



**NORDIC**  
**URBAN**  
**LAB**  
**ATHENS**  
**09-11.10.2020**



## NORDIC URBAN LAB – ATHENS 2020 - 2021

### NORDIC URBAN LAB: STUDIO 9-11 OCTOBER 2020

The 4th Nordic Urban Lab is taking place in Athens as a Greek-Nordic dialogue on cities and the role of culture and the arts in healing, energizing and creating our cities and experiences and practices we can learn from.

Nordic Urban Lab is a platform for artists and designers working in the public realm, architects and planners interested in alternative integrated approaches to urban development/re-generation, researchers, activists and community representatives.

Nordic Urban Lab ATHENS 2020-21 will be a two-step programme due to continued restrictions on international travel.

We are now confirming an ONLINE Lab 9-11 October with a studio set up at Serafio.

All sessions are free.

If you wish to participate, please send an email to [nulathens2020@gmail.com](mailto:nulathens2020@gmail.com)

We will reply with the final and detailed programme, and we will also send you the ZOOM link to the Lab 24 hrs. before. Please ensure to download the Zoom application on your device.

## BACKGROUND

The Nordic Urban Lab is a forum for interdisciplinary perspectives around the issues of developing a more human and culturally rooted urban understanding and practice. After Nordic Labs in Copenhagen, Helsinki, Gothenburg and Kiel, NUL is now a loose network of some 400 architects, planners, anthropologists, designers, visual and performance artists, activists, researchers, community organisers and local authority representatives.

We are thrilled to have the opportunity to create a Greek-Nordic NUL in Athens, structured as a dialogue on many of the current challenges of the urban reality seen from a cultural and artistic perspective.

In the evolving dialogue between “cities, citizens and culture”, the rebalancing and renegotiating key aspects of our urban community are in many ways similar in all cities. But given local, national and regional historic, cultural and political realities, there are highly individual and contextualized experiences and challenges as well as different dynamics and forces in each city as well as different protagonists and initiatives.

In defining the most relevant topics for NORDIC URBAN LAB in ATHENS, we have outlined 4 themes or rather “perspectives/lenses” in which to look at these dynamics. These have been developed together with the many Athens based contacts we have worked with around this project.

### WALKING ATHENS

These 4 themes will be used to structure the dialogical framework for the lab and will in effect also lead into a series of walking explorations in the city. These themes will be the focus of the STUDIO and will frame the

second part of the project WALKING ATHENS, which we will programme in May 2021.

This programme will be set up around a five-day event and a series of 12-hour exploratory walks in Athens with Greek-Nordic participants to map key aspects of selected neighbourhoods, collect material and information.

### THEMES

The four themes are in some ways obvious but on the other hand they also reflect areas where there are different experiences in the hope that these experiences will challenge and inspire. It is believed that this albeit superficial “mapping of the urban condition” will be useful not alone as an interesting perspective, but we also aim that the knowledge and the dialogue can continue and be translated into collaborative projects which look at specific situations in Athens.

Common for all themes is that we are linking the theoretical with the investigatory and with practice, well aware that innovative practice is often flawed and also needs to be upscaled to offer any “solutions”.

It is here, however, we feel that new hybrid typologies of action-based research need to be formulated, tested and tried. Newly-formed alliances between the artists, cities and citizens are crucial in this. The themes invite to a reflection but also to develop new practices on the overlapping of the urban as seen from the arts and as seen from planning of the urban.

We see the 4 themes as a frame for the Lab. The current challenge of adapting to the Coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing lockdown also offer the ideal opportunity



to reflect more broadly on relevant issues of how this time challenges our social norms and the redefinition of global-local as another compelling reason to question the way to look at urban transformation and the role the arts/cultural sector can play in these scenarios.

Here, both artists and arts/cultural institutions must rethink in order to be proactive and to be part of the solution.

## POST CORONA

We see NUL therefore in this Coronavirus context and also in the broader context of an ensuring number of crises, which have successively demanded a revision of many of the social/cultural/economic norms, which form the mental as well as the organisational structure of contemporary cities and urban life.

Each ensuring “crisis” has also produced calls for alternative vision and thinking. The impact of the economic crisis 2008-2011 is still having enormous consequences in many ways, still obvious in Athens. The recognition of the need to address the issue of the climate crisis and to work with more socially

environmentally balanced solutions, the urban youth crisis reflected in massive protests in marginalised neighbourhoods in major cities, the escalating rural-urban-conflict throughout Europe, the “refugee” crisis highlighted in 2015 but another determining global condition, and the current focus on Black Lives Matter, challenging us to rewrite history and our moral codex.

These and other global-local tensions invite us to work with creative methods in often complex and changing urban situations. This is the starting point for NUL 2020 in Athens.

## ORGANISATION

NUL is initiated by Trevor Davies and is managed and curated by Metropolis – Københavns Internationale Teater, Denmark, with the support of The Danish Arts Council and The City of Copenhagen - [www.metropolis.dk](http://www.metropolis.dk)

NUL ATHENS is organised by HeterArt, Athens, in collaboration with Serafio Complex, Synathina, School of Applied Arts Hellenic Open University, KROMA

International Contemporary Arts & Culture Platform, and Athens Digital Lab.

NUL ATHENS is supported by Nordic Culture Fund, Greek Ministry of Culture, City of Athens, and Nordic Embassies in Greece.

**metropolis** art and performance in public space



The Voyages - Compagnie XY © Samuel Buton

### **Session 1: Culture and Urbanism**

The opening session will take the form of an overview as an urban critique of the planning and management of contemporary city and urban society as the given context. It will touch on the signs of a growing understanding of the need for a socially and culturally based urban perspective. This goes one step further than event-based attractions and iconic architecture alone, and is also rooted in our relationship with the city on individual and community levels, the networked city and the creative city, which offer dynamic and relational models. We also look at the notion of cultural planning.

### **Session 2: Cities and Citizenship**

This session will focus on how cities are looking to changing notions of citizenship. The question of the right to the city is the starting point for how to open up formal, representative democratic frameworks to include far more and question how power sharing in cities is taking place. Formal representative democracy is being replaced by action-based and participatory models and also by a surge of do-it-yourself initiatives and resource sharing on micro-scales outside the formal frameworks driven by activism and artivism and a sense of shared responsibility.

The sub theme of inclusive cities will be included here. The theme of inclusion is becoming more and more of a concern as social divisions are often compounding. Marginalization thrives in market-driven urbanism, and the public sector is challenged to define new models of how to “include” and how to support higher levels of social innovation and social sustainability.

### **Session 3: Reviving Communities and Neighbourhoods**

In many ways, the local has re-asserted itself as the building block of the city, the natural stage for urban transformation where questions of local identity, local resources and local narratives are key. This key perspective of re-focusing the urban narrative questions issues of identity and also of strengthening engagement based on “a sense of place” as something everyone contributes to. Artists and creatives can of course have immense impact and play a key role in the re-configuration of the everyday.

At the core of many of these strategies and approaches are the public space and the public realm. From having been seen as spaces between buildings, the public space is now often seen as the turning point to create new and common realities of/in the city. Opening the public space as “free space” is a key factor for cities to visitors and citizens alike, the new cultural “space” where identities can be renegotiated and new relations built.

### **Session 4: Artistic Practice in the Urban Context**

Artistic practice in the context of urban processes has been highly profiled increasingly since the 90s. The Cultural Capitals of Europe is just one of many interpretations of this approach. On a European level, the increasing cross-pollination between the performing arts, the visual arts, architecture and urbanism but also the potential of the digital has given a freedom of approach. This allows artists to work with methods that are often transgressing the realm of the arts and intruding into social and urban realities, often confronting and counterpointing reality and fiction but also offering an alternative with this cultural acupuncture approach. We look at how these changing perspectives open up for a new contract between the arts and society revolving around the urban. Here, we sense the city in all its layered emotional reality.

### FRIDAY 9 OCTOBER

11.00-15.00

#### Theme 1: Culture and Urbanism

4 keynotes of 20 mins. each to stimulate us, followed by open panel with invited commentators.

16.00-19.00

#### Theme 2: Cities and Citizenship

4 keynotes of 20 mins. each to stimulate us, followed by open panel.

### SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER

11.00-14.00

#### Theme 3: Reviving Communities and Neighborhoods

4 keynotes of 15 mins. each to stimulate us, followed by open panel.

15.00-19.00

#### Theme 4: Artistic Practices in Urban Context

A series of presentations followed by open panel.

### SUNDAY 11 OCTOBER

09.00-18.00

#### Walking Athens

Programme of walks in selected neighbourhoods. Greek hosts share insights on challenges and solutions focusing on the potential for culturally led urban transformation. Live-streaming from selected sites every hour on the hour. The walks will be structured as walks of dialogue and observation with potential interactions.

**NOTE 1:** Participation at the NUL Studio, Serafio, is free. We invite you to complete the profile below and note the sessions you intend to participate in.

Registration for the NUL Studio at  
[nulathens2020@gmail.com](mailto:nulathens2020@gmail.com)

#### Please provide us the following information:

Name

Contact email

Contact mobile

Education / profession

Organisation / company

Webpage

Sessions in which you want to participate

**NOTE 2:** Online participation is free. Registration is required for each of the 4 sessions on the 9 & 10 October.

**NOTE 3:** Participation in the Walking Athens programme on 11 October is limited and by invitation due to COVID-19 restrictions. You are invited to follow online on Facebook. Further information will be announced.

#### ORGANISERS

**Trevor Davies, Metropolis:** td@kit.dk + 45 29404489

**Elisavet Papageorgiou, Metropolis:**

nulathens2020@gmail.com

+30 6974 707161, +46 767523810

**Anna Vafiadou, HeterArt:** heterart1@gmail.com

+30 6944245719, +30 2102821909

*The Voyages - Compagnie XY © Samuel Buton*





## NORDIC SPEAKERS

<b>Magdalena Malm (SE)</b>	Former director Arts Council Sweden / Director Public Arts Agency, Ministry of Culture
<b>Gry Worre Hallberg (DK)</b>	Artistic director Sisters Hope, presentation of the Sensuous Society
<b>Trevor Davies (DK),</b>	Artistic director and urbanist, Metropolis (Nordic Urban Lab)
<b>Ari-Veikko Anttiroiko (SE)</b>	Professor of Architecture & Urban Planning, University of Umeå
<b>Tina Saaby (DK)</b>	Architect, Chief Architect City of Gladsaxe and former Chief Architect Copenhagen 2011-2020, focusing on the value of the public space
<b>Matti Lucie Arentz &amp; Ingvil Aaholt Hegna (NO)</b>	Norwegian Design and Architecture Centre alternative urban innovation and national program for citizens' engagement
<b>Kirsi Verkka (FI)</b>	Head of Helsinki Public Participation Unit, City of Helsinki
<b>Pasi Mäenpää (FI)</b>	Professor, University of Helsinki will present the research "urban civic activism as resourced for the metropolis - solutions for the governance of self organising urban communities"
<b>Rikke Lequick Larsen (DK)</b>	Architect, Copenhagen Dpt. Planning, Head of strategy unit for neighborhood regeneration & creating with citizens
<b>Alexandra Szymanska (PL)</b>	Director, Gdansk Urban Culture Centre
<b>Michail Galanakis (FI)</b>	Professor at Helsinki University, urban space research
<b>Kjeld Khamina (SE)</b>	Professor Art History, Gothenburg University
<b>Vivien Madsen &amp; Jens Peter Madsen, Bureau Detours (DK)</b>	The largest independent collective of alternative architects and place makers in the Nordic countries
<b>Kenneth Balfelt (DK)</b>	Visual artist, working in socially conflictual contexts with inclusive art driven processes
<b>Liva Kreisler (LV)</b>	Architect/Urbanist, working with URBcultural planning project
<b>Marcus Mayer (NO)</b>	Prof. Bergen School of Architecture, member of Raumlabour Berlin
<b>Karoline H. Larsen / Collective Strings (DK)</b>	Artist working in public space and in participatory collective creative processes

## GREEK SPEAKERS

<b>Panayotis Tournikiotis</b>	Dean of Athens School of Architecture NTUA
<b>Monica Tsiliberdi</b>	Head of the Directorate for the Development of Contemporary Creation, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports
<b>Jenny Marketou</b>	Multidisciplinary artist, lecturer, and author noted for her interventions and technology based projects (Athens-New York)
<b>Vasilis Avdikos</b>	Assistant Professor, Department of Economic and Regional Development, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences
<b>Stelios Zerefos</b>	Architect, Professor at School of Applied Arts, Hellenic Open University
<b>Andreas Giakoumakatos</b>	Professor Athens School of Fine Arts
<b>Eleni Myrivili</b>	Atlantic Council Senior Fellow, AARF Resilience Center   Athens Chief Resilience Officer   Ass. Professor, University of the Aegean
<b>Amalia Zepou</b>	Founder of SynAthina
<b>Haris Biskos</b>	Architect and urbanist, Project manager of SynAthina
<b>Plato's Academy</b>	Athens Digital Museum creative team
<b>Konstantinos-Alketas Oungrinis</b>	Director of the Transformable Intelligent Environments Laboratory (TIE Lab)- Associate Professor, School of Architectural Engineering, Technical University of Crete
<b>The Design Ambassador</b>	Editorial team
<b>Filia Milidaki</b>	Curator – Cinesthesia / Eye's Walk Festival
<b>Evi Nakou</b>	Artistic Research and Audience Development Advisor, Athens & Epidaurus Festival
<b>Maria-Thalia Carras</b>	Co-founder & co-director of Locus Athens & TAVROS
<b>Eva Kekou</b>	Art historian, cultural theorist and curator
<b>Stavros Alifragkis</b>	Adjunct Lecturer, Hellenic Open University, filmic representation of architecture and the urban landscape

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