

## **Access in the Making (AIM) Lab Partnership Protocol**

## Acknowledgement<sup>1</sup>

As we write our values and principles, we want to acknowledge in bold letters that it was the methodological work of **the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR)** that has inspired and guided us throughout the process.<sup>2</sup> We are extremely grateful to CLEAR Lab for the incredible amount of work that they have done in how to run a feminist and anti-colonial lab,<sup>3</sup> and their generosity in sharing this know-how with others. **We cannot cite you and thank you enough.**

## Citation

Inspired by CLEAR Lab's work, AIM Lab has worked on this document over almost a process of ten months (and we are still and will be working on it). This document is the result of *labour*, including doing research, collective conversations, and editing. This

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that in our *Manifesto* and *Protocols*, we make the deliberate decision to use, not endnotes, *but footnotes*. In order to subvert the design hierarchy scripted into footnotes (which automatically decreases their font size vis-a-vis the font size of main text) we choose to use the same font size for both footnotes and the main body of the text, with the same line spacing. These design choices reflect our commitments to feminist ethics of citation. Through these choices, we seek to emphasize the shoulders we stand upon, and the various intellectual genealogies, activist, and artistic traditions that we draw from. Thank you, Annemarie Mol, Sara Ahmed, and Max Liboiron for teaching us about the importance of citations and the politics of footnotes (Mol, *The Body Multiple*; Ahmed, "Making Feminist Points, "; Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism*).

<sup>2</sup> CLEAR, *CLEAR Lab Book: A living manual of our values, guidelines, and protocols*.

<sup>3</sup> For methodological projects of the CLEAR Lab, see:

<https://civiclaboratory.nl/methodological-projects/>

document is a research output. This document is a *publication*. If you quote, use, or in any way benefit from this document, cite it.

**Cite as:**

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As a lab committed to disability justice and feminist citational practices, we are especially concerned that the intellectual labour of marginalized folks (including BIPOC, disabled artists, activists, scholars) and those occupying precarious positions in the academia (graduate students, adjuncts, emerging scholars) are not properly (sometimes, never) recognized. Our own citational practices seek to dismantle that ignorance and erasure, and we hope that you, the reader, will do the same.

## Partnership Protocol

Dear potential future collaborator,

Thank you for your interest in collaboration.

At AIM, we run our operations according to a series of protocols that we have developed in order to ensure that we abide by our values and principles in all the work we do. This involves our collaborations. We therefore invite any person or group interested in collaborating with us to first read this protocol in full.

Because we are committed to putting care and thought into everything we do (regardless of scale) we operate with the understanding that, *things can take time*. We ask the same understanding from our collaborators. This commitment is deeply connected with our core value of relationality, which is enacted through taking the time to prioritize process and building relations in caring and reciprocal ways.

As per our principles of “Nothing about us without us”<sup>4</sup> and *no one left behind*, we invite community groups, researchers, and other academic units alike to read our Values and Principles Protocol (listed on our website). Because of our commitment to slow and careful research, we engage prospective partners in our following multi-step,

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<sup>4</sup> Writing on the history of this phrase, James Charlton “first heard the expression ‘Nothing About Us Without Us’ in South Africa in 1993. Michael Masutha and William Rowland, two leaders of Disabled People South Africa, separately invoked the slogan, which they had heard used by someone from Eastern Europe at an international disability rights conference” (1998, 3). The decentralized nature of the origins of this phrase point to the prevailing networks of activism taking place within disability communities internationally, as well as the identification of a persistent exclusion of disabled communities from projects concerned with the lives of disabled people.

partnership-building protocol as explained in the following. (For short-term projects and inquiries such as one-off events and workshops, please contact AIM Coordinator [Prakash.krishnan@concordia.ca](mailto:Prakash.krishnan@concordia.ca))

First, we ask interested collaborators to review the preliminary assessment in addition to this partnership protocol (appendix A). These questions are drafted to guide your first meeting with us to determine capacity and fit between our two groups. If there is a perceived resonance between our intentions and commitments, we invite you to contact us ([info@accessinthemaking.ca](mailto:info@accessinthemaking.ca)) to schedule a live discussion via phone, video or in-person to discuss the proposed partnership with AIM's director, Arseli Dokumaci.

Once the partnership project idea has been discussed and both parties agree that there is a fit between two groups, and that there can be a potential partnership possibility, then our Lab director will bring the proposal to next AIM regular meeting, where it will be discussed by AIM's Steering Committee (SC). (If need be, the partners might be directly invited to the meeting in order to present their proposal. A question period will follow, before a decision among the AIM members is made). If affirmative consensus is reached, we will move to the next step, and collaboratively work together to complete an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). AIM will provide a tailored MOU drawn from the template originally prepared by provided to AIM by *Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology and Access to Life*.<sup>5</sup> The MOU will consist of the following sections to be discussed and completed together: background/ statement of purpose, terms, scope of engagement, contributions, acknowledgements and rights, data ownership, intellectual property, documentation and use of works, signatures. (Please note that additional

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<sup>5</sup> AIM's MOU has been adapted from a letter of agreement that was generously provided to AIM by *Bodies in Translation: Activist Art, Technology and Access to Life*. We thank them for their generosity both in providing the model for this document, but also modeling meaningful partnerships in the pursuit of social justice.

sections might be included depending on the scope and nature of the partnership). The MoU will need to be approved and signed by both parties' representatives before the project may begin.

Once the MoU has been signed, the partnership will officially begin. Throughout the partnership process, we will do regular check-in's and make sure that:

- a) any issues or conflicts that may arise are being timely and properly addressed (In the event of any conflict, we will consult with AIM's protocols and organize a meeting to address the issues in a dialogical manner. If need be, we will arrange for a third-party conflict resolution mediator to join us and mediate the meetings);
- b) that partnership is moving smoothly and both parties' needs are addressed;
- c) that the terms of the MoU are being respected by both parties.

Any inquiries about potential partnerships and protocols, please contact [info@accessinthemaking.ca](mailto:info@accessinthemaking.ca)

## Appendix A: Preliminary Assessment

Interested collaborators are invited to discuss the following questions internally and with AIM in order to determine what types of agreements need to be drafted. This assessment is adapted from the Memorandum of Understanding of Mutually Beneficial Research by Eric Gordon and Liat Racin (n.d.).<sup>6</sup>

1. Are accessibility and intersectionality core principles within this partnership? How will we both ensure we are prioritizing each other's access needs?
2. What is our shared purpose, desired outcome, and overarching vision of the partnership?
3. Does each partner see benefit in this research partnership?
4. Do we agree on the scope of the project? This includes an understanding of the allocated resources, key stakeholders, timeline, roles and responsibilities, etc.
5. Do we understand our individual and shared capacity for implementation as well as maintenance?
6. What are the cultural differences and perspectives that we should keep in mind?
7. Do we have a clear understanding of mutual expectations for communication during the project?
8. What are our mutual expectations of data collection, storage, maintenance?
  - a. Will data be formatted in accessible and easy to understand ways if it is meant to reach wider audiences?
  - b. Are there more topics to discuss to support a mutually beneficial partnership?
9. Are accessibility and intersectionality core principles within this partnership?

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<sup>6</sup> Eric Gordon and Liat Racin, on behalf of Boston Civic Media, originally prepared this for the Community Action Research Project, produced by the Engagement Lab at Emerson College.

## References

Charlton, James. *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*. California: University of California Press, 2000.

CLEAR. *CLEAR Lab Book: A living manual of our values, guidelines, and protocols, V.03*. St. John's, NL: Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2021.