

Multimodal Appreciation



A Kit for Evaluating Multimodal Works
in Anthropology and Beyond

Judith Albrecht, Tomás Criado, Ignacio Farías,
Andrew Gilbert, Carla J Maier

KIT ELEMENTS

Guide

–

Manifesto

–

Values Inventory

–

Instructions for Immersion

–

Dialogic Evaluation Protocol

–

Chart of Situated Challenges

–

Map of Interventions

Institut für Europäische Ethnologie · HU Berlin
ISBN 978-3-00-084575-8

Guide

Introducing the Kit for Multimodal Appreciation and Evaluation

This kit provides a set of practical exercises and a framework for valuing and assessing multimodal works. It recognizes their unique capacity to weave together and activate diverse media forms, collaborative practices, and public engagement while expanding the traditional boundaries of anthropological knowledge production.

This guide introduces the kit's components and offers a brief description of how each might help to advance the evaluation and legitimacy of multimodal research.

Manifesto

The manifesto is a ode to multimodality, a discursive framework and a handy companion on your journey to appreciate and evaluate more-than-textual research. Or, to put it more bluntly: With it, you may change the landscape of evaluation as you know it. The manifesto provides the groundwork essential for understanding the challenges and opportunities that multimodality brings to anthropological research. It introduces and unpacks critical concepts – from collaboration and immersion to the multiplicity of versions and public engagement – that provide the theoretical depth and practical insights needed to contextualize and activate the other kit elements.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMMERSION

These instructions will help users to identify the manifold affordances of multimodal works, something that requires paying close attention to the aesthetic or sensuous dimensions of knowledge forms as well as both unlearning media conventions and newly sensitizing ourselves to what a research work is and can be.

What's missing in the kit

This kit is intentionally designed as an open-ended, dynamic resource. We are certain that there are dimensions we have overlooked and anticipate that new dimensions will emerge through its use. This is why you'll find blank cards, expandable lists, adaptable templates, and blank pages throughout the kit – they are invitations for you to contribute your own insights, document new approaches, and expand the kit based on your experiences in appreciating and evaluating multimodal works. Your engagement with the kit actively shapes its evolution, making it a lively and collectively enriched resource rather than a fixed set of instructions.

DIALOGIC EVALUATION PROTOCOL

This kit component guides users through a joint assessment of a multimodal work. It is designed to bring evaluators into heightened awareness of the standards and decision-making processes they use when evaluating or reviewing a multimodal work or project. This in turn should advance the goal of identifying and articulating standards of what constitutes a "good" multimodal work, as well as improving the multimodal work or project under review.

CHART OF SITUATED CHALLENGES

This chart will help users to identify, articulate, and relate common challenges that arise from producing multimodal research. It offers an exercise that will aid in navigating these challenges, while also refining your understanding of what working multimodally entails.

VALUES INVENTORY

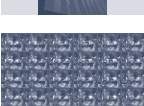
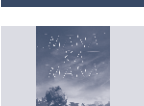
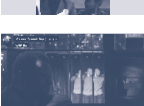
Learning to more fully appreciate and thus properly evaluate multimodal works requires that we extend or push conventional standards of what counts as academic, relevant, and original beyond their association with text and writing. This kit component thus offers users an expanded set of valuation criteria for how to appreciate and evaluate multimodal works.

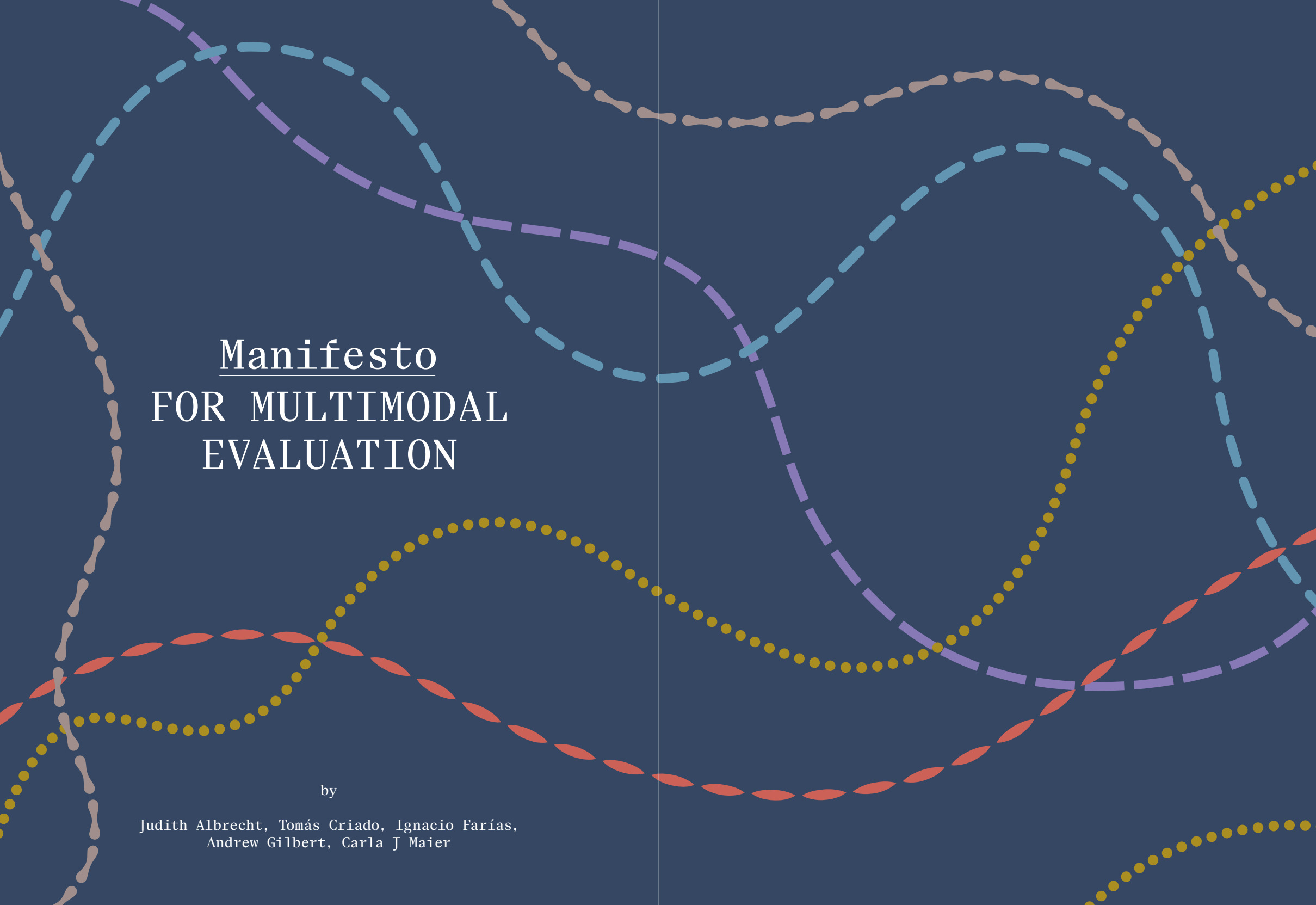
MAP OF INTERVENTIONS

This guide to collective mapping primarily aims to help makers of multimodal works to identify the collaborators, allies, networks, and other resources they need to thrive in the larger ecosystems of knowledge production in which they are enmeshed.

List of Multimodal Reference Works

→ The List of Multimodal Reference Works presents notable examples collected in 2023 in order to study and compare the aesthetic, multisensory, and methodological affordances of more-than-textual and multimodal works, serving not as an exhaustive collection but as an inspirational starting point for further exploration.

1.  GAME
House of Gossip
Berlin / Germany
2018-2021
<https://ww2.hu-berlin.de/stadtlabor/house-of-gossip-assembly/>
2.  BOOK, FILMS & WEBSITE
Sawt Bodies Species
Gilles Aubry, Norient
Morocco, Germany
2023
<https://norient.com/sawt-bodies-species>
3.  WEBSITE
Encounter
Berlin / Germany
2018-ongoing
<https://www.encounter-blog.com/de/>
4.  PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP
Affect Theater
2016-ongoing
<https://affecttheater.com/practice.html>
5.  GRAPHIC ETHNOGRAPHY
King of Bangkok
Claudio Sopranzetti, Sara Fabbri and Chiara Natalucci
2021
<https://utppublishing.com/doi/book/10.3138/9781487526412>
6.  AUDIO/VISUAL PRESENTATION
Making Worlds Otherwise
Miyarrka Media
2020
https://miyarrkamedia.com/bauman_portfolio/making-worlds-otherwise/
7.  INSTALLATION
ch bi vo do. Am / from here?
Mariana Farias Egues
Berlin / Germany, Basel / Switzerland
2022
8.  WORKSHOP
Visual Anthropologist doing a golden record
Matthaei & Konsorten
Berlin, Münster / Germany
2023
<https://goldenrecordstudios.earth/record/44>
9.  WEBSITE
Kaleidos
Ecuador
<https://www.kaleidos.ec/>
10.  GAME
Waste What?
Berlin / Germany
2023
<https://ww2.hu-berlin.de/stadtlabor/publication/waste-what/>
11.  GAME
Frack the game
California / USA
<https://frackthegame.com/>
12.  BOOK
Phone & Spear: A Yuta Anthropology
Miyarrka Media
London: Goldsmiths Press
2019
<https://phone-and-spear.pubpub.org>
13.  WEBSITE
Anthropology by the wire
USA
ongoing
<https://anthropologybythewire-blog.tumblr.com/>
14.  WEBSITE
Asthma files
<http://theasthmafiles.org>
15.  WEBSITE
Matsutake Worlds
<http://www.matsutakeworlds.org/>
16.  FILM
Karrabing Film Collective
ongoing
<https://karrabing.info/karrabing-film-collective>
17.  PERFORMANCE
I was never alone
Toronto / Canada, Russia
2015-2018
<https://iwasneveralone.org/>
18.  PROJECT
platform PECE
University of California
Irvine / US
ongoing
<https://worldpece.org/>
19.  URBAN PEDAGOGY PROJECT
Ciudad Escuela
Madrid / Spain
ongoing
<https://ciudad-escuela.org/about/>
20.  THEATRE PLAY
The man who almost killed himself
2014
<https://granadacentre.co.uk/project/man-almost-killed/>
21.  WEBSITE
Ageing in a time of mobility
Max Planck Research Group
Germany, Transnational
<https://www.ageingandmobility.com/about-us/>
22.  MUSIC ARCHIVE AND FESTIVAL
Echoes of the valley
Kathmannu / Nepal
since 2017-ongoing
<https://www.echoesinthevalley.com/>
23.  SOUND POEMS
Sound Poems
Leah Zani
Oakland California, Denmark, Laos
2022
<https://www.leahzani.com/post/how-to-write-fieldpoetry-sound-poems>
24.  VIRTUAL EXHIBITION
Decolonial Movements in Greenland
Laura Lennert Jensen, Anne Chahine, Vivi Vold
2021
<https://annechahine.com/2021/07/21/decolonial-movements-in-greenland/>
25.  PARTICIPATORY FILM
The Maribor Uprisings
Slovenia
2017
<https://mariboruprisings.org/howitworks>
26.  FILM
Tivoli Stories Project
USA, Jamaica
2018
<https://www.tivolistories.com/>
27.  FILM
Two Laws
Australia
1982
<https://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/two-laws/notes/>
28.  WEB-DOKU
Welcome to Pine Point
Canada
2011
<https://pinepoint.nfb.ca/>
29.  FILM
Bagamoyo Film collective
Tanzania, Germany
2015-ongoing
www.bafoo.org
30.  URBAN INTERVENTION
EBANO Collective
Lisboa / Portugal
2012-ongoing
<https://www.ebanocollective.org/>
31.  WEBSITE
The Affect and Colonialism Web Lab
Germany, International
ongoing
<https://affect-and-colonialism.net/>
32.  VR IMMERSION
Nowhere Media
Berlin / Germany
2014-ongoing
<https://www.nowheremedia.net/>
33.  COLLAGE
Leniqueca A. Welcome
Washington / USA
2016-20
<https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/5464>
34.  BOOK
Delta Worlds
Germany, Brazil, Canada, Myanmar, Senegal
2023
<https://delta.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/en/outputs/books/delta-worlds>
35.  MOTION COMIC
Motion Comics as Memory Work
Germany
2019-ongoing
<https://moccomemories.de/>
36.  EXHIBITION
Geography of ghosts
Austria
2023
<https://mlab.unibe.ch/geography-of-ghosts/>
37.  BOOK
Iru: The Remarkable Life of Irawati Karve
Urmilla Deshpande and Thiago Pinto Barbosa
Speaking Tiger Books
38.  SOUND INSTALLATION
Rituals
Berlin / Germany
2016
<https://blog.berlin.bard.edu/berlin-week-end-rituals-installation-opening/>
39.  SOUND INSTALLATION
Mosaic Mosaïque
Douala / Cameroon, Berlin / Germany
2010
https://www.gruenrekorder.de/?page_id=10742&fbclid=IwAR01EW5m0s5x1mVLGwRl-FnBB04mY72gcdq0jhhsWGY9En3QV4Ea_HY1Dww
40.  SONIC ETHNOGRAPHY
Expedition content
Netherlands, New Guinea
2020
<https://ek.klingt.org/expeditioncontent>
41.  FILM
Mankamana
Nepal, USA
2014
<https://dafilms.com/film/9287-manakamana>
42.  FILM
Making sweet tea
North Caroline / USA
2008
<https://sweetteafilm.com/>
43.  GRAPHIC ETHNOGRAPHY
Lissa: A Story about Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution
Egypt
2017
<https://lissagraphicnovel.com/>
44.  GRAPHIC ETHNOGRAPHY
Forecasts: A Story of Weather and Finance at the Edge of Disaster
USA, Paraguay, Australia
2023
<https://utppublishing.com/doi/book/10.3138/9781487542238>
45.  STUDENT PROJECT
Cultural Anthropology, Childhood Studies, Design Thinking
Berlin / Germany
2018-2022
<https://marvelapp.com/prototype/8ge0a4f/screen/70490941>
46.  EXHIBITION / PERFORMANCE / WEBSITE
Ay Kash/If Only
Germany, Afghanistan
2023
<http://www.underthestarryafghansky.com/about>
47.  PODCAST
Timezones
Norient
Bern / Switzerland, Transnational
2020-ongoing
<https://norient.com/timezones>
48.  PUBLIC CITY WALK
Decolonial Flanerie
Amo Collective Berlin
Berlin / Germany
2020-ongoing
<https://amo-collective.org/Decolonial-Flanerie-2023>



Manifesto FOR MULTIMODAL EVALUATION

by

Judith Albrecht, Tomás Criado, Ignacio Farías,
Andrew Gilbert, Carla J Maier

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	pg 01
A Manifesto for Multimodal Evaluation	pg 09
Proposed Itineraries	pg 34
Kit Elements	pg 36
A Short and Incomplete Bibliography	pg 42
Origins and Acknowledgements	pg 44

This manifesto is a ode to multimodality, a discursive framework, and a companion on your journey to appreciate and evaluate more-than-textual research. To put it even more bluntly: With it, you may change the landscape of evaluation as you know it. The manifesto provides the ground-work essential for understanding the challenges and opportunities that multimodality brings to anthropological research. It unpacks critical concepts – from collaboration and immersion to the multiplicity of versions and public engagement – that provide the theoretical depth and practical insights needed to contextualize and activate the other kit elements.

Introduction

Welcome, user, to the kit. We imagine you to be in one of two roles: a maker of multimodal works, or someone who needs to evaluate such works (for publication, for research funding, or for fulfilling degree requirements, like submitting a thesis or dissertation). Regardless of which role you are in, we expect you will find something useful here to advance your goals. We all have a part to play in facilitating the institutionalisation of multimodal research in the gatekeeping sites of academic knowledge production.

If you have come to this kit, then you may know that we find ourselves amidst an ongoing transformation across the humanities and social sciences in what counts as relevant scholarship. Over the last few decades, colleagues have begun exploring a wide variety of genres and formats of expression, reaching out and working with diverse publics, and trying out new collaborative research styles. The contemporary proliferation of visual, digital, creative and artistic explorations of ethnographic practice is a case in point. Some have dubbed this a “multimodal turn,” pointing both to the centrality of multimedia forms of description and relation in our everyday worlds,

as well as to the plurality of modes of undertaking ethnographic work that these media have afforded. This transformation has not come without challenges. This kit seeks to respond to some of them.

One challenge is linked to the term itself. “Multimodal” has come to mean many things in many different contexts, so it's necessary that we indicate what we mean when we use the term. While we are wary of attempts to provide hard and fast definitions, for our purposes here multimodal refers to those research forms and formats that are more-than-textual. It does not, as is often assumed, refer to forms and formats that are non-textual, an approach which sets up an opposition between text and non-text that is not an accurate representation of what we discuss. What are these multimodal forms and formats? Examples include games, comics, performances, audio/visual works, sound installations, photo essays, smell walks, museum exhibits, multimedia books or web platforms. And while we recognize that multimodal research can take many forms – including drawing, film, photography, sound recording, collaborative design, mapping, walking, and writing – this kit primarily focuses on completed research artefacts intended for publication and circulation.

In this regard, the kit responds to a critical challenge in academic research: despite extensive experimentation showing that multimodal approaches can effectively grasp, represent or evoke slippery research

objects, engage diverse audiences, and activate latent potentials for a broad range of practices in the world, traditional academic structures continue to focus on academic writing, creating significant barriers to the recognition and legitimacy of multimodal research methodologies. This is particularly the case in the gatekeeping institutions that authorize and legitimize research: academic publishers, degree-granting programs, and research funding agencies. In our experience, these obstacles have their origin in two related issues: valuation and evaluation. The problem is that what multimodal works have to offer is not sufficiently appreciated or adequately valued as academically relevant, and therefore many academic gatekeepers do not – or do not know how to – properly evaluate these works.

Our premise is that learning to more fully appreciate and thus evaluate multimodal works requires that we broaden or push conventional definitions of what counts as academic, relevant, and original beyond their association with text and writing. In part, this means extending questions that we usually use to assess an academic text to apply to other media forms and formats, or non-academic forms of writing.

For example, we might ask how a research-based board game makes a theoretical contribution to debates about how housing markets work. Here the academic value – how well a work contributes to theoretical debates – remains conventional, but the form and format of research changes, and we have

to ask how games (or films, or comics) might be seen to be “conceptualising.” Of course, if we focus too much on the theoretical arguments they advance, we may miss another important value of multimodal works that is often only implicitly recognized in more conventional academic texts (if at all): their ability to communicate particular ways of knowing by evoking and eliciting a particular aesthetic and social experience, rather than merely representing it.

In part multimodal works should be evaluated according to discipline-specific values. For example, anthropologists have long valued the ability of ethnographic forms of representation to render the complexity of people(s), sites and processes that are often subject to a kind of epistemic violence and abstraction that excludes, erases, or minimizes other ways of knowing and being. The contributions of some multimodal works thus could become particularly visible if we ask: How well does a multimodal work or project humanize or render the fuller complexity of a person in ways that resist reduction and abstraction? How well does it capture and communicate the dynamic, manifold, and messy ways of being and knowing that are less sensible in other forms and formats?

Another discipline-specific value has to do with collaboration. Anthropologists have long understood the value of explicitly unpacking how anthropologists learn from and with a range of field interlocutors, for these interactions constitute the ground from

which ethnographic knowledge emerges. We can apply this same anthropological value – making the epistemological grounds of ethnographic knowledge transparent – and apply it to the collaborative relations that lie behind almost every multimodal work. Such relations include the way that anthropologists might co-labor with an illustrator and a book designer to produce a graphic ethnography, or the way an anthropologist might co-labor with a sound engineer and curator to create a museum installation. We might ask: How well does a multimodal work or project articulate the different knowledges and forms of expertise involved, as well as the process of their joint work?

We also need to recognize new values built on the affordances of diverse forms and formats, including those not always seen as academic. For example, we might ask how well a multimodal work or project lends itself to activation or provides for distinct kinds of intervention. Of course, we “activate” academic texts all the time, but usually this is limited to traditional academic practices, like using concepts or by comparing others’ empirical data with our own. We also “intervene” with our work, although that usually just means engaging in scholarly debates. But the kinds of activations and interventions that are possible far exceed the traditional text-based realm of the academy.

Appreciating and evaluating multimodal works might also mean redefining what “relevant” means

by extending the boundaries of the community of relevance beyond academia and its provincial concerns. Here we might ask: How well does a multimodal work or project make visible/sensible community interests or problems? Or, how well does a multimodal work or project reach and reflect the concerns of particular (non-academic) audiences, or any other set of values that we might find of interest?

We hope that it is clear that our point is not to replace one hierarchy of values with another. Rather, we simply want to emphasize that we may overlook what multimodal works have to contribute if we continue to evaluate academic research according to a restricted set of values, many of which are based on text-based forms. We believe that future makers and evaluators of multimodal works will both benefit from being able to identify and articulate an expanded range of ways to value and appreciate academic work.

* * *

This manifesto and the other kit elements are designed to facilitate the appreciation, evaluation, and legitimacy of multimodal works. In putting together this pamphlet we are mindful of and play with the multiple meanings of *manifest*, the root word for manifesto. What follows could be seen as a manifest, an inventory of things we have learned. It comes in the form of a manifesto: a set of declarative state-

ments made in such a way that is easy for others to ascertain. And we hope that it has a performative effect, that is, that it manifests a readiness in the reader to plunge into the world of multimodal making and evaluation with confidence.

In the pages below we offer a Manifesto for Multimodal Evaluation that declares and describes the potentials and particular challenges when it comes to making, valuing and evaluating multimodal works.¹ This is followed by an itinerary that describes the individual kit elements and proposes a way to use them, even if we would also like to encourage you to find your own way. Finally, we provide a short and incomplete bibliography of texts that introduce some debates and discussions about multimodal anthropology in the English-speaking world.

¹ In this kit we use the word “work” to identify a single, more or less bounded artefact of knowledge production, such as a game, a comic book, a film, or a podcast. We use the term “project” to refer to broader initiatives which may include many works.

1. Multimodal projects center collaborative making

Things are seldom produced by one person alone: if for no other reason than agency or the capacity to act is a social matter. This is even more the case in anthropology, where learning about the world cannot be done without others. This doesn't just involve the interactive scene of most fieldwork, but also ethnographic analysis and attempts at conceptualizing and representing the world – how to name things or distinguish them, how to share a situation with others. Accordingly, working with others is a fundamental epistemic practice and ethical mandate in anthropology. But how is such collaboration achieved, acknowledged and reflected in multimodal projects?

All multimodal projects are collaborative experiments, bringing together heterogeneous actors, often over long periods of time. It is important to note that collaboration can happen in many ways: from the circulation of information to the more demanding task of joining forces to do or make something, whether we share specific goals (as happens sometimes in engaged or activist settings) or when we're struggling to find ways to work together on different, but related projects while allowing for mutual learnings. Collaboration can lead us to speak with the same voice, to impersonate a collective subjectiv-

ity that not only critically questions established narratives, but also creates and produces something different. But it can also make us sensible to the relevance of polyphony and multivocality. Distressingly, although collaboration is ubiquitous, it can also remain in the background when we finalize a version of a particular account, finding no palpable expression in the very structure (the affordances, the design) of a particular work. Such erasure is deeply problematic. We argue that reflecting on and accounting for collaborative practices in multimodal work is an ethical, methodological and epistemological imperative.

Notably, multimodal projects do not only rely on collaboration between anthropologists and interlocutors, but also often entail encounters between anthropologists and makers, that is, artists and producers, who have the knowledge and skills needed for working with specific media forms. In many projects, research interlocutors are also the makers with whom we engage in developing multimodal works. Of course, anthropologists can also be makers with drawing, design, filmmaking, and acting skills. Acknowledging these multiple forms of collaboration is crucial, for different things are at stake in each. Indeed, while conventional fieldwork focuses us on the epistemic status and ethical obligations of working with others, collaboration with makers often foregrounds aesthetic considerations and how these shape knowledge production. Both modalities of collaboration are often shaped by power and knowledge asymmetries. These asymmetries derive from larger structures that influence access to economic, institutional or political resources. Such asymmetries also, however, emerge from or are reproduced by the very practices of making a multimodal work. With more control over their time and research budgets, we might think that anthropologists play a predominant role in directing the terms and outcomes of any collective production. But this can obscure how dependent they may be on media experts in the making of a multimodal work, experts who have their own aesthetic commitments and concerns. Multimodal projects always involve the negotiation of different interests, forms of authority, and situated knowledge and expertise. We thus believe it is critical for any multimodal project to account for and reflect the complex conditions of collaboration in the works themselves.

As a corollary, we also argue that evaluators should develop ways of identifying, appreciating, and assessing the role of collaboration when reviewing multimodal works. Examine carefully how

collaborative dynamics manifest in the content, form(s), and choices throughout the work. How might such dynamics simultaneously enhance the work's richness while potentially compromising certain aspects of its aesthetic coherence or vision? Does the work acknowledge and show how different collaborators navigated the power imbalances between them, especially across places, disciplines and positionalities?

2. Multimodal projects assemble ecologies of works

Only rarely do multimodal projects come in just one form or format. Instead, they often result in heterogeneous instantiations of media, genre and context. Multimodal projects thus need to be appreciated as networks of different things. They are more than one: a written poem is different from its oral performance, and certainly it is distinct from an academic reflection on the possibility of treating said poems as fieldnotes. And a gallery exhibit that features video testimony is different from a documentary film with the same footage or an academic monograph which treats the same history or events. But they are also less than many, as they still operate as a project forming one ecology, in which individual works are connected to each other in different ways. Such multiplicity might involve dialogical, multilingual narrative strategies as well as the combination of various visual, performative, and sound elements, which manifest themselves in both analog and digital forms (for example on a website). Thus important dimensions of any single work may only become knowable when set in relation to this ecology. This means that different versions and different works within a project ecology should be considered when evaluating any single instantiation.

This poses many questions for making and evaluating: How to grasp this multiplicity and render ourselves sensitive to the nuances as well as the distinct publics that emerge around different works? How to talk about each multimodal work in relation to a larger project ecology? What affordances emerge in the relationship between these works? Do individual works perform different labor for a project, perhaps in relation to particular collaborations or publics? How does the impact that a work had, say, as part of a public screening or an exhibition, influence the ways in which the involved researchers will move on with it? Put another way, sometimes the reception of one work, or version, animates the production of subsequent works. How can we appreciate the evolution of a project through the interventions of its works?

And for makers, are these “ecological” relationships made knowable for audiences, including evaluators? There may be good reasons not to do so, but as we have argued above, there are also very important reasons to make the multiplicities of versions accessible together (for example, on a digital platform or website).

3.

Multimodal projects expand and resituate ethnographic writing

Writing is a fundamental practice in multimodal projects, which continue and radicalize the spirit of textual experimentation in anthropology and the humanities. Rather than moving away from text, multimodality explicitly articulates multiple practices and forms of writing with other genres and media. Thus, overcoming the misunderstanding that multimodality inherently involves a critique of textuality and logocentrism, and a cultivation of non-textual modes of relating to the world, is fundamental. Quite to the contrary: multimodality means multiplying the modes in which we write – about fields of engagement, analysis and collaboration.

Multimodal writing involves crafting texts that are integral parts of a multimodal work and their circulation: the speech bubbles in a comic, a film's synopsis or its subtitles, the instructions of a game, the technical description of an installation, the concept of

an exhibition, the script or the summary of a podcast, or the short descriptions of a project for different audiences of a festival. It is crucial to appreciate the multiple registers, formats, and genres in which such texts are written: indexical, evocative, conceptual, allegorical, political, instructional, and so on. And we need to understand how they relate to the non-textual elements, and how they diverge from traditional forms of academic writing. We should therefore turn our attention to the various ways in which multimodal projects expand and resituate ethnographic writing, without forgetting that writing itself can be multimodal.

The role of ethnographic fieldnotes in multimodal works deserves special attention. Rather than treating them solely as background inscriptions for subsequent analysis, multimodal approaches transform fieldnotes into media in their own right. They can become central to the work itself: for instance, when a field observation turns into a documentary's voice-over, or the description on a game's card. Digital environments further complicate this by creating spaces where social interaction automatically generates its own (written) documentation, generating new forms of field notes and raising questions about the nature of ethnographic inscription. Interestingly, digital environments enable a fluidzone of contact between the writing of a project and the written interpretations it might elicit, creating textual threads where the reactions to a work might become indissociable from the work itself.

Writing remains one of the most effective ways to activate the affordances of multimodal works. This can come in the form of appendices in a graphic ethnography that introduce readers to the grammar of comics. Or a booklet that contextualizes a museum exhibit. Or the repetition of textual forms that evoke a culturally specific aesthetic and epistemology. We might ask: How does a given form of writing change the sensibility and legibility of a multimodal work? How do textual and non-textual elements enter into dialogue or complement each other? We should also note a challenge here as well, namely, how to activate, contextualize, or (re)describe a work – how to account for the elements and decisions, the coincidences and constraints, that led to the making of a specific multimodal artefact – without overexplaining it. For many, the value of multimodal works lie in the irreducible, unexplainable, or unforeseeable nature of the experiences they generate. We are convinced that good multimodal works always exceed the descriptions we produce of them.

When evaluating a multimodal work or project, we may consider: How does the work integrate different forms of writing, and what purposes do these various textual elements serve? How does the work navigate between description and experience, between explanation and evocation? How does the integration of multiple forms of writing – from fieldnotes to technical descriptions to academic articles – contribute to or complicate the work's overall ethnographic argumentation? How does the work's textual elements interact with its other modalities to create meaning, and how might we assess the effectiveness of these interactions?

4. Multimodal works conceptualize through experiences, situations, encounters

It is often said that a good ethnographic monograph allows readers to perform analyses and conceptualizations that exceed those proposed by the author. This is possible because they create what Marilyn Strathern calls a “second field” – a textual space that can be inhabited and experienced while reading – alongside and in relation to the field of ethnographic research. Multimodal works, just like good ethnographies, also create “second fields” for audiences to inhabit and experience. But the experience of a multimodal work, in contrast to reading a monograph, is often collective and participatory (for example visiting an exhibition, playing a game, watching a performance, taking a smell walk). It also often engages a fuller sensorium. This is not to say that the spaces of inhabitation and experience constituted by a multimodal work are not shaped by conceptual propositions, but that the mode of relating to them may not be primarily discursive or analytical.

The challenge multimodal works pose to evaluation concerns precisely the question of how to assess these situated experiences. For textual ethnographies, the main challenge is to create a second field by literary means, where the reader does not just follow an empirical analysis or a conceptual argument, but also inhabits and experiences the field of research (or, more precisely, the relation between the two fields). By contrast, the challenge in a multimodal work seems to be the reverse one, namely, how to make the conceptual and analytical work visible and comprehensible through the experiences, situations, and encounters generated in and through the work. In fact, the conceptual and analytic elements may only be emergent in the work itself, and not in ways that attract attention. This requires finding ways to assess multimodal works that allow us to appreciate the experiences they offer, understand the collaborative process, and let the experience itself become part of discovering the conceptual and analytical arguments the work may contain. Let us be clear: a monograph is also experienced – reading can be deeply poetic. Yet the conundrum lies in the fact that anthropology's textual, analytical and conceptual imagination tends to follow modern European philosophy: noun-based and propositional, rather than verb-oriented and experiential. Here is where multimodal works expand our analytical and conceptual imagination beyond text, pushing us to identify and realize their aesthetic, affective and evocative affordances.

The question of how to evaluate the kinds of learning associated with this process is crucial. At stake is the question of what ethnographic knowledge might entail and the extent to which this is fundamentally experiential. When evaluating a multimodal work, we might consider: How does the work create and sustain its experiential space, and what kind of inhabitation does it invite? What kind of engagement does it encourage (synesthetic, affective, intellectual)? How do the aesthetic and sensory elements of the work relate to its conceptual framework, and are they merely illustrative or do they generate their own forms of knowledge? What is the relationship between individual and collective experience in engaging with the work, and how does this shape its ethnographic contribution? To what extent does the work succeed in making its analytical framework accessible through non-academic forms of writing or non-textual means, and how might we assess this achievement beyond conventional academic criteria?

5. Multimodal works engage with and respond to the media shaping social fields

The media literacy argument for a multimodal turn in ethnography stems from an empirical observation: the people about and with whom we do research are increasingly engaging with different media to act in and co-produce their worlds – documents about themselves, their struggles, dreams, the issues that concern them and so on. This vernacular multimodality raises a fundamental question: how can we encounter our interlocutors, how can we collaborate with them, if not by engaging with them and the media shaping these social fields? From this point of view, multimodality is not just a choice made by researchers interested in specific media forms and formats, but the result of an ethnographic obligation towards the field.

This brings us to a crucial consideration: the relationship between this vernacular multimodality and multimodality in anthropology. Understanding this relationship requires examining how these two forms of multimodality converge or diverge in specific works and projects. Is multimodality a matter of choice, an anthropologist's desire to creatively use the affordances of a media format, or is it empirically grounded in specific dynamics of a field, and about anthropologists learning to respond adequately to those dynamics?

For some, honouring a field's forms of expression and knowledge circulation might be ethically quintessential, a hedge against the risk of restoring the much-criticized figure of the anthropologist as a solo thinker. But responding multimodally to a media rich environment is not always about mimetic moves. There might be good reasons for creatively responding in different media or following different media conventions than the ones present or known in a field: for instance, to provoke reflection or to raise debate. Responses might also be analogic, allegorical, evocative, critical, fictional, or speculative – each approach carrying its own implications and potential. So it is crucial to understand the specific “mode” of doing this, that is, how and why a multimodal work responds to the multimodal forms that shape specific fields.

The evaluation of multimodal works thus invites us to examine: How does the work acknowledge and engage with the existing multimodal practices in the field? How does the work explain and justify its choice of media and modalities in relation to the field? What kind of dialogue does it establish between the multimodality of the field and its own multimodal approach? How does the work navigate between different forms of correspondence – whether analogic, allegorical, evocative, critical, fictional, or speculative? How does the work balance responding to existing media practices while potentially introducing new perspectives or critiques through its choice of modalities?

6. Multimodal works scramble conventional research temporalities

Multimodal projects usually alter the supposed temporality of conventional ethnographic research, with its customary proposal-field-work-analysis-representation sequence. This may have to do with the fact that the temporalities of multimodal works are often dependent on complicated teamwork dynamics and the nature of specific media forms. Sometimes they require long preparatory work and then everything happens quickly, as in a performance or a game, 90 minutes and, poof, it's over. But, strangely, this experience can stay with someone for the rest of their life, or it might be heavily discussed and disputed for a short period of time, and then subside into oblivion.

Come what may, multimodal works can extend the customary methodological sequence, such as when a representational device, like an installation or a film, elicits new research situations or contexts, thus turning an ending – the closure of a project through its

dissemination – into a new beginning for ethnographic inquiry, with a new impetus and brand new collaborators. Or when a work about to be finished suddenly takes a twist when presented to a new public, and heretofore affordances are discovered and activated, and a new development emerges in response. This can happen because each performance or instantiation of a multimodal work re-launches its affordances into a new setting with a different audience, hence unfolding specific local meanings: each new instantiation also becoming the new site for a possible new version, a different assemblage of media, and so on. What's even more complicated is that this can push a project to live in perpetual recursive cycles: closings turning into new openings, time and again. The lifespan of a multimodal project can easily exceed preconceived tracks and well-trodden paths.

Indeed, multimodal projects tend not only to include complex beginnings but even more complex endings. This might have to do with the fact that they are funded in patchy ways, or depend on the voluntary commitment of many people. Creative and unconventional strategies are often required to realize a project or for it to continue to work. This is the reason why some multimodal works also suffer drastic endings, such as when the funding for hosting a website or digital platform runs out, and all of a sudden all our work disappears in thin air, leaving only a vestige, a memory, an inspiring story we tell without being able to show the project itself. Certain multimodal works can also turn into collectors' rarities, with only three copies of a game in active circulation. Or they become strange zombies, as has happened to many interactive documentaries, turned into specimens of Java media archaeology until the moment in which they can perhaps get a new media life – such as when an old film or sound recording is digitized and made available again, or when a peculiar artistic booklet is re-printed.

Hence, fully evaluating multimodal projects usually requires the complex art of “thinking from their effects,” considering how they behave in different situations and contexts, sometimes even calling temporary publics into being, and learning to appreciate how their complicated trajectories introduce shape-shifting articulations of relevance. How are multimodal projects enabling a consideration of their many afterlives, developed with different companions – academic or not? How well is a work allowing us to understand its whirlwind shape, how it was discussed or disputed, how it morphed and got transmogrified in its trajectories, terrible deviations, and

transformations, opening up conflicts and raising conundrums? Being able to evaluate this will depend on how well this process might have been documented, either within the work itself – for instance, in a digital platform – or in another account in a different media. The tormented media lives of documentation, then, become a key evaluation index.

7. Multimodal works' affordances and aesthetics both enable and challenge evaluation

As cultural artefacts, multimodal works inhabit and operate in multiple worlds. They are not only part and parcel of anthropological projects, but are also shaped by specific affordances, conventions and aesthetics associated with specific media fields. Multimodal works thus are always more or less coherent or more or less fragmentary composite assemblages: vortices of different expectations, sensibilities and logics, brought into relationship to enable different forms of meaning-making. While some of these compositions might follow established media genres (documentary film, comics, role-playing board games), others may emerge as monstrous assemblages, proudly displaying the sutures and stitches needed to hold together incommensurable worlds and challenges. Considering multimodal works as composite should provoke a conversation on how differ-

ent elements fit together, or were made to fit together according to a design principle. But what if the very process of composition is not rendered evident for others to see? What is lost, and what do we gain when showing or hiding the traces of composition? Sometimes, like in a good magic trick, experiencing a multimodal work requires a suspension of disbelief so we can be moved or surprised. This may require concealing the machinery so that we can be in awe. Exposing the trick, like explaining a joke, can kill the magic. At the same time, critically assessing the use of specific media affordances and conventions is essential, as they shape the semiotic, affective, social, and aesthetic effects a work can have when it interacts with a user or an audience.

An additional challenge is that most anthropologists, as well as most members of our potential audience, have been socialized into popular aesthetic media conventions that may disrupt our ability to identify affordances that do not conform to those conventions. For example, when we play a game, we may expect it to be “fun,” or when we watch a film we may expect to be “entertained,” both of which are achieved effects that flow from arranging game or filmic elements according to particular aesthetic conventions. But the conventional expectations (a board game should work like this, or a documentary film should look like this) may not only distract us from identifying important affordances of the form, they might also influence us to negatively evaluate something that does not conform to them. Of course, there may be no escaping these conventions and their associated expectations, so good multimodal works tend to take them into account and play with them, or respond to them in some way. But this is also something that evaluators of multimodal works need to take into account when assessing them – to ask whether and how our socialization into media conventions may be influencing our assessments, and whether there are other important affordances that fall outside of these conventions.

8. Multimodal evaluation demands rethinking immersion

Immersion. Attending. Attunement. Engagement. Absorption. Sensibilisierung. Appreciation. Each of these terms describes some dimension of the process of coming to experience and thus to know something using the full sensorium of human perception. It is clear that in order to be able to evaluate something, you need to know it, to be brought into an awareness of its affordances, and for multimodal works this means foregrounding the aesthetic or sensuous dimensions of knowledge forms. Of course we have aesthetic experiences whenever we read academic texts, even if we do not always define such experiences as immersive; this may be because a popular ideology about texts is that they succeed when they foreclose the sensual in favor of the rational.

There is a long history of attempts in the arts, philosophy, and even monastic practice to organize and engineer different moments and movements of such perception and articulation. Often they come in the form of sequentially arranged practices, and include an attempt to stage an immersive, sensuous, or immediate experience of a work that at least temporarily suspends interpretation and

judgement (even if this is never fully possible). No encounter with a multimodal work is unmediated – there is no escaping the spatial, temporal, linguistic or historical setting of the encounter, or the sociocultural habitus we bring to the encounter, itself shaped by the ways that we are socially and politically positioned in the world. It may be, however, that the attempt and failure to fully suspend interpretation and judgement – the failure to have an unmediated or immediate experience of a work – can aid in the process of identifying those multiple mediations. This, in turn, can also aid in our identifying and articulating how the work works, what its affordances are, how it achieves or fails to achieve its effects. By singling out and partially isolating one dimension of experience, the attempt to suspend analysis can itself create an awareness of and openness to novel and unexpected sensations and perceptions, that can aid in the creation of new epistemic grounds.

In order to appreciate a multimodal work we may need to learn from or modify already existing practices of immersion and find ways that allow us to unlearn or at least set aside our training in text-based aesthetics, so that we may come to perceive and articulate the diverse affordances of a multimodal work. Multimodal appreciation necessitates staging moments of synesthetic perception and articulation. That is, it involves not only experiencing how something affects you but also becoming aware of that effect. Others can aid in this process. We thus understand immersion as an art or technique of attention that is not solely about synesthetic immediacy; it also involves dialogical procedures of collective inquiry. The promise of immersion for the evaluation of multimodal works – or what we think of as immersion's synesthetic and epistemic effects – is more fully realized when the immersive experience is socialized and thus not temporally or socially isolated to a single event. Indeed, when our individual immersive experience is shared with others who have encountered the same work, and vice versa, we may revise our sensory and analytic experience of the work in ways that change their meaning and even their feeling. Since our ability to identify the affordances of a work results in part from the way our experience of a work is mediated by our existing knowledges, academic training, and social positions, we arrive at an observation counter-intuitive to a simple phenomenological approach to immersive encounters. The more mediations we are exposed to in our collective appreciation, the more “immersive” our experience of the work in the sense that we became more alive to its sensory and analytic affordances.

This poses a set of questions: What is the best setting in which to engage or immerse in a multimodal work, one that will allow its diverse affordances to emerge? How can we come to be aware of the way our own social positioning, cultural habitus, and academic training influence our perceptions and interpretations? Who are the right people to stage immersive experience with and learn from? What new perceptions, and what new kinds of knowledges emerge when multiple perspectives on immersive experiences are brought into dialogue?

9. Multimodal evaluation is dialogic, interdisciplinary, and emergent

Multimodal works necessitate dialogic evaluation approaches because they operate across disciplinary boundaries, knowledge systems, and sensory dimensions that limit traditional single-reviewer methods and models. Dialogic evaluation can help create awareness of the standards and decision-making processes we bring to assessment, including their differences and limits. It also creates spaces where diverse perspectives can collectively engage with a work's multifaceted nature, enabling evaluators to appreciate and critically respond to diverse disciplinary references, methodological problems, and distinct knowledge forms. This approach argues that evaluation norms in multimodal scholarship should emerge through interaction and practice rather than isolated analysis, reflecting the collective approach to immersion we outlined above.

Dialogic evaluation as we imagine it extends beyond simply collecting individual perspectives. Rather than aggregating the separate insights of reviewers A, B, and C – as a skilled editor might do in a traditional review process – dialogic evaluation creates a generative space where new understandings of what constitutes a “good

work” can emerge. This emergence during dialogue produces possibilities and insights that would not materialize from immersion alone, regardless of how thorough. The dialogue becomes not just a means of bringing together what each evaluator already knows individually, but becomes the critical moment where collective learning happens and novel ideas, values and standards take shape.

Dialogic evaluation as we propose it envisions review processes that balance constructive engagement with critical rigor, bringing together diverse co-present reviewers who collectively examine works through immersive exploration and discussion. Importantly, dialogic evaluation need not be confined to assessing a work’s completed form when changes might be difficult to implement – especially for complex projects like films, games, or digital platforms that require production teams working within specific timeframes and budgets. Instead, dialogic evaluation can function as an integral component throughout a project’s development, helping to bring different aspects, facets, and versions of a work into fruition. Thus, dialogic evaluation can potentially accompany a work’s entire production – for instance as part of iterations of evaluations that a committee provides for a PhD project, or in the way some anthropological journals engage collectively and constructively with multimodal submissions. Ultimately, such collective evaluation could simultaneously create pathways for innovative teaching approaches, learning methodologies, and engaged scholarship within anthropological disciplines and across the broader humanities landscape.

10. The future of anthropology has always been multimodal

Multimodality is gaining traction in anthropology and beyond, with many advocates envisioning its transformative potential to reshape research practice. However, it is essential to recognize that anthropology has never been monomodal. From the earliest anthropological expeditions to the foundational examples of ethnographic fieldwork, anthropologists have consistently engaged with a diverse array of media. For over a century, tools such as photography, film, exhibitions, sound recordings, and drawings have been integral to the production of anthropological knowledge.

This history of multimodal anthropology has gone hand in hand with the emergence of professional anthropology not only in universities, but also in museums and other cultural institutions. This means that, to a significant extent, professional anthropology has been historically shaped by colonial frameworks that involve forms of cultural othering and epistemic violence. Perhaps this is why, in the past four decades of disciplinary debates surrounding ethnographic writing, this history of multimodal anthropology has been somewhat overlooked. In fact, in these debates the discipline was recast as if the politics of ethnographic representation had only ever been a matter of reading and writing. The current display of inventiveness through multimodal works and the impetus to embrace

multimodal anthropology must be understood as part of the long history of uses of more-than-textual resources in different practices and times: learning from, while also moving beyond it.

There is also much to learn from the most important precursor of multimodal explorations, namely, visual anthropology. In the context of a textual primacy in the discipline's self-understanding, visual anthropology developed as a parallel domain including specialized teaching programs, conference sections, and film festivals. The institutionalization of visual anthropology has thus been predicated on a sense of fundamental difference from non-visual anthropology. When struggling to institutionalize multimodal anthropology, we do not mean that it should evolve into a separate domain or as a subfield of anthropology at large.

In fact, the most promising future for multimodal anthropology is one in which the term itself becomes unnecessary, a long forgotten adjective from a text-centric era. Let's work towards a time when it becomes self-evident that any anthropological research encompasses an ecology of works in diverse media and modes, a future in which multimodal projects are simply valued and evaluated as integral to the perpetual reinvention and new conventions of anthropological practice.



“Before turning to the next sections of this pamphlet, we encourage you to inspect the rest of the kit if you have not already done so. Keep them handy as you read through the proposed itinerary and a description of the individual kit elements below.”



Proposed Itineraries

Some of these kit elements are primarily aimed at evaluators and others at makers. We thus propose two main itineraries in using the kit elements.

Evaluator Itinerary:

If your interest in this kit is mainly as a future evaluator of multimodal works and projects, we would encourage the following itinerary. It will work best if you have an actual multimodal work that you would like to assess, as well as at least one partner or colleague with whom you will undertake this assessment. The following itinerary is not likely to be completed in one sitting but rather unfold across multiple moments.

1. → Read the Manifesto.
2. → Familiarize yourself with the **VALUES INVENTORY**.
3. → Follow the **INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMMERSION**.
4. → Perform the **DIALOGIC EVALUATION PROTOCOL**.

Evaluators may also benefit from considering the other kit elements (**CHART OF SITUATED CHALLENGES** and **MAP OF INTERVENTIONS**). For example, a greater appreciation of the potential challenges faced by researchers might help evaluators to understand particular choices made in the production of a multimodal work. It could also prompt useful discussions at various stages of mentoring relationships. And an examination of the contexts and networks that many projects will have to navigate could help reviewers to identify and suggest additional resources to support individual multimodal projects.

Maker Itinerary:

If your interest in this kit is mainly as a maker of multimodal works, we would encourage the following itinerary. It will work best if you have an actual multimodal project that you are working on. Ideally you have colleagues who might do the same and help you assess and compare your charts and maps. The following itinerary is not likely to be completed in one sitting but rather unfold across multiple moments.

1. → Read the Manifesto.
2. → Familiarize yourself with the **VALUES INVENTORY**.
3. → Create your own **CHART OF SITUATED CHALLENGES**.
4. → Chart and navigate a **MAP OF INTERVENTIONS**.

Makers will certainly benefit from performing the other kit elements (**INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMMERSION** and **DIALOGIC EVALUATION PROTOCOL**), mostly to be able to identify and articulate the values of one's own work in ways that meet the demands of likely institutional evaluation frameworks.

Other Itinerary:

One guiding idea behind this kit and the project from which it emerged is that we cannot possibly foresee all of the challenges or opportunities that working multimodally will provoke in the gate-keeping institutions of anthropological knowledge production. We have thus designed each kit element to provide for some openness, to extend the logic that each element contains or even to adapt them in ways we cannot foresee. We thus expect that any user of this kit might come up with their own itinerary and way of relating and activating its diverse elements – or even create their own elements for issues that we did not anticipate.

Kit Elements

Our kit is made up of six main elements: the Values Inventory, Instructions for Immersion, Dialogic Evaluation Protocol, Chart of Situated Challenges, Map of Interventions, and this Manifesto, which is designed to contextualize and activate the other kit elements. Each of them individually and in combination respond to some of the challenges, obstacles, and opportunities outlined above. We also include a quick Guide to the kit elements as well as a list of many of the multimodal works we learned from.

The **VALUES INVENTORY** offers users an expanded set of criteria for how to evaluate multimodal works. It comes in the form of cards that can be detached from one another and held together by a key ring, ready to use in relation to the other kit elements as well as in a variety of other settings. We also include blank cards so you can add values we have not yet thought of.

The **INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMMERSION** aim to guide users to identify the affordances of a multimodal work. The instructions themselves are quite simple: a prompt for how to prepare, then how to engage the work, a set of questions to identify how and why a work achieves its effects, and then a prompt to share your impressions with others. We provide a small space to write on the instructions themselves, but having a writing instrument handy will be useful. These instructions are based on the assumption that appreciating multimodal works requires paying close attention to the aesthetic or sensuous dimensions of knowledge forms, and that we may need to both unlearn and newly sensitize ourselves to what a research work is and can be.

To prepare to immerse, we suggest finding or creating a setting that will allow for the best possible engagement with the work; the context for such engagement influences how we experience that work. For example, you might want to listen to a sound work in a setting with few other sonic or other sensory distractions. You might

want to watch a film on a screen bigger than your phone. And you may want to carve out the time which a full engagement with the work demands (games, or walks, or performances all have different tempos and time spans). At the same time, we believe it is useful that we be brought into awareness of the subjective elements that influence how we experience a multimodal work, including our academic training, our media socialisation and expertise, and the way we are socially positioned in the world (by diverse identifications, such gender, religion, race, ethnicity, political commitments, kinship, etc.). This will aid in later making sense of our experience of the work.

We note that there are multiple ways to experience a multimodal work. We can watch a film from beginning to end without doing anything else. Or we can take notes while watching. Or, if we have the ability, we can stop the film, rewind, take notes, walk away and come back, and so on. Each of these ways will influence our experience of that work. We recommend experiencing the work as designed (watch a film or listen to a podcast or watch a performance or play a game or read a comic or complete a walk from beginning to end, or with very few interruptions), with minimal note taking. It can always be engaged again.

Finally, recalling the discussion of immersion earlier in this manifesto, we believe that a fuller appreciation of the affordances of a multimodal work – and indeed a deeper experience of its aesthetic and sensory dimensions – comes when our experience of that work is socialized. Thus the final step: to share with others who have experienced the same work.

The **DIALOGIC EVALUATION PROTOCOL** is aimed to guide users through a joint assessment of a multimodal work.

Why dialogic? In part because our evaluations rarely stand alone: we are part of dissertation advisory committees, or panels reviewing research funding applications or submissions for publication. Only in some of these contexts, however, is the process of assessment a joint enterprise, performed relationally. We believe that formalizing and making dialogic the collective review of a multimodal work or project will advance the goal of identifying and articulating standards of what constitutes a “good” multimodal work, as well as help to improve the multimodal work or project being reviewed

(insofar as reviews or assessments include feedback). This is particularly the case if we are assessing a work with people who have different academic training, media expertise, or disciplinary locations.

The Protocol that we propose here identifies multiple dimensions of evaluation that relate to our expanded values inventory. It also offers a writing format designed to make visible to evaluation partner(s) our responses to the various evaluation dimensions indicated in the sample questions. Not only will this bring us into awareness of the standards of evaluation and decision-making processes we bring to bear when assessing a multimodal work or project, but doing so should also sharpen discussion when differences emerge and help provide detail when articulating a final review decision. And as with every element in our kit, we encourage experimentation here – add or subtract dimensions of evaluation, assess simultaneously or asynchronously, perform the evaluation in dialogue with more than one other person, and so on.

The **CHART OF SITUATED CHALLENGES** is aimed to guide users to identify, articulate, and relate common challenges that arise from working multimodally, including when submitting a work or project to evaluation. Each multimodal maker will need to navigate their way through a kind of obstacle course specific to their project and the institutional situation they are in (a PhD student in a degree-granting program, an applicant for a research grant, a maker seeking publication). We believe that multimodal projects will be strengthened if makers chart out these obstacles or challenges at various stages - before, during, and after research. The exercise we propose should thus be a useful step in not only charting challenges and their implications for a given multimodal project; it should also ideally help in crafting responses to meet them.

Through our research we identified numerous challenges and sets of questions that most multimodal projects will face at one time or another, and have organized them into six thematic areas. We have created an exercise to identify which of these challenges your work might encounter, how they might be related to other challenges, and what the potential implications are.

Certainly there are some challenges that we do not create space for because they are related to administrative or infrastructural

questions of a specific nature, such as whether or not a university program can accept a multimodal work as satisfying degree requirements, or the challenge that working multimodally may take more time or funding than what is generally expected in a PhD program or research program, or that a publisher or library may not have the digital or other infrastructure to accommodate a more-than-textual work. In these cases, and for other challenges we have not foreseen, we expect that the charting exercise can be adapted and extended to respond to them as well.

The **MAP OF INTERVENTIONS** is aimed to help researchers working in more-than-textual forms and formats to identify the relevant institutional and social settings within which you might want to – or have to – situate your work. The resulting map should serve as both a practical tool for understanding your work's contexts and act as a prompt for critical reflection on your practice within larger ecosystems of knowledge production.

The term “intervention” can be thought of broadly here. In conventional academic terms, researchers produce works (articles, books, conference presentations) that intervene into disciplinary debates and/or make contributions to a body of knowledge. Multimodal works do this as well, but they also have a potential that exceeds this relatively limited understanding of research intervention. These works can engage new audiences, act as catalysts for new research, lend themselves to community initiatives, create new collaborations – and should be appreciated and valued as such. But perhaps most important in this context, intervention means doing the work of pushing boundaries within a university program, publishing house, or funding agency about what a relevant and acceptable form of academic knowledge production is. But in order to successfully plan and make any intervention, even those of a conventional nature, it is important to map out the conditions necessary to do so – including the ability to withstand evaluation. When we do this mapping exercise, you will hopefully realize that you are not alone: there are likely allies, potential collaborators, and supportive organizations within the institutions and networks of knowledge production we find ourselves in. And you need not start from scratch: there are models and precedents to look to, as well as disciplines which have developed a language to articulate the values and affordances of particular multimodal forms and formats.

And so the kit provides an exercise to map out those allies and resources within and beyond our institutions. It also suggests that you map those moments where you have run into obstacles or obstructions to your work, to learn from them, and identify how they shape your interventions. And as with most of our kit-based exercises, this one benefits from being carried out with others – with collaborators on your project, or allies who have done similar multimodal work, or supporters who have experience in the gate-keeping institutions that evaluate and legitimize our research. Ideally, the mapping exercise will identify resources – in the form of people, precursors, and practices – to help your project to succeed and thrive.

A SHORT AND INCOMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are many starting points from which to explore the discourses and debates about multimodality within anthropology. Rather than attempt a comprehensive list, we instead present a partial list of texts that have influenced the creators of this kit at one time or another. (In keeping with a decision made in the design of this kit, the list includes solely English-language texts). In the manner of good academic publications, each of the entries below should open up for the reader a new world of references, theoretical and conceptual inspiration, cautionary tales, and a solid introduction to the stakes involved in multimodal research practice and evaluation.

Astacio Alvarez, Patricia, Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan, and Arjun I. Shankar (2021) "Multimodal Ambivalence: A Manifesto for Producing in S@!# t Times." *American Anthropologist*, 123(2): 420–427

Chin, Elizabeth (2017) "On Multimodal Anthropologies from the Space of Design: Toward Participant Making." *American Anthropologist* 119(3): 541–543

Collins, Samuel Gerald, and Matthew S. Durrington (2024) *Multimodal Methods in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge

Cox, Rupert, Andrew Irving and Christopher Wright (2016) *Beyond text? Critical practices and sensory ethnography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Criado, Tomás, Ignacio Fariás and Julia Schröder (2022) "Multimodal Values: The Challenge of Institutionalizing and Evaluating More-than-textual Ethnography." *entanglements*, 5(1/2): 94–107

Criado, Tomás and Adolfo Estalella (eds.) (2023) *An Ethnographic Inventory: Field Devices for Anthropological Inquiry*. New York: Routledge

Dattatreyan, Ethiraj Gabriel, and Isaac Marrero-Guillamón (2019) "Introduction: Multimodal Anthropology and the Politics of Invention." *American Anthropologist*, 121(1): 142–153

Dattatreyan, Ethiraj Gabriel, and Isaac Marrero-Guillamón (2021) "Pedagogies of the Senses Multimodal Strategies for Unsettling Visual Anthropology." *Visual Anthropology Review*, 37(2): 267–289

Deger, Jennifer, Victoria Baskin Coffey, Caleb Kingston, Sebastian J. Lowe, and Lisa Stefanoff (2025) "Epistemic attunements: Experiments in intermedial anthropology." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 35(1–2): 3–19

Dicks, Bella, Rosie Flewitt, Lesley Lancaster, and Kate Pahl (2011) "Multimodality and Ethnography: Working at the Intersection." *Qualitative Research*, 11(3): 227–237

Estalella, Adolfo and Tomás Criado (eds.) (2018) *Experimental Collaborations: Ethnography Through Fieldwork Devices*. New York: Berghahn

Jungnickel, Kat (ed.) (2020) *Transmissions. Critical Tactics for Making and Communicating Research*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Nolas, Melissa, Christos Vavantzakis, Richard Long, Ellie Walton, and Bethany Logan (2022) "Last but not least." *entanglements*, 5(1): 1–7

Sansi, Roger (ed.) (2020) *The Anthropologist as Curator*. London: Bloomsbury.

Takaragawa, Stephanie, Trudi Lynn Smith, Kate Hennessy, Patricia Alvarez Astacio, Jenny Chio, Coleman Nye and Shalini Shankar (2019) "Bad habitus: Anthropology in the age of the multimodal." *American Anthropologist*, 121(2): 517–524

Westmoreland, Mark R. (2022) "Multimodality: Reshaping Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 51(1): 173–194

ORIGINS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This kit has its origins in the research project

Multimodal Appreciation. Prototypes for the Evaluation and Institutionalisation of More-than-Textual Ethnography,

developed at the Stadtlabor for Multimodal Anthropology, Institute for European Ethnology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. To learn more about the project, and the diverse processes and practices that led to this kit, follow this link:

> <https://www2.hu-berlin.de/multimodalappreciation/>

We extend special thanks to the participants in roundtables, individual events, and especially our workshop series, all of whom were open to engaging with us about the conceptual, methodological, and aesthetic possibilities and challenges of multimodal evaluation, helped test kit elements, and discussed visions for future multimodal research. Thank you Jennifer Deger, Claudio Sopranzetti, Maple Raza, Rachel Karafistan, Maka Suárez, Jorge Nuñez, Melanie Garland, Imad Gebrael, Anne Chahine, Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, Max Haiven, Thiago Barbosa, Dimitra Kofti, Gabriele Alex, Vivian Berghahn, Ana Ivasiuc, Alexa Färber, Simone Pfeifer, Joella Bitter, Gabriel Dattatreyan, Megan Jeanne Gette, Marina Peterson, Jesse

Shipley, Deborah Thomas, Christos Varvantakis, Pierre Depaz, Marcela Lopez, Indrawan Prabaharyaka, Leniqueca Welcome, Julien McHardy, Gilles Aubry, Jara Rocha, and Susanne Eichner.

Members of the research team: Judith Albrecht, Tomás Criado, Ignacio Fariás, Andrew Gilbert, Carla J. Maier, and Karina Piersig.

A heartfelt thanks goes to the audio and visual documentation team: Sadek Bouzinou (camera work and film editing) and Sven Jensen-Brakelman (audio recording and editing, podcast production).

We gratefully acknowledge the lead designer of the kit, Dina Fluck, who from an early stage engaged closely with our ideas and process, guiding the project with professional insight and leading the final production stages with exceptional care.

IMPRINT

This kit is available in print or as a PDF Download:
<https://www2.hu-berlin.de/multimodalappreciation/>

Cover and layout design:
Dina Fluck

Multimodal Appreciation:
A Kit for the Evaluation of
Multimodal Works in Anthropology
and Beyond, 2025
First edition

Institute for European Ethnology
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Str. 40/41
D-10117 Berlin
ifee.sekr@hu-berlin.de
<https://www.euroethno.hu-berlin.de/de>

This book has been made possible with the generous support of the Volkswagen Foundation (project number 0069945-00) as well additional funding from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle.

ISBN 978-3-00-084575-8

Fonts by: Camelot Typefaces

Printed by:
FP Katalogdruck Berlin

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons AttributionShare Alike 4.0 International License (CC BYSA 4.0). <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/bysa/4.0/>



Manifesto FOR MULTIMODAL EVALUATION

1. Multimodal projects center collaborative making



2. Multimodal projects assemble ecologies of works



3. Multimodal projects expand and resituate ethnographic writing



4. Multimodal works conceptualize through experiences, situations, encounters



5. Multimodal works engage with and respond to the media shaping social fields



6. Multimodal works scramble conventional research temporalities



7. Multimodal works' affordances and aesthetics both enable and challenge evaluation



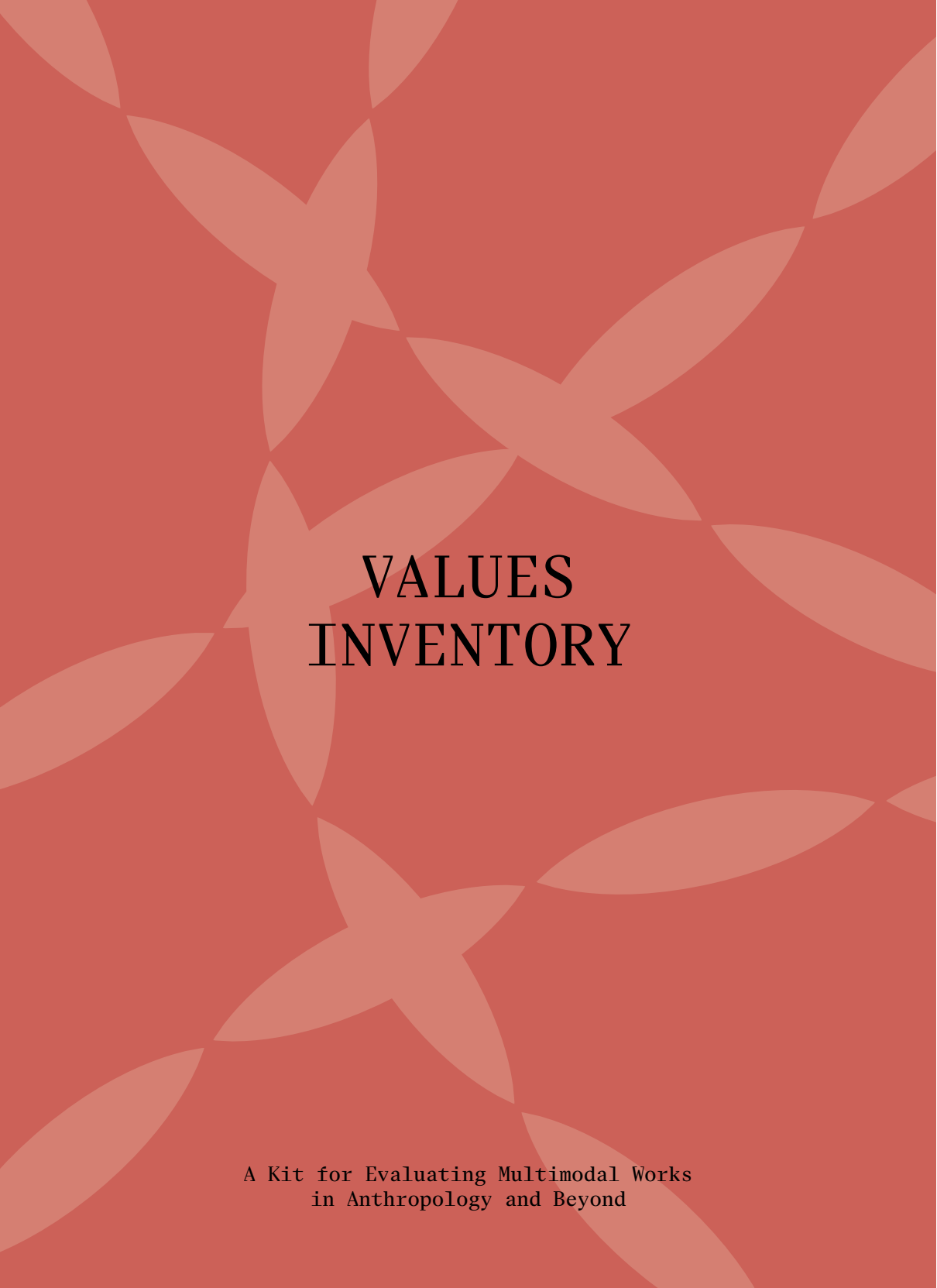
8. Multimodal evaluation demands rethinking immersion



9. Multimodal evaluation is dialogic, interdisciplinary, and emergent



10. The future of anthropology has always been multimodal

The background of the left page is a solid red color with a pattern of overlapping, stylized leaf or petal shapes in a lighter shade of red. These shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some shapes appearing to be in front of others.

VALUES INVENTORY

A Kit for Evaluating Multimodal Works
in Anthropology and Beyond

VALUES INVENTORY

This Values Inventory offers an expanded set of criteria for appreciating and evaluating multimodal works. Taken together, they are designed to prompt reflection on the diverse dimensions that individual works and projects may entail. The Inventory contains questions that help users assess how a multimodal work embodies each value. Feel free to add any relevant values not included in this list.

Originality and Relevance

A traditional academic value according to which most scholarship is evaluated: Is the argument, analysis, contribution to theory, method, (re)presentational aesthetics, etc., **original and relevant?**

Communication

A traditional academic value usually assigned to a text: How **clearly and coherently** does it communicate?

Truth Value

A traditional academic value: How **accurate** is the information that is being communicated?
Does the multimodal work create or achieve a high level of truth value?

Evocative Capacity

How well does a work **evoke** something about the phenomena under consideration, such as a (sensory) experience?

Performative Value

How well does a multimodal work or project **perform or enact** an argument, point, or phenomenon under investigation?

Humanity

How well does the work **humanize** or render the full complexity of a person in ways that resist reduction and abstraction?

Collaboration

How well does the multimodal work or project make possible **collaboration** or other relations? How well does the work make visible or credit the role of that collaboration or those relations?

Media/Object Alignment

How well are the format(s)/media/genres and object(s) of investigation **matched** in a multimodal work or project? And how well is this relationship articulated, i. e. why this format/media for this topic?

Affordances Realized

How well are the possibilities/elements/
affordances of individual formats/media/
genres used in developing insights, achieving
an analytic effect, containing a multiplicity
of perspectives, or communicating any of
the above?

Multiplicity

A value of accumulation: How well
does a project realize the affordances of
intermediality and multimodality **across**
multiple forms and formats?

Ethical Value

How well does a multimodal work or project make visible/sensible **community concerns**, problems, objects, etc?

Reach

How well does a multimodal work or project **reach and reflect** the concerns of particular audiences?

Multidisciplinary Potential

How well does a multimodal work or project develop or draw upon **multiple disciplinary perspectives** and practices to effectively document and communicate the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation?

Epistemological Location

How well does a multimodal work or project makes the **conditions of its production** sensible/visible/knowable?

Activation Potential

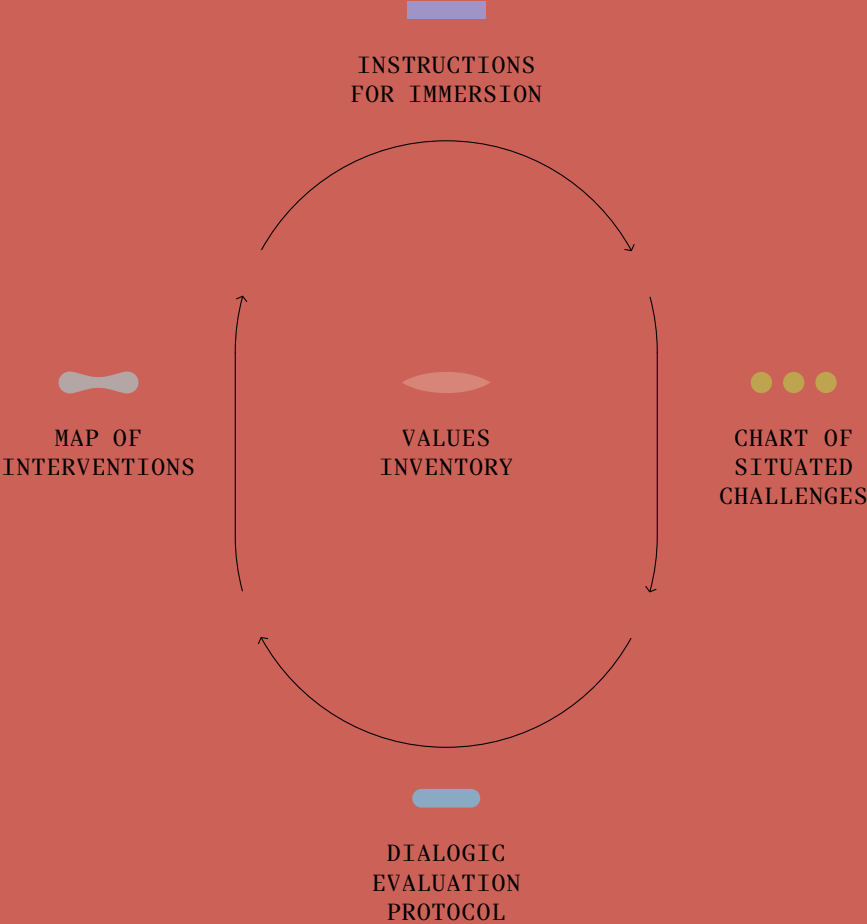
How well does a multimodal work or project lend itself to **activation** or provide for distinct kinds of interventions?

Accessibility

How well is the **accessibility** of a multimodal work or project designed and realized?

Pedagogy

How well does the multimodal work or project anticipate and provide for **teaching**?
Does it provide tools for its own activation
in classroom settings?



INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMMERSION

A Kit for Evaluating Multimodal Works
in Anthropology and Beyond

The first step towards appreciating a multimodal work is to find or create an appropriate space or setting in which to engage that work, and to be aware that we come differently positioned and with distinct knowledges and experiences that set us in relation with the work in specific ways.

IMMERSION

Immerse yourself or encounter the multimodal work in the way(s) that it invites engagement – such as:

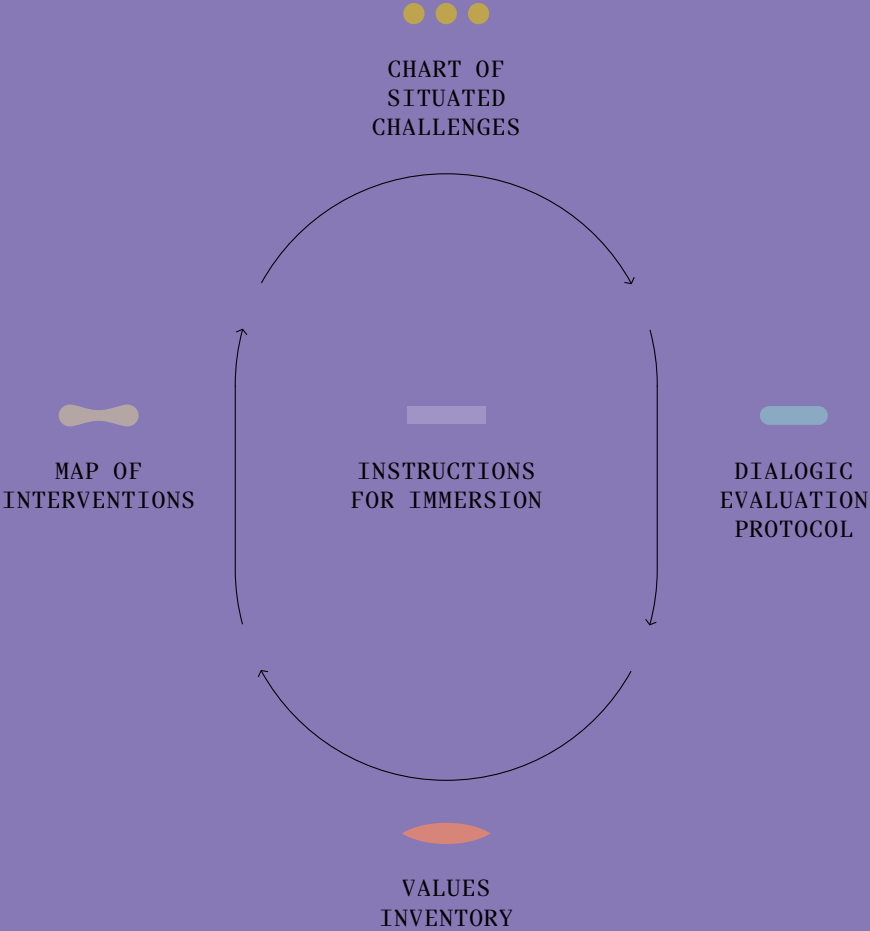
- reading
- watching
- listening
- smelling
- manipulating



Document your immersion by responding in writing to four questions:

- What made or left an impression, on an intellectual, emotional and/or affective level?
- How are these impressions informed by your social position, your disciplinary background and/or your own research practice?
- What qualities or elements of the work afforded or contributed to these impressions?
- How does the work contribute to relevant debates or trends in anthropology? Or what, from your perspective, is preventing the work from making such a contribution?

Share your experience and responses with others.

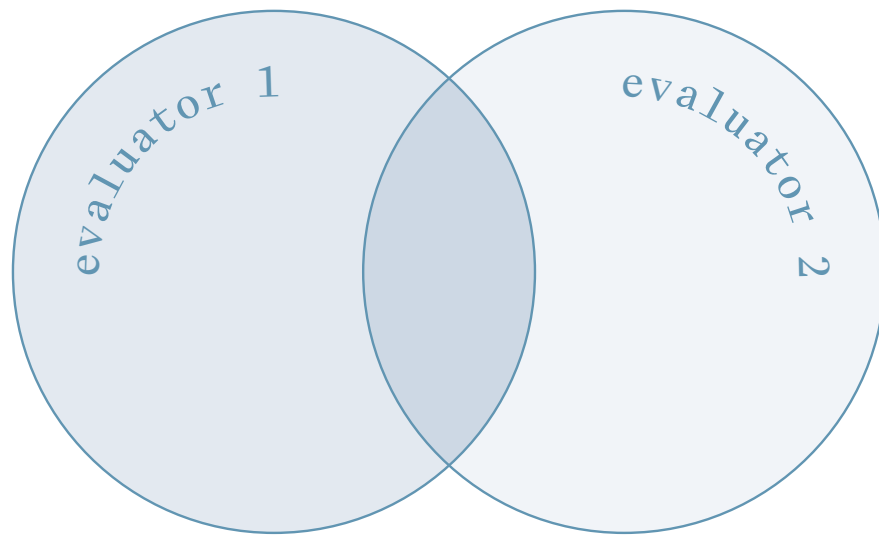


DIALOGIC EVALUATION PROTOCOL

A Kit for Evaluating Multimodal Works
in Anthropology and Beyond

The Dialogic Evaluation Protocol is aimed at guiding users through a joint assessment of a multimodal work. The format that we propose here is made up of questions that correspond to multiple dimensions of evaluation and are inspired by the expanded Values Inventory. They may not all be relevant for each multimodal work or project. We recommend that you go through the Instructions for Immersion before you complete this protocol.

**Team up with the colleague you want
to evaluate the work with**



You may use the model protocol we provide on the following pages or create your own according to your needs.

The evaluation of each dimension will have to be done on separate sheets of paper, or in an online document with two columns if you prefer to type instead of write by hand. The point is to bring each response to each question into a visible relationship.

Filling in the protocol can be done in a synchronous as well as asynchronous way.

The completed protocol is designed to be used as the basis for a conversation which will lead to final evaluation results.

Rudiments of a dialogic evaluation protocol

Names and disciplinary
backgrounds of evaluators:

.....
.....

Name of the multimodal project:

.....

Name of the maker(s) of the multimodal project:

.....
.....

Short description of the project
(max. 500 words):

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Evaluation Process

Choose a question from the following pages and write down your response. Repeat for as many questions as are relevant to the work at hand.

Answers evaluator 1 ...

Answers evaluator 2 ...

Evaluation results

Please choose whether you would recommend this project/ work for publication, funding, or the fulfillment of degree requirements (PhD level), and/or whether it needs additional work. Then answer the following question.

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO
- ☐ MAYBE (revision needed)

How did you reach that decision? Explain the evaluation result and, when relevant, indicate what additional work needs to be done in order for it to be published/funded/ accepted as fulfillment for a degree requirement.

Research Means and Ends

- Where and how well does the multimodal work/project make the process or conditions of its production visible/sensible/assessable?
- How well does the multimodal work/project make possible collaboration or other research relations?
- How well does the multimodal work or project incorporate and respond to the concerns of different groups and audiences?

Modes and Media

- How well do the different media, modalities, and genres match the object(s) of investigation in a multimodal work or project? And how well is this relationship articulated, i. e. does it make the case for why this format/media for this topic?
- How well does the work take advantage of media-specific affordances?
- How well does the project realise the affordances of inter-mediality and multimodality across multiple forms/formats (i. e. a book + film, a performance + exhibit, a text + walk + podcast, etc.)?
- How well does the work evoke the (sensory) experience or phenomenon under consideration?
- How well does a multimodal work or project perform or enact an argument, point, or phenomenon under investigation?

Disciplinary Concerns and Contributions

- How well does the multimodal project/work contribute something original or relevant to anthropological discourses, methods, and theories?
- How well does the multimodal work or project render the full complexity of a person, a group, or context in ways that resist reduction and abstraction?

Use the space below to jot down additional questions about dimensions or multimodal works that this protocol did not foresee.

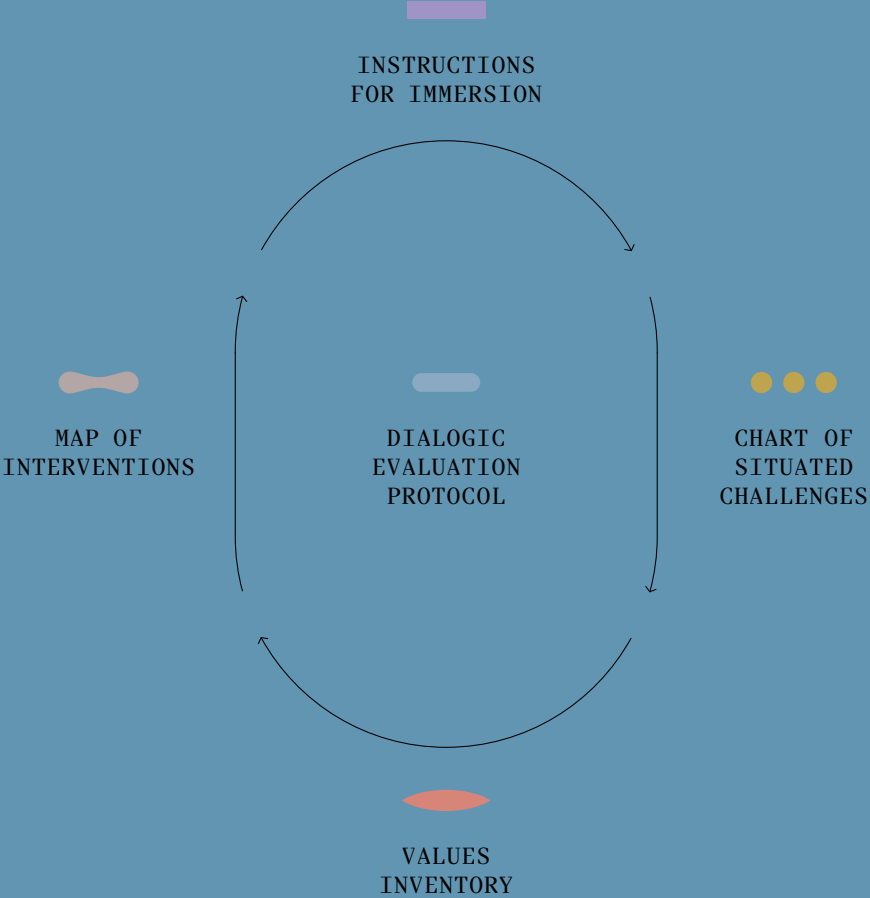
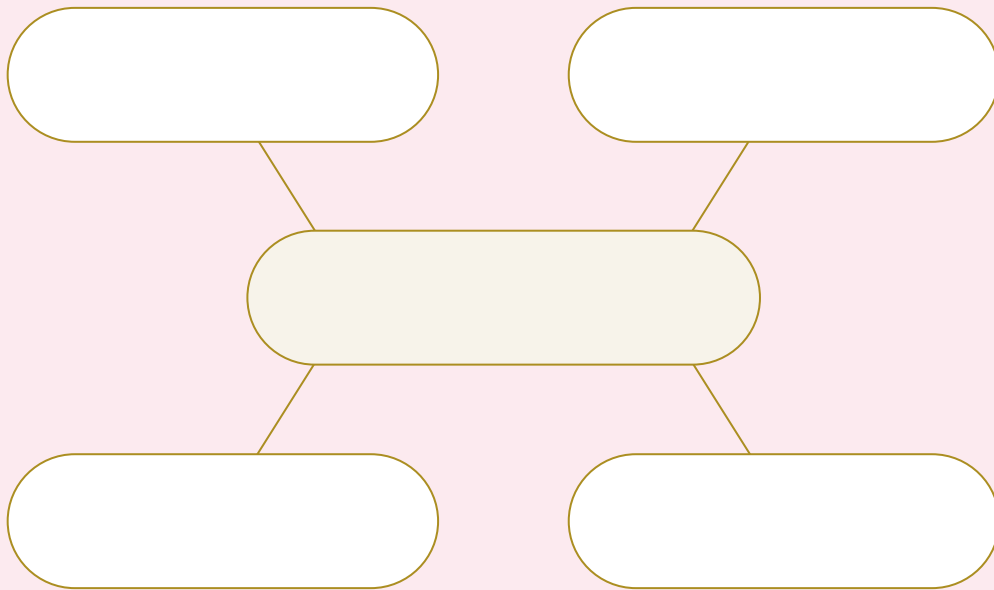


CHART OF SITUATED CHALLENGES

This charting exercise will help you identify, articulate, and navigate through the challenges you will encounter when developing a multi-modal project. A list of common challenges can be found on the back side of this kit element. By charting them, you will not only identify the implications for a given multimodal project, but this process should also help in crafting ways of accounting for and responding to them. On the following pages we provide one format for how this charting exercise could be approached.

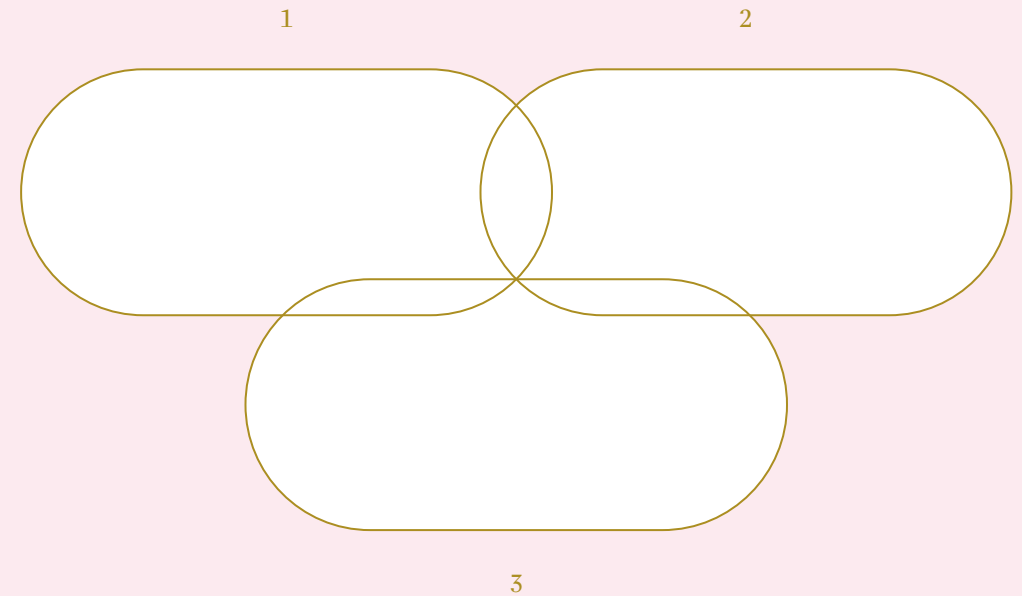
CREATE YOUR OWN SKETCH



Step 1:

Draw a similar form to the one you see above. Then choose a challenge and note it down in the bubble at the center; then specify how this challenge relates to certain aspects of the work/project you are developing or evaluating using the other bubbles. Repeat this with as many challenges that speak to you.

CREATE YOUR OWN SKETCH



Step 2:

Draw a similar form to the one you see above. Identify relevant overlaps between two or more challenges and write them into the overlapping bubbles. Note down below what that implies for the project at hand.

Collaboration

Collaboration in multimodal projects presents a number of challenges, and developing strategies to navigate them will help your project to thrive. Some of the challenges are not unique to multimodal projects – indeed, most ethnographic fieldwork has an interactional and collaborative dimension to it. Working multimodally, however, can draw in new actors, including artists and other media practitioners, designers, other researchers, and so on. A number of factors can influence the nature of collaboration and thus the nature of the multimodal project and the form/content of any individual multimodal work. These factors include the co-presence of diverse epistemologies, expertise, aesthetic sensibilities, and (academic) norms; the definition of roles, division of labor, co-existence of diverse goals; power asymmetries, different linguistic capacities, and unequal access to resources. Which of these is likely to be relevant for your project? They all raise a number of questions (ethical, financial, epistemological, political), some of which will be important for evaluators of your work. These include: what are the research conditions that influence the production of the multimodal work? What influence does the media form (film, comic, game, performance) have on the nature of collaboration as well as the production and reception of anthropological knowledge? How and why are certain (aesthetic, labor, political) decisions made and how are they realized? How can you document these factors during the course of research and production? How can they be presented to evaluators, either alongside or within the multimodal work itself? Could you, if necessary, assign value to the different people involved for the work that they did?

Different Forms in the Field

Multimodal projects are shaped by crucial methodological questions related to research practice. For example, different media may affect field access and research relationships in unique ways. Each media choice and sensory mode opens unique pathways to knowledge while simultaneously creating specific limitations. Also, some media forms and formats may better capture what we are focused on, particularly its sensory or aesthetic dimensions. What does drawing or mapping capture or open up that a sound recording does not (and vice versa)? What does photography capture that note-taking does not (and vice versa)? Some media forms and formats might be better suited as documentary data to be analyzed later, while others might work well for producing artefacts of the process of our learning, and yet others for communicating or evoking something crucial as part of a more or less finished multimodal work. Some users of this kit might find themselves at the end of their project, and have experienced how unique forms of knowledge emerged during engagement with media – from editing and post-production to the creative use of field recordings and drawings. Can you chart out which media forms and formats would be (or were) best suited to specific research purposes or stages, and how they are (or were) related? What is the best way to account for and represent these choices and their logics in a multimodal project?

Multimodal projects are also shaped by methodological questions related to the media ecologies that constitute part of our research field(s). What are the relevant media that you encounter in your field sites, whether produced by interlocutors or others? What is your relationship to that media and its producers? What status does that media have in your project? How does it appear in your project?

Affordances of Multimodal Works

Researchers chose to work multimodally because of what doing so affords. Some of these affordances are outlined in the Values Inventory. But there are many more challenges and considerations to entertain. For example, what does thinking through a written text afford versus through an audio paper? What forms of knowledge are generated in relation to producing or engaging with each? Consider that an audio paper might activate temporal and sonic thinking in ways that written text cannot, or how a visual essay might enable spatial understanding that audio alone might miss. The affordances of each medium create distinct possibilities for both creator and audience: a film might allow for simultaneous layering of meaning through image, sound, and movement; an interactive installation might enable embodied learning through physical engagement; a written text might facilitate detailed theoretical analysis through its ability to be referenced, annotated, and reviewed at varying paces. These affordances also shape how knowledge circulates and who can access it.

What experience or language do you have (or need) to articulate to yourself and others what the different media and modes you are using afford? When might you need to do this, and for whom (grant application, PhD proposal, publication submission, etc.)? Does your project require an experimental moment (or moments) to discover, identify, and test those affordances? How would you go about doing this?

Immersion

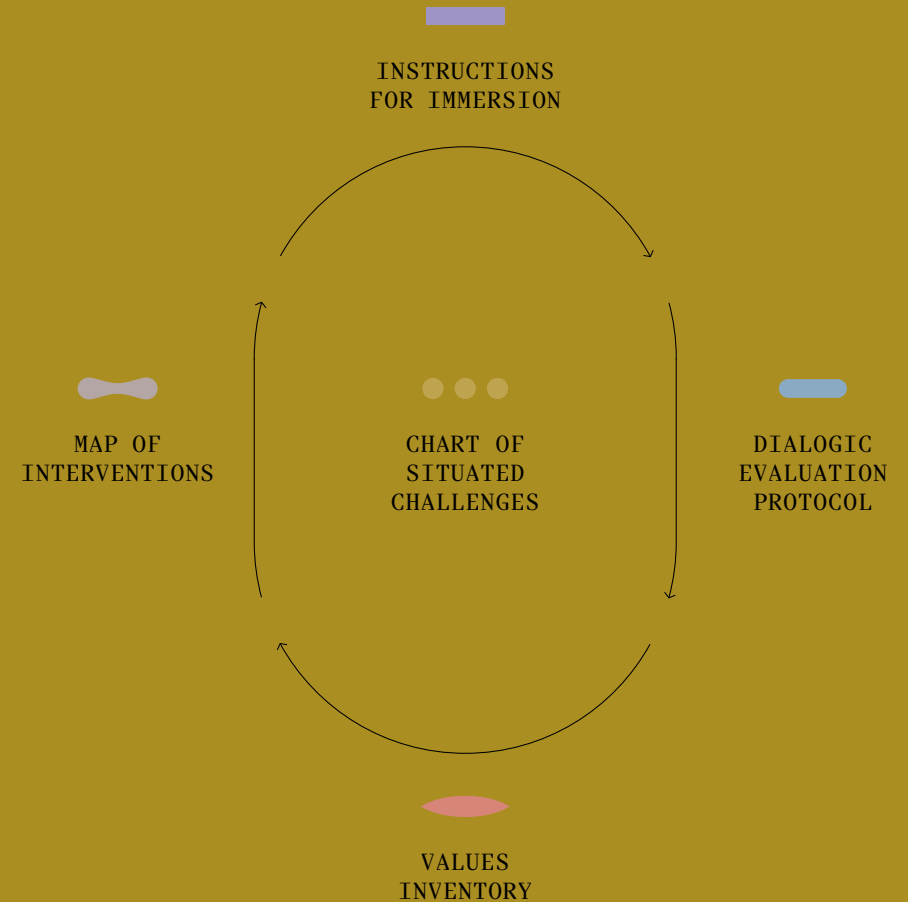
In the kit Manifesto we have discussed the role of immersion when it comes to engaging and appreciating multimodal works. This discussion (and attendant Instructions for Immersion) are aimed largely at evaluators. But immersion also identifies a challenge for makers: how can we encourage the diverse audiences for our work (including future evaluators) to engage with its aesthetic, sensory, and other dimensions in ways that fully identify the work's affordances? What framework for reception does your work require to be fully appreciated? Do audiences need to be trained to make sense of an unfamiliar aesthetic sensibility or unlearn conventional ways of listening, watching, reading, or playing? How can you encourage such training or unlearning? Should you attempt to provide the criteria for interpreting and assessing the value of the work? Is something lost if you overexplain the hows and whys of the work, the way explaining a joke can kill a joke?

The Multiplicity of Versions

Multimodal projects often include different discrete works or versions. An exhibit may be produced alongside a film and then a book. Or a film and a game and a web platform. Or a performance and a podcast. Or a graphic ethnography in different versions adapted to different linguistic publics. And so on. This multiplicity can raise some important questions. Which mode or modes are best suited for which public or purpose? Why? Might the production, circulation, and impact of one work end up inspiring the production of other works? How? Are there specific affordances that are best realized when considering a project's many discrete works together? How can you communicate that to your audience (including evaluators)? Are there specific challenges that might emerge around accessibility, i.e. an article behind a paywall, a social analysis in jargon-filled text, a film only available for festivals, an exhibit or performance that is time limited? How can they be overcome?

The Role of Writing

Ethnographic texts or academic writing are often juxtaposed and placed in opposition to multimodal, more-than-textual forms of anthropology (despite the repeated insistence that multimodality includes text). One challenge is that diverse forms of writing and the role they play in multimodal works get overlooked, undertheorized, and undervalued. These forms can include game instructions, the text that accompanies an exhibit, the proposal for the realization of a film, or the script for a comic or graphic ethnography. Often such writing is used to activate, situate, or contextualise more-than-textual affordances of a project. What role does writing play in your multimodal project? What affordances might it unlock or activate or foreclose? What genre conventions or expectations are available to use, play with, undermine or work against?



MAP OF INTERVENTIONS

A Kit for Evaluating Multimodal Works
in Anthropology and Beyond

MAP OF INTERVENTIONS

This exercise helps you visualize and understand the multidimensional landscape of relationships in which your multimodal work is situated. It encourages the identification and recognition of both apparent and lesser known allies, resources, and networks in that landscape – across academic and non-academic spheres and institutions – that could help you to identify and articulate the value of your multimodal work, gain institutional recognition, and thus create the conditions for successful research. Each area on our Map of Interventions indicates a potential point in your project landscape with prompts on how you can populate it with relevant information, either alone or with others. Move through the exercise in whichever way it makes sense to: we suggest beginning with You Are Here. We also recommend you use a larger piece of paper or digital platform like a Miro-Board to complete this exercise. And we expect that you will discover new points on your map that we cannot foresee.

Steps for Evaluating Multimodal Works

