

# INURA AS A VILLAGE

## URBAN RESEARCH AND ACTION IN URGENT TIMES

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To some extent the INURA 2022 conference felt like being in the eye of a storm. It was the first INURA conference since Zagreb 2019, postponed twice and reduced in length because of the pandemic – a crisis that upended lives around the world and changed the ways that many navigated the cities they knew. For many participants, attending INURA 2022 marked the first time travelling or even the first time being around other human beings since the pandemic began, while for others it was still an impossible conference to attend because the pandemic was still keeping them at home. For others still, attendance wasn't possible because the so-called summer pandemic pause generated a ton of competition in the conference landscape. INURA 2022 was, for example, in direct competition with the World Urban Forum in Poland, which some committed INURA members understandably wanted to attend. And, if the pandemic wasn't traumatic enough, a war was also unfolding on the eastern edges of Europe (which rages on as we write this). Sunny and calm INURA 2022 seemed a welcome

respite for reflection and reconnection amidst so much isolation and upheaval.

Thank you for reading this Bulletin, which aims to serve as a kind of post-conference reflection; but, before delving into the contents, it is worthwhile to credit the conference that was originally planned for 2020. Back then, in another world, we—the Urban Studies Group at DGEO (University of Luxembourg), D-ARCH (ETH Zurich), the INURA Common Office, and the INURA Birthday Committee—planned a much more extensive conference.

Then March 2020 rolled around. In describing his 2020 lockdown experience during an interview, Dave Grohl from the Foo Fighters explained how at the moment of the lockdown announcements, they were all ready to go on tour. The bus was packed and everything. They just had to get on board and go; but then, it all just fizzled out. This is how it was for everyone involved in INURA 2020: We all just had to get off the INURA 2020 bus. And, for two years INURA met online, thanks to events organized by the INURA Common Office in Zurich.



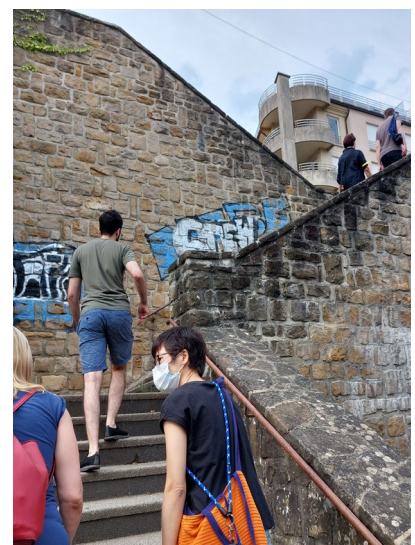
Snapshots of INURA 2022 by O. Kryvets, C. Carr and U. Lehrer

We found the bus again in 2022. This time around, our team had also changed. Key organizers from 2020 had moved on to other pressing domains of work and life. The Urban Studies Group of the Department of Geography and Spatial Planning (DGEO) at the University of Luxembourg (UL) were also joined by new members. The INURA 2022 conference was again organized by DGEO, the ETH and the INURA Common Office with further financial or technical support from FHSE, the Fonds National de la Recherche, the Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning, the Ancien Cinéma Café Club in Vianden, and the INURA Conference Fund. Once it was clear that 2022 was actually going to happen (around the end of January 2022), monthly meetings were held with a voluntary INURA committee who hammered out the speakers list for the 30th Anniversary. Thank you Philipp Klaus, Roger Keil, Ute Lehrer, Marvi Maggio, Christian Schmid, and Iacopo Zetti.

INURA 2022 began with tours of the City of Luxembourg and Kirchberg (see page 9). The Minister of Energy and Spatial Planning of Luxembourg, Claude Turmes, also welcomed INURA in a video message, explaining the broad lines of the work of his ministry and expressing enthusiasm about the important links between activism and planning. These were followed by two days of discussion, addressing

a number of current urgencies. Of course, each discussion was too short, and there were many moments when everyone wished they had more time (apologies to those that were cut off!)—reflecting again the times we are in, but also the amazing debate culture that members of INURA possess. Never in our experience has it been so easy to convince speakers to put away their presentations and simply reflect on a question and discuss it. Never has it been so easy to get an audience to engage.

Opening the birthday event, Ute Lehrer and Tino Buchholz introduced and recalled the history of INURA. This was then followed by two days of panels, video screenings, and retreat discussions. The first set of debates addressed different patterns and pathways of urbanization in Latin America, Asia, and Africa—places where conditions of uncertainty and crisis are not new(!)—subverting any eurocentricity and setting the stage that it is the underlying political economies and structures of governance that shape the crises unfolding around us, no matter where we are. Other issues addressed included the ongoing climate crisis, the financialization of housing, the urbanization of disaster, the role of Marxist movements as strategies for organization and solidarity, the contradictions that characterize politics and activism, the role of big tech as new actors in urban development,



Snapshots of the 2022 tours by C. Carr and K. Madron



and perspectives on research and action because, lest one forget, another world is possible.

The discussions which marked the conference were the ones on the devastation brought about by authoritarian—some now argue totalitarian (Kolesnikov, 2022)—aggression. Olga Kryvets, who joined Mariia Prystupa in sharing witness statements of fleeing the war, exposed INURA to the need for research in recovery and post-war urban futures for Ukraine. This led to the birth of a new group aimed at reconstruction in Ukraine.

We are not republishing the specific program in this Bulletin, but instead wish to thank everyone who participated: Panayotis Antoniadis, Nitin Bathla, Bernd Belina, Johannes Birgmeier, Jens Brandt, Bob Colenutt, Laura Colini, Jorge Peña Diaz, Kike España, Markus Hesse, Vedran Horvat, Roger Keil, Philipp Klaus, Philippe Koch, Olga Kryvets, Tom Leufen, Ute Lehrer, Yiqiu Liu, Marvi Maggio, Faiq Mari, Anitra Nelson, Camilla Perrone, Kacper Pobłocki, Mariia Prystupa, Fred Robinson, Jennifer Robinson, Marit Rosol, Mark Saunders, Angela Stienen, Monika Streule, Christian Schmid, João Tonucci, Louanne Tranchell, Chris Tranchell, Lorenzo Tripodi, Arie van Wijngaarden, Richard Wolff, Tammy Wong, Tino Buchholz and Iacopo Zetti!

It took a village to get this bus moving! We are thus glad that we can present this Bulletin as a way of remembering the contents of the conference itself (e.g. Tripodi/Colini; Wolff). The Bulletin also documents some of the lessons learned: In our (Madron/Carr) next entry, we summarize the feedback and reflections that INURA members had about the Grand Duchy, and this is followed by an entry from Markus Hesse who explains why this critical feedback is important. This is complimented by Arie van Wijngaarden's observations of Luxembourg past and present, including a remarkable memory of the Youth Hostel years ago. Philipp Klaus and Arie van Wijngaarden, in separate entries, also recall the recurring themes of INURA over the

years. At the same time, we are glad to welcome an entry by Olga Kryvets who was new to the local organizing team, to Luxembourg, and to INURA at the time of the conference. This is balanced by Tammy Wong's input that amplifies the solidarities between Ukraine and Hong Kong, and Marvi Maggio's conceptual way forward drawing on Marx's 'realm of freedom'. We look forward to keeping these conversations going!

**Thank you! And, happy birthday INURA!**

### Further Readings

In addition to this Bulletin, we can also refer you to two further outputs: During the conference, Nitin Bathla interviewed a number of participants, which can be heard at Urban Political Podcast. Shortly after the conference, the local team also published a brief in Brennpunkt (Madron et al., 2022).

Bathla, N. (host) (2022). Dispatch from INURA Conference 2022 in Luxemburg. UrbanPolitical Podcast. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from [https://urbanpolitical.podigee.io/54-inura\\_luxemburg](https://urbanpolitical.podigee.io/54-inura_luxemburg)

Kolesnikov, A. (2022). Putin's war has moved Russia from authoritarianism to hybridtotalitarianism. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved November 4, 2022, from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/04/19/putin-s-war-has-movedrussia-from-authoritarianism-to-hybridtotalitarianism-pub-86921>

Madron, K., Kryvets, O., Nicotra, E., Reiter, C., Syrus, A., Carr, C. (2022). Reflecting on research and activism in times of uncertainty and crisis: The 30th Anniversary conference of INURA in Luxembourg, Brennpunkt. Available at: <https://www.brennpunkt.lu/article/reflecting-on-research-and-activism-in-times-of-uncertainty-and-crisis-the-30th-anniversary-conference-of-inura-in-luxembourg/>