund, independent researcher (University of Helsinki, Aalto University).**

I have a PhD in social anthropology, which was published as *Knowing Nature, Knowing Science: an ethnography of environmental activism* in 1998. From early in my graduate life, my research drew me into many cross-disciplinary debates and methodologically unorthodox engagements. In 2002 I left a University of London lectureship in anthropology for a more varied life. About ten years later, however, I returned to teaching as an adjunct in Helsinki, and have taught students from many backgrounds since. I write in English and Finnish, in academic, journalistic and activist registers.

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**Adolfo Estalella, Spanish Research Council.** I am an anthropologist and postdoctoral researcher at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). My two fields of research are Anthropology of Knowledge and Science and Technology Studies (STS). My recent work is focused in the study of digital cultures and forms of grassroots urbanism. I am interested in civic projects and activist initiatives that intervene in the city, more specifically I investigate two aspects of this forms of urban experimentation: the material infrastructures mobilized to refurbishing the public space and the epistemic practices and learning contexts through which knowledge circulates. Two other topics of my interest are the methodological innovations of ethnography and research ethics.

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**Anna Lisa Ramella, University of Siegen.** Anna Lisa Ramella is an anthropologist and filmmaker, graduate of the M.A. Transcultural Studies at the University of Bremen. Using methods of Visual Anthropology, her M.A. approached sedentary life in transit along the railroad region of the Dakar-Niger express in Mali. Through the conjunction of text, image and sound, the interactive web project [www.laviedurail.net](http://www.laviedurail.net) was created. Currently, Anna Lisa Ramella is preparing her PhD at the University of Bremen, a digital ethnography project focusing on place-making within mobility on the example of touring musicians. She has presented her research and films at international film festivals, including Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival, SVA Film and Media Festival as well as international conferences such as IUAES and EASA. Her newest film „Circulating objects“ brought her back to West Africa to visually unravel the many perspectives on the trade of objects between Europe and Africa.

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**Tomás Sánchez Criado, TUM's Munich Center for Technology in Society (MCTS).** PhD is a social anthropologist with specialization in STS , Senior Researcher at TUM's Munich Center for Technology in Society (MCTS). Since 2007 I have been studying ethnographically the material politics of care infrastructures, through an analysis of the promises and compromises of different corporate-institutional & grassroots self-care devices (telecare for older people, open/DIY technical aids for independent-living, and urban accessibility arrangements and interventions). Currently developing ethnographic research on urban accessibility struggles and the creation, implementation, maintenance and supervision of sidewalk democracy projects as

well as inclusive urbanism practices in Barcelona (in comparison with similar transformations in Europe).

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### **Convenor election**

The network will have four convenors. Network convenors will be replaced every two years. Convenor group should be balanced in gender and career stage terms, the latter meaning that there should be at least a PhD candidate in the convenor group.

### **Activities**

The network aims at opening a space of debate, collaboration and intervention among those scholars interested in the topic of ethnographic experimentation. We expect to organize at least a meeting per year, but we will promote the organization of activities under the rubric of #Colleex among those scholars pertaining to the network.

We will promote a digital infrastructure as key part of the network activities. The experience of some of us as participants in the Anthropology of Media is valuable and we consider this network an exceptional referent for the kind of digital intervention we intend to develop. The media seminars of the AnthroMedia network are a reference for us and we will try to organize a series of seminars of this kind during the time of the network.

We have an agreement with Allegra Lab to publish a series of brief pieces in their website. Allegra has been curating with extremely care a blog and a series of XXXX in its website and we think is an opportunity for #Colleex to get involved in a public already established.

We expect too to promote a series of publication for the next years that would sum up to the edited book we are under contract with the EASA book series.

## Network supporters

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