

Collage and Collection: Composing the Urban from Fragments

- **Convenor:** Dr. Santiago Orrego
- **Duration:** 1 week (5 days, ~30 hours)
- **Format:** Morning (3 hrs seminar/lab) + Afternoon (3 hrs field or studio work)
- **Final Output:** One large-format urban collage (A3–A2) integrating textual, visual, and material fragments + a 300-word reflection “*What the collage taught me about the city.*”

Workshop Description

This workshop explores collage as an ethnographic and analytical method—a way of composing the urban through fragments, leftovers, and traces. In collage, the ethnographer works like an assembler of relations, piecing together the minimal, the residual, and the misplaced into new forms of understanding. Collage-making invites a sensibility akin to Walter Benjamin’s flâneur in *The Arcades Project* (1999 [1927]) or Michel de Certeau’s walker in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984): figures who collect, cut, and rearrange the city as a living montage.

From an anthropological perspective, collecting and assembling the urban fragment links to what Kathleen Stewart (2017) calls “infrastructural attunements”—a sensitivity to minor events, gestures, and resonances that make up the social fabric. In this sense, collage becomes both form and method, a practice of noticing the partial and the peripheral. Collage also echoes feminist and STS approaches to method: María Puig de la Bellacasa’s (2017) ethics of care, Celia Lury’s (2021) problem spaces, and Haraway’s (1988) situated knowledges all emphasize the partial, relational, and material nature of knowledge. Through cutting and juxtaposition, collage makes these relations visible and tangible.

Throughout this workshop, participants will gather fragments—textual, visual, and sonic—from the urban field, then reassemble them into hybrid visual compositions. Each collage will become an ethnographic tableau, a multisensory reading of the city that combines empirical attention with speculative imagination.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

1. Learn to use collection and collage as ethnographic techniques for composing urban experience.
2. Explore assemblage, juxtaposition, and layering as analytical and aesthetic strategies.
3. Reflect on how urban fragments reveal relations between material, sensory, and social infrastructures.
4. Produce a final collage and a reflective text that connect form, method, and urban ethnography.

Requirements

This laboratory welcomes participants from anthropology, visual studies, and related creative disciplines. No artistic or technical experience is required—only curiosity, attention, and openness to experimentation.

- **Participation:** Attendance at all sessions and active contribution to discussions, field exercises, and collective review..
- **Materials provided:** All basic materials—pencils, pens, scissors, cutters, glue, paper sheets, old magazines, and photocopies—will be available in the studio. Participants may bring their own fieldnotes, photos, or sound transcripts.
- **Technical access:** A printer or photocopier will be available for small print runs. Participants comfortable with digital layout tools (Affinity Publisher, InDesign, Canva, etc.) are welcome to use them, though analog production is encouraged.
- **Readings:** Short daily readings guide conceptual grounding and studio experimentation.
- **Engagement:** Each participant contributes one collage and one 300-word reflection to the collective exhibition, *The Urban Assemblage*.

Daily Structure

Day 1 – The Collector’s Eye: Gathering Fragments

Morning | Concepts & discussion

- **Read:**
 - Benjamin, Walter. 1999 [1927]. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Convolute M: The Flâneur)
 - Stewart, Kathleen. 2017. “Infrastructural Attunements.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35 (3): 445–458.
- **Discussion prompts:**
 - How does the flâneur’s gaze relate to ethnographic observation?
 - What makes a fragment valuable or significant?
 - How does collecting the “infraordinary” differ from representing the spectacular?

Afternoon | Field & studio

- Field exercise: 90-minute urban walk collecting fragments (tickets, trash, flyers, photos, overheard phrases).
- Return to the studio: document and annotate each fragment’s place of discovery.

Output: *Field inventory* of 12–15 urban fragments.

Day 2 – Assemblage and Juxtaposition

Morning | Concepts & Discussion

- **Read:**
 - De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Ch. 7 “Walking in the City”)
 - Law, John. 2004. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. London: Routledge. (Introduction)
- **Discussion prompts:**
 - How does walking generate a method?
 - How can collage embrace “mess” without seeking to clean or explain it?
 - What are the ethics of juxtaposing incongruent fragments?

Afternoon | Studio Practice

- Begin experimental collage layouts by combining 5–6 fragments, exploring spatial rhythm and tension.
- Introduce layering, transparency, and partial occlusion.

Output: *Prototype collage* (A3).

Day 3 – The City as Montage

Morning | Concepts & Discussion

- **Read:**
 - Lury, Celia. 2021. *Problem Spaces: How and Why STS Thinks with Fragments*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Chapter 2: “Fragmenting Knowledge”)
 - Haraway, Donna. 1988. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599.
- **Discussion prompts:**
 - What does “thinking with fragments” mean for ethnography?
 - How do montage and situatedness intersect?
 - In what ways is a collage both analytical and ethical?

Afternoon | Studio Practice

- Compose *Final Collage Draft* (A3–A2 format).
- Peer review and feedback: analyze narrative rhythm, density, and attention.

Output: Collage draft + written annotation (150 words).

Day 4 – Material Thinking and Care

Morning | Concepts & Discussion

- **Read:**
 - Puig de la Bellacasa, María. 2017. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Chapter 5 “Making Time for Soil”)
 - Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge. (Selections on materials and making)
- **Discussion prompts:**
 - How can making itself be a form of care?

- How do materials—paper, glue, residue—carry their own agency?
- What happens when a collage decays, stains, or falls apart?

Afternoon | Studio Practice

- Finalize collage: integrate textual, visual, and material fragments.
- Prepare a short descriptive label (≤ 75 words).

Output: *Final collage + label.*

Day 5 – Exhibiting the Fragment

Morning | Installation & Sharing

- Set up the collective exhibition *The Urban Assemblage*.
- Group discussion: how do individual collages converse as a collective ethnography?

Afternoon | Reflection

- Write a 300-word reflective text “*What the Collage Taught Me about the City.*”
- Closing roundtable: How can collection and collage become ongoing methods in ethnographic research?

Final Deliverables:

- 1 completed collage (A3–A2)
- 75-word label
- 300-word reflection

References

- Benjamin, Walter. 1999 [1927]. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Haraway, Donna J. 1988. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599.
- Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge.
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- Lury, Celia. 2021. *Problem Spaces: How and Why STS Thinks with Fragments*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, María. 2017. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2017. “Infrastructural Attunements.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35 (3): 445–458.