

ENHANCING PERFORMATIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN MEANS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Master's thesis - Performative Artistic Research
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Theoretical Reflection

My research project studies the relationship between citizens and urban public space, and, specifically, whether it is possible for citizens to see their daily life as a performance using artistic practices. I am conducting my research in means of public transport (without excluding bus stops and underground train stations) in Athens and in Amsterdam. Through two workshops held in the two cities, I invite citizens, artists and non-artists, to co-create, experiment with, and apply performance art-led practices in public transport vehicles. Unsuspecting citizens onboard buses and underground trains are called upon to redefine their everyday life through the performative interventions staged by the participants, including myself. Citizens are invited to start a dialogue with their fellow passengers on public transport, transforming the quasi-non-spatiality/temporality of a means of public transportation into performance space/time and, subsequently, social space/time. In this way, I aim at enhancing performative civic engagement.

I started this research project driven by a fundamental question that has preoccupied me since I first got involved in art. "Is art separate from life"; So I decided to bring this problematique into the context of my research and explore it in my project.

In the last ten years of my artistic career, and through my involvement with long durational performance art, I have tried to bridge my life with art, as well as artistic practice with life. I believe that art and life are inseparable and I consider artistic expression a fundamental human attribute. Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh expresses his personal experience with art through the statement that life and art are the same and explores the possibility of allowing our lives to be a work of art (Jagodzinski, 2021, pp. 370-374). In 2015, I met Hsieh in Athens, Greece. He explained his artistic vision by referring to his one-year-long performance acts. Hsieh's perspective is similar to Joseph Beuys's, who views the world as a social sculpture shaped by human beings as artists, since every human being is an artist (Tisdall, C. 1974, p. 48). Drawing on Hsieh's and Beuys's perspectives, I could describe the vision and the purpose of my artistic research as enabling citizens to realize that they are actively participating in a performance act called life. However, my intention is to further explore and develop Hsieh's and Beuys's perspectives by staging intimate performative encounters with people in public space seeking and tapping into physical proximity with them to trigger creative, playful or merely spontaneous corporeal, verbal or non-verbal interaction with them in order to generate public sociability and conviviality in a space of exchange and interconnectedness. What is more, project aims at training citizens in using –and further developing– performance art techniques and tools as a way of engaging with the physical and social reality of urban public space.

Under the title "Enhancing performative civic engagement in public transport", my research questions have been formulated as follows:

Main research question

How can citizens consciously intervene in everyday life through performative artistic practices in means of public transportation?

Sub-questions

How can citizens perceive everyday life – including executing "daily routines and tasks"– as performance?

How can the temporality and spatiality of public transit be transformed from waiting time and space into co-created communicative time and space?

An artistic/research project that is related to my research is set out in Aleksandra Ianchenko's (2020) "A Tram Ride You Would Talk About." According to Ianchenko, performative interventions in transit spaces can act as a powerful tool to boost social interactions and transform the automatic routine of transportation into a cultural and social activity. Ianchenko's

artistic interventions from 2016 to 2020 revealed to me that there is an active field of research in the public space setting of means of public transport, which provides opportunities for experimentation and co-creation among citizens.

Therefore, my project is inscribed at the intersection of performance and public space studies, and more specifically, in the sub-field of research on public transport as public space, which includes artistic practitioners and researchers who seek to generate social space in public transport settings through visual and performative artistic means.

I view public space as not only a material but also a social environment that is produced, reshaped and restructured by the citizens through their experiences, their intentions for action and the relations they develop in it. My research draws on Lefebvre's (2019) approach to urban public space not as a neutral container of social life, but as a socially constructed entity produced by social practice. Lefebvre's approach confirms and expands my view that public space is not a given but requires a conscious effort to claim it.

My research project focuses on the public space of public transport. I view public transport as a form of public space, a type of street or square, with unique features: an enclosed, mobile space (Paget-Seekins & Tironi, 2016) where people are in close physical contact with each other in the form of multiple brief, unspoken, embodied, physically close interactions (Tuvikene et al, 2021). Using public transport is an outdoor "unavoidable" (Tuvikene et al, idem), "necessary" and more or less "compulsory" activity, during which people are in "passive contact" with each other (Ghel, J. 2011, p. 9-13), occupying a "non-place" (Augé, 1995) and a timeless time. In my participant observations onboard buses or in underground trains in Athens and Amsterdam, I confirmed that passengers are in a state that I would call "passive mobility" –only minimum activity was taking place as passengers were staring out blankly in front of them or hunching over their smartphones without making eye contact with fellow passengers.

Drawing on Habermas's theory, Tuvikene et al (idem) examine whether public transport is a space where people can come in contact with each other and potentially create a common public sphere. They consider public transport a privileged tool for claiming the publicity of urban spaces, as they regard public transport not only as space where people can meet each other, but also as public good and public property. Sharing Tuvikene et al's (idem) perspective, I aim at highlighting the convivial element of the underexplored public space setting of public transport. As they argue, communication and a shared idea of publicness are fostered in environments that allow for long periods of human contact. However, as they argue, the mobility and transient character of passengers' coexistence, along with the fact that people nowadays are hard-to-impress, undermine the potential for a shared, social public space. My intention is to tap into citizens' artistic side and empower them to express themselves in creative ways challenging the conventions of the mobile public space that public transport vehicles constitute, as well as conventions of civic conduct in public transit. I explore whether transit space and time can become creative social space and time and whether people are able and willing to communicate in this spatiality and temporality.

Generally, one can observe a number of transformations in mobile public spaces in recent years. For example, the windows on a train or bus are rarely opened, and citizens' mobility is increasing, and as a result they demand faster transport speeds. As a consequence, the spatiality and temporality of public transport is changing. We, as commuters, are part of this change as we shape transit space and time with our bodies and our behaviour.

In my project, I challenge citizens in transit to intervene in their daily lives as creators and to realize that their embodied engagement is necessary for their interaction with their physical and social environment in urban public space. My goal is to show that people's bodies and behaviours are crucial to their awareness and creative activation of urban public space. The analysis of the documentation of the performative experimentations staged in the context of my project so far indicates that these interventions seem to be able to reduce interpersonal discomfort and promote the social engagement of passengers onboard public transportation, building a creative social space and creating a community feel.

“Non-places,” a term coined by Marc Augé, are the seamless, sterilised, transient, places which are in-between others. Most are designed with the goal to create a calm, orderly place for people to temporarily occupy and travel through. An airport, for instance, is a space where people pass through in order to take a flight to travel somewhere else; a shopping mall forms a larger space to provide shopping locations. In the same way, a bus exists as a mode of transport within which a passenger can sit or stand in, without considering the bus as a location but as a means to get to a destination (Davies, 2019). Additionally, the time dedicated to travel is an intermediate state, neither productive nor unproductive, but rather suspended in between moments dedicated to personhood (Lloyd, 2003, p. 98). One of the underlying assumptions of my research is that each of us makes a conscious decision between life and non-life –living an authentic engaged life or an insulated, alienated existence. While Augé observes and analyses the characteristics of a non-place without calling for its transformation, the proposition of my research is that non-places can be activated into social spaces. My aim has been to empower citizens to live an authentic, engaged life through socializing and creativity. I have sought to create spaces of resistance through artistic practices that allow citizens to get out of and reflect upon the non-places they inhabit. Augé’s theory on non-places has guided my artistic practice, namely, my choices concerning the type of interventions staged. More specifically, instead of physical interventions, I focused on others, implementing props such as the mirror, the portraits, and the tic-tac-toe game, as I intended to motivate passengers to step out of their state of solitary individuality and experience conviviality, dialogue and co-creation as a way to reclaim and reinvent their authentic inner self as well as their social self in public space.

I believe it is important to intervene in the mobile space of public transport as it produces ritual habits and routines that are performed automatically and fails to facilitate social interaction. According to J. A. Thomas, (2009), interactive behaviours are necessary to reduce social discomfort in public transport. Research indicates that there are definite benefits to socially interacting with the other regulars on the bus or train both the individual and community level. The concept of social capital describes the latent benefits of establishing social participation, establishing public environments that have a “community” feel. Having the chance to build social spaces in means of public transport will create “bridging social capital”. As Robert Putnam (2000) argues, bridging social capital is that gained from relationships with people who are quite different, whether in culture, race or ethnicity, economic status, political philosophy, or all of these and more besides. In addition to the benefit of building trust and feeling more comfortable with the other passengers, sociable people are viewed more positively and have higher life satisfaction scores (Emmons & Diener, 1986). Moreover, studies have shown that participatory art-based activities has multidimensional positive effects on mental and physical health outcomes (Beauchet et al).

Moreover, my research draws on the social impact of the arts on civic engagement. Stern & Seifert (2009) argue that the arts have an impact on social and community life. Drawing on Habermas’ distinction between the political and the literary public sphere, Stern and Seifert propose an expanded view of civic engagement pointing to the terms of “cultural public sphere” and “cultural citizenship,” as an attempt to highlight the special role of the arts in shaping citizenship. The concept of cultural public sphere goes beyond the traditional view of the public sphere that focuses on political and civic rights and responsibilities, and refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a terrain that allows affective –aesthetic and emotional– modes of communication. Cultural citizenship is produced through ephemeral creative practices in which citizens engage in their everyday lives, and which constitute their participation in the cultural public sphere.

Stern & Seifert (idem) propose the term “arts-based civic engagement” which they define as any activity that promotes citizens’ dialogue and engagement through creating, participating or relating to an artistic act. They point to the fact that, as civic engagement has declined due to the prevalence of television viewing and private leisure, facilitating people’s attendance to a performance, an exhibition or a workshop contributes to community engagement. Citizens’ engagement in dialogue is viewed either as the ultimate goal of arts-based interventions in public space or as a necessary step towards further ends related to raising public awareness and empowerment. According to the authors, the arts can promote dialogue between citizens by shedding light on individual life stories and the intimate aspects of public issues, making diverse perspectives

visible, allowing people to express their emotions, and putting forward new ways of thinking by means of figurative language, playfulness, and symbolic ideas. One aspect of civic engagement is civic dialogue, that is, exchanges between people about issues of public concern or matters that affect their individual, communal and social lives. In my research, and with the aim to enhance citizens' performative civic engagement, I decided to step back and not to design a performance act which would be staged by me, a professional performance artist, as this would have the creative mark of an experienced artist who would encourage passengers to have a momentary creative experience and then let them go back to their everyday routines. It would not empower non-artists to tap into their creative potential and become "temporary performance artists" who go back to their everyday lives equipped with artistic awareness as well as creative strategies and tools that they can use and further develop. Furthermore, the theory on arts-based civic engagement enabled me to abandon the experiments which revolved around exclusively physical performance acts/choreographies, as they did not seem to engage passengers and focus on others (flashcards, and in the next stage, mirroring, portraits printed on cards, post-it notes, protective suit in combination with cards, and tic-tac-toe) that worked and promised to be practices with many advantages in terms of triggering passengers' response and engagement and enable the production of a communal social space.

I have conducted this research motivated by an emancipatory cognitive interest (Habermas, 1972, pp. 308-311), namely, with the intention to empower citizens/non-artists to intervene in urban public space employing performance art-led techniques and tools. Habermas's theory on knowledge and cognitive interests has helped me to fully realize that my project aims at social transformation as a result of understanding and critically reflecting and acting upon a sociocultural situation. This project has been driven by the conviction that if citizens are trained and triggered to co-create and participate in performance-art based interventions in public space, they will connect with the intimate repository of their creative selves, explore their creative potential, and acquire civic artistic awareness that will enable them to intervene in public space as temporary performance artists, thus enhancing their potential for leading more socially engaged lives. As a result, the performative tools and methods implemented in the project were designed to serve the project's emancipatory cognitive interest. For this reason, I decided to co-create a series of performative interventions with other people, artists and non-artists, in the two workshops that were held in Athens and in Amsterdam. My role in the workshops would be that of a facilitator who would tap into the creative potential of the participants in order to elicit ideas and develop skills and tools for socially engaged physical, verbal and/or text-based performative interventions. The workshops would emancipate and empower participants to explore and co-design experimental physical performance interventions that would be staged in public space settings, thus becoming "temporary performers". They would, in turn, engage citizens-passengers in the performative events staged, emancipating and empowering them to produce a communal creative social space.

Producing a creative social space is achieved through the interplay between collaboration and estrangement (Westerman, 2016). I concur with theorist Jonah Westerman who challenges notions of performance that seek to define it as a medium or genre and argues instead that performance is an interrelated set of questions concerning how art relates to its audiences and the wider social world. Through the performative interventions conducted for the purposes of my project, I have attempted to estrange passengers from their surroundings and invite them to interact with other citizens. I have employed a series of performance art devices (portraits printed on cards, post-it notes, protective suits, cards, small whiteboards, mirrors) that have sought to defamiliarize passengers from the typical transit space of a public transport vehicle and challenge the conventions of the public space of public transport through its temporary appropriation.

Through a set of physical, verbal and/or text-based performative interventions staged by the citizens-turned-temporary performers in transit public space, passengers are expected to be engaged in art-led creative interactions, enabling the of a communal creative social space.

These performative interventions aim at carving valuable social space out of the mundane daily experience of public transportation. Thus, chance public encounters become loci of communal creative practice and performative civic pedagogy and empowerment.

Conceptually, performance art, in general, democratizes the conditions of aesthetic creation and appreciation by raising new issues of ontology, meaning, and taste. Aesthetically, it expands the parameters of artistic expression by opening the door for new applications of the corporeal and the affective in art (Ventzislavov, 2020).

The aesthetic choices that underlie this research can be reflected in the concepts of simplicity and immediacy –the participants stage the interventions in a short time by using simple, everyday means and tools, without being consumed in artistic embellishment, so as to effectively engage participants in co-creating a communal and communicative creative social space. The techniques, practices and tools employed are co-created in the collective and democratic spatiality/temporality of the workshops and imply a subversion of traditional art forms from which citizens often feel excluded, which results in their viewing art and the institutions that serve it as a fenced-in realm where only the culturally initiated can enter (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 26). This project can be viewed as socially engaged performance art that aims at engaging, empowering and emancipating citizens artistically and socially.

In both Ianchenko's and my project, the performative interventions aim at activating citizens' artistic perception, raise civic creativity and facilitate social interaction by means of unusual and unexpected performative experiences. However, in my research, and through the workshops held, I propose a performance art-based civic creativity pedagogy that can be applied in urban public space in order to enhance performative civic engagement. In the interventions employed in my project, citizens will be empowered to become temporary performers and intervene in the daily lives of other citizens in public space settings by activating their artistic perception and raising their civic creativity. This will be effected with the aid of a toolkit of artistic devices and techniques that can be used by citizens to reposition themselves in public space as creators and co-creators of performative events in a new, creative social space in the setting of public transport vehicles. The easy-to-use tools that will be developed will be able to be transformed and employed by citizens in a range of public space settings as products of a creative practice that can be passed on from one citizen to another.

Reflecting on my position as an artist and researcher in the project, and in close reference to Stern & Seifert's (2009) perspective, I perceive myself as a provocateur of dialogue or an animateur who, through artistic tactics, methods and experiments, incites passengers into interactions, detaching them from their daily routine commuting to or from work and defamiliarizing them from the typical transit space of a public transport vehicle. I perceive the performance artist as a facilitator of collective creative experience in public space and a catalyst for dialogue and communication. I employ collaborative performance art in order to transform public transport into a new area of conviviality, a social space that, however ephemeral it may be, has the potential for a lingering impact on citizens. In my project, the way in which I employ performance art techniques and tools is based on, and inspired by, human relations and their social context. For this reason, I draw on relational aesthetics, an aesthetic of the inter-human, of the encounter, of proximity, of resisting social formatting (Bourriaud, 2002).

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Personal Reflection

One of the key elements that defines my perspective on life and art is experience. I draw my inspiration from action and lived practice performed in the context of the reciprocal relationship between art and life. Commitment to hands-on engagement in artistic practice has been my driving force so far, and I believe that, to some extent, it is one of the key elements in understanding life and art. In other words, my life stance can be expressed by the motto: Don't ask about life, just live it. It is this outlook on life that has led me to engage in the art of dance. A purely physical art that gave me the opportunity to face the limits of endurance and flexibility of the body, balance it with the mind and cultivate the spirit through western classical and modern dance forms. However, my most valued personal resources are related to my origin and my roots. As a small cultivator of land, in the first years of my life, I experienced what it means to plant and take care of trees, and look after animals. This gave me the understanding of the importance of creation, but also a lesson in the patience and care you can dedicate to something beyond yourself. I guess that is the reason why I find myself professionally interested in long durational performance. I have the opportunity to employ and further develop these attributes to achieve my ultimate goal – integrating life with art. A representative trait of my personality is my persistence in achieving my goals and gradually becoming able to convey to others an affirming stance on life and art. During my research, I trained and empowered the participants in two workshops into staging performative interventions and I managed to get across to them my perspective on participatory engagement and the experience of interaction that give faster and richer results in performance art and everyday life.

In this Master's programme, I have had the opportunity to test my views on art and life and I am grateful for that. Going back to my original proposal, I find that although the basic assumptions of my research have not changed dramatically (one of them being that life and art are not separate realms), the main axis of my project has shifted and has been informed and supported by theoretical insights from related literature on public space, the public sphere and performance, and the artistic practice and research of other artists that featured in the syllabus of the courses or I discovered, assisted by the academic team of the faculty.

Since the beginning of the project, my vision has shifted along with my research questions. They became more specific and more effective in addressing the research topic I am inquiring into. My original research question interrogated the boundaries between the performer and the spectator, pointing to the potential of a performance act to enable the spectator to become a performer temporarily. Gradually, the focus of my research shifted from the dichotomy between the performer and the spectator to raising citizens' artistic and social awareness through creative civic engagement and empowerment, thus minimizing the distance between the performer and the spectator altogether. Therefore, throughout the research process, I have developed an even stronger citizen-centric approach as a key element of my artistic practice, doing away with the boundaries not only between the performer and the spectator, but also between performance art and everyday life.

The fact that I had to observe all the components of my research and justify all the choices I made in my project is bound to be transferred in my artistic practice, as I feel I am more inclined now to address a creative project with a researcher's eye. I also believe that the manner, depth and scope of challenging of the established assumptions and practices I have been employing as an artist has expanded and evolved and that my creative toolbox is richer. I feel that my creative vision is now more informed by critical thinking, an aesthetic awareness, participatory action and co-creation. The research process made me get out of my artist's comfort zone, allow my creative work to be exposed to the questions of others, and deal with "mistake" and "failure" as an integral part of art and life.

The nature and structure of artistic research, and much more of performative research, is such that the experiments themselves form part of the research results and findings –the material outcomes of practice are representations of research findings in their own right (Haseman, 2006). These findings are open to multiple and different interpretations, as "performative research is derived from relativist ontology and celebrates multiple constructed realities" (Haseman, idem). Moreover, in the effort to come up with a clear answer to a question, other questions are born which, in turn, open up new pathways towards new answers. For example, the chess, a tool employed in one of my interventions, can be seen either as simply a game or a symbol of conflict and confrontation and of the effort to deal with them. Also, the question of whether there is potential for social spatiality/temporality in public transportation, led to the question of whether there is potential for creative civic engagement, which, in turn, guided the design of the experiments. This management of a constant emergence and exploration has been at the core of my development this year.

The four main principles in my artistic practice are: symbolism, ritual, relational aesthetics, and experiential corporeal engagement. Through.

Symbolism

A key element in my artistic practice is symbolism through objects-props. I often use stage props, objects and geometries that shape the artistic environment of the performance and act as symbols for concepts I hope to express. I believe that objects and shapes facilitate people's access to the act as they often underpin its structural framework. I choose simple, mundane objects and allude to everyday life. In my latest works, I have used the geometric forms of the sphere ("Orbital") of the cube ("Kube"), as well as the amorphous mass of the plastic bags ("Nature"). The common plastic bag I use in "Nature" is a symbol of blind consumerism. The incorporation of this object into the act enables me to critique the way people operate in their daily lives, disrespecting nature's equilibrium and, thus, paying the price for their indifference toward the continuing and inexorable destruction of the natural environment.

In my research this year, each performative intervention is linked to socio-political concepts and issues such as: citizens' freedoms, justice, democracy, racism, etc. In this way, I want to engage passengers in empathy and criticism, inviting them to a seemingly innocent game that can be turned into a socio-political debate.

By selecting a prop from the toolkit, a passenger is invited to start a discussion with another passenger, guided by instructions that accompany the chess set.

For example, if you choose the chess, the topic of the conversation with your chess mate is war. Players are invited to answer some questions:

- What are you willing to sacrifice to win this war?
- Which pieces do you prefer?
- Have you thought that the pawns in a game of chess can be people (soldiers), just like the king?

The protective suit hides bodily features and, in this way, the intervention triggers discussions about gender. In addition, during the pandemic, the protective suit was associated with the fear of Covid-19.

The mirror symbolically challenges passengers to think and act from the position of the Other. It reminds us that the Other can act as a mirror of our behaviours and to realize, to a certain extent, that what we give comes back to us.

By trying to guess the other person's life by writing information about them on post-it notes using words, numbers and dates, a citizen is transformed from one out of a number of passengers onboard a public transport vehicle into a person worth-noticing, a personality.

The different portraits on the cards comment on the tendency we have to form an opinion about someone based on their appearance and colour. This experiment can trigger discussions about racism and stereotypes.

Ritual

As a performance artist, I start every performance act as a ritual dance that draws its movements from everyday life and people's daily habits. I employ ritual in every performance act I stage because it helps me to step into the performance space and time, and establish a rapport with the audience. Ritual precedes theatre (Schechner, 1988) and establishes a communal space where community members can engage in collective action. The link between performing arts and ritual suggests that performing arts speak to something innately human in all of us, and that ritual and art stem from a common psychological and spiritual human impulse. At the turn of the 20th century, Jane Harrison developed ritual theory which suggests that Greek theatre originated from ritual performances thereby linking performing arts to religion and ritual. "For Harrison, all art in some sense springs out of religion, and between them, there is a connecting link, a bridge, and that bridge is ritual (Sidebottom, 2018).

In the case of my project, I stage performative interventions in the public space of public transport vehicles in order to disrupt established ritual habits and routines performed automatically by passengers in their daily lives, as they are produced by, and in turn reproduce, the mobile non-place (Augé, 1995) of public transport.

In these interventions, art produces estrangement, a defamiliarization necessary to stop prevalent perceptions and practices from seeming natural and readily acceptable. The performative interventions are unexpected, at times bizarre, or even unsettling, which is what makes them artistically and socially relevant and effective. Passengers are taken aback, but this surprise has the potential to shatter their passive acceptance of the inevitability of transit conventions, and challenge mindless reproduction of automated civic behaviour in urban public space. Through the denormalization of deeply embedded and widely accepted daily rituals,

artistic practice can become civic reeducation practice, facilitating social interaction and making personal and social change possible.

Relational aesthetics

I am interested in a relational, collaborative, interactive and democratic creative practice. Nicolas Bourriaud (2002, p. 113) defines “relational aesthetics” as “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”. He sees artists as facilitators rather than makers and regards art as information exchanged between the artist and the viewers. The artist, in this sense, gives audiences access to power and the means to change the world.

The way in which I employ performance art techniques and tools is based on, and inspired by, human relations and their social context. For this reason, I draw on relational aesthetics, an aesthetic of the inter-human, of the encounter, of proximity, of resisting social formatting (Bourriaud, idem). In my artistic practice so far, I have had a spectator-centric approach establishing a dialogue with the audience. What is more, I have often risked the end result of a project so as not to compromise the relationships in the team. My research project this year prompts meetings and invites appointments with citizens in public space. It operates as a relational device provoking and managing individual and group encounters, and containing a certain degree of randomness. I employ collaborative performance art in order to transform public transport into a new area of conviviality, a social space that promotes co-creation and civic engagement. However, ephemeral it may be, it is a space where heterogeneous forms of sociability are worked out that have the potential for a lingering impact on citizens.

Experiential corporeal engagement

In my artistic projects, the process of creation starts from the architecture of the body and the wide repertoire of its dynamics. The dance education that I received has influenced me in my artistic practice and the way I develop my projects. I choose to investigate a given project through an experiential approach and understand time and space as lived temporality / spatiality. The performative interventions staged in the context of my project invite passengers to engage with their fellow citizens through a corporeal, experiential encounter. Corporeal interaction between people through sharing and collaboration is for me a key element in the assimilation of lived experience. The interventions in my project aim at the corporeal immersion of the participants in the social space created, and the collective sensory-bodily experiences produced intend to heighten awareness of the discursive, cognitive and affective aspects of the interventions. Collective corporeal experiences in performance acts contribute to meaning-making, authenticity, empowerment, and social as well as performative civic engagement in the broader contexts of the participants lives.

Learning capability can be defined as the ability to process knowledge, that is, the ability to create, acquire, transfer and integrate knowledge, as well as to adapt and modify one's behavior to reflect the new cognitive situation, with the aim of improving one's performance.

Throughout my research project, I have developed or further refined learning skills related to collaboration and co-creation, as well as hands-on skills, gaining more experience in the technicalities of documentation and other requirements of the project. I have gained competencies in observation, and an increased readiness in correlating what I observe with my own work. Another key competency that I have gained is an increased flexibility in the creation phase of a project, and also in my communication with the participants in the project. This year, the learning conditions provided in the Master's programme such as: a high degree of exposure to change, constant high-quality feedback, useful pointers and suggestions, as well as motivation by academic staff, and opportunities to communicate my project to diverse audiences established a learning environment that fostered curiosity, perseverance, flexibility, effective prioritizing, creativity, and collaboration. Throughout this academic year, I have been striving to apply these learning skills in my practice.

Attending this Master's program, I quickly realized that no research is immune to problems, and that in a research project, dealing with problems is a daily task, therefore, having a problem-solving mindset was the skill that would help me in the short as well as in the long run. From the first moment, there were problems in my research, the first and main one being that I did not have a research question, or rather, that my research question was not specific enough. So, with the guidance of my coach, and examples I had from the programme, I decided to solve the problems rationally and step by step. So I tried to define the problem and I identify possible causes. By identifying the problem, I had a better perspective of the available solutions. So, I specified the options I had to solve the problem, and I selected the most appropriate ones. Moreover, with my experiments in public space, I designed plans for the implementation of appropriate solutions. Then, I executed these plans by testing the solutions, and I monitored the results, evaluating the solutions each time. Planned problem-solving proved to be an effective coping mechanism in carrying out my research project. Another approach to problem-solving I employed during the research was processing and managing the multiple opinions that would come up during the project from the community of participants in the workshops I set up. Through our discussions and collective reflection on the implications and the results of every suggestion we could build the next experiments and tools used in the project.

Mental resilience in learning environments is an important asset that affects the process and largely determines the results of a project. At each stage of my research, I made sure to take time for active pauses which, in addition to the necessary rest, also gave me the required clarity and focus on the main axis of the research. Another key area in stress management is prioritizing the tasks involved in the project and, at the same time, meeting the deadlines of the course assignments during the academic year. In my case, my coach helped me in the former area as she often had to keep me close to the research goals by carrying out the research steps in the right order. Stress levels increased shortly before deadlines for presentations and the submission of assignments. Physical exercise on a daily basis and the necessary breaks during the day were beneficial in managing my stress. I developed a method of setting shorter or longer rest intervals during the day, week, month and trimester which proved quite effective.

Prior to my admission to the Master's programme, I had not dealt with project planning and structuring so systematically and in so much detail. I took all the information about this field from researchers who taught us at the university, from the Research Days, and from the suggestions and advice given in expert talks and by my coach. This is the domain that gave me the sharpest learning curve. Research needs to be built and supported by references to literature. At the same time, research is triggered by inner and personal values, needs and cognitive interests, but, by implementing appropriate strategic methods and tools, it can be relevant and properly communicated to social groups, local communities and authorities, and state agencies. The motivation I had from my teachers to develop and get across my point of view as expressed in my project was important and encouraged me to build more solid skills in the domain of networking, such as sharing and acquiring relevant information, place my project in a broader context, project it in the future, and thus consider and take steps towards the sustainability of my research.

I am currently in contact with Aleksandra Ianchenko (performer - researcher – Tallinn University, Estonia / Åbo Akademi University, Finland) to whom I communicated my research, and we discussed how my experiments can be used by PUTSPACE (Public Transport as Public Space in European Cities: Narrating, Experiencing, Contesting) <https://putspace.eu> a network/research project that promotes public transport research in which she participates. Researchers, artists, universities, institutes, and museums from Europe, including among others, Belgium Estonia Finland Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, participate in this network/project.

In addition, I am planning to submit my project, in the form of a video documentary or mini-film, to Athens-based STASY, the Urban Rail Transport agency in Attica, Greece. Submissions will be projected on the wide screens of Attiko Metro, Athens underground transport system, in the context of a festival held by the Department of Corporate Social Responsibility and Cultural Heritage of Athens-based STASY.

Peer Feedback by Yannis Varvaresos

One of the best attributes of Ioannis Karounis, was his constant willingness to assist in whichever co-creation part we had. From early on, he was participating with a sense of openness and selflessness in the lectures, workshops, and especially discussions, which were focused on finding common grounds and solutions, among us, the students. This openness made him a great dialogue partner, since he wasn't trying to impose his ideas on anyone, but rather propose solutions to ideas that the group was suggesting. Also, as a collaborator, he was willing to help in every way it was needed: either as a performer, a designer or even a photographer, for us so that we could have documentation of our projects.

Concerning Ioannis' way of communicating his research work, he has great skills in documenting and showing his work. His presentations were visually captivating, presenting well-designed videos and photos. This was extremely helpful, because through images and videos, we were able to completely understand what his research was about and how he was engaging with his research questions. In addition to that, since the beginning of the Master's program, he has evolved, in the way he verbally communicates his research work with us, he has become more explicit, thorough, and specific and is backing his practice with a concrete theoretical framework.

Peer Feedback by Jitka Čechová

Ioannis Karounis is a very mature artist with a clear opinion and view on art and life. I have experienced many workshops and seminars with him in Tilburg, and Ioannis has always proven to be a strong dialogue partner who is not afraid to speak his mind and, on the other hand, listen with interest to the opinions of others. Ioannis thinks strategically, methodically and is able to choose appropriate methods in collaboration that are effective and to the point. From Ioannis, I am inspired by his straightforwardness and ability to confront, which creates dynamic situations that move group discussions forward and serve to explore new ways and approaches to working in public space.

I had the opportunity to become deeply familiar with Ioannis' project while composing a panel for the Micro Symposium. I really appreciate that he stepped out of his comfort zone of being a performer and threw himself into the work of a facilitator, which requires a comprehensive approach. Ioannis offers the group he works with his leadership skills, methodological skills, empathy, and critical thinking skills.

Ioannis, through his diligence, has made great progress in his ability to formulate and communicate his project on a professional level in the field of academic artistic research. Ioannis's project confirms that it is possible to actively engage people in public transport, with playful interventions that straddle reality and theatre. His project reflects his personal philosophy, which is based on the fact that art is not performed, but is lived, which is evident in his artistic research project.

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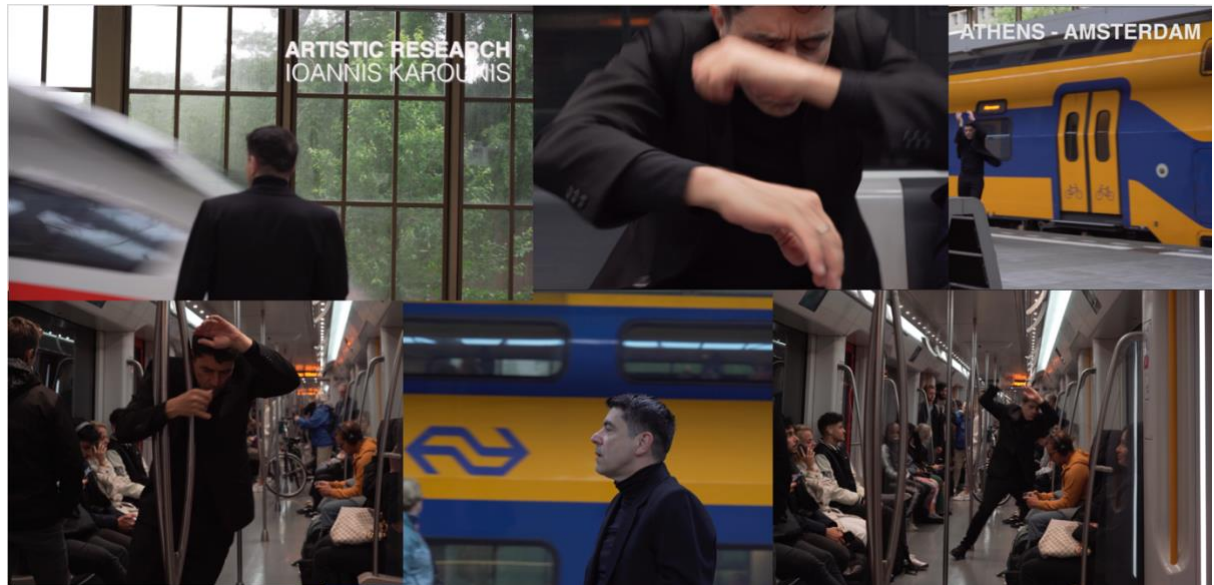
STASY – Urban Rail Transport,
http://www.stasy.gr/index.php?id=375&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4462&cHash=c223f8551e6b8ef821fda59814ba2089.

Artistic Reflection

In the last ten years of my artistic career, and through my involvement with long durational performance art, I have tried to bridge artistic practice with everyday life. Drawing on Taiwanese performance artist Tehching Hsieh (Jagodzinski, 2021, pp. 370-374) and Joseph Beuys (Tisdall, C. 1974, p. 48), I believe that art and life are inseparable and I consider artistic expression a fundamental human attribute.

My research project explores creative civic encounter in urban public space, and, more specifically, whether it is possible for citizens to see their daily life in the mobile public space of buses and underground trains as a performance using artistic practices. Through two workshops held in Amsterdam and Athens, I have invited citizens, artists and non-artists, to co-create and apply performance art-led practices in public transport vehicles in the two cities. Unsuspecting citizens onboard buses and underground trains have been called upon to redefine their everyday life through the performative interventions staged by the participants, including myself. Citizens have been invited to start a dialogue with their fellow passengers on public transport, transforming the quasi-non-spatiality/temporality of a means of public transportation into performance space/time and, subsequently, social space/time (Lefebvre, 1991). In this way, I aimed at enhancing performative civic engagement. The proposition of my research is that non-places (Augé, 1995) can be activated into social spaces. My aim has been to empower citizens to lead authentic, engaged lives through socializing and creativity.

Since the beginning of the project, my artistic vision has shifted along with my research questions – which became more specific and more effective in addressing the research topic I have been inquiring into. My original research question interrogated the boundaries between the performer and the spectator, pointing to the potential of a performance act to enable the spectator to become a performer temporarily. Gradually, the focus of my research shifted from the dichotomy between the performer and the spectator to raising citizens' artistic and social awareness through creative civic engagement and empowerment, thus seeking to do away with the distinction and the distance between “performer” and “spectator” altogether.



Apart from the research focus, what changed in the process of my research were the specification of the locus of the research, that is, the public space of public transportation as a potential social space of creative civic experience and engagement (Stern & Seifert, 2009), and the methodological choice of participant observation and the workshops, which proved to be very useful for the design of the performative interventions staged and tested in the project.

In the workshops that I conducted in Athens and in Amsterdam, I presented my idea and the theme of my project to the participants inviting them to co-design and co-develop performative interventions and artistic tools. The workshops were attended by artists and non-artists who were trained to intervene in public transport employing performance art-led techniques.

Conceptually, performance art, in general, democratizes the conditions of aesthetic creation and appreciation by raising new issues of ontology, meaning, and taste. Aesthetically, it expands the parameters of artistic expression by opening the door for new applications of the corporeal and the affective in art (Ventzislavov, 2020). With my project, I have attempted to expand the boundaries of democratic, corporeal and affective artistic creation by actively involving a number of participants in the project who, in turn, would actively engage a number of passengers in a series of performative interventions.



During the Athens workshop, we designed experiments that revolved around the use of flashcards. In addition, we came up with the following experiments:

- mirroring
- portraits printed on cards
- post-it notes (on which we write down personal details of the passenger sitting or standing opposite us, as we imagine or assume them, such as name, age, occupation, destination, etc.)
- protective suit in combination with cards.
- tic-tac-toe on a small whiteboard

From the analysis of the documentation, these interventions seemed to be able to reduce interpersonal discomfort and promote the social engagement of passengers onboard public transportation, building a creative social space and creating a community feel.

In the Amsterdam workshop, I employed a creative magnifying lens into the development and the impact of the experimentation by focusing on the real life of a person in public transport (Georgios Skantzaris) whom I followed in his daily train journey commuting to work from Amsterdam to Eindhoven. In the workshop, the participant was given the freedom to redesign the existing techniques and tools, propose his own, and improvise during an experiment if needed. He decided to stage games of chess (as a variation of the “tic-tac-toe” intervention designed and employed in previous interventions).



In the next stage of the project, we developed and tested a toolkit of artistic devices that can be used by citizens to exercise creative citizenship and reposition themselves in public space as creators and co-creators of performative events. The toolkit also contains a manual for each one of the performative tools in it. These props will get citizens out of their daily routines and provoke their conscious engagement and performative dialogue with other citizens. My ambition for the research outcome is for the project to have an ongoing impact after the completion of the inquiry. I expect that these tools will be able to be further developed by citizens—they can intervene in the original ideas by adapting and modifying them according to their own needs and aesthetic criteria— and used in a range of public space settings as products of an artistic practice that can be passed on from one citizen to another. Therefore, this project proposes an art-based civic creativity pedagogy that can be applied in urban public space in order to enhance civic creative engagement, which can potentially develop into creative activism.



These interventions encompass and express the main aesthetic principles of my artistic practice in the context of my research project: simplicity and immediacy; symbolism; relational aesthetics; and experiential corporeal engagement.

First of all, the participants stage the interventions in a short time by using simple, everyday means and tools, without being consumed in artistic embellishment, so as to effectively engage passengers in co-creating a communal and communicative creative social space. The techniques, practices and tools employed are co-created in the collective and democratic spatiality/temporality of the workshops and imply a subversion of traditional art forms from which citizens often feel excluded, which results in their viewing art and the institutions that serve it as a fenced-in realm where only the culturally initiated can enter (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 26). This project can be viewed as socially engaged performance art that aims at engaging, empowering and emancipating citizens artistically and socially.

Secondly, the props employed act as symbols for concepts I hope to have expressed. We chose simple, mundane objects that allude to everyday life that would create an atmosphere of

familiarity and would make it easy for passengers to relate to them and use them. At the same time, through each prop, the performative interventions were linked to socio-political concepts and issues such as: citizens' freedoms, justice, democracy, racism, etc. In this way, I intended to engage passengers in empathy and criticism, inviting them to a seemingly innocent game that can be turned into a socio-political debate. By selecting a prop from the toolkit, a passenger was invited to start a discussion with another passenger, guided by instructions that accompany the toolkit. For example, the protective suit hides bodily features and, in this way, the intervention triggers discussions about gender. In addition, during the pandemic, the protective suit was associated with the fear of Covid-19. The mirror symbolically challenges passengers to think and act from the position of the Other. It reminds us that the Other can act as a mirror of our behaviours and to realize, to a certain extent, that what we give comes back to us. By trying to guess the other person's life by writing information about them on post-it notes using words, numbers and dates, a citizen is transformed from one out of a number of passengers onboard a public transport vehicle into a person worth-noticing, a personality. The different portraits on the cards comment on the tendency we have to form an opinion about someone based on their appearance and colour. This experiment can trigger discussions about racism and stereotypes.

Moreover, the way in which I have employed performance art techniques and tools in my project is based on, and inspired by, human relations and their social context as I have intended my research to develop as a relational, collaborative, interactive and democratic creative practice. For this reason, I have drawn on relational aesthetics, an aesthetic of the inter-human, of the encounter, of proximity, of resisting social formatting (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 113). Nicolas Bourriaud (idem) defines "relational aesthetics" as "a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space." He sees artists as facilitators rather than makers and regards art as information exchanged between the artist and the viewers. The artist, in this sense, gives audiences access to power and the means to change the world. My research project prompts meetings and invites appointments with citizens in public space. It operates as a relational device provoking and managing individual and group encounters, and containing a certain degree of randomness. I have employed collaborative performance art in order to transform public transport into a new area of conviviality and communality, a social space that promotes co-creation and performative civic engagement. However ephemeral it may be, it is a space where heterogeneous forms of sociability are worked out that have the potential for a lingering impact on citizens.

Finally, another element of my research project, but not the most important as was the case with my artistic projects so far, is a corporeal aesthetics and experiential corporeal engagement. The performative interventions staged in the context of my project invited passengers to engage with their fellow citizens through a corporeal, experiential encounter. Embodied interaction between people through sharing and collaboration is for me a key element in the assimilation of lived experience. The interventions in my project aimed at the corporeal immersion of the participants in the social space created, and the collective sensory-bodily experiences produced intended to heighten awareness of the discursive, cognitive and affective aspects of the interventions. Collective corporeal experiences in performance acts contribute to meaning-making, authenticity, empowerment, and social as well as performative civic engagement in the broader contexts of the participants' lives.

After each experiment, the people who staged the experiments interviewed the passengers who had interacted with them, collecting the views, feelings and behaviours of citizens in public transport. The people who staged the experiments were also interviewed by me. These interviews were videographically documented and informed me in depth about the results of the performative experiments, allowing me to have an overview of the feelings and the insights of the participants in the workshops, and giving me direct access to citizens' responses to the experiments. Video documentation made it possible for me to have direct access to the unfolding of the experiments, the emotional and physical condition of every participant in every experiment, and the atmospheres before and during the experiments. Thus, it allowed me to evaluate the experiments in terms of their relevance, effectiveness, and aesthetic quality, as well as think over and redesign the ones that were less effective in generating passengers' response.

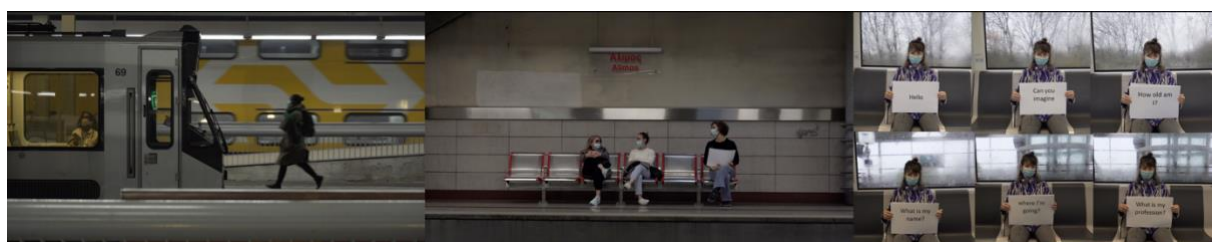
I view video documentation as an aesthetic form, as an expressive, creative act in itself. Therefore, documenting the performative interventions was not only about capturing the reality and the veracity of what happened, but also about how to document what happened in a way that was aesthetically compatible with my overall aesthetic vision – simplicity and immediacy, and the affirmation that life and art are not separate realms.

The participants who were selected to go through the workshops and stage the experiments were: Zafiria Tsirakaki, Angeliki Pantazi, Dimitra Roustani, Ina Varka, Orestis Alexiadis and Georgios Skantzaris. I obtained their consent for the usage of their personal details in this project, as well as for recording them photographically and videographically for the purposes of research documentation.



Concluding my research project, I am more aware of the importance of striking a balance between the two main aspects of my artistic practice. The first is the fulfillment of my artistic vision, and the second is the social relevance of the art I produce and the question of whether this art has social utility and awareness-generating capacity. Considering the various stages of this project and, at the same time, my development in reflection and critical thinking, I can say that the design process and the result of my artistic research work is very close to my idea of a participatory performance art practice that empowers and raises civic awareness putting aesthetics at the service of the social without compromising the artistic character of the work.

In my opinion, the social character of art is summed up in the dependence of the value of an artwork on the extent to which it helps us to respond to our daily needs in the best possible way. The philosophers Claude Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte rejected the belief that art is an end in itself and acknowledged that the value of art lies in whether it contributes to the realization of a vision for a future society without violence and class exploitation (Beardsley, 1989 p. 287). I believe that the idea of art as an end in itself may result in shallow aestheticism that ignores the problems of the real world rendering art into a pastime for the leisure classes. In my view, it is perfectly legitimate for a work of art to convey, apart from an aesthetic perception of the world around us, messages that will urge citizens to transform their living conditions for the better.



Reflecting on my position as an artist and researcher in the project, and in close reference to Stern & Seifert's (ibid) perspective, I perceive myself as a provocateur of dialogue who, through artistic tactics, methods and experiments, incites passengers into interactions, detaching them from their daily routine commuting to or from work and defamiliarizing them from the typical transit space of a public transport vehicle. I perceive the performance artist as an aesthetic provocateur and a facilitator of collective creative experience in public space and a catalyst for dialogue and communication. I employ collaborative performance art in order to transform public transport into a new area of conviviality, a social space that, however ephemeral it may be, has the potential for a lingering impact on citizens.

In my artistic practice so far, I have had a spectator-centric approach establishing a performative dialogue with the audience. My research project this year prompts meetings and invites appointments with citizens in public space. It operates as a relational device provoking and managing individual and group encounters, and containing a certain degree of randomness. I employ collaborative performance art in order to transform public transport into a new area of conviviality, a social space that promotes co-creation and civic engagement.

Extroversion –engaging with the world and the Other– is the medium that pumps oxygen to a society's brain and heart, allowing it to remain open. Like a recluse who, deprived of contact with other people, has no social stimuli, opportunities to challenge and be challenged, enrich and develop their thinking, so an society whose citizens are introverted remains stagnant, reproducing the same myths about others and about itself. This is exactly what I tried to highlight this year through the artistic practices I employed in my experiments. Starting from the body, with the physical presence of the performer in public space, I highlighted the value of conviviality and creative participatory citizenship through performative practices that shaping citizens' daily lives in urban public space.

In the following photos and video footage accessed through the links listed below, I present passengers' response to the interventions staged in the context of my research, triggering small, inadvertent, on their part, participatory performance acts.



1_building up dialogue

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656219635/efdf195265>

6_Athens_flashcards_Monastiraki

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656227380/01f33395af>

7_Amsterdam_line 51

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656228132/84399263fd>

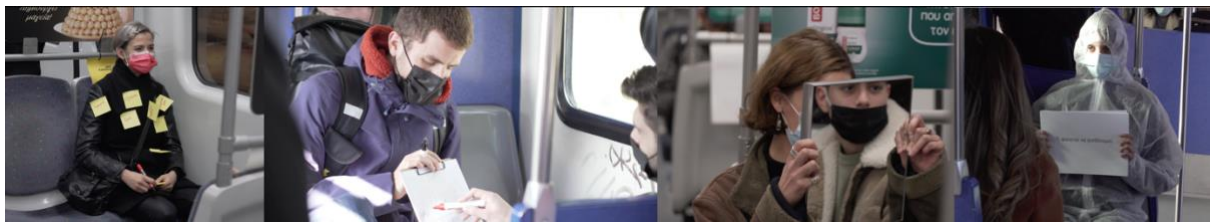
The recording of my research through video documentation reveals spatial/temporal and aesthetic transformations in civic encounter and conviviality in public transport, enriching related artistic research on public space.



My aim this year was to give flesh and blood to my initial thoughts and assumptions, namely, that citizens are able to interact in public with their peers as long as they are provided with proper opportunities and conditions. I decided to create a community of artists and non-artists who would assist me in conducting my research with their insights and practice. I communicated all the stages of my research to colleagues, to my coach and academic staff of the university, as well as to my fellow students, who helped me become more specific about the focus and the locus of the research, and my own perspective and position in it.

My project gained momentum and the initial progress led to leaps and bounds in terms of emerging results, the aesthetic quality and the relevance and effectiveness of the experiments, as well as the qualities-atmospheres produced in public transport.

Below, I present photos and list links to videos from the second period of the research.



Protective Suit - Ina Varka

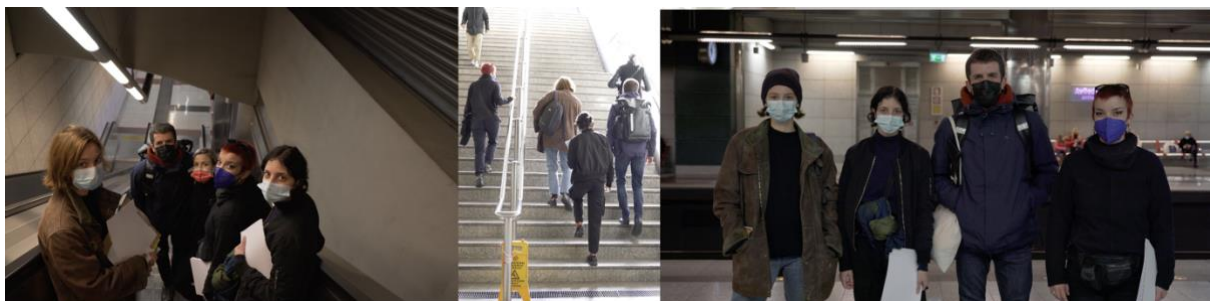
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/690234856/a0cf2133d7>

Post it notes - Zafiria Tsirakaki

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/689075465/9f166ab4d0>

Mirroring - Angeliki Pantazi

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/690276747/e51ab3ff95>



In the third period of the research, having developed and tested my methods and tools, I had the opportunity to reflect and evaluate the results, and then proceed to the connection of experiments with social and political issues which could be discussed by citizens in public transport. An example is the chess experiment whose design and development coincided with the Russia-Ukraine war. Through a game of chess, citizens were called upon to reflect on the consequences of the war and how they themselves would react in these conditions.

Passengers/chess-mates were invited by the initiator of the experiment to answer some questions:

- What are you willing to sacrifice to win this war?
- Which pieces do you prefer?
- Have you thought that the pawns in a game of chess can be people (soldiers), just like the king?



Video documentation

Chess // Giorgios Skantzaris

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/716044648>

The results of my research that can be easily tested and reproduced by other researchers or artists enabling experiments and interventions in public transport to further evolve

The research continues through the toolkit of artistic devices and props that we created during the year, which passengers have the opportunity to open and choose a prop in order to stage their own interventions in public transport vehicles, inviting their fellow passengers in a participatory performance act, thus repositioning themselves in public space as creators and co-creators of performative events in a new, creative and co-created social space.



NEW EXPERIMENTS // 3rd Period

<https://vimeo.com/703849228>



I have created a community of citizens who participate in my research by co-developing and supporting performative practices. I would like to find out if this practice can go on, that is, if the members of this creative community can continue to make conscious decisions for participation in co-created social spaces and, therefore, for conscious creative civic lives, empowering other citizens to do the same.

I would like to see this project evolve and be used and further developed by future researchers or artists. I intend to propose this project to public and private institutes seeking cooperation and funding. My research was triggered by inner and personal values, needs and cognitive interests, but, by implementing appropriate strategic methods and tools, I feel it can be relevant to social groups, local communities and authorities, and state agencies. The motivation I had from my teachers to get across my point of view as expressed in my project encouraged me to build more solid skills in the domain of networking, such as sharing and acquiring relevant information, place my project in a broader context, project it in the future, and thus consider and take steps towards the sustainability of my research.

I am currently in contact with Aleksandra Ianchenko (2020), a performance artist / artistic researcher on performance events in public transport settings (Tallinn University, Estonia / Åbo Akademi University, Finland) to whom I communicated my research, and we discussed how my experiments can be used by PUTSPACE (Public Transport as Public Space in European Cities: Narrating, Experiencing, Contesting) a network/research project that promotes public transport research in which she participates. Researchers, artists, universities, institutes, and museums from Europe, including among others, Belgium Estonia Finland Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, participate in this network/project.

Through all this video and photographic material, a 13.17-min long short film/video documentary is being created aiming to present the course of the research, my own insights and the those of the participants on the project. The film will testify to citizens' willingness to interact performatively with each other and actively engage in everyday life creating and co-creating it.

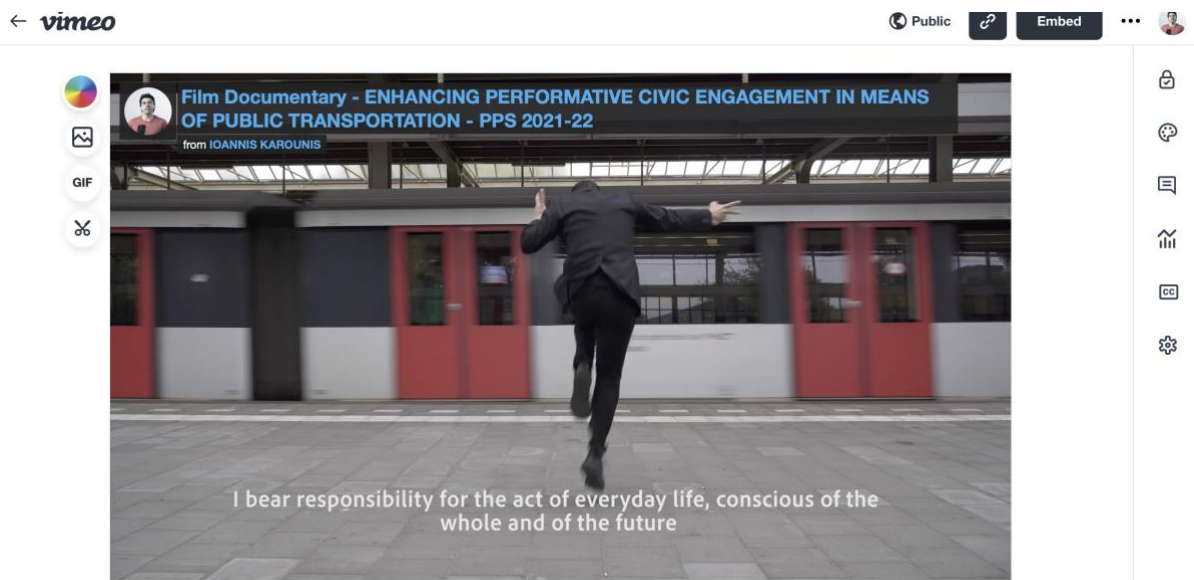
I am planning to submit my project, in the form of this short film, to Athens-based STASY, the Urban Rail Transport agency in Attica, Greece. Submissions will be projected on the wide screens of Attiko Metro, Athens underground transport system, in the context of a festival held by the Department of Corporate Social Responsibility and Cultural Heritage of STASY.

The film will also be accessible through a webpage on my website (<https://www.ioanniskarounis.com>) dedicated to the project. It will give visitors an overview of the project before they go through it in more detail browsing the videos, the photos and the text. I consider this film an aesthetic project in itself, and an additional aesthetic product of this research.

Film documentation

Duration 13:17

Video link: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/719923625>



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This research answers key questions on human mobility and citizens' experience of time and space in public transport (PT). Human mobility is a phenomenon in itself defined by and dependent on social, economic, cultural or political characteristics. The text explores whether and how PT can be seen as a form of public space.

PT is seen as a form of public space, a type of street or square, with unique features: an enclosed, mobile space which people have to use and where they are in close physical contact with each other. Drawing on Habermas's theory, the authors examine whether PT is a space where people can come in contact with each other and potentially create a common public sphere. They consider PT a privileged tool for claiming the publicness of urban spaces, as they regard PT not only as space where people can meet each other, but also as public good and public property. They also discuss the implications of the public character of PT, namely, potential future forms and functions of PT systems. They point to the importance of people's daily mobility in urban public space, and their daily contact with other people, as well as the inequality of access to mobility options. However, they leave room for doubt and criticism shedding light on the problematic assumptions associated with the concept of public space.

The authors argue that public space is a problematic, complex and multi-dimensional term, as the border between public and private –a culturally conditioned categorization– is not easily discernible. They define public space as physical space where people who do not know each other and come from different social strata gather. They also view public space as a socio-political ideal, drawing on Habermas's concept of public sphere: it is a place where people congregate, thus producing an open, inclusive and democratic environment that enables the expression, toleration and synthesis of diverse or conflicting opinions.

The importance of human daily movement emerged through the mobility turn which sees transport not only as a way of moving from one place to another, but also as a way of living or being part of a wider community. Ethnographic research has focused more on stops, stations and terminals, which are more easily defined sites. The ephemeral character of the communities formed in PT settings, has prevented the production of many ethnographic studies on the field.

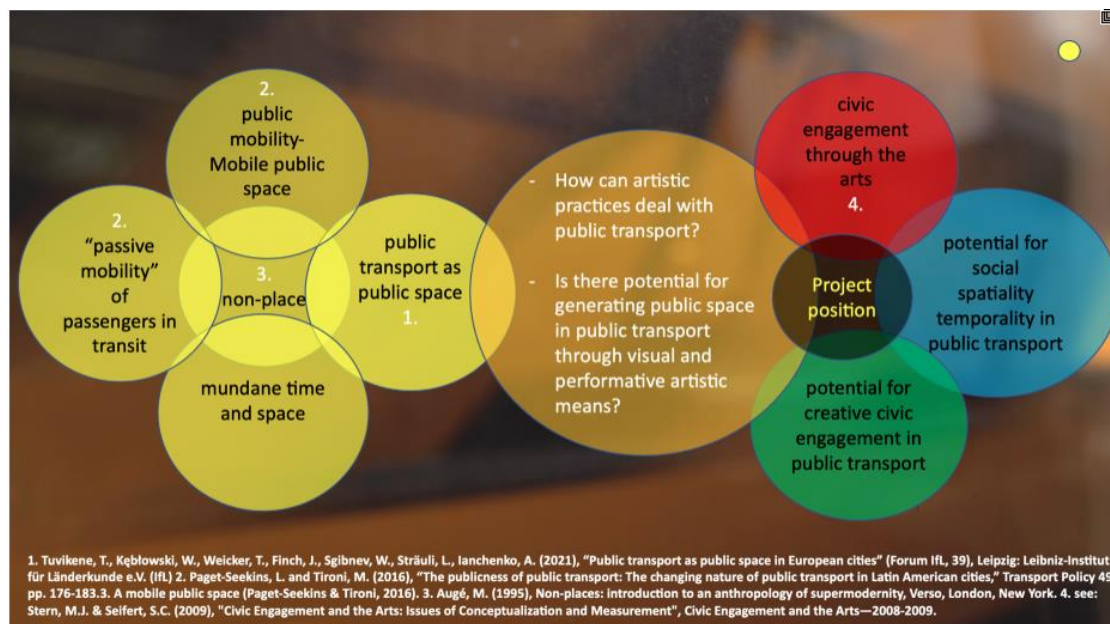
PT is mundane, ordinary mobile space characterized by frequent use and multiple brief, unspoken, embodied, physically close interactions. Communication and a shared idea of publicness are fostered in environments that allow for long periods of human contact. However, the mobility and transient character of passengers' coexistence, along with the fact that people nowadays are hard-to-impress, undermine the potential for a shared, social public space. On the other hand, public space is defined by the coming together of strangers who are carriers of diverse cultures. In PT, passengers have in person contact with each other in an environment of mutual acceptance regulated by commonly accepted rules. Therefore, PT consists public space.

According to the authors, PT may produce public spaces that prevent social inclusion as they reflect the socio-spatial inequalities in a city by keeping the mobility flows separate according to class and ethnic origin. Mobility is shaped by power structures, which raises questions about the subject of public space, the distinction between public and private and the economic stakes of the publicness of PT. Acts of protest and resistance by civil society organizations and collectivities aim to transform the non-democratic regulation of PT systems considering transport a part of the wider political struggle for reclaiming public urban space.

At the same time, and despite challenges to social inclusion posed by separate mobility flows, the authors argue that PT seems to be an ideal place for meetings between strangers, pointing to the essential properties of PT as a public space which produces citizenship. Passengers travel together, complying with a commonly accepted set of rules and regulations, which may also fuel debates, for instance, on fare-free PT. It has also been argued that PT could serve as a basis for European citizenship – the dense PT systems of European cities differentiate them from car-dependent North American cities. Encounters on board PT indicate that PT is indeed a type of public space as passengers have to share space with strangers of diverse backgrounds, which generates the potential for tolerant attitudes. Finally, passengers' solitary

experience on PT can become communal – involuntarily or voluntarily. The voluntary dimension is observable in emerging conversations between strangers or artistic interventions in the internal spaces of PT, both of which produce the community of transit spaces. The authors argue that a question worth exploring is how artistic practices deal with PT as they believe that there is potential for generating public space through visual and performative artistic means. Events, including performative acts, can be devised and staged on PT to enhance its publicness. Other interventions may include re-designing stops, stations and the exterior of transport vehicles. Through the artistic interventions they stage in PT, artists consciously produce emotions and affective atmospheres, thus creating social and emotional spaces.

Through my research, concepts have emerged which are of great importance for the understanding of public transportation as a lived public space. The following Venn diagram the main concepts my research draws upon in relation to space, time and citizens in transit.



From a very early stage in my research, I wondered if public transportation can be regarded as what we call public space and whether mobility ensures a rich field for research and experimentation. The project "Public transport as public space in European cities" addresses my concerns and features relevant research in the field of public transportation. Below, I list a number of correlations between sections of the text (T) and my own research (R).

(T) PT as mobile public space where passengers are in physical proximity

(R) Public transport is not only a public utility and a means of accessing other public places; it is also itself a mobile public space (Paget-Seekins & Tironi, 2016). According to Jan Ghel (2011, p. 9-13), people in public spaces such as public transport are in "passive contact" with each other—they only see and hear other people—and only minimum activity takes place. Passengers are in transit, in a state of "passive mobility"

(T) Impossibility of escaping unwelcome situations

(R) According to Jan Ghel (2011, p. 9-13), using public transport is an outdoor "necessary activity," which is more or less compulsory.

(T) PT as mundane, ordinary public space – PT is a welcoming space for reading, watching films, chatting on smartphones or conversing with friends, and commuters develop

sophisticated skills for handling laptops and other work equipment to do their jobs while on transit. The time of movement is not considered wasted time, but time used to carry out work to socialize or transition time between home and work during which people gather their thoughts.

(R) Waiting space / time – In the participant observations I have conducted, I have observed that the passively mobile spatiality/temporality of public transit is generally treated as empty, wasted and private time – a common sight on public transport vehicles is that of individuals staring out blankly in front of them or hunched over their smartphones without making even the slightest eye contact with fellow passengers.

(T) Strangers on PT vehicles coexist without communicating with each other – the mobility and transient character of passengers' coexistence, along with the fact that people nowadays are hard-to-impress, undermine the potential for a shared, social public space.

(R) Public transport as a non-place – Augé (1995) argues, that the traveller's space is the archetypal non-place, and that non-places are occupying more and more parts of public civic lives. Passengers are isolated from each other despite their physical proximity

(T) PT generates citizenship – Passengers travel together, complying with a commonly accepted set of rules and regulations, which may also fuel debates, for instance, on fare-free PT.

(R) The elementary form of citizenship that one can practise as a PT passenger can be developed into creative civic engagement – I believe it is important to intervene in the mobile space of public transport as it produces ritual habits and routines that are performed automatically and fail to contribute to personal and social development. My aim is to explore if transit space and time can become creative and if people are able and willing to communicate in this space and time. Through a set of physical, verbal and/or text-based performative interventions staged by the citizens-turned- temporary performers, passengers are expected to be engaged in art-led creative interactions, enabling the production of a communal creative social space. I expect these interactions to result in building trust among passengers and making them feel more comfortable with their fellow passengers. As Robert Putnam (2000) argues, there are two kinds of social capital. Bonding social capital is the advantage people develop from relationships with those who are essentially similar to themselves. Bridging social capital is that gained from relationships with people who are quite different, whether in culture, race or ethnicity, economic status, political philosophy, or all of these and more besides.

(T) Solitary experience on PT can become communal (involuntarily or voluntarily). The voluntary dimension is observable in emerging conversations between strangers or artistic interventions in the internal spaces of PT.

(R) My research aims at enabling citizens' creative and co-creative appropriation of public space, in that it intends to transform the quasi-non-spatiality/temporality of a means of public transportation into performance space/time and, subsequently, social space/time. The proposition of my research is that non-places can be activated into social spaces. I am conducting this research motivated by an emancipatory cognitive interest (Habermas, 1972, pp. 308-311), namely, with the intention to empower citizens/non-artists to intervene in urban public space employing performance art-led techniques and tools. I believe that if they are empowered to connect with the intimate repository of their creative selves, explore their creative potential, and acquire civic artistic awareness that will enable them to intervene in public space as temporary performance artists, they will lead more socially engaged lives.

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one more experiment: **DO YOU WANT TO PLAY?**



Unlike my previous experiments which were based on structured workshops requiring a number of the participants, this assignment is an opportunity for me to launch a new series of experiments that I, myself, will conduct in the setting of public transport.

The new experiment that I chose to stage emerged from the pre-workshops (first period) and the idea of flashcards. It is essentially a variation of the original idea and intervention, whereby I stick a flashcard on the windows of an underground train and call the passengers to read through the prompts and the questions written on it prompting them to imagine certain things about their fellow passengers first, and then I urge them to talk to them. In this way, as in all of my experiments so far, I try to create a space of interaction between the passengers where I

invite them to show more interest in each other, thus encouraging them to engage in a participatory process aimed at civic encounter, dialogue and co-creation of social space that can bring people together across the divide of mistrust between strangers.

The flashcard reads:

Hello.

Observe the passengers around you.

Observe the atmosphere.

Can you imagine

- where they are going?
- what is their profession?
- what is their name?

They have the same questions about you.

Start a conversation with another person.

At this stage of my research as I reflect on my position as an artist and researcher in the project, and with close reference to the text by Stern and Seifert, I perceive myself as a provocateur who, through artistic tactics, methods and experiments, lures and incites passengers into interactions, detaching them from their daily routine commuting to or from work and defamiliarizing them from the typical transit space of a means of transport. In the context of this experimentation, I perceive the artist as a facilitator of collective creative experience in public space and a catalyst for dialogue and communication.

Based on Stern and Seifert's insights on art-based civic engagement, I can reflect further on an important dimension of my research and my artistic creation in general, that of the artistic practitioner as a provocateur whose aim is to trigger interactions among people.

In this experiment, which I staged in Athens (Greece), I realized more clearly my role as a provocateur. After recording the reactions of the passengers with my video camera, I revealed my real identity and my intentions, and talked to the citizens asking them how they felt, if they found the whole process interesting, and whether they would go on to do something similar onboard public transport vehicles or in other public spaces. Their answers and responses were positive, as they said that my experiment brought them out of their personal space- and their intimate world eliciting thoughts about the people around them.

On the other hand, there was also a large section of passengers who did not pay attention to the intervention and did not seem to care. However, when one passenger started engaging in the intervention by reading the flashcard and posing the questions written on it to those around him, then other, more reluctant, passengers showed more interest and began to participate hesitantly. This seems to be a characteristic of most people in similar social situations: they expect someone to make the start.

As regards my research project as a whole, my intention is to employ collaborative performance art in order to transform public transport into a new area of conviviality, a social space that, however ephemeral it may be, has the potential for a lingering impact on citizens. In my project, the way in which I employ performance art techniques and tools is based on, and inspired by, human relations and their social context. For this reason, I draw on relational aesthetics, an aesthetic of the inter-human, of the encounter, of proximity, of resisting social formatting (Bourriaud, 2002).

Below, I present video documentation of the experiment as well as photographic material.

Experiment / intervention

Provoking performative civic engagement in public space

Location / means of public transport (Athens - Greece)

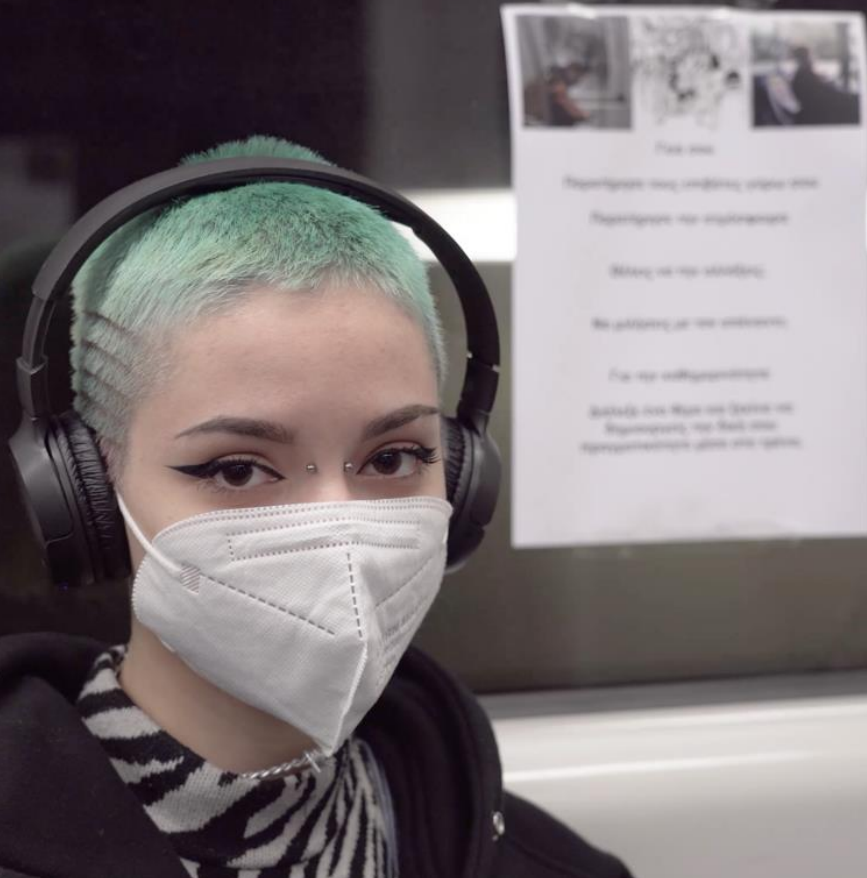
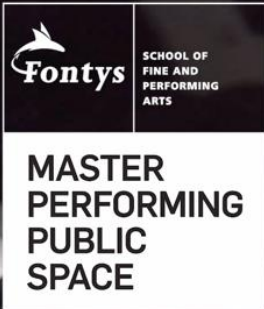
Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/703849228/e5318a57b7>

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Enhancing performative civic engagement in means of public transportation



1_building up dialogue
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656219635/efdf195265>

2_Amsterdam_flashcards
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656220055/ba147f80be>

3_Athens underground train line 2
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656224469/dac3e14a26>

4_Athens_tram_kalitheia
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656225456/4629db1bd3>

5_Athens Syntagma underground station
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656227025/c03e52be0b>

6_Athens_flashcards_Monastiraki
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656227380/01f33395af>

7_Amsterdam_line 51
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656228132/84399263fd>

8_Athens_physical interventions _tram_Koukaki

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656230807/185ee96744>

9_Amsterdam_physical interventions

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656231164/079e851718>

10_Amsterdam_line 53

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656231838/adb7cfb63b>

11_Amsterdam_flashcards

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/656232143/64eae0edcd>

Workshop Athens – Interviews

Protective Suit - Ina Varka <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/690234856/a0cf2133d7>

Post it notes - Zafiria Tsirakaki <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/689075465/9f166ab4d0>

Mirroring - Angeliki Pantazi <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/690276747/e51ab3ff95>

Tic-tac-toe - Orestis Alexiadis <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/690539950/0ceb8d02a5>

Text printed on flashcards – Dimitra Roustani

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/690455406/c8f2defb8c>

Workshop Amsterdam - Interviews

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/716044648>

New experiments – New prototypes

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/703849228>

Results

Toolkit

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/717475330>

Film Documentation – duration 13:17

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/719923625>

Research page on the web

Web site: www.ioanniskarounis.com

<https://www.ioanniskarounis.com/research/>

RESEARCH CATALOGUE EXPOSITION

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Collaborators

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