

Post-COVID Urban Mobilities

November 2020

Curator

Christophe Bruchansky

Artists

Cindy Hwang

James Proctor

Jessica Starns

Jody Zellen

Kristina Borg

Nemanja Ladjic

Teresa Leung

Taylor Colette Moon

Ver Ikeseh

Willi Dorner

and Guillaume Leterrier

Plural / Pluriel

<http://plural.world>

A World of Difference

Plural/Pluriel is a collective dedicated to pluralism, the fight against one-dimensional thinking and ready-made paths.

We are a community of pluralists: thinkers and activists embracing divergent views and seeking to promote the coexistence of social, cultural and economic alternatives within our societies.

<http://plural.world>

November 2020, Paris

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Urban Mobilities is a public appeal for a post-Covid urban mobility that is pluralistic and benefits all walks of life. The exhibition showcases photographs, videos, digital and community projects that question and challenge conventional mobility and how it can be negotiated in the public space.

The Covid-19 lockdown deprived citizens around the world of their mobility. The lockdown not only slowed down economic activity, it also had a profound impact on other forms of mobility: people's wanderings, social gatherings and physical activities. This experience has inspired many citizens to rethink their mobility, to define it less in terms of quantity – the speed and distance of their journeys – and more in terms of quality and freedom.

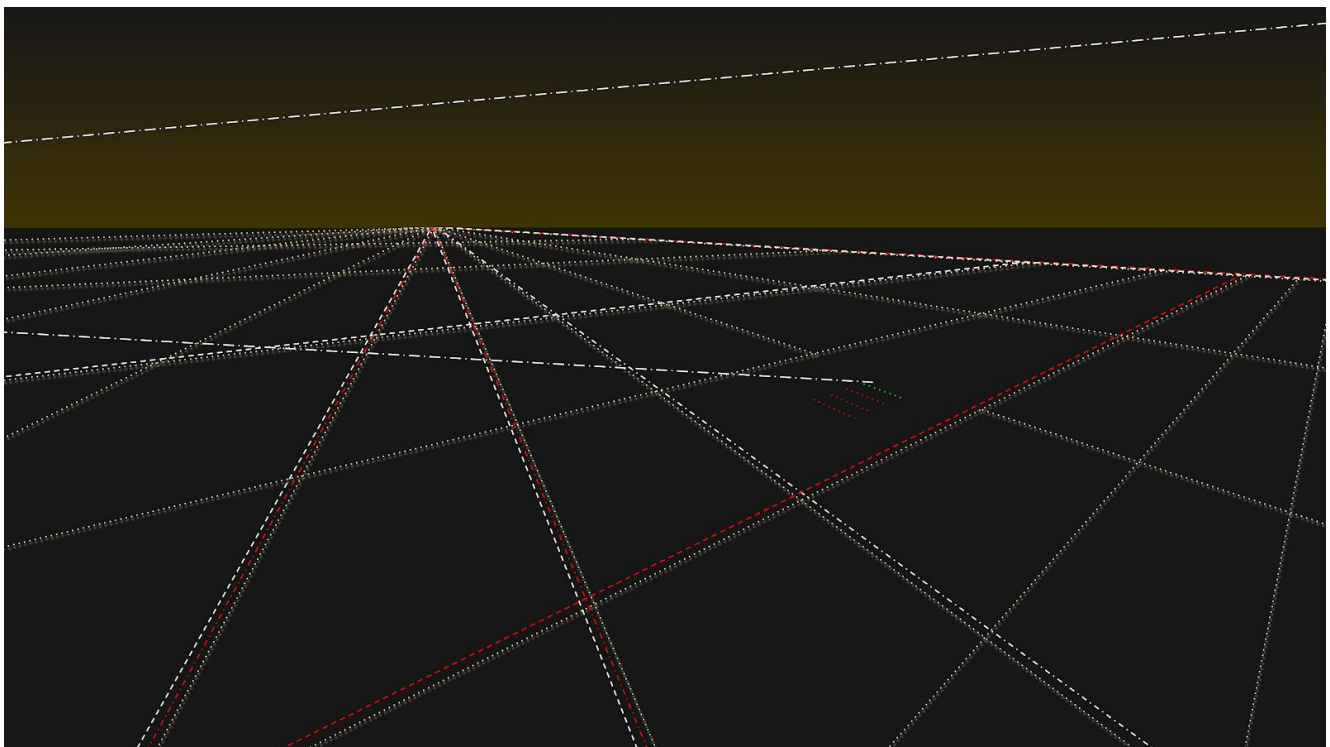
<https://plural.world/mythologies/urban-mobilities/>

Before

Once upon a time, urban mobility was a necessity of modern city life.

Lignes Droites (Straight Lines, Christophe Bruchansky, Paris, May 2019) is an audio-visual series focusing on air and ground traffic. The artist explores a so-called “collective compulsive order”. Order cannot be harmonious if not accompanied by an empty space, a space large enough for its geometry to be graspable. The artist invites spectators to seek out this free space on the edge of motorways and in the labyrinth of airports.

<https://bruchansky.name/artwork/lignes-droites/>
<http://bruchansky.name/>





The work **Squares (Nemanja Ladjic, Serbia, 2016)** is based on a personal video archive made of footage taken in different European squares organized into a single video composition. Moving frames of video recordings simulate views of an imaginary observer. Starting points of this technique were the Theory of Relativity and B Theory of Time, also known as Block Theory, in which the past, present or the future don't exist; time consists only of moments that are all equally real together. **Sound by 33.10.3402**

<https://vimeo.com/216281409>
<http://www.nemanjaladjic.com/>



Drained fountains (Teresa Leung, Armenia, 2014). Huge, drained fountains in Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, were once where people gathered and children could go swimming during the hot summer when it was under Soviet rule 29 years ago. Without water today, they are still wonderful places to go. I have thought of several great things we can do there. This is part of my journey to explore the possibilities of structures—whether they are abandoned, partially abandoned or unmanaged—in urban areas.

<https://vimeo.com/103213047>

<https://www.teresart.net/>

Pas-Perdus (Mind Your Step, Christophe Bruchansky, Paris, may 2019) uses videos, prints and pixels in an exploration of the theme of walking. Walking is about more than simply moving from one spot to another. It is an act of thought, a way of living. We walk to the rhythm of our thoughts, step by step, strolling or striding. Walking pace gives pedestrians an air of composure. Their steps transcend the purpose of their movements. They are the metronomes of city life.

<https://bruchansky.name/artwork/pas-perdus/>
<http://bruchansky.name/>





Model City (James Proctor, Sacramento, 2018) presents an uncanny reflection of Sacramento based on satellite imagery and routes through its transportation network. Aspects of this mediated view of a place are familiar, such as algorithmically optimized routes across town, while the shifting, fragmented structures in between feel odd and disorienting. It raises questions about how what we choose to measure determines what we see, and how that affects our decisions for the future.

<https://vimeo.com/278851582>

<https://jamesaproctor.com/>



In the video **What you Like, Where you Like, When you Like** (**Christophe Bruchansky**, Paris, May 2019), the artist uses a map to show the routes of drivers gravitating around their customers. Users of a location-based service see themselves at the centre of the map displayed on their mobile app. They are the centre of attention.

<https://bruchansky.name/artwork/interfaces-nombrielistes/>
<http://bruchansky.name/>

During

A radical departure: what if urban mobility was not a necessity after all... but a choice?

"I have enjoyed a return making net art, exploring image text relationships, unstructured narratives, rollovers, gifs and pop-up windows. Avenue S is developing spontaneously and functioning as a visual journal during these disconcerting and unprecedented times". Jody Zellen



Avenue S (Jody Zellen, USA, June 2020) is a new addition to "Ghost City," 1998-2020. "I began working on this path when things shut down and we were asked to stay at home. I see it as an ever-growing project with no end in sight paralleling my intentions when I began Ghost City".

<http://www.ghostcity.com/avenue-s>
<http://www.jodyzellen.com/>

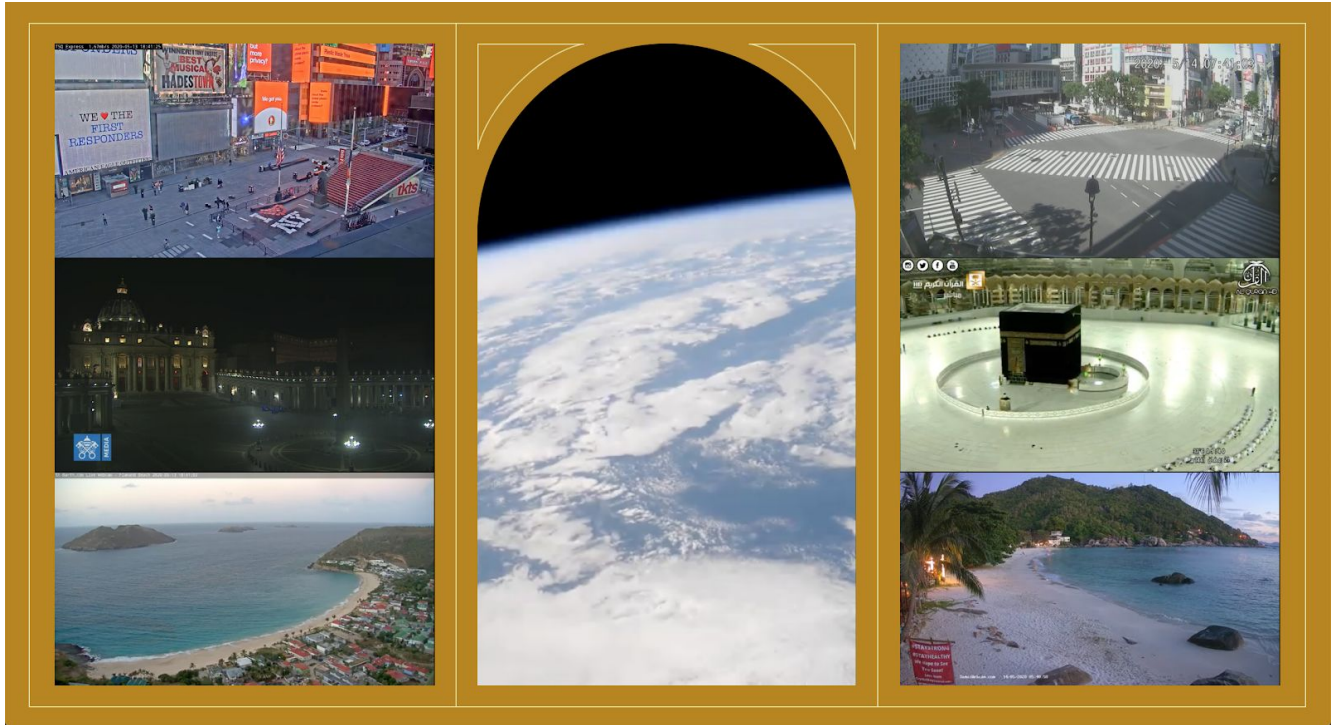


Drive Thru Nation (Taylor Colette Moon, USA, July 2020) looks at how the prominence of the flag in the Midwest echoes the visual advertising language of billboards, carnivals, casinos, supermarkets, and drive-ins. The film looks at how individuals consume the flag and signs as passengers during their commute. It was made in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement after the murder of George Floyd.

<https://youtu.be/-rdcaB9xX6k>

<https://taylorcolettemoon.wordpress.com/>

"The Covid-19 lockdown has furthered the global trend of replacing rich cultural and social interactions with that which can be delivered, seen through a car or screen, or ordered to-go". **Taylor Colette Moon**



“Webcam World” (Cindy Hwang, USA, April 2020) is a living altarpiece that streams live footage from seven locations: Times Square, Shibuya Crossing, St. Peter’s Square, the Great Mosque of Mecca, beaches in St. Barts and Thailand, and the International Space Station. The webcams bear witness to the contraction of public spaces in the era of Covid-19, while calling attention to global interdependence and heightened surveillance. The website is accompanied by an archive of daily screenshots that will document the trajectory of the pandemic until it subsides.

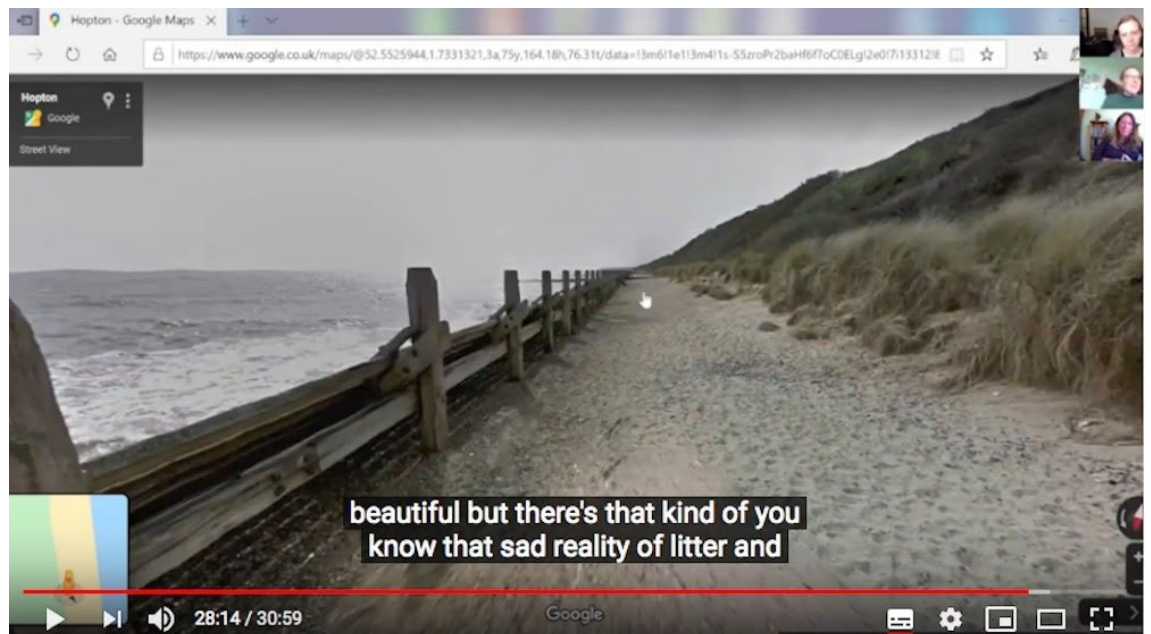
<http://web-cam.world/>

<http://www.web-cam.world/archive/index.html>

<http://cindyhwang.info/>

*“Covid-19 has accentuated both the stratification and possibility of urban space — what can we do to ensure that its benefits do not only accrue to the wealthy, who abandoned cities the instant that those benefits dissipated? What does a city characterized by radical solidarity, mutual aid, and collective care look like?”. **Cindy Hwang***

"I use Google Street View a lot due to being dyspraxia and it helps me to memorise new routes and places. I also use Google Street View with my grandfather as we go on walks around his hometown in Ireland, a place I haven't had the opportunity to physically visit".
Jessica Starns



Virtual Walks (Jessica Starns, UK, May 2020) breaks down the feeling of isolation whilst social distancing. "I started by putting a call out on social media and had a few people respond to say they would like to get involved. We visited local places such as Coventry, a day trip to Barcelona, to a day out at a museum. It was a collaborative process".
Funded by Phakama

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2UAaRgqQuTgQAWJC5IfG2QBFcSIaR1Bw>

<https://twitter.com/jessicastarns?lang=en>

<http://projectphakama.org/>

After

Could there be more than one form of mobility?



It does matter where (Willi Dorner, La Strada Festival, Graz, 2020) is a participatory project created with city residents. It is a performative call for more public space, for more space for urban residents, encouraging them to take up more room and to reinforce the assertion that the city is a space to live in. They use chairs to temporarily invade spaces and occupy them, inviting others to follow their example. © Willi Dorner/ photo: Lisa Rastl. © *Willi Dorner/ photo: Lisa Rastl*

<https://www.dornerrastl.at/projects/it-does-matter-where/>
<http://www.dornerrastl.com/>

The Whole Traffic Needs to Be Questioned

Willi Dorner lives and works in Vienna. His internationally touring artistic work includes pieces for the stage as well as site specific performances. He also has a great interest in photography, film and visual arts.



Portrait: ©photo: Eva Kelety

Interview conducted by Christophe Bruchansky.

* * *

Christophe Bruchansky: *In It does matter where, you encourage local residents to reappropriate public space. Why do you feel it is necessary?*

Before Covid, city spaces became more and more privatized, a current problem in many cities. We live life in different simulacras of so-called “public spaces”; the truth is that they are privatized and the owners predetermine how we have to behave by installing signs where all the rules of behaviour are listed. And on top of that, you have to consume, which means you need money to take part in outdoor life in a city.

So what has happened in Vienna since the Covid lockdown? The young generation is out on the streets in various places. They claim the spaces they need by occupying them, and they are right, it is their right to demand free space without consuming. This, for me, is a basic and important right that residents have to claim these days, as it has been taken from them over the years.

More than 10 years ago when I was an artist-in-residence at a university of architecture in the UK, together with a group of young architecture students I investigated where in the city of Nottingham we could sit with our own chairs (we also brought a little coffee table and a rug with us). It was already frustrating back then to see how limited free space is in cities. I picked up the idea again two years ago to encourage people to express their need for more room in cityscapes, as my travels with different projects all over the globe made me realize that when you are not wealthy you cannot afford a proper space to live in. It is important that the city once again becomes a space for living and is not merely a highway or parking lot for cars

And then the Covid lockdown brought home the tough reality for many many residents of how small our apartments are, when we are not earning good money. And our streets are also cluttered up with cars. It became so obvious and eventually the authorities realized that people need more room in the cities and started to block off streets – at least in parts – keeping them free from traffic. They renamed the streets “meeting zones”. But residents were still only allowed to move between cars!? There was no visible difference from the situation before.

Large parts of the streets were still occupied by machines! This is just not working for me anymore. The city has to give back living space to the residents and ban cars from the city.

In the project I produce tableaus to sharpen people’s awareness of the situation we live in. I photograph and disseminate them through different media channels.



It does matter where Aarhus, Sept, 2018 © Willi Dorner/ photo: Lisa Rastl.

Sitting on a chair in the middle of a street feels like a transgression. Are streets not supposed to promote mobility? Is there anything wrong with mobility?

These days it is a transgression when you sit on the street. It is not allowed, except when you get permission. But over the years more and more land in the city has been turned into streets, land was used to build carparks and parking lots. All this land got covered by asphalt. Austria is one of the leading countries worldwide in tarmacking the ground.

We need an appropriate and contemporary mobility concept. The shape and design of the city today is a result of a traffic concept dating back many decades and changing it is always going to be difficult. The same applies to people: changing habits is difficult and takes time.

But in today's city there are more appropriate and efficient ways of promoting traffic. It could be via different vehicles, like all kinds of bikes and scooters, and it could be with a good public

transport in a city; you do not need these vast areas for cars anymore. It should be made difficult for cars to drive into the inner city. The whole traffic system needs to be questioned and changed. The change is already underway, although very often it needs brave politicians to make decisions that are not so popular with car drivers but good for the environment. And in order to be able to enforce such important decisions, you need to adopt an effective and suitable communication policy so that residents will support rather than resist them.

A good example is Paris. When you look at Paris, you can see how much change it is undergoing. Paris already had a massive air pollution problem years ago. I remember, when I worked there in 2014, everybody could use public transport without paying and cars were not allowed over the weekend, because air pollution reached a level that was no longer tolerable. And now you can see in Paris how much can be done in a short time to create a more liveable city. It also needs someone with a strong personality or a popular mayor. A good politician people can trust is essential.

How do you feel about the empty streets seen during the Covid-19 lockdown?

The streets were not really empty, they were blocked and occupied by cars and for me they looked deserted; it was like everybody was gone and they left their cars behind, because they left the city for a better place. It sounds like a sort of dystopia. Or maybe it's a utopia? Everybody left the city for a better place to live?



The Cities Within (2016), Vienna, Leopoldstadt _ photo by the artist

DIY City Walks (Kristina Borg, Austria in 2016, Netherlands in 2017) are specific to different cities. Starting off with a series of conversations with a number of locals, the artist gains knowledge about their day-to-day experience of their city. Gleaning information from these conversations, together with onsite-research walking, the artist maps-out a number of hidden and/or neglected spaces, significant to personal and collective memory, so as to create a fictional-narrative based on a mix of fantasy and reality.

<https://www.kristinaborg.com/alternativewalks2016->
<https://www.kristinaborg.com/>

In Such an Alienated Society We Do Need to Slow Down

Kristina Borg is a freelance visual and socially engaged artist and an art educator/lecturer. In her interdisciplinary research-practice she spends time integrating into specific communities and devotes her attention to relationships between people.



Portrait: @photo: Elisa von Brockdorff

Interview conducted by Christophe Bruchansky.

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Christophe Bruchansky: What motivated you to create DIY walks?

Kristina Borg: I would say that these developed organically. My interest in space has always been very strong and along the years this evolved into space and place, with a specific interest in urban and public space – an urban-collective space and a

social context – thus an open space and an already built environment with its own character. In other words, the city. I always research this concept in relation to the community: the locals' experience and their memory of such a space/place.

The very first alternative DIY walk resulted from a three-month residency in Vienna, Austria in 2016. At the time I was looking into how and why Mercer's study classifies Vienna as the world's most liveable city, year after year. Why is it the most liveable? For whom is it the most liveable? What do the locals have to say? And how does such branding impact the day-to-day running of the city? All of these questions led me to a series of conversations with the locals, specifically focusing on the second and tenth districts, Leopoldstadt and Favoriten respectively. Initially I had no idea that the project would develop into an alternative DIY walk. My aim was to present and provide an experience to the public that was as authentic, as much as possible, as that of the local community.

I remember that as part of the research process in Vienna, I walked endlessly exploring neighbourhoods off the beaten track while trying to get a first-hand experience of the spaces and places that the locals mentioned during our conversations. As my residency developed it felt natural to address this notion and methodology of walking as an actual artform in itself.

These DIY walks purposefully move away from the city touristic centre and focus on the outer districts or areas which, more often than not, are neglected by authorities. During such one-and-a-half to two-hour walks, one passes through streets and places that are not always so common; they might be hidden, but are significant to the daily lives and the personal and collective memory of the local inhabitants. Such DIY walks are complemented with an audio fictional narrative that I write, based on a mix of fantasy and reality. It is then up to the public participant/walker/wanderer to decide how to interpret the narrative, whether to take it as a fact, a metaphor or a dream.

What role does walking play in these tours? Could you imagine them done by bike or bus?

Walking is the fulcrum of the entire process, from research phase to development and final

presentation. As I mentioned in the previous question, during the research process I walk a lot so as to get a taste of and familiarise myself with the spaces, places, and neighbourhoods that the local community members I meet recall. At times these could be actual streets, corners, doors, buildings and any other detail one comes across when passing through a city with an observant eye. As Geoff Nicholson (2009) describes,

“For me walking has to do with exploration, a way of accommodating myself, of feeling at home. ...It’s the way I get to know that place. Maybe it’s a way of marking territory, of beating the bounds. Setting foot in a street makes it yours in a way that driving down it never does.”

Indeed, whenever I am in a place, especially when working in new cities, I feel the necessity to feel at home, without which I wouldn’t be able to perform or produce. The target audience of these walks are the actual locals, rather than tourists (though tourists are also welcome), and I invite them to look at their city as if seeing it for the first time so they can re-read, re-interpret and re-live their city. For this reason, when working in foreign cities, I feel that as a stranger I must first accommodate myself and feel at home before inviting anyone to look at their city with fresh eyes. On the other hand, when working in foreign cities, I manage to maintain a more objective view, which I also find more challenging when working in places I know.

The research walks are always documented through drawings, creating almost like an abstraction of maps. I draw my walking routes and annotate my first observations, my first impressions, my first reactions as well as my personal landmarks which I return to during the development process. These form the basis for the creation of the final walking route taken by the public

In the case of Vienna, the DIY city-walk actually includes the use of the underground and the tram. On one hand, these are included for practical reasons to link far-off neighbourhoods together, which if walked would otherwise add a further hour or so. However, this goes beyond mere practicality or functionality. Such use of public transport also follows the conceptual framework of the audio narrative, which the public participant/walker/wanderer continues to listen to while on the underground or the tram. This

highlights certain historical stories and how these continue to be reflected in our contemporary life. For instance, when it comes to the two Viennese districts, Leopoldstadt and Favoriten, what I had initially interpreted as contrasting are instead presented as complementary contrasts.

In the case of Haarlem, in The Netherlands, where cycling forms such a huge and significant part of the Dutch social and urban texture, initially I felt it was very apt to include certain bicycle passages and I remember discussing it with some locals. However, I had three main concerns. Firstly, I did not feel it could add anything fundamental in terms of concept or narrative that walking could not present. Secondly, I do feel that walking offers a unique experience; by nature, it’s a slower process and I do feel that in such an alienated society we do need to slow down. Lastly, I was concerned about the safety of the bicycle users who would have been ‘competing’ against the traffic flow while listening to the audio narrative and its pre-recorded ambience sounds on the headphones. Although the Netherlands’ infrastructure is bicycle friendly, I felt that having someone with a pair of headphones cycling their way through would go against road etiquette. So, this was also decided on with respect to the safety of the actual public participant but also that of the other pedestrians, fellow cyclists and any other vehicle users.

But who knows what future projects will entail?

At this point, regarding this reference to other modes of transport, I feel I must mention another project, entitled *No Man’s Land¹*, based in Malta, where I’m from. Although this cannot be included as an alternative DIY city-walk, I adopted the same research methodology and working phases mentioned above. The project in itself, contextualised in Malta’s Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour areas, revolves around the politics of sea and the highly contested invisible, territorial borders that such a space entails. Though I adopted the same form of presentation with a fictional narrative, I felt it was only natural to forget about walking for a while and present the experience at sea, making use of a small electric-powered boat.

¹ <https://www.kristinaborg.com/nomansland2018>

Based on the memories you collected for these walks, how would you describe urban mobility?

Well, I think here we need to make a distinction between (1) what urban mobility should be and how we wish it would function, and (2) how it is actually implemented, sometimes badly, in our cities. The Alternative DIY city-walks in fact challenge the latter and invite the public participant/walker/wanderer to rethink the former.

I believe that urban mobility is more than simply moving from point A to point B. It is often done to satisfy a very specific purpose, such as employment, leisure, running errands, accessing goods or services, or visiting family and friends, to name just a few. However, with an observant eye and an open soul I believe we can gain and elicit a more holistic experience of our mobility in urban space.

Through the anecdotes and memories that I collected, urban mobility allows the walkers to experience public space in a multisensorial way, reliving forgotten sounds, smells and tastes, such as when one local in Haarlem recalled the squeaky sound of the milkman's cargo bike wheels and the sound of placing the metallic milk cans on the street. Urban mobility allows us to act politically and be present in the street, just as one street graffiti slogan declared, "Never let the fascists have the streets!"

As I re-walk my research walking routes I try to reimagine the visuals that I see and interpret my surroundings in an anthropomorphic and biomorphic manner, recalling once again what the locals had shared, similar to when a shopping complex in Vienna was compared to a pregnant woman or another block of offices that looks like a shark with its mouth half open ready to swallow you whole.

Last but not least, walking also comes with its surprises and odd encounters, such as when during one city-walk in Haarlem we encountered a guy who walks his two giant pigs on a leash every day in the park. Prior to actually encountering them, this anecdote remained rather fictitious, even though it was a story that a local had shared. Encountering them really took us by surprise!

All this is urban mobility.

Do you believe the lockdown will have a long-lasting effect on urban mobility and our relationship to the city?

I wish I could reply positively to this question, but I'm afraid I don't have any high hopes! Lockdown has been a perfect eyeopener and, for a moment, everyone started talking about social solidarity – a mere buzzword to me, which never really impressed me, on the contrary it irritated me, for the reason I'm about to explain.

I believe that society is too alienated. Once the lockdown period started to ease down everyone seems to have gone back to the previous 'normal' forgetting about all the social solidarity that was highly spoken of. We are surrounded by too many commodities which have actually helped to accommodate our needs and alleviate the burden of lockdown.

I hope that lockdown will have a long-lasting effect on our relationship to the city. There has definitely been some awareness, such as a refocus on the local, but on a wider scale I believe the road is still long, very long.

If you had to create a DIY walk based on your lockdown experience, what story would it tell?

Where I am based, in Malta, we only had a partial lockdown; although everywhere was closed, except for the essentials, we were still allowed to go out without any time or distance restrictions.

As a freelance artist I'm used to working from home, so although all projects were paused, cancelled or postponed, my routine did not really change – it simply became more of the same.

Unlike others who reverted to baking, sewing or past hobbies, my aim for the lockdown period was to simply catch up on a lot of reading that had been piling up for months. This did not happen. Instead, unfortunately, I found myself working endlessly at my laptop, pretty much as usual: revising projects and budget plans to adapt to the new 'normal', writing new proposals, applying for funding, updating my website (that was a successful lockdown task!), while I continued to observe, listen

and reflect – three skills I constantly make use of in my artistic research and practice.

From time to time, I did manage to go out, get off the grid, refresh my thoughts and go for a walk by the sea or in the countryside, or rather what they have left of it. For those who are not aware of the dire state of the Maltese Islands, we have serious problems of open space being overbuilt and taken over by roads infrastructure, private and commercial interests.

So, my story for the DIY walk based on my lockdown experience, would sound something like this:

I walk in circles, up and down, repeatedly in the morning, afternoon and evening. I walk from one room to the other, chasing the best connection, with a glass of water in hand and my earphones dangling from my laptop, following me around. I walk again in circles, up and down, when a series of clouds wave through the window. I go out on the terrace and as I feel their warmth, I greet them back.

I walk again in circles, but not for long. I feel the need to taste the salty spray of the waves crashing on the rocks. I sit down and treasure the colour palette as the sun sets over the horizon. It's dark. It's quiet. I go back and walk in circles.



Ver Ikeseh launched the **I Can 100 Mural Project (Nigeria, 2020)** where he aims at painting murals in 100 communities across Africa and in the process teach kids and youths how to paint murals. The project involves a lot of movement which has been put on hold due to the global lockdown and travel restrictions.

<https://www.instagram.com/ver.mr.artist/>

I Made Sure the Lockdown Period Counted for Me And Those Around Me

Ver Ikeseh has over ten years of experience as a practicing visual artist. He earned a Bachelor of Art in Fine Arts from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Nigeria. He also has two art related Master's Degrees from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and Leiden University, the Netherlands.



Interview conducted by Christophe Bruchansky.

* * *

Could you tell us a bit more about the *I Can 100 Project*?

My undergraduate thesis was an analysis of the wall murals within the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This and my subsequent research on murals have continued to propel my passion to impact lives and minds by transforming dilapidated structures in slums and villages with my colourful murals.

I started a company called Abeda Etcetera where I paint murals in public and residential spaces for a

fee. So far the company has been impressive considering the growing clientele. One of the main reasons for starting this for-profit is to be financially self-reliant, employ others, but most importantly make money to fund my community service which is to paint murals in dilapidated areas around Africa. This is in line with SDG 11- "Sustainable human settlement through art", hence there is a need for every human to live in a sane environment and enjoy a bit of some relaxation.

Most people (especially children) live in slums and villages that lack aesthetics and basic amenities which have now become luxuries for them. While painting in slums and villages, I paint with school children, dropouts and those who can't afford tuition fees to enable them to mingle, so they can learn from each other. Those who are yet to be students are encouraged to strive to become students while those who are already students are reminded to appreciate the privilege they have.

Recently, I launched the *I Can 100 Project* where I aim at painting murals in 100 communities across Africa and in the process teach kids and youths how to paint murals. I have painted some communities in Nigeria and Ghana. This campaign earned me a spot as one of the 25 AYADA Lab 2019 finalists which is supported by Goethe Institute, Alliance Française and I-Space Ghana. Currently I paint mural commissions, and the proceeds are used to fund my *I Can 100* community mural project.

Before I officially launched *I Can 100* I was already donating murals to communities. I felt a special kind of fulfilment when I painted free murals for those who can't afford. Then the idea to formally launch the project and brand it was to enable proper documentation, accountability, self-evaluation and to aid me apply for funding.

It's interesting that the colourful murals excite the children so much they are now more interested in going to school and diligently attending classes. This was an angle I didn't foresee before the commencement of the project. The slums and schools in Africa, particularly Nigerian, are so dilapidated it seems every school and street need murals. The demand is so high, I get several calls and messages from people who also want their regions painted. One of the strategies has been to concentrate on regions that can't afford it financially

if they were to pay; so I focus on the most dilapidated and deprived areas. As a result of the demand I have increased my target. Instead of painting 100 communities for a few years, I have decided to paint 920 communities and make it a lifetime project. During the lockdown I used the time for evaluation and planning and in the coming months I will launch the *920 Project*.

How has the lockdown impacted the project and your mobility as an artist?

The lockdown has been a huge disadvantage to my work. This is because I could not travel to places where I was booked for commissions which meant I lost money and or my money was on hold. For instance, I was to attend a mural festival in Dakar and also paint a few communities, my flight and accommodation were booked shortly before countries started shutting down borders. Everything about that festival is on hold and plans have just resurfaced towards re-planning. I was also booked to fly to Lagos from Abuja for another mural commission but plans were put on hold due to the Covid-19 lockdown. However, since I could not travel internationally or interstate, I concentrated on Makurdi city where I spent most of my time during the strict lockdown in Nigeria. In Makurdi I painted several murals, both commissions and donated murals. I made sure the lockdown period counted for me and those around me.

What have been the effects of restricted movement on the African communities you visited?

It was very difficult for people to cope with, particularly when a large percentage of people in Nigeria live from hand to mouth. Most of them depend on their daily earnings to eat. For instance, a man with three wives and eight kids who rides his bike locally as a means of transportation business was forced to sit at home and stare at his hungry kids and wives daily. This is quite difficult in a country where the government didn't make adequate plans for palliatives. So eventually the man ends up disobeying the authorities who have said no movement, he would rather face the wrath of the government and risk contacting Covid-19, because not going out means his entire family would eventually die of hunger. There were also reported cases of crime on the rise. This is because restricted movements meant limited earnings; as a result

those who were in absolute lack ended up stealing and committing crimes to earn.

It's also interesting how most of the remote communities didn't believe Covid-19 existed. They believe it was a way for the government to control the public and possibly embezzle funds. For these categories of communities, adhering to Covid-19 as directed by WHO wasn't even an option nor a topic for discussion. In fact, to them wearing a nose mask, using sanitizers and observing social distancing was unnecessary and alien.

How have they responded to the lack of mobility? Did it reflect in your mural commissions?

Lack of movement coincidentally inspired new modest ideas for entrepreneurship. During the Covid-19 lockdown when movement was restricted, it became obvious to people how important essential services are, with food top of the list. Several people began to sell food in various forms and quantities. These were easy ways for people to earn. In addition, several people ventured into the nose mask business, as it was compulsory for those who had to commute. These included fashion designers, tailors and anyone else interested. There was a ready-made market for nose masks and sales were easy. Those who could produce them easily retailed them earning extra cash on the go. Unfortunately, I didn't capture these new norms in my murals; however, I have included them in my sketches for my next set of murals.

During the lockdown, people also realized it was a good time to spend together as families. So people travelled across regions to go stay with their loved ones. People who have tight work schedules and hardly have time for immediate and extended families went extra miles to travel to their families, even when it required getting a Movement Pass from the government authorities.

Do you believe this episode will change anything for the future of mobility?

Yes. This is because the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown reminded the world that restricted movement is difficult to adhere to, especially for low income earners; however, there are so many things we can get done without having to move from point A to B. During the lockdown, people found innovative ways to achieve their goals with limited physical movements. This has also helped to cut certain costs related to logistics. These are areas people explored and are willing to explore further, even after the Covid-19 pandemic.



photo ©Guillaume Leterrier for Les Bergers Urbains

Members of the **Les Bergers Urbains** collective have been rearing sheep in Seine-Saint-Denis since 2012. To promote peasant farming in the city, they pasture their domesticated sheep in Saint-Denis, Bondy and Aubervilliers, improving the parks and gardens in the three areas and creating a special bond with local residents.

<https://www.bergersurbains.com/>

When the Urban Mammal Encounters the Rural Mammal

Guillaume Leterrier is an urban shepherd and former regional development specialist working in the social and solidarity economy.

Members of the *Les Bergers Urbains* collective have been rearing sheep in Seine-Saint-Denis since 2012. To promote peasant farming in the city, they pasture their domesticated sheep in Saint-Denis, Bondy and Aubervilliers, improving the parks and gardens in the three areas and creating a special bond with local residents.



Portrait: ©Teresa Suarez

Interview conducted by Christophe Bruchansky.

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In what way can a sheep shift our perception of the city?

Guillaume Leterrier: Our collective offers a gentler approach to managing open spaces by re-introducing a little bit of nature into the city. The sheep graze and then we see different types of grass appear and the return of flower-filled meadows. It gives us the opportunity to question our sedentary lifestyle.

The shepherd and the flock really do represent the nomadic lifestyle. The sheep always has the same rhythm. You have to wait, there's no point going any faster. When the urban mammal encounters the rural mammal, it becomes more human.

It works pretty well: forcing the city to slow down makes it a more agreeable place. When you watch a sheep moving around parks and gardens, you realise that these open spaces are everywhere in the city, there are far more of them than you'd think. So it's bit like a marker of the city.

Is urban transhumance something new or a forgotten custom?

It has always existed. We drew on a medieval law, the grazing right which allows people to pasture their animals on all fields and spaces which are open, not fenced in and not cultivated.

Paris would never have become a great city without the grazing land that surrounded it. Broadly, animal rearing began to disappear from cities in the 60s when the fridge was invented. According to FAO² figures, fifteen years ago urban farming was feeding between 15 and 30 percent of the global population, mainly in the southern hemisphere. So it never totally disappeared.

How do you deal with moving your flock around the city?

We work with the Direction Départementale de la Protection des Populations (DDPP) [*local department for protecting populations*]. We inform the prefecture of our flocks' movements at least a month in advance in case they carry and transmit any diseases. We also ask every commune we cross for permission to use the streets. The flock has to walk on the pavements, not the roads. The sheep are very domesticated, they know all about walking on the pavement.

We don't really have a problem with urban planning. However, the city is clearly a much more pleasant place when it is open and green. We're a bit like regional ambassadors working on managing open spaces, showing how to run them differently as well as bring them to life more easily.

² <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>

We're talking about equivalent costs, but we've got several roles: social cohesion, safety, mediation, things like that. And we can produce meat with a distinctive taste from the same animals feeding at different places. The wider the palette of flavours, the nicer it is. It's useful to work on that aspect and to promote urban territories.

Do you feel that urban transhumance should be more widespread?

We're not the only oddballs doing it. And actually it's wrong to talk about transhumance, because it involves movement across large areas; what we do is travelling grazing and roaming. We've advised quite a lot of people: Lyon and Marseille are taking the same path, as is Brussels. The demand is there. We could imagine networks of breeders around Paris at the local authority level, the sharing of practices, meadows that work better, with more biodiversity.

When we lose our bond with animals, something feels not quite right. We can tell that something's missing. So the ability to recreate it really is essential to the city of the future.



Mouvements de Foule (Christophe Bruchansky, Colombia, 2018) is a collection of eight videos dealing with open, tamed and failed revolts. The set, mixed in 2018 from nightclubs and YouTube video samples, is inspired by Latin America, its mass protests, its overlapping and jostling populations, its quest for a comfort zone that is contrastingly immobile.

<https://bruchansky.name/artwork/mouvements-de-foule/>
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