

Laboratories

At ASA16 we have provided for sessions that depart from the convention of the text-based presentation. These ‘laboratories’ provide occasions for experimentation, encouraging knowledge generation through a range of visual, acoustic and performative methods. The intention of the laboratories is to explore methodological and epistemological possibilities of carrying out and presenting anthropological research collaboratively, through dynamic and reciprocal exchange.

Laboratories may:

- explore non-textual and non-linear presentations of anthropological knowledge
- entail collaborative forms of presentation as an alternative to the individualistic approach to the scholarly presentation
- offer experiential presentations that are characterised by action and participation
- produce an immersive environment where people share insights and skills, and experiment without a definitive idea of what might emerge.
- The selection committee bore the following criteria in mind:
 - Interactive activity: The laboratory should be a site where there is an activity or process, rather than a presentation of research findings.
 - Collaboration: laboratories should have a collaborative dimension – preferably though not limited to a form of collaboration between an anthropologist and another practitioner (eg designers, artists, engineers, activists, performance artists, urban planners, architects, health workers).
 - Embedded: proposals that find ways to embed themselves into the conference’s events and milieu. For example, proposals should take into account how the laboratories will have an impact on the physical site or on the delegates’ experience of the conference. Our intention is to link the laboratories to the core conference themes and proposers should indicate which of the five sub-themes their proposal would best relate to.
 - Ethnography: proposals should show a commitment to the complexities of ethnography as it regards the ways of articulating the human experience in the world.

Lab01 Drawing the anthropological imagination

Convenor: Elizabeth Hodson (University of Aberdeen)

Kingsley Barrett (Calman Learning Centre): throughout the conference

Anthropology has had a long and sustained relationship with the medium of drawing.

From the diagrammatic illustrations of Alfred Gell to the musing offered by Michael Taussig's drawings and collages, to the more recent shift towards a graphic anthropology by Portuguese anthropologist Manuel João Ramos, there has been a longstanding engagement with the medium as a means of description and revelation. This laboratory will take the form of an exhibition that brings together anthropologists through the marks they make and the lines they inscribe. Ranging from visual field notes made in situ to more sustained visual images that bear witness to the interstices between art and anthropology, this exhibition will chart some of the more recent developments between anthropology and drawing. Understood in a more expansive sense to include marks made on a surface, diagrams, map, and visual note taking, the aim of the exhibition will be to explore the visibility of ethnographic fieldwork, the importance of aesthetic forms for observing momentary sensations and securing fleeting ideas and moving of from this, how these impressions and recordings develop beyond the field and offer imaginative exposition and experimental speculation on the future.

Lab02 Karaoke and beyond: challenging the impact agenda

Convenors: Franziska Fay (SOAS, University of London); Zoe Goodman (SOAS, University of London)

CM219 (Maths Building): Tue 5th July, 16:00-17:30

Can karaoke maximize impact? This lab will consider the potential of karaoke as a medium through which anthropologists could communicate their work and foster change in others' behaviour. Following an introductory musical meltdown, participants (working in teams) will be invited to come up with subversive and humorous interventions that both comply with and challenge the impact agenda. The aim of this lab is to think creatively and critically about the global impact regime, and how it affects future anthropological legacies. Put simply, how can we play with impact? We start in the shared knowledge that the requirement to change people's behaviour is antithetical to anthropological theory and practice, and is intimately embedded in neoliberal conceptions of value and epistemology. How might we comply with impact requirements in ways that questions the commodification of research outputs and creates new modes of engagement between anthropology and broader publics? In a moment where formats like "pechakucha" are attracting attention, how might anthropologists go beyond the PowerPoint and out into the world?

Lab03 Corresponding with threads: an exploration in movement, performance, materials, and anthropology

Convenors: Valeria Lembo (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia); Jan Peter Laurens Loovers (University of Aberdeen); Paola Esposito (Oxford Brookes)

CM219 (Maths Building): Wed 6th July, 11:00-12:30

What happens when a thread unravels amongst scholars? This laboratory continues our enquiry into the relations between movement, performance, materials and anthropology. Unlike recent papers where threads are metaphors for anthropological inquiry (Green

2014; Strathern 2014), our collaborative project investigates how actively walking with a (golden) thread is a method to further anthropological understandings of weather, subject-object, sensuous perception, and theory. The laboratory extends on the Walking Threads project (www.walkingthreads.wordpress.com) and explores thinking with materials (particularly, threads) as a ‘practice of education’ (c.f. Tim Ingold); a non-representational, practical engagement that entwines action and perception. Our concern is not with description per se, but with the affordances of engaging with and in the world through materials.

We encourage participants to bring a yarn of thread (golden or any colour) but we will also have a selection of threads at hand. The laboratory offers (i) a brief introduction to Walking Threads, (ii) a space to explore different engagements with thread, mobilising the human and non-human and their entwinement with anthropological theory, (iii) and, finally, to facilitate another Walking Threads exercise. We will intertwine the thread in temporary installations throughout the laboratory. The (golden) thread takes a lead role in all of this. Corresponding with bodies, things and places, both playfully and thoughtfully, we are attentive to where the thread can take us. Participants will entangle with the thread, as well as with the animate and inanimate elements along the way, weaving their moving bodies into the sensuous, animated fabric of physical forces.

Lab04 One set of virtual footprints: a collective cyber-pilgrimage

Convenors: Jonathan Miles-Watson (Durham University); Vivian Asimos (Durham University)

CM219 (Maths Building): Wed 6th July, 09:00-10:30

The workshop will involve a group, virtual pilgrimage in which the collective consciousness of the group will be blended together in one avatar. The traditional categories of ‘communitas’ and contestation will be tested against the realities of this new media using the group as the experimental subjects. Through this process, will we discover if (during this event) the assembled collective body of the anthropological community will experience ‘communitas’? Or will power structures and hierarchies unveil themselves?

We invite delegates to enter into this cyber-pilgrimage, where many minds mingle into one set of virtual footsteps. Here we will engage with questions regarding the “‘fields of experience’”, by directly interacting with challenges in virtual ethnography. How is the anthropological understanding of collective ritual impacted by an embodied pilgrimage, lacking physical footprints, but having virtual footsteps, blended into a collective trail?

The event will be broadcast to the wider conference online and discussion will be encouraged to continue beyond the event through a virtual environment. This process will be facilitated by an engagement with ‘Journey’, an indie-developed pilgrimage platform that deliberately draws from mythography in the creation of a symbolically layered environment. The collected group will be responsible for a single avatar,

and group participation will be encouraged through the spontaneous circulation of a single controller. Following the pilgrimage, the conveners will host a discussion. This workshop will be capped at 20; other delegates can participate via the online platform. Prior registration is necessary.

Lab05 Instrumental bodies

Convenors: Sarah Buckler (Robert Gordon University); Trish Winter (University of Sunderland)

PCL053 (Palatine Centre): Tue 5th July, 09:00-10:30, 11:00-12:30

This lab will examine the role that musical instruments play in developing body techniques (Mauss, 1979) and knowledge of the body (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, see also Moores, 2014) to build ‘music worlds’ (Crossley, 2015), exploring the role of agency and the constraints of musical instruments. We will investigate, through a series of practical activities, the relationship between embodiment and mood, the impact this has on musicking (Small, 1998) and the extent to which we are able to ‘tune in’ to one another (Schutz, 1976) in ways mediated by musical instruments. We will explore these relationships in practical, hands-on ways, thinking around questions such as

- Does the musical instrument constrain expression?
- What is the relationship between the particular body posture and movement required by the instrument and mood?
- Does the tuning of the instrument impact on mood?
- What impact does the character of the instrument have - e.g. tuning, size, range, how it’s played - bowed, blown, hit, etc.

It is not anticipated that the lab will result in a musical performance, however there will be small ‘musical vignettes’ around the conference site as lab participants explore these questions.

The lab will be suitable for people who already play an instrument (at any level) and also those who don’t. Some simple instruments will be provided and musicians are encouraged to bring their own along. A room large enough to move around and play will be needed.

Lab06 Dream literacy for social scientists

Convenor: Iain Edgar (Durham University)

CM219 (Maths Building): Tue 5th July, 11:00-12:30

There are few, if any, dream theory sensitivity, practice and interpretive training programs available in the world for social science researchers. Yet ‘dream literacy’ has been identified by Tedlock (1991) as a core skill in the study of cultures with

significantly different notions of reality and dream compared to the west. Indeed some anthropologists, such as Guedon (1994), have found that dream awareness and sharing was essential to an in-depth study of the culture they studied. This workshop will facilitate working and researching with dreams across cultures, using imaginative methods (Edgar 2004). The workshop offers researchers the collaborative opportunity to experientially sensitise themselves to indigenous dreamworlds, a variety of core dream interpretative traditions and the role of their own dreams in fieldwork and the reflexive dimension of their studies.

Lab07 Turning dinner inside out: experiments with food at the edge of ethnography

Convenors: Mara Miele; Laura Colebrooke (Cardiff University)

PCL053 (Palatine Centre): Mon 4th July, 16:00-17:30

Transcending traditional academic and policy barriers, food practices offer an attractive means to engage with contemporary issues in innovative ways. Through shared sensory experience, food brings us together but also distinguishes us from the world around us, holding us in intimate and necessary relation with our environment. Yet while food offers fertile ground for inquiry into embodied experiences, by transcending the realm of the verbal and visible, food presents both an opportunity and a challenge for ethnographic research methods.

In this lab participants will be invited to participate in an unusual performative meal, engaging food in innovative and mundane ways to consider what we can learn when notions about what food is are interrupted: when material, culture and art are reconfigured through innovative or mundane food practices. Through playing with food ‘diners’ will collaboratively experiment with the material and culture of food to surprise and challenge, offering a chance to slow down reasoning (Stengers 2008) around everyday practices and perhaps open up new productive possibilities through sensory practice and knowledge

Building on the premise that research encounters as productive performative sites, this lab confronts the consequences of enrolling bodily ways of knowing through food in academic inquiry. By encountering different foodstuffs, we experiment with possibilities for an unsettling of boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, inquiry and representation. In doing so we invite participants to collaborate in developing responses to the challenges that food poses to ethnographic research.

Lab08 Meaningful objects

Convenors: Zemirah Moffat (Insightful Moves); Jennie Morgan (University of York)

PCL053 (Palatine Centre): Tue 5th July, 16:00-17:30

What is your favourite object? That one possession that makes you feel you. An item, small or large, infused with so much meaning it really does feel like the universe in a

grain of sand. And can you imagine letting it go? How does this make you feel? And can you imagine gifting it? And if so, to whom and under what conditions would it feel right?

Intrigued? Come to this workshop. A workshop about kinship, the placement of value, gift and exchange. It will reveal attachments and emotions and stories, many many stories. We ask each participant to bring along an object meaningful to them, to come and share its stories.

This will be a time and place to gather self knowledge about how we relate to our objects and to listen and learn about how others relate to theirs. We hope also to learn from our participants about how other groups and peoples from around the globe connect to and through objects. Indeed, how do our personal attachments interact personally, locally and on the world stage. We hope too that this understanding may help us in our ethnographic work, as we observe and are woven into the lives of others and their objects.

Lab09 “Three Women (Break the Silence)”

Convenor: Omotayo Jolaosho (University of South Florida)

PCL053 (Palatine Centre): Mon 4th July, 14:00-15:30

“Three Women (Break the Silence)” is a solo performance ethnography project based on fieldwork and interviews with South African activists. Between 2009 and 2010, Omotayo Jolaosho conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Johannesburg, South Africa, investigating how the freedom songs that galvanized collective struggles against apartheid remain crucial for post-apartheid mobilizations. In addition to academic articles and a book project, she developed a solo performance script based on this research that examines women’s distinct experiences of vulnerability and community within activist collectives. The script and resulting performance examines themes including romantic entanglements, physical wellbeing, humanizing support, and what it means to find one’s voice amidst gendered repression.

“Three Women” is a collaboration between the playwright/performer Omotayo Jolaosho, and Vernice Miller, who is directing the project. We plan to present a 40-minute performance followed by a discussion with the audience, guided by concerns including:

- The role of performance in producing knowledge about women’s lives;
- How the epistemological potential of performance extends beyond research encounters in the field;
- Performative writing and performance ethnography as dissemination methods that re-configure and transcend fieldwork experiences; and

- The collaborative process of staging South African women's voices by two women of different African descent.

The project links most strongly with the sub-theme on “different modalities and experiences of fieldwork,” and also contributes to the sub-theme on “health and well-being.”

Lab10 Climate change: combining cultural viewpoints in common strategies

Convenor: Rosalyn Bold (University of Manchester)

PCL053 (Palatine Centre): Wed 6th July, 09:00-10:30, 11:00-12:30

Climate change touches the communities anthropologists work with worldwide, and whilst challenging in the scale of the disaster it threatens, presents a potential point of equivocation between worlds and cultural perspectives. We are seeking to collaborate in combining cultural constructions and experiences of climate change, and to involve anthropology in wider cross-sectoral conversations.

We are delighted to have the participation of Michael Kang, of the Social Lab Revolution's Gigatonne lab, (http://social-labs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/The-Gigatonne-Lab_230115.pdf). The Gigatonne lab aims to bring together academics, government, finance, business and civil society to agree upon strategies to reduce global emissions by a gigatonne starting in 2016. Identifying the most promising ideas and approaches, it provides access to key influencers, decision-makers and financiers so that strategies for emissions reductions can be scaled more successfully. As we explore the diversity of cultural constructions of climate change, the Gigatonne lab is focused on bringing such perspectives together in elaborating common strategies for creating concrete change.

In the contemporary context of collapse and crisis, existing cosmologies are shaken. Climate change challenges the modern separation of nature and culture, and the western mode of 'being in the world'. Viveiros de Castro (2014) explores the relevance of the mythopoeic register as a vehicle for imagining 'the end of the world', which is unthinkable from a scientific perspective. We will explore how cultural constructions of climate change can help communities to mitigate or come to terms with collapse and change. We hope to combine cultural perspectives to open the way for 'worlds otherwise'.