# Introduction to EthnoCol2019 – Ethnographies of Collaborative Economies

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**Abstract.** We introduce the proceedings of "EthnoCol 2019 – Ethnographies of Collaborative Economies", a one-day conference held at the University of Edinburgh on October 25 2019, and supported by the COST Action "From Sharing to Caring".

## 1  Background

The terms "Sharing Economy" or "Collaborative Economy" have been commonly used in recent years to refer to a proliferation of initiatives, business models and forms of work, from the development of far-reaching corporate digital platforms that have become means of organising cooperative practices, to local, regional and community-led collaborative initiatives in sectors such as housing, tourism, transport, social enterprise, culture and the arts, etc. Researchers from many disciplines are currently conducting ethnographic studies of practices, cultures, socio-technical systems and lived experiences of collaborative economies, producing case studies and data sets documenting these realities and their impacts and implications, as well as developing methodological and epistemological insights and sensibilities about approaching these contexts ethnographically.

EthnoCol 2019 was a one-day conference held at the University of Edinburgh on October 25th 2019, where these themes were explored through presentations of current research and discussions engaging a multidisciplinary group of attendees. The event and the publication of the proceedings are supported by the University of Edinburgh and, particularly, by the COST Action "From Sharing to Caring:

Examining the Socio-Technical Aspects of the Collaborative Economy" (CA16121, 2017-2021), building and growing a network of actors focusing on the development of collaborative economy models and platforms and on social and technological implications of the collaborative economy through a practice focused approach. The conference aligned specifically with the COST Action's Working Group 1 activities to bring together different ethnographic case studies on the collaborative economy with the aim to a) build a basis for developing a multi-faceted view on sharing and caring practices, and b) develop theoretical frames and concepts, and a conceptual foundation for the Action to interpret and classify the different cases.

The conference featured presentations of the papers included in these proceedings, as well as a keynote talk by Professor Ann Light (University of Sussex and University of Malmö), and open discussion sessions.

We solicited papers contributing ethnographic accounts and understandings of collaborative economy practices and communities, and therefore contributing to a multi-faceted view on sharing and caring practices. We were also keen on receiving papers focusing on the methodological aspects of studying collaborative economi(es) e.g. collaborative ethnography, participatory action research, co-design etc.

## 2  Peer-Review Process

We first solicited the submission of extended abstracts responding to the themes of the conference. The following types of contributions were encouraged:
- Ethnographic accounts of practices and/or of forms of community aggregation in collaborative economy settings;
- Ethnographic case studies of collaborative economy initiatives, frameworks and platforms;
- Instances of ethnographically-informed design of collaborative systems in support of collaborative economy practices;
- Reflections on theoretical, epistemological and methodological challenges of studying the collaborative economy ethnographically;

A total of 37 submissions were received, and each was reviewed by at least two members of the conference's international scientific committee, as well as the co-chairs. The authors of a subset of extended abstracts were then invited to submit a full-length paper, which was again reviewed by the scientific committee. The result of this rigorous process are the 16 papers included in the conference programme.

# 3 Themes and Open Issues

The EthnoCol 2019 papers represent timely contributions to the current state of the art in identifying and analysing a broad range of phenomena under the umbrella of the collaborative economy. The contributions give a sense of the multifaceted character of the collaborative economy, as the specific ethnographic studies reflect on the diversity of themes around the subject matter. The selected papers fall within four themes relevant to the scope of the conference: a) ethnographies of sharing economi(es) practices; b) ethnographies of grassroots local initiatives; c) ethnographies of co-designing collaborative economies; and d) ethnographies of spaces for collaborative economies. These themes follow, respond and expand the literature and debates on the collaborative economy, offering an overview on current issues around the subject and new insights based on original research across several countries. Using ethnographic methods to analyse collaborative economy phenomena, the papers present in-depth research with rigorous data collection and analysis. We expect that the selected papers will contribute to several fields of knowledge, and offer invaluable insights to the overall discussion on the collaborative economy.

# 4 Acknowledgements