

Research Article

Fieldwork on Six Legs: Ethnography as Multispecies Experimental Collaboration

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This item has been published in Issue 05 'The Author Is Dead, Long Live Co-Authors! Collaborative Work in the Humanities,' edited by *The February Journal*.

To cite this item: Luggauer E and Ferdinand (2025) Fieldwork on six legs: Ethnography as multispecies experimental collaboration. *The February Journal*, 05: 40–63. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60633/ffj.i05.115>

To link to this item: <https://doi.org/10.60633/ffj.i05.115>
Published: 30 October 2025

Fieldwork on Six Legs: Ethnography as Multispecies Experimental Collaboration

Elisabeth Luggauer & Ferdinand

Cayenne, Hester, Torridon, and Doni, to name just a few, have become known not only as dogs present in the everyday lives of the scholars Donna Haraway, Timothy Hodgetts, Karen Lane, and George Kunnath, but also as active participants in their research, thinking, reflection, and ultimately, writing. Thinking with these multispecies companionships, this paper explores the ethnographic techniques of Elisabeth and Ferdinand's *human-dog-entanglement* within the research field of human—street dog relationships in the city of Podgorica. The paper elaborates on how fieldwork, guided by multispecies modes of being in a city and in a research field, enables an ethnographic approach that moves beyond the dominance of human sensory and spatial frameworks. Unpacking this example of a multispecies experimental collaboration between a human ethnographer and a canine para-ethnographer, the paper connects the two vibrant bodies of scholarship on multispecies ethnography and ethnographic experimentation.

Keywords: contact zone, ethnographic experimentation, multispecies ethnography, multispecies experimental collaboration, Podgorica, street dogs, urban anthropology

Strolling in

It is a cloudy, rainy, and chilly morning in February 2016 in Podgorica (Montenegro). After a brief initial visit a few months earlier, I have now returned for the main fieldwork for a research project exploring the practices and politics of cohabitation between humans and street dogs in this city. We are slowly walking along Hercegovačka, one of the historic roads in the city center, which has now been converted into a pedestrian area.

We: that is, myself (Elisabeth), Anna (my partner at the time), and my dog, Ferdinand. Anna is absorbed in observing antifascist graffiti, while Ferdinand, whom I kept on a leash connected to me, sniffs his way along the street, along the few trees planted in this urban ground, and the walls of the buildings that frame the narrow road. Meanwhile, I try to pay attention to (signs of) the presence of psima lualicama or ulični psi ('stray dogs' or 'street dogs').

Suddenly, a white dog crosses our paths. She glances briefly at the humans, then turns her attention to Ferdinand. The two circle one another, sniffing noses and butts with cautious curiosity.



Figure 1. Elisabeth and Ferdinand encountering their future research partner Angela, February 2016, Podgorica. © Anna Klieber, all rights reserved, used with permission.

The other dog moves on, trots down the road, turns the corner, and disappears.

A few days later, Ferdinand and I are in Café Berlin—one of the few places recommended to us as ‘pet-friendly.’ Settled at a small table in the corner of the mostly empty café, I am writing up fieldnotes. At the table next to us, a woman begins engaging Ferdinand in a warm, playful interaction, calling him over to her, which results in an exchange of glances between the woman and me.

‘Is he yours?’, she asked me in English.

‘Yes,’ I reply.

Just now, a large white dog stands up from another corner of the café and makes their way over to us. ‘And she’s a stray,’ the woman says, introducing the dog.

As the two dogs greet each other, I suddenly recognize her: it was the same white dog we encountered a few days earlier on Hercegovačka. It turns out that the woman is deeply entangled with this dog and has much to tell about her: she first appeared on the café’s terrace the previous summer. She kept returning, hanging out between the tables and guests, and wanting to enter the indoor space. After some negotiation between the café’s regulars and friends of the owner, including this woman, Martina, the dog was granted access to the café’s interior.

Following this, the dog became an integral part of the café’s small community, as well as the shops, bars, and surrounding neighborhood. That group that formed around her care, including Martina, waiters, guests, and local neighbors, named the dog Angela. They regularly arrange food and water for Angela at the café and keep a constant eye on her well-being.

Podgorica is the capital city of Montenegro, with approximately 180,000 human inhabitants. Like many Southeast European cities, Podgorica is also home to numerous, yet uncounted, strays (Luggauer 2018, 2022). While practices of living with pet dogs in the city have spread only in the past few decades, *luta*lice have, in the words of our human research partners, 'always been present.' Earlier, their population was controlled by hunters shooting dogs or by spreading poison in the streets.

In 2001, animal welfare activists founded the country's first dog shelter in Podgorica. Since then, the practices of stray dog population management have gradually shifted to focus on housing dogs in the shelter and promoting their adoption. In parallel, programs of 'trap-neuter-release' temporarily foster dogs in the shelter for castrating and vaccination, then return them to their previous locations on the streets.

These measures are largely sustained by animal welfare activists, who care for dogs on the streets, volunteer in shelters, foster dogs in their homes, and campaign in the media for the adoption and humane treatment of stray animals and pets. Obviously, this collective effort has a significant impact on the local stray population. However, in recent decades, there has been a growing interest in keeping dogs as pets, many of whom end up abandoned or left to roam freely and mate with strays. Thus, in general, the number of strays living in the city is increasing.

Life as a stray is precarious. Many dogs are well-fed, but medical care is scarce. Particularly when they appear in groups, dogs are often perceived as disturbing or dangerous. Depending on a dog's shape and behavior, attitudes towards them can often be indifferent or even hostile. Dogs are mistreated and often poisoned, or transferred to the shelter. For some dogs, the chances of being adopted and leaving the shelter are quite low. What sparked my research interest was the daily coexistence of humans and strays, and how public urban spaces are (re)imagined and (re)shaped through their multispecies experiences in, appropriations of, and claims to space.

This continuum of multispecies encounters, first on Hercegovacka and then in the café, opened up a research field of reciprocally crafted relationships between some humans and some strays, which I (Elisabeth, the anthropologist and essay-writer) came to conceptualize with Donna Haraway (2008) as 'naturalcultural contact zones,' mutually maintained 'worldmaking entanglements' between the dogs and the humans. Ultimately, the project focused on three such contact zones situated in different parts of town. This paper outlines how it matters that it was a particular multispecies 'we' that strolled through the city, was present in this moment in the café, and eventually became an epistemic entanglement of human and dog sensor apparatuses and modes of being in the urban.

I also reflect upon the experimental methodological endeavor of conducting multispecies ethnography as a multispecies entanglement. Here, 'experimental' denotes leaving well-trodden paths, trying something radically new, and attuning one's senses to a totally unpredictable process and outcome.

In that sense, experimentality is essential for multispecies research. Although this is not a new observation (Bubandt et al. 2022; Hamilton and Taylor 2017; Kirksey 2014), interestingly, multispecies methodological scholarship is not yet thoroughly intertwined with scholarship that epistemologically characterizes and reflects on ethnographic experimentation (Criado and Estalella 2018, 2023; Estalella 2024; Martínez 2021).

This paper outlines the experimental reconfigurations necessary to open up a multispecies companionship to a research collaboration. I mobilize the concept of the 'para-ethnographer,' coined by Douglas Holmes and George Marcus (2005), for research partners epistemically collaborating with ethnographers, and consider the dog Ferdinand a canine para-ethnographer in my research project. Fleshing out the research practices of this multispecies ethnographic companionship, the paper connects multispecies ethnography to the scholarship emphasizing the experimental character of ethnography in fieldwork (Criado and Estalella 2018, 2023; Estalella 2024). I argue that a further epistemic intertwinement of these scholarships is beneficial for both: a deeper conceptual engagement with the experimental can enrich the repertoire of multispecies ethnographic techniques, and including other than human collaborators in ethnographic experimentation will certainly expand human ethnographic fieldworkers' imaginative abilities.

Companionships and Arrangements

Ethnography created and has long rested upon an image of fieldwork as a long-term stay away from home, a somewhat lonely adventure among strangers, conducted by an ethnographer—often imagined as a cis male and white individual—who is seemingly independent and always ready to leave everything behind to spend months abroad. These heteronormative and elitist concepts of fieldwork and the ethnographer's identity are being dismantled by feminist and decolonial approaches to ethnographic knowledge production. It is pointed out that research and knowledge, often presented as the product of solitary effort, are in fact frequently made possible only through the accompaniment and labor of others—such as wives, partners, and assistants—who take on care work, support in the field, transcribe notes, edit texts, and more.

Researchers are increasingly public about the challenges of arranging fieldwork logistically while being embedded in academia's administrative structures and entangled in relationships of care with humans and others. As one example, the term 'patchwork ethnography' has been coined to describe alternatives to 'long-term "traditional" fieldwork' (Günel, Varma and Watanabe 2020). In the German Anthropological Association's working group 'Family in the Field,' to name another example, the presence of companions and children is discussed not only as a nuisance or organizational challenge, but also as a potential source of enrichment for ethnographic research. Along similar lines, Kristen Ghodsee (2005) has reflected on the

challenges of including multispecies family members—Tosca and Porthos, two Bassets—in her fieldwork arrangements, while also discovering its epistemic benefits.

These methodological reflections emerged from a planned eight-month fieldwork stay in Podgorica for a research project. Initially, I (Elisabeth) considered Ferdinand's presence on the trip a mere logistical challenge. At the beginning, Ferdinand's presence required us to balance the ethnographic activities of exploring the city through walks, site visits, and engaging with locals with our existing multispecies rhythm of moving, eating, and resting—finding food that fits his needs and taste, learning about local veterinary infrastructure, and moderating his exposure to the 'Mediterranean diseases' and scabies the vets at home in Austria had been warning me about. However, at some point, Elisabeth realized that our very presence as a multispecies entanglement researching the everyday lives of other human-dog-entanglements had the potential to teach us more than practicalities. Our multispecies mode of being present could actually open up tracks and connections in the field that a human-only research presence could not access, and a dog by himself would probably not have interpreted and connected in that way.

In Haraway's (2003) work, the concept of the 'companion' recognizes the social as an entanglement of multiple 'companion species,' such as humans and dogs, who have co-shaped each other and the worlds they inhabit; it encompasses co-living, co-inhabiting, and co-creating. In his thoughts on 'assembling the contemporary,' Paul Rabinow (2011) also re-accentuates the figure of the companion in order to rethink anthropology as a project that always emerges from experimentation and collaboration. Rabinow highlights anthropology as a mode of doing research with companions—the individuals with whom we think and theorize, the ones with whom we research, and all those who transcend these boundaries.

This paper is crafted out of a human—dog companionship that shapes and creates their everyday world together. Integrating the two perspectives on companionship—the multispecies everyday world-making and the scholarly co-crafting—the paper proposes considering multispecies ethnographic collaborations as multifaceted relationships in which dogs also become companions in thinking, reflecting, and ethnographing. In so doing, it is thinking companionship alongside Karen Lane and Torridon, an anthropologist and her canine 'research assistant' who have countered narratives about the dividedness of Belfast (2015); Timothy Hodgetts and Hester, a geographer and a dog who have co-written about forming a 'humandog collective' within wildlife conservation studies (Hodgetts and Hester 2018); and George Kunnath and Doni, an anthropologist and a stray who met during George's fieldwork within the Maoist movement in India (Kunnath 2021).

Multispecies Experimental Collaborations

Ethnography is not a method; it is not a set of standardized steps and techniques applied in a certain sequence. Rather, ethnography is an open-ended, creative, inventive, and immersive mode of being present—a critical and (self)reflexive engagement with the everyday lives and struggles of other living beings, both human and non-human. Often, ethnography poses an intervention in social dynamics; it begins with researchers asking questions and often evolves into joint problematizations by multiple research partners from different sites. This immersive and critical engagement with others' everyday lives depends on collaboration between researchers and other research partners.

Although collaboration is inherent to ethnographic knowledge production, it has not always been reflected, recognized, and acknowledged. In the past decades, the ethnographic concept of collaboration has been reformed by critical and reflective decolonial, feminist, and inclusive approaches that aim to trouble and shift power relations between 'the ethnographer' and 'the field,' between co-working scholars, and between ethnographers and their companions (Weiss 2016). In fact, the plurality of possibilities for how to collaborate on ethnographic knowledge production has become itself a research subject (Boyer and Marcus 2020).

In this paper, I connect the multispecies and the experimental perspective on ethnographic collaboration, both of which have spawned vibrant scholarship in the past decades. In response to posthumanist worldviews and attunements to life as situated in naturecultures (Haraway 2003; Latour 1991), ethnography has opened itself up toward concepts of multispecies ethnography (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010), or an anthropology beyond the human (Ingold 2013), pushing at times towards understanding cohabitation as collaboration (Pardo Petraza 2023). In parallel, a scholarship invested in ethnographic experimentation has emerged, highlighting the impetus that different modes of ethnographic encounter bring to fieldwork as they open up new roles, contributions, outcomes, and ways of collaboration (Estalella 2024; Martínez 2021).

Acknowledging other than human creatures as ethnographic agents challenges our automatized conceptions of research partners as interlocutors with whom the ethnographer can engage through verbalized language. Laura Ogden, Billy Hall, and Kimiko Tanita (2013: 17) advocate for a multispecies ethnography as 'a mode of wonder' and a 'speculative mode of inquiry.' Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey and Ursula Muenster (2016) emphasize the aim of multispecies studies to 'cultivate arts of attentiveness' for more than human worlds and worldings. By means of 'passionate immersion,' a term taken from Anna Tsing (2011: 10), van Dooren, Kirksey, and Muenster call for 'immersive ways of knowing and being with others' and paying 'attention to what matters to them—attention to how they craft shared lives and worlds' (2016: 6).

Ethnographic research has been pursuing attunement to more than human lifeworlds from several directions. Since its very beginnings,

multispecies ethnography has mobilized the imaginative, transgressive, and provocative potential of art and artistic practices (Kirksey (2014). Artistic approaches to highlighting the interwovenness of humans and others often leverage multimodal formats other than text such as image-based exhibitions and films (Hamilton and Taylor 2017; Jasarević 2025).

Another mode of 'cultivating arts of attentiveness' engages biologists and ethologists as gatekeepers and translators of other than human voices (van Dooren 2014 and 2019). Under the names of 'etho-ethnology' or 'ethno-ethology' (Lestel, Brunois and Gaunet 2006), 'lively ethnography' (van Dooren and Rose 2016), and an 'ethologically informed ethnography' (Hartigan jr. 2021), scholarship has emerged that seeks to combine perspectives and methods of observation and participation from ethnography and ethology.

Furthermore, attentiveness towards nonhuman research partners emerges from particular emphasis on the multisensoriality of ethnographic research. Building on approaches in sensory ethnography (e.g., Pink 2009), the researcher's body is mobilized as an interface for communication and exchange that extends beyond words. The researcher is encouraged to smell, touch, and feel with multispecies research partners, their surroundings, and places associated with them such as their dwellings (Hamilton and Taylor 2017). This approach involves mobilizing both the researcher's and the research partners' bodies as instruments of cognition and attunement to the other, such as by feeling the vibrations of a bee's hum on the skin (Fenske 2017) or noticing the histories and relationships embedded in damp fur or substances clinging to animal bodies (Luggauer 2018).

Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen, Nils Bubandt, and Rachel Cypher (2022: 12) recently recapitulated that multispecies ethnography is always 'an invitation also to get outside of one's disciplinary comfort zone by experimenting with other methods.' Arguably, multispecies ethnography needs to go beyond experimentation with methods to include an experimental approach to the core concepts of ethnography as well. Multispecies ethnographic scholarship has expanded anthropocentric understandings of research partners and research collaborations to include animals and plants in ethnographic encounters, as entangled with humans and as collaborators in their own right. This paper focuses on an ethnographing multispecies collaboration of a human and a dog, where the dog appears in the research field entangled with the ethnographer as a canine partner in multispecies research.

Echoing older debates in anthropology (Wagner 1981), Tomás S. Criado and Adolfo Estalella (2018, 2023) stress invention as a crucial feature of ethnographic fieldwork that seeks to closely participate in different and complex lifeworlds and struggles. According to Criado and Estalella, cultivating inventiveness opens up spaces for experimental approaches to ethnographic encounters, as well as assembling a research field connecting those who are willing to participate. Here, 'experimental' does not just mean doing something new; it is a dynamic that fosters the unexpected and unpredictable. Experimentality emerges as a research design initiated by ethnographers in fieldwork encounters and materializing in unplanned

or unintended fieldwork collaborations shaped by other research partners. Such experimental collaborations materialize in co-created 'fieldwork devices' (Criado and Estalella 2018). As demonstrated in their two lively edited collections (2018, 2023), fieldwork devices can take an indefinite plurality of forms, whether co-authored works, jointly redesigned tools, or digital technologies such as WhatsApp groups. Fieldwork devices can be a frame or initiator for experimental collaboration. At the same time, the fieldwork device emerges from and is shaped, developed, and changed in experimental collaborations.

Building on Estalella and Criado, I consider the presence and ethnographic engagement of Ferdinand as a 'fieldwork device.' While, as outlined above, Ferdinand was physically brought to the research space by the ethnographer, his epistemic engagement was nonetheless inspired by human and canine actors participating in this fieldwork. In what follows, I discuss Ferdinand's and my multispecies experimental collaboration within the dynamics and struggles of the shared everyday lives of humans and street dogs in Podgorica.

On Two Legs

Exploring urban formations through walking is a core research technique within urban ethnography, a continuum that spans sociology, anthropology, and geography. Perhaps anticipating the sensory turn a century ago, Robert Ezra Park appropriated the journalistic phrase 'nosing around' to denote a mode of discovering cities by straying from the beaten path and sticking one's nose in hidden niches that do not initially invite discovery (Lindner 1990: 10). Walking as a method in urban ethnography has been cultivated from many angles, with a focus on the sensory and perceptual dimensions of urban formations and dominant or subversive rhythms, as elaborated, for example, by Johanna Rolshoven (2017) walking through Florence, or Tim Edensor (2018) exploring ruins in England.

At the beginning of the project, particularly during my very first short-term visit to the city, which Ferdinand did not attend, I walked through Podgorica on my own, on two legs. I nosed around roads, pathways, and niches, paying attention to what I could sense, feel, and notice under my feet, in the air, and when touching things. I followed the dominant rhythms of the city, moving at the same speed as others and stopping where they did, but I also challenged this rhythm and attempted to catch the modes of functioning in the spaces left outside the dominant flow. I noticed traces of paws in the ground, half-eaten food leftovers, and bowls that were both filled and empty. I engaged in superficial small talk with humans and caught glimpses of dogs who were most likely not pet dogs but strays, exchanging looks, sounds, touches, and sometimes even cuddles with them.

It proved difficult for me to open conversations with other humans about dog passers-by while the dogs were being briefly greeted or chased

away from café terraces—and insufficient for the in-depth immersion ethnography required. Especially challenging was actually following the dogs, that is, keeping track of them as potential future canine research partners. Those dogs who avoided contact ran away even faster when they noticed they were being followed. Those who were interested in contact attempted to stay around, thereby twisting the dynamics by following me instead.

On Six Legs

While I struggled to find a way into this elusive multispecies research field, I was also present in this research space as a human—dog contact zone myself. The world Ferdinand and I have been creating together is one in which a nameless puppy of unknown origin, apparently found somewhere on the streets of the Slovakian city of Nitra, gets adopted by a student of anthropology living in Graz, Austria. Our relationship is formalized in a 'pet passport' listing 'Ferdinand' in the box of 'animal' and 'Elisabeth Luggauer' in the field of 'owner.' Becoming with each other has meant that we have learned to detect the other's needs for food, water, sleep, and relief, as well as wishes to play, rest, or concentrate on scripts and books. The rhythm we have been developing together is one structured by long morning and evening walks during which we pursue our various interests (nosing, sensing, thoughts, and podcasts). We also enjoy long hikes and long hours spent together in cafés, as well as periods of spatial independence.

Kristen Ghodsee (2005) reflects on the challenges of accommodating the needs of Tosca and Porthos, two Bassets, in her fieldwork with the Slavic Muslim minority. Ghodsee's intention was to simply transfer their American urban life to a Bulgarian village. Initially, it did not occur to her that their joint presence could be of any epistemic relevance. However, one day on a walk, the bassets caught the scent of sheep and set off in pursuit. Ghodsee, surprised by her dogs' capacity for hunting, ran loudly screaming after them. This canine action caused a stir in the village. Aiming to calm her neighbors' anger, Ghodsee explained that the city-dwelling dogs were not accustomed to sheep, which in turn caused irritation among her research partners, who questioned which dog would not be used to sheep. She reflects that this moment not only made her well-known in the village but also made it easier to build research relationships. Furthermore, this mutual surprise and irritation was a crucial moment in understanding the other's everyday world and positionality better. Although Ghodsee points out the epistemic relevance of the dogs' actions, she does not elaborate further on how this moment changed the modes of their multispecies presence in the field.

Similar to Ghodsee's situation, I initially considered Ferdinand's presence primarily an organizational challenge. I attempted to distinguish between fieldwork and being with a dog through two strategies: (1) separating the dog walks from the walks around the city I designated as a research activity and (2) keeping Ferdinand, who was used to a life mostly off-leash,

on a leash. However, the encounter in Hercegovačka and its continuation a couple of days later in Café Berlin recalled at the very beginning of this paper led me to reflect on Ferdinand's potential role in shaping the research field. I found myself wondering what else actively allowing Ferdinand's presence and spatial practices might open up to me.

Thus, our joint walks expanded from operationally fulfilling Ferdinand's canine physical needs to ethnographically exploring the city together. Gradually, I relinquished my role as guide and reduced the control I exerted over Ferdinand. As a human, even when I actively try to embrace multisensoriality, vision and hearing always dominate my ethnographic experience. As a dog, Ferdinand is primarily a nose on four legs. The ethologist Alexandra Horowitz (2010: 12) goes so far as term a dog's take on the world a 'point of nose.' Dogs can not only identify, connect, and remember a broader variety of odors than humans; they also engage with the world by sniffing, catching, and interpreting smells. They investigate beings and things by means of deep sniffs that require them to come very close.

Ferdinand's world can be understood as a lively smellscape. He organizes odors, along with events, experiences, and other visual, aural, tactile, and thermal sensations from his coat, skin, and paws, into meaning. Ferdinand not only senses a different world than I do, but he also renders himself a different *umwelt*. Relinquishing my guidance of our joint spatial presence meant allowing the dog's sensory attunement to the world to become the driving factor in our ethnographic engagement. Thus, the ethnographic motto of 'nosing around' turned into a literal mode of doing ethnographic research.

Following Ferdinand's sensorial attunements and enabling the interactions he sought brought me to spots in the city where my human senses and modes of exploring had not yet taken me—and probably never would have. We ended up under bushes, between buildings, behind and under cars, in gardens, and in particularly narrow niches. Ferdinand's modes of claiming urban space led me to pause over seemingly uninteresting things and events, turn over stones, peer into holes and trash, and ultimately find myself in numerous fascinating and enriching interactions.

By engaging in this multispecies way of sensing the urban environment, I noticed the various types of food placed or scattered in many places hidden from human perception: leftovers, bones, pieces of local street- and fast food like pizza, burek, and other pitas, as well as kibble and wet food for dogs or cats. We found improvised shelters mounted in the corners of the city's built structures, covered with cardboard, wood, and plastic bags, as well as dog and cat houses constructed from wood or old furniture such as cupboards. We discovered places that animals probably created or adapted as regular resting or sleeping spots.

Among the large numbers of cats, birds, tortoises, and butterfly larvae we encountered, my research interest in relations between humans and street dogs focused my attention on dogs and the critters dogs are closely entangled with: ticks, fleas, mites, and worms. At times, Ferdinand seemed

more interesting to strays than I did alone. Additionally, his presence often seemed to startle the dogs less than when I approached on my own.

We obviously did not only encounter other than human beings. Ferdinand's canine attentiveness often led us into situations that made it clear to me that we had crossed a personal or spatial boundary, and I became aware of how often his presence was unwelcome. However, our practice of sensing around as a multispecies entanglement also invited people to talk to me about dogs. Ferdinand's rather small, fox-colored body with its friendly and curious appearance probably made it easy to not be scared of him, and hence approach him and us. Not belonging to any of the currently fancied dog breeds in Podgorica (the Labrador, the Staffordshire Terrier, Pitbull, Cane Corso, Husky, Akita, Maltese, or Poodle) sparked many questions about Ferdinand's breed, and my answer, revealing his origin from the streets, often led to intense conversation about the subject of street dogs.

Canine Para-Ethnographers

Searching for stories that counter the dominant narrative of Belfast as a divided city, Karen Lane (2015) describes how her dog and their joint walks became an ethnographic technique. She reflects that a walk that follows primarily the dog's sensing and interests enhances serendipity. It leads to unexpected places (at least for the human, possibly also for the dog) and interactions that can kick off deeper conversations about difficult subjects. Lane is accompanied by Torridon, a Wheaten terrier—a medium-sized dog with a fluffy, long, and light-colored coat, and a friendly and welcoming attitude towards strangers. Lane reflects that, much as in Ferdinand's case, the dog's shape and temper essentially contributed to their ice-breaking effect. Lane analyzes their work as a collaboration between the dog as a 'research assistant' enacting connections, and an anthropologist who then takes over.

In their essay 'How We Nose,' Timothy Hodgetts and Hester (2018), a hunting dog with a particularly strong sense of smell, describe a methodological approach to walking, nosing, and sensing together. Connected to Hester via the leash between them, Timothy found himself part of a much broader than human sensory apparatus, engaging in a multispecies research field. Hodgetts conceptualizes his and Hester's nosing around as doing research as a 'humandog collective' implicated in social dynamics between mammal actors from human and dog to pine martens.

In all these examples, while human ethnographers did not plan for canine involvement, it nonetheless came about gradually during fieldwork, enacted not only by the human ethnographer but also by the canine companion, as well as other actors in the research fields. Karen learned that contested spaces where a stranger could not simply go could be covered as part of a dog walk, and she discovered Torridon's potential for initiating interactions with strangers. Timothy realized how Hester's nose detected and localized many more traces of pine martens than he could through his

human sensory apparatus. In Ferdinand's and my research, both collaborative techniques—the multispecies extension of sensory engagement and the enactment of dog-initiated interactions—came together.

Timothy and Hester undertook their fieldwork connected via a leash, a device of moderation, control, and protection. The reason for this material connection and thus human control over the situation may lie in regulations for wildlife-protected areas. However, the leash can also be seen as a tool helping to ensure the fundamental ethnographic research ethics of not causing harm to any research partners involved. A dog roaming through forests, leaving her scent behind, and possibly chasing other animals might not only disturb these research partners but also cause actual harm to the habitats of animals other than humans. Furthermore, Hester could get injured or lost.

Not situated in wildlife conservation areas, Karen Lane and I probably benefited from our greater ability to be with dogs unleashed, a constellation that allows a deeper immersion of the canine companion in our research fields. Lane notes that one conversation crucial to the research process was initiated by Torridon approaching a woman while off-leash. She reflects that this particular connection could only have happened due to Torridon being unleashed, randomly approaching a stranger, and Karen being too slow to stop her. Similarly, the interaction between Martina and me in the Café occurred only because Ferdinand approached Martina, and I was too slow to intervene.

Ferdinand is a gentle walker who approaches others cautiously, shows little interest in chasing others, and responds well to vocal and other commands. Thus, during his life, he has mostly moved around urban spaces without a leash. Probably like Karen Lane, I had come to terms with the fact that Ferdinand might occasionally engage in unwanted interactions that needed to be disentangled by his human owner. And yet, on our very first walks through Podgorica, an unfamiliar spatial arrangement for both of us back then, I kept him on a leash. While most strays only showed affection towards me after I had made friendly contact, Ferdinand's canine presence attracted several of them from a distance. He was barked at, chased away, interacted with, and even followed for whole walks and all the way home to our apartment. Keeping him close and having some control over his engagement with the city and its inhabitants certainly helped protect him. Furthermore, dosing his, and hence my, immersion into the field seemed at the beginning a good compromise in terms of the classical issue of maneuvering between proximity and distance in ethnographic fieldwork.

However, growing confidence in the transferability of our well-established contact zone into this new socio-material context, and also my curiosity about how many more interesting things and links might become noticeable if he were unleashed, led to an increasing removal of this device of dosage. Gradually, Ferdinand and the fieldwork became unleashed from human supervision and the dominance of human interpretation of urban space. We slipped back into our usual and embodied modes of being

present, not connected via a leash, but negotiating our spatial appropriations through looks, sounds, gestures, and modes of movement. Now the dog's modes of appropriating space were not just suggestions but often became the leading rhythms, bringing us to unexpected and exciting, at least for me, places and social situations.

Karen Lane qualifies Torridon as a research assistant and describes the dog as initiating interactions, which Lane, who refers to herself as 'the anthropologist,' then transforms into actual research situations. Thus, she sets a clear hierarchy in their multispecies collaboration. At the same time, echoing Horowitz (2010), Lane (2015) reflects upon dogs as anthropologists: over thousands of years of cohabiting with humans, dogs have developed and fine-tuned their sense of smell, along with their other senses, and become experts in interpreting human behavior and social situations. They can sense excitement and conflict in humans, as well as danger in social situations.

In a playful and speculative essay about his relation with Doni, a stray dog he encountered on fieldwork and who eventually joined him in the research, anthropologist George Kunnath (2021) goes one step further and refers to Doni as 'an anthropologist in his own right.' Unlike Torridon, Doni lives in a loose bond of temporary companionship with the visiting anthropologist, sleeping in the yard of the anthropologist's residence; Doni makes his own choices on when to follow the anthropologist, which fieldwork situations to join, and when to cautiously yet actively seek interaction. Doni even decides to join other humans, disappearing and living with a different community for a while—practices that remind one of an anthropologist.

Like Lane and myself, Kunnath also identifies a moment of action by Doni as crucial for his research process: one day, Doni's nose caught an apparently intense smell, and he excitedly sniffed the air. He ran away, following the smell. Pursuing Doni's sensory stimulus, George discovered an opium field—an economic activity that his other research partners had not mentioned to him. This discovery altered the anthropologist's understanding of the research field, as well as his role within it.

Lane and Kunnath reflect upon Torridon and Doni as research assistants, anthropologists, and even anthropologists in their own right. I propose a different concept for dogs as fieldwork companions: how about considering Torridon, Hester, Doni, and Ferdinand 'para-ethnographers'? Para-ethnographer is a term introduced by Douglas Holmes and George Marcus (2005) for research partners who are not (academically) trained as ethnographers, yet engage in ethnographic practices. They collect data through sensory attunements, interactions with others, and interpretations of social dynamics, thereby co-producing ethnographic knowledge. The term was originally coined in the context of research into public institutions and expert cultures, and thus describes highly skilled individuals, often engaged in research or at least academically trained.

Criado and Estalella (2018) broaden this term by considering all those who engage with ethnographers in experimental collaborations as para-ethnographers. Ethnographers initiate research projects with a defined

research interest; para-ethnographers are characterized by being, often even equally, dedicated to the ethnographic collaboration, but motivated by different interests. They challenge the ethnographers' techniques, interfere with procedures, and turn research processes into 'experimental collaborations,' as Estalella and Criado put it (2018).

Canine para-ethnographers do not follow a particular research interest, or if they do, Karen, Tim, George, and I were not able to find out what. However, the dogs certainly follow a broad range of other interests; in fact, their autonomous actions often intervene in carefully planned fieldwork. Across our different research fields, we human companions' decision, or need, to follow the dogs and engage with their sensory attunement to the world altered our perceptions and orientation.

The para-ethnographer is a relational figure, emerging from and simultaneously enhancing collaboration. Hodgetts and Hester (2018) refer to their immersion into a research field as a 'humandog collective.' In contrast to Hodgetts and Hester, who were connected via a leash, Ferdinand and I did not always move through our field sites close to one another, walking as a collective; we often moved separately, following different sensations, much like Doni and George's mode of collaboration. I conceptualize Ferdinand's and my multispecies mode of ethnography as a *human-dog-entanglement*. I use hyphens to interrupt but link the threefold elements of the human, the dog, and the two of them entangled.

Doni, like Ferdinand, enjoyed multispecies field trips and the excitement they came with (Kunnath 2021). And, joining Kunath and myself, Doni and Ferdinand further developed their sensory navigation through and along different field sites and field relations. The humans in the teams deepened their understanding of the dogs' perceptions, and together, we aimed to deepen our communication.

Ethnographing multispecies collaborations between handlers and mine-detecting dogs in Colombia, Diana Pardo Pedraza (2023) refers to the 'repetitive choreographies of detection' wherein handlers send dogs out into a field to sense and communicate the presence of mines underground as 'sensory co-laboring.' This 'sensory co-laboring' emerges from a shared commitment to understanding each other beyond verbalized conversation tools. 'Sensory co-laboring' also means jointly engaging in something that neither can do alone, while reflecting on the structural differences between the collaboration partners: the dog, unprotected, in the minefield, the handler standing outside, wearing a protective vest. With Pardo Pedraza, I conceive of Ferdinand's and my mode of being together in the ethnographic research field as such 'sensory co-laboring': laboring to fine-tune our sensory perceptions and communication in order to navigate the city as a research field; laboring that is epistemically enriching and at the same time safe for both of us.

Unleashing Fieldwork

Arguably, due to its open research design, ethnography is always somewhat experimental. The more ethnographers relinquish control over research processes and the more other actors in the field take over, the more experimental—in the sense of radically unpredictable—a research setting can be. When allowed, the dogs' thwarting of convention and expectation alter fieldwork into an experimental collaboration between human ethnographers and canine para-ethnographers. These research collaborations initiate further collaborations with other actors in the field, which are equally experimental due to their multispecies nature and thus hardly predictable.

In his concise review of the mobilization of the experimental in ethnographic settings—ranging from fieldwork to analysis to knowledge dissemination—Estalella (2024) points out the plurality of understandings of the experimental, reminding readers that the experimental itself is very open, emergent, and difficult to conceptually pin down. In ethnography, Estalella summarizes, 'the experimental' reaches from a colloquial concept of novelty and unpredictability up to carefully curated scenarios where ethnographers encounter future research partners.

I argue that the ethnographic collaboration as a human-dog-entanglement discussed in this paper is characterized by two experimental features: the involvement of a canine sensory apparatus, and, at least partially, unleashing the fieldwork to these other than human attunements to the world. At the time of this research, Ferdinand and I had been crafting a companionship for a while. Ferdinand's attunements and assessments were not unpredictable to me; unpredictable was, however, where his actions might lead.

Ferdinand is guiding me on one of our multispecies-sensory walks down the road where we are staying, near the outskirts of Podgorica. Suddenly, a passerby stumbles over him. I expect a complaint, but the man just gives Ferdinand a long, appreciative look and comments on how beautiful he is, adding that it must be pleasant to walk together. Then he suggests that an even better place for a walk would be the 'forest for dogs' (šuma za pse), as he calls it, pointing toward the large green-brown area at the end of the road that marks, for now, the edge of the city.

A few days later, Ferdinand and I explore this area, which at first glance seems to be just a piece of unbuilt land. Then, from between the pine trees appear a playground, a fitness park, and then an agility obstacle course, welcoming us with the sign 'pasji park' (dog park). A man and a Malinois stroll around between the trees and obstacles. It is the interaction between the dogs that prompts the man and me to exchange a few words. My slow skills in Montenegrin soon reveal me as a foreigner.

The man, Radovan, turns out to be the founder of this park, Montenegro's first park dedicated to walking and spending leisure time with dogs. Having heard about my research interest, he asks if I have already seen

the 'little houses for strays' ('kućice za pse') in the strip of pine trees a bit further on. I haven't, so he offers to show them to me, and the four of us walk over there. On the way, Radovan engages me in a conversation about local practices of living with dogs, reflecting upon the concepts of dogs belonging to a house or an owner ('kućni psi' or 'vlasnički psi') as well as those living as strays on the streets.

What was advertised as houses for dogs turns out to be a camp of improvised huts constructed from kennels, pieces of wood, and furniture, offering shelters of varying sizes. Dogs of different sizes, colors, types, and ages are lying, sitting, walking, and jumping about the camp. Approaching them, Radovan puts his dog on a leash. It would be better to keep a bit of distance, he explains; strays can transmit diseases to our dogs. For the same reason, he urges us to leave soon.

Eager to learn more about this camp, I kept returning there until I finally met a woman who came by to feed the dogs, apply eye drops, and treat their scabies with cream. Initially, she was skeptical about my presence and the questions I posed. But when she heard about Ferdinand, whom I kept in my car parked a few meters away during my first visits to this camp, she smiled and started engaging in conversation with me.

This camp was established by a group of animal welfare activists as a place in the city where dogs could recover from injuries and be treated for diseases, as well as for puppies deemed too young to live unsupervised. Since I was living close to the camp, my participant observation in the human–stray contact zone around these huts soon included not only being present in the camp and engaging with the dogs and human operators via different languages but also becoming involved in feeding, cleaning, and providing further care. It was not long before Ferdinand was let out of the car, which had been the device for dosing his immersion in this particular multispecies research field.

From the beginning, Ferdinand was well accepted by the camp inhabitants and the human caregivers. While I was observing, listening, asking, talking, picturing, touching, wiping, removing ticks, fixing huts, and more, Ferdinand shared food with the dogs, engaged in play with them, and joined some of them on their explorations around the camp. Soon, the usually quiet, gentle, and careful dog became a part of the more outgoing group of inhabitants who would loudly defend the camp against every unfamiliar person driving, walking, or running by too close, at times even chasing them away.

Each of these moments posed the question to me whether his fieldwork collaborations would require human intervention. Ferdinand's immersion into the practices of the camp dogs sparked questions and jokes from my human research partners and pushed our conversations away from the 'classical' dynamic of an ethnographer asking questions and an interlocutor answering and towards dialogue: joint thinking and reflecting on dogs, dog food, and dog behavior; collaborating on troubleshooting, such



Figure 2. The Camp, April 2016, Podgorica. Courtesy of Elisabeth Luggauer.



Figure 3. Ferdinand with some of the camp inhabitants, April 2016, Podgorica. Courtesy of Elisabeth Luggauer.

as moving huts or negotiating between the camp dogs' spatial concept and those of the others, human and nonhuman, who claimed this pine forest.

One morning, Ferdinand and I had just stepped out of our apartment for a quick walk and grocery run when I noticed a particular excitement in him. Usually careful in approaching other dogs, Ferdinand now craned his neck and wagged his tail heavily as he strode over to a group of dogs on the unbuilt land in front of my building. A few steps closer to them, I understood the reason for his excitement: among the dogs was Orka, a

big black female, and part of the group of dogs living in the forest. She must have recognized him, or us, too, and ran over, greeting both of us with jumps and barks. She joined us on our walk around the block, waited next to Ferdinand in front of the supermarket, and eventually followed us back to our apartment.

Stepping out of the building the next morning, we were welcomed not only by Orka, but also by Štroko, Zia, and Bubi, three other dogs from the camp. They joined us on our walk around the block, engaging with the people, strays, and owned dogs from the neighborhood. They paid particular attention to all the trash cans along the way and the food on the ground and barked at some of the cars passing by.

From this morning on, the dogs' explorations, which had previously been limited to the area around the camp, extended further into the city, reaching the area where my apartment was located and becoming an almost daily routine. The motivation for these wanderings, the human camp operators hypothesized, was that the dogs were bored in the camp back in the forest. Also, they suspected, having noticed and localized Ferdinand and me on their strolls encouraged them to pass by this particular corner of town.

Soon, the dogs became known in this neighborhood as the 'gang from the forest' and were perceived as related to Ferdinand and me. While some neighbors were amused by their presence, interacting with them and providing water and food along the road, others were displeased to have them around. They identified Ferdinand and me as the root cause of their presence, complained to me, and urged their removal from this corner of the city.

When the dogs got tired of walking, running, and barking, they would lie down under the linden tree in front of my apartment building. That means the caregivers, arriving at the camp by car from different parts of the city, changed their routes to always pass by the spot under the linden tree, collect all the dogs there, and return them to the camp. Since I was living there, I too was asked to collect and return them to camp whenever I met them around my place.

While Ferdinand was always very happy to encounter the gang in his neighborhood, set on joining them on their tours of local trash cans and car-chasing games, I was increasingly stressed by tensions with the neighbors and worried about the dogs, who were even transferred to the shelter, and only released again due to lots of negotiations by the animal welfare activists.

Ferdinand and I were no longer just arriving at the camp for time-constrained visits; we could no longer control our immersion by just getting back in the car and driving away, particularly not after the little dogs made it through my building's fence to meet us in the yard. Our canine research partners had taken over control of Ferdinand's and my intertwinement with their everyday lives. Again, dogs' modes of sensing and moving had changed the dynamics of this research process and my level of immersion in the field. This time, it was not those of the canine para-ethnographer that did so, but those of our other canine research partners.

The caregivers knew the dogs were not safe anywhere, but they expected fewer troubles for them when they remained in the somewhat remote piece of forest where the camp was. When the camp dogs extended their mobility into the neighborhoods of the city, on the one hand, their human caregivers cheered for the dogs' spatial appropriations, their inscribing themselves into this urban space and claiming their right to it. On the other hand, they expressed concern that the more the dogs are present in the city, the greater their danger would be.

When the funding for this fieldwork came to an end, Ferdinand and I eventually had to drop out of these lively and precarious everyday struggles for space. After our departure back to Austria, the dogs continued to roam around that particular corner of the city for a couple of weeks, but then shifted their attention to other attractions. Caregivers continued operating the camp for about another year, including by transferring the dogs from the various endpoints of their wanderings back to the camp and arguing for their release from the shelter when they were picked up by dog catchers. When some of the dogs were found poisoned, those who survived were boxed in private dog kennels, and some of them were adopted later.

Collaboration, Companionship, Co-Authorship

This paper fleshes out a multispecies experimental collaboration in the course of which a human-dog-entanglement becomes deeply immersed in the everyday struggles of street dogs and their human caregivers. The paper echoes calls within multispecies ethnography for cultivating posthumanist, creative, speculative, and experimental approaches to researching more than human everyday lives and engages in thinking companionship with other human—dog formations.

I propose conceptualizing Ferdinand, the dog accompanying a human ethnographer, as a canine para-ethnographer who intervenes in fieldwork and thereby significantly contributes to ethnographic knowledge production. I consider his presence and actions as a fieldwork device that unleashes our ethnographic immersion into the shared everyday lives of humans and strays. In so doing, I mobilize two conceptual figures central to ethnographic experimental collaboration and demonstrate their benefit for methodological reflections on both modes of doing multispecies ethnography and practices of ethnographic experimentation. What would it mean to generally conceive of multispecies ethnographic encounters as experimental collaborations about to be crafted? Which fieldwork devices can best kickstart different multispecies ethnographic collaborations, and what devices might be crafted out of them? And, last but not least, how do we adequately document multispecies ethnographic collaboration?

With the fading of the image of ethnographic knowledge production as a work done by one individual mind, the single-authored piece as the highest standard of knowledge dissemination is also gradually being

dismantled. Feminist academic practices in particular have played a key role in introducing and advancing modalities of co-authorship—both among scholars and between researchers and research partners—to bring together diverse perspectives in the production of knowledge and to acknowledge the value of epistemic collaboration (Searcy and Castañeda 2020).

Meanwhile, co-authorship—or, more accurately, making collaborations in research and writing public—has become widespread in anthropological knowledge production. Hodgetts and Hester (2018), for example, push towards a multispecies co-authorship. As they reflect, Hester did not intentionally type sentences into a keyboard; however, she made significant contributions to knowledge production. Hodgetts, thus, decided to cite her as a co-author, making the methodological reflection about their research as a ‘humandog collective’ recognizable as a collaborative effort.

Ferdinand also did not type any lines of this paper; he just walks over keyboards, and occasionally sits down on them. However, he has undoubtedly contributed significantly to this research, actively participating in creating the research field from which this paper emerges. He troubled and twisted carefully prepared scenarios, deeply immersing me and us in the everyday struggles of human–stray relations. Collaboration, of course, does not need to be equal to be acknowledged and made visible.

We have been becoming with one another for the past seventeen years, in overlapping everyday, scholarly, and ethnographic dimensions. A companionship that deserves to be acknowledged, I’d argue. However, unlike Hodgetts and Hester, who chose to write from the point of view of a multispecies ‘we,’ the narrating voice in this paper remains a human ‘I.’ While we are certainly both invested in this companionship, to the best of my knowledge, Ferdinand perhaps reflects upon his (ethnographic) encounters, memorizes places and situations, and learns from them, but it is Elisabeth who reflects upon this companionship as a methodological contribution to multispecies ethnography and ethnographic experimentation. But, if I may speculate, it is the two of us who call for further intertwining experimental and multispecies collaborations to enrich and enhance a plurality of modalities beyond text for multispecies authoring and dissemination of knowledge.

1. The common expressions for perspectives and entities beyond an anthropocentric scale are ‘more-than-human’ and ‘other-than-human.’ However, in *Matters of Care*, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa suggests that a formulation without hyphens, as ‘more than human’ or ‘other than human,’ ‘speaks in one breath of nonhumans and other than humans such as things, objects, other animals, living beings, organisms, physical forces, spiritual entities, and humans’ (2017: 1). I follow this lead, hoping to contribute to eroding the dichotomy of humans on the one side and everything else on the other.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a result of an intense collaborative ethnography to which many companions of several species have contributed. I thank Ferdinand for the vibrant, eye- and perspective-opening exchange; Ferdinand and Anna for strolling together through Podgorica; and Martina, Angela, and the camp dogs and their caregivers, particularly Orka and Tamara, for engaging with me in contact zones of temporarily living and ongoingly thinking together.

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Author's bio

Elisabeth Luggauer (she/her) is an anthropologist exploring various dimensions of more than human urban everyday lives and the possibilities of doing ethnography beyond the human. In her PhD, she explored the question of how humans and stray dogs co-create urban spaces and the meanings of places, shaping the city of Podgorica as a multispecies meshwork. Currently, Elisabeth focuses on urban climate politics as a multispecies matter. She researches how 'green'—approached as entanglements of species and organisms—becomes enacted and acts in shaping ideas of future urban cohabitations in the context of accelerating global warming.

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Ferdinand (he/him) is a dog, a canine para-ethnographer, and a companion to Elisabeth Luggauer both in doing anthropology and doing everyday life. His special interest is following the smells that his sensorial apparatus captures and tracing them to their sources. This may take some time, but that is okay.

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