



## **Interdisciplinary Workshop on Collaborative Research and Writing**

**Thursday and Friday, 5 – 6 May 2022**

**University of Neuchâtel**

**Organizers: Lisa Marie Borrelli (HES-SO Valais | nccr – on the move),  
Jan Beek (Johannes Gutenberg University), and  
Anna Wyss (University of Neuchâtel | nccr – on the move)**

The workshop will be held at the University of Neuchâtel, Espace Tilo-Frey1, Room R.O.12.  
Online participation is possible via Webex. A link will be sent after the receipt of the registration.

Those interested in the workshop can register until 3 May 2022. Please e-mail to Anna Wyss:  
[anna.wyss@unine.ch](mailto:anna.wyss@unine.ch).

### Theme and Main Goals

Collaborative research includes various processes, from a shared data collection, joint data analysis and writing (Lassiter 2005) to participatory engagements that critically examine questions of authorship (Mayblin et al. 2020; Nimführ & Sesay 2019). It also includes the connection and exchange between various partners, including researchers, interlocutors, and other partnerships that emerge during the planning of a project. In recent years the call for participatory research has increased (Facer & Pahl 2017), tackling questions of power inequalities between the researcher and those 'researched', knowledge production and discussions on how to involve research interlocutors more holistically in the production of our data. Hence, these processes of collaboration require much organization and an ongoing dialogue.

At the same time, old and new concepts (re)emerge that tackle auto-ethnography, inter-, trans- and multinational research collaborations or para-ethnography, the collaborative work between anthropologists and e.g. members of the studied spaces that are no longer understood as mere 'sources of raw data', but as 'producers of cultural analysis' (Islam 2015, p. 231). Such reconceptualization also reshapes the spaces where we conduct research, making them at times into 'para-sites' (Holmes and Marcus 2008: 97, 100), 'space[s] for a kind of conceptual work that is not derivable from theory, academic literature, or interviews' and that blur 'the boundaries between the field site and the academic conference or seminar room' (ibid., see also Sandoz 2019). These shifting intellectual practices make it necessary to discuss different forms of collaborative research and engage more actively and critically with how our own work can be challenged and advanced in light of such concepts.

Just as important, but less reflected on, are new forms of knowledge production between research professionals. While formerly, the ideal and the reality of qualitative research has been the 'lone ethnographer', most research nowadays takes place in larger, often interdisciplinary, research projects and research centers (such as the NCCR itself). The workshop will allow participants to discuss the potentials and risks of these epistemological practices, drawing on their own experiences with them as ethnographic material.

### This Workshop Sets Out to Discuss Two Main Themes

First, we wish to discuss how we can fruitfully engage in collaborative work when conducting research together, focusing on inter-research collaboration. Planning, conducting and analyzing data together (within a research context) is challenging (Dusdal & Powell 2021). Yet, it increases the amount of data that we can process, enables us to apprehend a research context from different perspectives and allows for a critical engagement in analyzing the material we gathered. It impacts our research reliability and transparency, pushing us to reflect on situations that we observed from different angles and questions pre-disposed and ready-made assumptions that we might be biased towards. Some collaborative engagement might include conducting interviews together, but eventually also observations and writing joint articles, chapters or entire books (Eule et al. 2019).

Yet, collaborative research does not only cover joint work between research professionals but new ways in which interlocutors become involved in the production and analysis of data, able to shape our understanding of the observed and question our interpretations. Hence, the second theme of this workshop sets out to discuss and advance our knowledge and experiences regarding collaborative research and writing with research participants. We will engage in discussions on para-ethnography and how we can expand our known and used research methods beyond the classical set and instead include 'interlocutors', whom we encounter and base our data and analysis on. This includes experiences on the cooperation and collaboration with interlocutors and participatory methodologies (see Holmes & Marcus 2005a,b). Indeed, research methodologies have increasingly expanded, developed, and discussed the involvement of the 'interlocutor' or 'informant'. Those we receive our information from, are indeed not 'others' in opposition to us, but – especially in research contexts set closer to 'home' – often differ only marginally. Indeed, we might 'also share broadly the same world of representation [...] and the same curiosity and predicament about constituting the social in our affinities' (Holmes & Marcus 2005b: 250). As such, para-ethnography receives a relevant position within our everyday research.

## Thursday, 5 May 2022

Location: University of Neuchâtel, Espace Tilo-Frey 1, 2000 Neuchâtel, Room R.O.12.

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- 09:15 **Welcome and Introduction**  
Jan Beek, Lisa Marie Borrelli, Anna Wyss
- 09:30 **Introduction Round**
- 10:00 **Session 1: Ethnographic Team Research – Gathering Data**  
**Ethnographic Team Research as a Method: An Outline of its History**  
Thomas Bierschenk, Annalena Kolloch  
**Conducting Fieldwork Together**  
Lisa Marie Borrelli, Annika Lindberg
- 11:30 Lunch Break at “Bach et Buck” (Avenue du Premier-Mars 22)
- 13:00 **Session 2: Ethnographic Team Research – Analysis and Writing**  
**Doing and Writing Ethnography Collectively: Insights from a Project on the Contested Control of Migration**  
Lisa Marie Borrelli, Tobias G. Eule, Annika Lindberg, Anna Wyss  
**Joint Ethnographic Research as Joint Storytelling**  
Jan Beek, Mirco Göpfert  
**Insights into Interdisciplinary Ethnographic Research**  
Franziska Hohl Zürcher, Cornelia Griebel
- 14:30 Coffee Break
- 14:45 **Discussion and Q&A: Power, Friction and the Return of Armchair Anthropology?**  
Moderated by Joanna Menet
- 15:30 **Practical Exercise I: Analyzing Data Collaboratively: Discussing Fieldnotes and Interviews**  
Lisa Marie Borrelli | Laura McAdam-Otto
- 16:45 Coffee Break
- 17:00 **Participatory MINGA Workshops in Practice**  
Christina Mitmasser / Yvonne Riaño
- 18:00 Official End of Day 1
- 18:00 **NCCR Fellow Meeting | Gender Peer Group Meeting**
- 19:30 Dinner at “Les Bains des Dames” (Quai Louis Perrier 1)

## Friday, 6 May 2022

Location: University of Neuchâtel, Espace Tilo-Frey 1, 2000 Neuchâtel, Room R.O.12.

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- 09:15 **Welcome Recap and Outlook**  
Jan Beek, Lisa Marie Borrelli, Anna Wyss
- 09:30 **Practical Exercise II: Analyzing Data Collaboratively: Practical Writing Exercise**  
Joanna Menet
- 11:30 Lunch at “Quai du Port”
- 13:00 **Session 3: Participatory Research and Non-Academics as Research Colleagues**  
**The Museum as an Epistemological Pluriverse? Collaborative Experiences with Indigenous Communities from the Amazon and Beyond**  
Andrea Scholz (online)  
**Research and Refusals: On the Challenges and Im/Possibilities of Collaborating with Academics**  
Annika Lindberg and Steve Nwaogu Stanley (online)
- 14:30 Coffee break
- 14:45 **Wrap-Up: Discussion, Preparation for Workshop II**
- 16:00 Official End of Day 2

## List of Abstracts

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### **Thomas Bierschenk | Annalena Kolloch: Ethnographic Team Research as a Method: an Outline of its History**

The topic of the lecture are the advantages, opportunities and challenges of ethnographic team research. The first part deals with the emergence of this methodological format from the perspective of a long-standing organizer (Bierschenk) of such research, also in the context of student research-related learning (so-called teaching research). Inspirations for the development of the method were the actor-centred and conflict-oriented Anthropology of the Manchester School, epistemic practices of the sociology of development in Bielefeld, the use of simulation games as a training method in development cooperation and the sociological approaches of grounded theory. In the second part, the method is examined from the perspective of a former participant (Kolloch) in such teaching research and other collaborative research. In the third part, the speakers jointly discuss recent insights from conducting team research on so-called public 'hotspots', which was inspired by the earlier experiences.

### **Annika Lindberg | Lisa Marie Borrelli: Conducting Fieldwork Together: (no abstract)**

### **Lisa Marie Borrelli | Tobias G. Eule | Annika Lindberg | Anna Wyss: Doing and Writing Ethnography Collectively – Insights from a Project on the Contested Control of Migration**

This input will reflect on the collective research journey we have taken in our project 'Contested control at the margins of the state', in which we studied how migration control is enacted, shaped, and challenged by various actors (including police officers, lawyers, migration officials, NGO staff and migrants themselves) across several European states. Overcoming conventional ethnographic labor division, our approach entailed compiling and building upon rarely combined perspectives, which stemmed from our interrelated yet distinct research projects. In our input, we reflect on the opportunities and challenges, including the analytical gains to be made and the necessary compromises and complexities that present themselves in such collaborative ethnographic research projects. We describe our methods of conducting research at time together, at times alone, the process of sharing and jointly analysing our research material, and finally writing down our findings in our collaborative monograph. We make a case for collective writing as a mode of enriching our analyses – and of denouncing the individual-centric incentive structures of academia by acknowledging and actively promoting collective approaches to academic knowledge generation.

### **Jan Beek | Mirco Göpfert: Joint Ethnographic Research as Joint Storytelling**

Ethnographic team research is difficult! Any form of work collaboration is challenging, but field work has been created as individual work, and its results cannot be brought together as mere data. In our presentation, we examine joint writing as a specific form of knowledge production. Based on similar attempts and our own experiences, we reflect how we tried to share our ethnographic material when writing together. Because ethnographic material is highly contextualised and interwoven with interpretations, the most important forms of exchange were ones that were open to such implicit knowledge – telling stories from the field. Based on our particular experiences, our presentation critically reflects the epistemic potential and limits of such team research.

### **Franziska Hohl Zürcher | Cornelia Griebel: Insights into Interdisciplinary Ethnographic Research**

Our contribution highlights the challenges and opportunities in interdisciplinary ethnographic research. Thematic foci are, for example, the approach to data collection, emphasis in data analysis and writing, and journal selection. Our contribution draws on the experiences we, a sociologist and a translational scholar, have gained in the research project «Interceptive interpreting in lawful communication surveillance». In this research project, we explore how interceptive interpreters translate intercepted conversations and conserve them in written form, but also how they cooperate with the police in their daily routines. Not all challenges in interdisciplinary ethnographic research are due to the different disciplines alone. In addition to interdisciplinarity, collaboration is always interpersonal and, in our specific case, which is not, however, a special case, also «inter-spatial» and «inter-temporal». The challenges and opportunities of these three additional dimensions of collaborative research will also be briefly addressed in the presentation.

### **Lisa Marie Borrelli | Laura McAdam-Otto: Analysing Data Collaboratively: Discussing Fieldnotes and Interviews**

In this session, we focus on jointly discussing and interpreting ethnographic/empirical material. Together, we will explore the technique of an 'ethnopschoanalytische Deutungswerkstatt' (ethno-psychoanalytical interpretation workshop). The session will begin with a brief introduction concerning the method of interpreting material in an ethno-psychoanalytical manner, where we will also explain the 'rules' of the method. In a second step, we will work in two groups with material shared by participants. In the final part of the session, we will return to our plenary group and reflect on our experiences of interpreting material together.

Please contact Lisa via MAIL by [lisa.borrelli@hevs.ch](mailto:lisa.borrelli@hevs.ch) if you wish to share your material, so that Lisa and I can proceed with our planning. If you wish to share material, you can either provide the group with parts of an interview, or with fieldnotes. Please share material in the English language.



We will read the material during the workshop, i.e. those of you who will act as interpreters do not need to prepare the session in advance. The material will be treated confidentially. This also applies to the interpretations and thoughts shared in the small group sessions.

### **Yvonne Riaño | Christina Mittmasser: Creating Spaces of Inclusion and Mutual Learning: A Reflection on Participatory Research Designs**

Academics today search for inclusive methodologies that aim at creating knowledge with research subjects rather than about them. This resonates with feminist and post-colonial approaches which strive to 'decolonize' methodologies by considering research participants as real partners. Despite intense theoretical debates on this subject, the implementation of horizontal collaborations remains limited as well as a complex issue. In this presentation, we raise the question of how academics can facilitate co-creation processes and reflect on the principles that should guide research partnerships as well as practical examples. We will first discuss the potential of participatory Minga workshops and how they can be applied in practice through the example of a study on "highly-skilled" migrant women in Switzerland. Then, we will elaborate on a long-term research partnership created with an organization supporting migrant entrepreneurs in Zurich.

### **Joanna Menet: Analysing Data Collaboratively: Practical Writing Exercise**

This collaborative writing exercise is based on the tool of the 'silent conversation'. Our aim is to experiment with creative writing strategies and produce different forms of texts. Each participant will formulate a stimulus, based on research data (eg interview quote, observational note) or a theoretical or methodological question. In a second step, we will take turns in responding individually to the stimulus by writing our thoughts and questions around it. The resulting collages of collaborative texts may serve as a basis for further writing or conversations. Andrea Scholz: The Museum as an Epistemological Pluriverse? Collaborative Experiences with Indigenous Communities from the Amazon and Beyond.

### **Andrea Scholz: The Museum as an Epistemological Pluriverse? Collaborative Experiences with Indigenous Communities from the Amazon and Beyond**

Unlike ethnological research at universities and other research institutes, ethnological museums in the Western world are under a great deal of pressure to work collaboratively. Transparency and co-production of content in collaboration with the so-called societies of origin are no longer optional, but a strong demand that is also put on institutions by society. Are stolid institutions like museums ready to transform themselves into epistemological pluriverses?

I will discuss this question in my talk, using the example of the slow but steady transformation of the Ethnological Museum Berlin and through the lens of the collaborative projects I have undertaken at the museum, together with indigenous partners in Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. Working with indigenous partners from the Amazon involves particular methodological challenges and treats the objects in the collection as perhaps the starting point but never as the end.

### **Annika Lindberg | Steve Nwaogu Stanley: Research and Refusals: On the Challenges and Im/Possibilities of Collaborating With Academics**

Social scientific research invested in issues of inequality and injustice has been criticized for perpetuating the very same structures of social and epistemic injustice that it allegedly seeks to understand (and often to change). In our conversation, we discuss failed, flawed, and some rewarding experiences of collaborative research, and the conditions under which such collaborations can 'work' - and for whom. We reflect on Audra Simpson's (2007) suggestion that refusals – refusing research and of a research that refuses – are a necessary and generative part of this process.