

# Finding Our Footing

## Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic Through Urban Go-Alongs



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“Walking is only the beginning of citizenship, but through it the citizen knows his or her city and fellow citizens and truly inhabits the city rather than a small privatized part thereof. Walking the streets is what links up reading the map with living one’s life, the personal microcosm with the public macrocosm, it makes sense of the maze all around.”

Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust* (2001), p. 176

The set-up of this research functioned as an escape from the lockdown, and brought me outside into the world, in an attempt to re-experience the pandemic in new ways. Equally, it questions the set-up of most thesis trajectories, which are characterized by staying inside, being tied to a laptop, and mostly communicating through screens. What has kept me from doing so before, I wonder? I cannot recall when I lost the sense that a deeper understanding of the world could be gained *out there* in the world, but this thesis allowed me to rediscover that.

Veel dank aan mijn wandelaars. Thank you Maja, Samira, and my fellow writers, for helping me find my footing. Thank you papa, mama, Floor, Ben, for walking with me and keeping me on course.

Cover image: Schallmeier, 2020

### **Abstract**

In the restrictions to people's whereabouts instated by the Dutch government to contain the spread of COVID-19, biopolitics become explicitly visible. This thesis examines how these measures have changed practices of everyday life in Amsterdam. A series of go-alongs with seven participants generated interview and fieldnote data exploring the ways in which they encountered, used, and experienced their urban environment differently, and how they practice the rules during the pandemic. Through tracing individual experiences of navigating the pandemic, this thesis gives insight into how networks of discipline and antidiscipline interact during the pandemic. With reference to Foucault's mechanisms of discipline and Michel de Certeau's theory on the politics of everyday life, this research discusses how everyday practices during the pandemic relate to articulations and negotiations of power. As such, this research contributes to our understanding of the entanglement between state strategy and the tactics of daily life in Amsterdam.

*Keywords:* COVID-19 pandemic, biopolitics, everyday practices, network of antidiscipline, network of discipline

### **Finding Our Footing**

For a lack of an alternative activity, going for a walk became a central part of daily life during the viral COVID-19 pandemic as a way to get out of the home/office, to exercise, or to socialize at a distance. Consequently, it was by going on walks that I encountered what it means to live through a pandemic. During these daily outings I encountered people having a *borrel* on their porch for a lack of cafés, a group hurling kettlebells at the gym-in-the-park, crowds waiting in line outside of the coffeeshop spaced out along the sidewalk. More so than by tuning into the government’s press-conference regularly, walking through the city provided an insight into everyday life during the pandemic.

From the onset of the pandemic, the Dutch government has restricted mobility to different degrees to contain the spread of COVID-19. Restrictions have included the drastic reduction of (public) transport, restrictions on visits, as well as the closing of (semi-)public locations such as schools, offices, museums, shops and libraries. All these measures were aimed at stopping the spread of COVID-19, to prevent hospitals of getting overwhelmed, to protect ‘vulnerable people’, while also keeping essential infrastructures in place (Cave et al., 2020, p.1). This is all part of a strategic regime that puts limits on where people get to go and who gets to be where. People have to socially distance, stay at home, and restrict their travels. The extent to which the use of public space is being constrained during the pandemic is unique and unparalleled (Honey-Rosés et al., 2020, p. 1). Daily life during the pandemic thus reveals an explicit biopolitics (Foucault, 2004) that became visually and viscerally manifest. People still went outside but had to navigate the biopolitical restraints of the ‘new normal’ and figure out what to *do* this new reality that was being imposed (De Certeau, 1978). Their movements started to flow along other lines, thereby “creating new social rhythms and public connections” (Lamond & Lashua, 2021, p. 9). As such, I wonder how everyday politics find their expression in daily practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Biopolitics refers to the active management and subsequent disciplining of the population at a corporeal level (Foucault, 1978; 2004). Foucault describes this as systems through which regimes exert and reinforce power aimed at creating ‘docile bodies’. Biopolitical strategies, “techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault, 1978, p. 140), are not new but become more visible and explicit in a pandemic. Primarily, measures are being taken by the government to control individual bodies by restricting their movement. For example, a decree to remain at one-and-a-half meters distances from others, and restrictions to the freedom of assembly have been measures that were actively disciplined and punishable by fine. The Dutch government also nudges the population to self-regulate (Brownlee et al., 2020). Prime-minister Rutte emphasizes the population should apply the rules using their own responsibility and ‘common sense’ (Rijksoverheid, 2020). For example, the use of facemasks is mandatory in some places, but is also advised for in spaces where people consider they cannot assuredly social distance. Moreover, the government has focused on quantifying the development of the pandemic in statistics with daily updates on positive tests, hospital intakes, and number of deaths (Milan, 2020). The use of surveillance technology such as of contact tracing apps, movement and crowding sensors, as well as the vaccination ‘passports’ being rolled out across Europe allow for “real-time mass monitoring at the individual and aggregate level, in turn optimizing population control” (Kitchin, 2020, p. 362). Taken together, these measures reflect a pervasive effort to register and control the circulation of bodies through control at the individual and population level.

These measures, however, do strategically rely on the self-regulation of society. In addition to state control and punishment, the enforcement of the rules relies on the way in which networks of relations together perpetuate the disciplinary measures. In Foucault’s

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discussion of the population's self-discipline and self-regulation emphasis remains on the ways in which these relate to the disciplinary measures of the regime.

In 'The Practice of Everyday Life', De Certeau contrasts the strategies of the planners of the city as owners of the space, with the people that live in the city and use the space. Michel De Certeau critiques Foucault for analyzing mechanisms that counter power in a way that still focuses on – and thus privileges – the apparatus exercising power (De Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). Rather, De Certeau proposes to study what people *do* with the rational plan that is imposed on them. De Certeau subsequently examines discipline and the disciplined through the everyday 'ways of operating' of individuals, revealing a range of ambiguities in how users and consumers adopt and adhere to rules. De Certeau adopts a metaphorical comparison to the written text, and argues that the ordinary city walkers do not display a passive following of the rules but rather write their own lines using the imposed vocabulary that may contest "the clear text of the planned and readable" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 93). In these practices, it becomes apparent how rules can be re-appropriated by citizens to serve personal interest, but also how subtle everyday acts can become performances of public antidisiplinary sentiments.

Stepping away from the fictional total overview of a strategist looking down and paying attention to the manifold paths at street level reveals that "the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 93). "De Certeau (1984) recognizes the ability of walkers to uncover 'secret terrains' of cities when differentiating between the controlled public city and the secret urban terrain navigated by walkers, 'the ordinary practitioners of the city' "(Moles, 2008, p. 4). This ability facilitates a novel way of approaching the study of how people navigate the COVID-19 pandemic from day to day through tracing their footsteps and exploring how they cope with the restrictions and affordances that this unprecedented time holds. Such "understandings of the everyday and the

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ordinary can be crucial to how we understand the bigger picture” (Riley & Holton, 2015, p. 8).

Therefore, I set out to examine the bigger picture of power dynamics between the state and the citizen, through looking at how everyday tactics have taken shape in response to the strategic management of the COVID-19 outbreak in Amsterdam. De Certeau’s notion of tactics-on-the-pavement (1978) can help contextualize everyday contestations to the strategies of viral containment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Examining people’s everyday acts provides insight into the ways in which they make sense of the pandemic, bringing to life “peoples’ lived experienced [through] everyday practices, experiences and bodily performances located in situated contexts and places (Duedahl & Stilling Blichfeldt, 2020, p. 440). This contributes to an understanding of the ways in which walking is part of the politics of everyday life, illuminating ways in which urban citizens cope with and challenge state strategies of managing the COVID-19 pandemic (Foucault, 2004; De Certeau, 1984).

### **How I walked the walk that is doing research**

In this thesis, I examine urban practices during the COVID-19 pandemic based on an analysis of qualitative data generated through a series of ‘go-alongs’ with seven people in Amsterdam during May 2021. The go-along is a mobile method where a researcher accompanies the interviewee during a normal outing in their natural environment, mimicking its natural occurrence (Kusenbach, 2003). The go-along combines an interview with participant observation, producing both interview data as well as fieldnotes based on embodied experience (Kusenbach, 2003; Carpiano, 2009; Stevenson & Farrell, 2018). This way, knowledge is produced about individuals and their social and physical environments through spatial practice (Stevenson & Farrell, 2018, p. 435). Considering how people are moved and affect by this and how they negotiate this from day to day reveals how people engage with

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and negotiate the state strategies of managing the pandemic. I chose this methodology because it is suitable to find out about the way people go about their walks through public space and how they experience the city in a pandemic, but also to witness and experience (changes in) the dynamics of the city. Through walking, a situated phenomenon of everyday life, I studied experiences of navigating the pandemic in a double sense.

“If it is true that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also miniscule and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them, and finally, what ‘ways of operating’ form the counterpart, on the consumer’s side, of the mute process that organize the establishment of socioeconomic order.” (De Certeau, 1984, p. xiv).

This is an in situ study exploring experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, by roaming through Amsterdam in the late stages of a lockdown phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2021. Seven go-alongs provided insights into people’s experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it emanated daily pedestrian experiences of being in the city during the pandemic. This generated data that situates human experience and knowledge production in the places where daily practices take place. Rather than seeing ‘the field’ as an implicit background in the process of ethnographic fieldwork, the go-along makes explicit the role of place in the way people make sense of the world. A ‘pragmatics of space’ assumes that “human beings cope with space. Their ways of being-in-the-world are characterized not by ‘being on Earth’ – as argued in philosophy –, but by coping with space” (Lussault & Stock, 2010, p. 14). Simultaneously, going along produced additional knowledge through *being* along, by participating and co-experiencing as a researcher. The mobile and participative characteristics of the go-along make it appropriate to study how walking in the city

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contributes to making sense of everyday life in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, asking acquaintances to share a participant recruitment leaflet with their acquaintances. Consequently, interested participants were recruited through email on a direct basis. Participants were selected on the basis of three criteria. Firstly, they all lived in Amsterdam. This situates the research within a context of place, and is the environment that triggered my initial fascination. Secondly, all participants regularly go for a walk through Amsterdam. This was defined quite broadly up front. I have chosen not to set any more criteria either to what makes up ‘regular’ walking practices or how long the walks should be. This ensured that my participants all had habitual walking practices to be studied, while it leaves room for a broad range of walking locations, incentives and practices to come forward from the go-alongs. I’m not looking to essentialize the ‘pandemic pedestrian’, but rather to scratch the surface of the reality of walking through the pandemic in Amsterdam. Thirdly, I intended to speak with a range of people with distinct engagements with walking practices, to take part in different ways of walking in the city. I did not actively control for other elements, such as gender, ethnic, or socioeconomic background. Therefore, my research should not be read as a universal or representative study of life in Amsterdam during the pandemic. It offers an initial exploration of experiences of a new and unique societal event, studied within my own social proximity.

These selection criteria resulted in a selection of nine participants with distinct engagements with walking during the COVID-19 pandemic – such as walking for mental health or walking after work – as well as locations in Amsterdam. Unfortunately, I was unable to complete all nine go-alongs because of two cancellations in the late stages of my data collection. Thus, I conducted seven go-alongs with people from a broad range of age groups, but with a skewed gender representation (18–29 years, 1; 30–39 years, 3; 50–59 years, 1; over 60, 2; Men, 5; Women, 2). I chose a topic-list over a questionnaire to find a balance between

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replicability and flexibility (Riley & Holten, 2015). Before the go-along, the participants were briefed on the co-productive set-up of the go-along. I then invited them to take me by the hand as an ‘expert’ and take me along on their walk.

I invited the participants to take the lead in deciding where to go and how long the go-along would be. The go-alongs were conducted between 5 and 31 May and lasted between thirty and ninety minutes. The walks took place in Amsterdam in different parks (Rembrandtpark, Amstelpark, Oosterpark) and through different neighborhoods (Jordaan, De Pijp, Oost). The go-alongs were an exchange that was either prompted by things happening around us or based on the briefing topics. Interviews were recorded using a mobile recording device with lapel microphone suitable for outdoor recording.

The go-alongs were written up as verbatim interview transcriptions. In addition to the interview recording, an audio fieldnote diary recorded my reflections and experiences with conducting the go-alongs. Key concepts that came forward during the go-along were recorded as written notes. The transcriptions were completed with tagged information about any spatial elements that were referred to in the conversation. This blend of materials contributed to the integration of data from the interview transcripts with my participatory experiences as well as theoretical reflections.

An exploratory analysis of these materials included coding and categorizing the data. A range of themes emerged which lay out experiences of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic in Amsterdam. These themes are presented with reference to grouped examples and quotes from the go-alongs. In addition, a theoretical analysis focused on how these experiences relate to Foucault and De Certeau’s discussion of the pandemic strategies and tactics-on-the-ground. This allows us to explore how the imposed reality of the COVID-19 measures compares to the lived experience.

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### **Findings**

The experiences participants shared with me of having walked during the pandemic brought to the surface the strange and mundane elements of being outside the last few months. These findings lay out how they saw, felt, and were aware of the pandemic measures in Amsterdam, and what they did with that in their daily practices. In their descriptions of navigating the streets and the rules, their everyday or mundane acts bring to the surface the way in which discipline and antidiscipline intertwine and counteract in the practices of everyday life during the pandemic.

#### *Walking became a way of coping*

The government's restrictions meant that working from and staying at home became part of 'the new normal' for my respondents and being outside had gained a different significance; it became a way of coping with being inside most of the day, or an alternative to the spaces they would normally frequent. For someone whose work at a spa was temporarily suspended, going for a long walk each day became a way of simply spending his time. A consultant working from home used a daily walk as a way of creating a psychological boundary and transitioning his mind from his work-space to his home-space. Another person took a walk as a replacement for the gym that was closed. A student found a way to continue to meet new people, either by going on a walking date or by meeting other students through the 'UvA Walks' initiative, which facilitates walking rendezvous between students. He shared that for some students, this walk was their only and very needed social contact during the week. I got the sense that walking presented the opportunity of keeping on the move while the city had come to a halt, and to cope with the 'new normal'.

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### *Embodied awareness*

In the conversations, it also became clear that participants had felt the world had changed at a visceral level. “All year, there was this atmosphere that was almost mystical around you,” someone told me as she explained how scared she had been to go outside in the beginning. Physical distancing had been important at the onset of COVID-19:

“Especially in the early days. This was of course very scary. You just didn’t know that much about how it got around, you know? So, I just had this guard up. If someone came up, I’d get up on my toes, go over to the other side of the street.”

The city has always had its own sidewalk etiquette of ‘civil inattention’ when it comes to giving each other space and acknowledging others (Goffman, 1963). In the beginning of the pandemic, people would walk around each other to actively respect physical distancing measures. During the go-alongs, I noticed that people did not go out of their way anymore to give other people more space. Even in the parks, where paved lanes weave through open areas of grass, and the width of these lanes means people have to pass each other almost shoulder to shoulder, no one sidestepped onto the grass to avoid oncoming pedestrians. One participant did bring it up as we were walking through Rembrandtpark.

“In the beginning I found it so strange, really, so absurd almost that people would walk around me in a circle. I just thought *doe effe normaal* – act normal! The humane aspect was just... Something so normal, all of a sudden, is not normal anymore. And I’d almost start to feel guilty when I would just walk normally.”

### *Experiencing the city during COVID-19*

The rhythm of life in Amsterdam was visibly changed. It often came up during the walks. Every participant talked about how the streets had become empty during the early lockdown, and how the city was more quiet than usual. This stillness had been quite workable, or even

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welcome in the beginning. The absence of tourists was notable. This inspired some to go and see places that they usually avoided because of their popularity, such as Dam square and Leidseplein. I thought it was ironic that restricted access had, by some strange logic, made these public spaces more accessible to locals. As a participant showed me around de Wallen, I noticed he felt both a sense of alienation and a sense of attachment with the neighborhood (Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2020). He had come to feel ‘like a complete stranger’ in his own neighborhood and was adamantly involved in a resident initiative that wanted to reverse the touristification of the Red Light District. He also shared stories on every street corner about the history of the Wallen, where he had lived for decades. He stopped to look at one of the oldest buildings on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal.

“During COVID-19, I frequently went for a walk and I came to the most delightful discoveries, because I had the time and space to look at other things, rather than checking whether or not I was getting run over. Now, I get to see this façade, a beautiful trapgevel. How unique! Your focus, your attention changes. In the neighborhood I’ve lived in for decades, I suddenly discover all these great things. And what was nice too was that residents would find each other again. Normally you could pass each other in the crowd, so to speak, ten times a day and never meet. And now you’d meet again. The neighborhood became a residential area again.”

We toured the Warmoesstraat and talked about the many shops that clearly cater to the tourist public – the coffeeshops, the waffle hut next, followed by a store selling souvenirs such as marijuana-printed underpants. Then, my participant eyed some tulips in a pot at a flower stand and decided to buy them on the spot. This resulted in a conversation with the florist, who shared that this product was newly added to the product range because the shop had started to cater more to local residents with the decline in tourists. This spontaneous

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interaction with the environment resulted in information that I had not otherwise gained about local entrepreneurial responses to the COVID-19 situation.

Participants also shared what they missed most during the pandemic and what this meant to them. The appeal of a busy Amsterdam had come back, of being able to walk around and “anonymously experience how everyone is doing their own thing” and of “saying yes, going out and just getting completely engulfed by the city”. Being able to go to a bar to be served a drink by a waiter or even talking to someone new simply to hear stories other than the one’s they had been hearing at home was something they missed. I sensed an appreciation for the usual hustle and bustle. With the yearning for the return of unpredictability and chaos, they missed Amsterdam as they are walking through it, thinking of everyday practices in the ‘old normal’, in a world without COVID-19.

### *Practice-ing the pandemic measures*

Every participant had a story about how the city had continued to change within the bounds of the pandemic reality. It became apparent in public space that people were starting to carve out some space within the confines of the COVID-measures. Participants shared stories of the ‘creative resistance’ they had witnessed throughout the city (De Certeau, 1978). In De Pijp, a neighborhood normally characterized by crowded terraces, this continued to be the case throughout the pandemic, but in another way. “People still came to the squares in order to hang out. They’d get a beer at a café, and would just hang out in the square, but separately. Not on the terrace but just, informally, in the same place.” The make-shift terraces mean that the space kept the function of terraces – only the chairs did not belong to bars, but to the residents. In fact, all throughout the city, the closing of the horeca had not stopped residents from finding ways to meet up for drinks – on doorsteps, bridges, or even next to a terrace that had to close five minutes before:

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“We were out of town and we came back and our entire street was packed with people having drinks. I did not know what I saw! Forty, maybe fifty people. That really made me feel like a huge middle finger to the rest of the world. As if they were saying, we will just do what we want and we don’t need to consider the rest of the world. It really felt like provocation to me. Like, we are not going to let you. Freedom before everything.”

### *Walking the line, crossing the line*

Whether or not participants followed the rules, and what was acceptable ‘room for maneuvering’ came up by default as participants talked about working from home, social distancing and the current status of vaccinations in The Netherlands. The majority of participants expressed that they did not actively contest the rules, but they also shared with me the ways in which they had (creatively) contested or reinterpreted the imposed measures. Some still had visitors, and ‘perhaps one too many’. Or they even met up in a group but at home, thereby keeping out of public scrutiny. One person mentioned sailing in Friesland with friends during the summer, where less people meant less surveillance, and thus less risk of getting caught. Altogether, these antidisciplinary practices did not seem out of line for them. Rather, they were a way to keep the measures workable for them. “We did hug every once in a while. We developed a corona-hug where you hold your breath – just as a way to keep things human,” someone explained. As such, some creativity in applying the rules was considered a positive, natural thing to all participants. Overall, most people did not discuss the viability of the rules in question, and so discipline and antidiscipline coexisted in the way they navigated the pandemic.

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### *Debating what's right*

In practice, everybody's navigational practices exhibit a combination of discipline and antidiscipline – of sticking to the rules while sometimes sticking it to the rules. I found all had regular (constructively) critical discussions about what they were to do during the pandemic with the people around them. In one person's student house, a system had been established where the 'strictest voice would determine the rule' and so any future conflict was avoided. One person shared that she did not appreciate how, among friends, people had taken more liberty of judging her decisions:

“We had a lot of discussion. We have had some people come to dinner. Every time we'd have this discussion about what we could do, what we would do, whether we go on holiday, or whether or not you'd take the train. Constantly judging each other. That was a tough time, you know.”

Because it was a very current during the time of this research, vaccination was a hot topic. In the eyes of some, getting vaccinated meant 'taking responsibility' or was 'something you do for other people'. In the eyes of someone else, getting vaccinated was yet another thing he felt was being forced on him, and something he deliberately refused for that reason. It was still clear that the COVID measures and the appeal to 'common sense' resulted in controversy. Commenting on each other's conduct has remained common, although this peer evaluation was sometimes experienced as more pervasive than normal, or unusually intimate. This is in part because it feels like this addressed not only the behavior, but the person in question – and nobody wants to be considered a '*wappie*' – or a looney. Two participants actively went out of their way to ensure me that they were 'not a *wappie*!' when they criticized the pandemic response. Being able to make your own choices and also wanting others to do the right thing thus inspired many discussions. I could interpret these as examples of polarization, but that would fail to take into account the messy reality of navigating the

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‘new normal’, and the fact that a continuous open discussion happens about the rules and practices.

### *Coming to terms with the ‘new normal’*

Looking back on the conversations I had, I got the sense that overall the ‘new normal’ had become somewhat internalized (Foucault, 1977). Initially, distancing themselves had felt odd, but they had more gotten accustomed to doing it. However, they also felt relief at the prognosis of lifted restrictions. Getting vaccinated would mean that they would gain back some liberties soon. What is remarkable, is that not every form of biopolitics that is at work in the COVID-19 measures seems to be equally visible or remarkable to every body. Most people did discuss and question some social distancing aspects while finding the need for masks and vaccines natural and inevitable. But one participant sensed the opposite; nothing about the pandemic felt ‘normal’. I found it striking that he was the only person that even took mention of the mandatory facemask that was so ubiquitously part of daily life now. He had disliked the sensation of ‘that thing on his face’ from day one, and he still disagreed with the measure altogether. He described how he had initially continued to enter supermarkets and stores without wearing it, but after a confrontation with an angry customer in the store, he had since chosen to wear it. Coming to terms with the facemask felt like ‘giving in’ to him. However, he felt that the emotional and financial toll of being confronted with not wearing it were not worth it. He criticized the docility of Dutch people in relation to the state of biopolitics:

“I was incredibly surprised with how docile the Dutch have proven to be. I thought, anywhere in the world, people would be docile, but not in the Netherlands. I thought we were so much more rebellious – it’s what we are known for, this stubbornness. I expected more noise, and I’m surprised there’s

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not more dissent. There are protests and people talking about what is not right about it and I think that's valuable, because I do believe there is room for more critical voices. And I think that's really good because otherwise there's only one voice speaking."

The pandemic had brought him to a practical crossroad because he did not agree with the instated measures. Out of resistance, not getting vaccinated emerged as a means of contestation in a pandemic in which he felt he had not been free to make his own considerations. He felt like he still had a tough time ahead of him although he had found a tactic of navigating this:

"My focus is on the ways in which I get to keep as many liberties for myself as possible. Maybe it is something of a game. Like the little boy that is trying to find out where the line is, looking to see where I can push a little. It's the game-element that I have tried to throw in there, because I find myself at odds with my environment."

His choice shows a conscious gamification in terms of visible of discipline and antidiscipline in different spaces. In this sense, he is choosing to only 'take back space' in private, just like the other participants.

*People may be done with the virus, but we are not done with the virus*

Considering the attitudes and practices over time, a certain disciplinary erosion comes forward. For most participant, practical commitment was initially in line with the recommendations by the state, but as the pandemic progressed over time, this changed.

"In the first lockdown, we all started out doing really well. Throughout the country, everybody was very strict. We were in it together. Applauding the essential worker and such. The atmosphere then has of course changed during

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the year. More differences of opinion have emerged.”

In contrast to this, a participant that started off in fierce resistance of the disciplinary measures ended up taking a more pliable or agile approach in taking to the rules, to avoid repercussion from others. For all people, the focus is on finding agile ways to continue to practice their autonomy within the ‘new normal’ – either through creative means or simply by doing it in private. The fluidity that occurs in the way people do the rules flows according to their level of coping with the situation. The sense of threat or ennui that they feel from the virus itself and the possible social repercussions determine how they cope with the rules. As such, a certain volatility also presents itself in their attitudes and practices with reference to the network of discipline that they experience. What this brings to the fore is that antidiscipline on the individual level is practiced in a network of discipline that encompasses both people’s personal social circle as well as society as a whole.

### **Conclusions**

In the approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has resorted to an unprecedented form of biopolitics (Foucault, YEAR). The experiences described in the go-alongs with my participants describe how they adapted to and navigated the disciplinary measures, in the city and at home. These go-alongs show certain ways in which people deal with the threat of a virus, cope with the restrictions and negotiate the subsequent change of circumstances and show the mechanisms through which people adapt to and navigate a new set of disciplinary measures. The network of discipline (Foucault, 1977) and the network of antidiscipline (De Certeau, 1978) emerge as intertwining systems in the practices of everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The adaptation over time to these restrictions reflect to some extent an acceptance of the ‘new normal’, as it concerns Foucault. Discipline is not merely imposed and maintained

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by the state, but is perpetuated throughout all spaces in society through disciplining by networks (Foucault, 2004). One person clearly called into question the biopolitical strategies. The other participants did not do so, explicitly. This may be related to the timing of this research, one year after the measures were firstly instated. In contrast to those that internalized the measures, one person remarked explicitly on the biopolitical state of exception that he has experienced during the pandemic and that he continues to regard upon as abnormal. Rather than through normalization and self-regulation, he did end up adhering to the ‘new normal’ because he feels he cannot escape it. He feels unable to escape the rules because of the disciplining of the state – through fines – and the disciplining through social networks – by strangers in the supermarket as well as by his friends. It is clear that participants don’t do the rules blindly and without question, so whereas they are largely obedient they are not docile (Foucault, 1978).

The network of antidiscipline in the way described by De Certeau (1978) practices become visible as rules are adapted to practice. What emerges are myriad examples of how people actively seeking make their own space inside and outside the rules. Individuals are able to circumvent discipline in different ways, or to apply the rules in different ways that the disciplinary system prescribes them. “The tactical make-shift creativity of groups and individuals that together compose the network of antidiscipline” (De Certeau, 1978, p. xiv) becomes visible in the way they literally navigate the city, and use walking as a way of appropriating public space to continue daily practices that are being circumvented. Reappropriating their own neighborhood or constructing make-shift terraces, citizens make the spaces that they do not own their own. A new ritual such as a corona-hug emerges as a new invention that redefine the social distancing mold. These tactical practices implicitly question the rules, or simply show how rules are re-written in practice to fit people’s personal stakes.

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### *Limitations*

Different bodies are differentially affected by biopolitical government and thus generates “differential vulnerability” (Lorenzini, 2021, p. 4). COVID-19 may be able to affect every body, not everybody is at equal risk. Existing urban inequity has consequences in terms of how well and how comfortably people are able to self-isolate and protect themselves from COVID-19 (Cole et al., 2020, p. 1). The COVID-19 measures have applied a biopolitic that exacerbated existing inequalities of class, gender, race and nationality (Dobusch & Kreissl, 2020, p. 711). Thereby, a contrast emerges where some lives are valued and protected, whereas others are expected to risk exposure to ensure the continuation of society. In addition, “mobility [...] affects a person’s opportunities to work, maintain social ties, get education, acquire basic supplies, [and is] therefore deeply connected to social positioning, both shaping and being shaped by social relations and power asymmetries (a.o. Cook & Butz, 2018; as cited in Dobusch & Kreissl, 2020, p. 711). This is not an accidental biproduct, but shows that biopolitics “is a politics that structurally relies on the establishment of hierarchies in the value of lives, producing and multiplying vulnerability as a means of governing people” (Lorenzini, 2021, p. 40). This thesis does not allow for a reflection on intersectional experiences of biopolitics during the pandemic. The people I have walked with all expressed that they had not been too drastically affected in their daily life as a result of the pandemic. While their experiences were diverse, they did share in a level of privilege. Some had to work from home, others had work temporarily suspended, but most of them explicitly said they felt they had not been dealt the worst cards. As such, our understanding of the daily experiences of navigating life in a pandemic would benefit from further research to make visible the effects of existing urban inequalities in the context of Amsterdam.

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## **APPENDIX I: CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH**

### **PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

Project title: Finding our footing in a crisis: Mapping the COVID-19 pandemic through urban walks

Name, email of student: Pam van Schie, 545950ps@student.eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Maja Hertoghs, hertoghs@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 15 April 2021 – 1 August 2021

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES

### **PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS**

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? NO

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. NO

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). NO

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### PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? NO

Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? NO

Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR ?  
YES

Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? NO

Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? NO

Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? NO

Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES

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*If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue was unavoidable in this study.*

This research project consisted of go-along interviews about people's personal experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, this data contains political opinions, and data concerning mental or physical health. This information is essential to answering the central research questions of this research project.

As the go-along method means the researcher will be accompanying the research participant on a walk through their natural environment, and mimicking their walking practices from daily life, this means that it is possible that the researcher and research participant will encounter acquaintances of the research participant, or the researcher. During four go-alongs, the participant ran into an acquaintance. However, no contact apart from a greeting was made and as such the confidentiality of the participant was not overridden. Moreover, should any interaction take place with passers-by that are recorded by the microphone, this would require the researcher to obtain consent.

*What safeguards were taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).*

The researcher informed the participant of the possible collection of special categories of data in the informed consent form. Any questions about these data were answered before the commencement of the go-along. The data will inform the research conclusions and will only be featured in the research report in a confidential manner. Interview transcripts were de-identified by using pseudonyms.

A pre-brief was held with all but one participants prior to the go-along to discuss possible ethical issues. We discussed the possibility of encountering acquaintances and how this may compromise the confidential participation of the participant. Furthermore, we discussed what to do in such cases. All participants opted to keep walking and not engage with anyone they

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met. Moreover, the participant was reminded that the conversation could possibly be overheard by passers-by.

The use of lapel microphones was chosen for its inconspicuousness, as well as its limited recording range to limit risks of noticing as well as recording of passers-by.

In one instance, the researcher recorded a conversation between the participant and a third party – a flower vendor – and forgot to obtain consent.

*Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.*

Since the interview was about personal experience with the COVID-19 pandemic, some participants shared information about their physical and mental health.

Moreover, this is a walking method, meaning participants could get physically tired. By letting the participant determine the walking route, this ensured the walk was within their physical limits to a certain extent. On one instance, a participant shared a potential health risk prior to the go-along. A strategy was discussed if this risk should become apparent during the go-along. However, this did not happen.

Moreover, the researcher will at regular intervals reiterate that participants are free to stop the interview at all times. On one instance, however, the researcher did not check with the participant whether they wanted to opt out of the go-along due to rain. After the go-along the participant did not express that they had wanted this. However, the researcher is not sure whether they followed the ethics in this instance. Upon reflection, the researcher could have checked beforehand and during whether the participant was comfortable enough.

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### **PART IV: SAMPLE**

*Where did you collect or obtain your data?*

Data was collected using a go-along method in Amsterdam. The ‘field’ is public spaces in Amsterdam, including Rembrandtpark, Amstelpark, the Jordaan, the Wallen, the Pijp, Oosterpark. This research did not take place in any indoor or private spaces. The go-alongs produced recorded interview data, as well as a fieldwork diary. Interviews were recorded using a recording device with a lapel microphone.

*What is the size of your sample?*

I had interviews with 7 unique participants.

### **Part V: DATA STORAGE AND BACK-UP**

*Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?*

During the go-along, a sound recording was made on a recording device (DVT1200 MEMOREC 4GB USB PHILIPS). The device was carried by the participant during the go-along. After the go-along, the device was collected by the researcher. In the short term, this recording was stored on the device.

Upon arrival at home after the go-along, the digital recording file was transferred by cable to the researcher’s personal computer, and then transferred to the researcher’s encrypted external

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hard-drive, and never redistributed by email or uploaded to a cloud. The recordings were then deleted from the recording device immediately after transfer.

For transcription purposes, the recordings were accessed from the encrypted hard-drive.

Interview transcriptions were stored on the encrypted hard-drive. The data was only seen by the researcher.

*Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?*

The responsibility for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from my research rests solely with myself, Pam van Schie.

*In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?*

Interview transcriptions were de-identified using pseudonyms. The information linking the recording files to the participants were be kept separate from the data on the researcher's personal computer.

## **PART VI: SIGNATURE**

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University

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Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Pam van Schie

Name (EUR) supervisor: Maja Herthoghs

Date: 1-8-2021

Date: 1-8-2021

**APPENDIX II: Informed Consent Form**

Beste ,

Hierbij wil ik u uitnodigen deel te nemen aan een onderzoek dat wordt uitgevoerd onder verantwoordelijkheid van de Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, onderdeel van de Erasmus University Rotterdam. Het onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Pam van Schie.

*Doel van het onderzoek*

De naam van het onderzoek is “Finding our footing in a crisis: Mapping the COVID-19 pandemic through urban go-alongs”. Het doel van dit onderzoek is inzicht te krijgen in de dagelijkse ervaring van wandelen in Amsterdam tijdens de COVID-19pandemie.

*Gang van zaken tijdens het onderzoek*

Uw deelname aan het onderzoek bestaat uit een wandelinterview, waarbij de onderzoeker u vraag haar mee te nemen op een wandeling zoals u die in het dagelijks leven zou maken. Het wandelinterview is een participatieve onderzoeksmethode. Dit houdt in dat de loop en inhoud van het wandelinterview tot stand komt in samenwerking met de deelnemer. Voor uw deelname aan het wandelinterview bepaalt u zelf welke route wordt gelopen en hoe lang de wandeling duurt. De onderzoeker bespreekt dit met u voorafgaand aan het wandelinterview. Tijdens de wandeling zal de onderzoeker u aan de hand van een topic-lijst vragen naar uw belevingen en ervaringen van de wandelen, en over uw reflecties op wandelen in Amsterdam tijdens de COVID-19pandemie. Daarnaast staat het u vrij om de onderzoeker op eigen initiatief te vertellen over onderwerpen die u wilt delen. Zo bepalen de onderzoeker en de deelnemer gezamenlijk te invulling van het wandelinterview.

Voor het onderzoek wordt uw persoonsgegevens verwerkt. Tijdens uw deelname aan het onderzoek kunnen persoonsgegevens worden verzameld van onderstaande aard:

Informatie over afkomst of etniciteit

Politieke opvattingen

Religieuze of filosofische opvattingen

Informatie over uw gezondheid

Informatie over uw seksualiteit of seksuele activiteit

Van het wandelinterview zal een audio-opname worden gemaakt, zodat het gesprek later ad-verbum (woord voor woord) kan worden uitgewerkt. Dit transcript wordt vervolgens gebruikt in het verdere onderzoek.

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### *Potentiële risico's en ongemakken*

Er is enig ongemak verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie, vanwege de mogelijk gevoelige aard van het onderwerp. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Het wandelinterview vindt plaats in de publieke ruimte. Hierdoor bestaat de kans dat de inhoud van het gesprek hoorbaar is door anderen. Daarnaast bestaat de kans op ontmoetingen met derden die bekend zijn met de deelnemer of onderzoeker, waardoor uw vertrouwelijke deelname aan het onderzoek mogelijk wordt geschonden. De onderzoeker bespreekt dit met u voorafgaand aan het wandelinterview om te bepalen wat te doen in een dergelijke situatie. Bijvoorbeeld, er wordt afgesproken of genoemd zal worden aan derden dat de deelnemer in een onderzoek meedoet of niet, wat er zal worden gezegd over het onderzoeksproject, en of de onderzoeker wel of niet op enige afstand zal blijven.

### *Vergoeding*

U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding. Door deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek zult u meer inzicht krijgen in uw beleving van uw dagelijkse wandeling. Het bredere doel van dit onderzoek is het in kaart brengen van veranderingen in dagelijkse wandelpraktijken in Amsterdam tijdens de COVID-19pandemie, en het onderzoeken van de politieke en sociale rol van wandelen tijdens de pandemie.

### *Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens*

Uw privacy is en blijft maximaal beschermd. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen. Voordat de onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden zullen uw gegevens anoniem gemaakt worden: geanonimiseerd. Bij de start van ons onderzoek wordt uw naam gepseudonimiseerd ofwel 'versleuteld'. De onderzoeker is zelf verantwoordelijk voor dit pseudoniem en de sleutel en zal uw gegevens niet delen met anderen. In een publicatie zullen of anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De audio-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op de beveiligde versleutelde hard-drive van de onderzoeker.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan de supervisor en, indien nodig, (bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit) en alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep;

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in dit geval aan een onderzoekscommissie van de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam die hiertoe bevoegdheden heeft.

De onderzoeksgegevens zullen worden bewaard tot uiterlijk vijf maanden na afloop van het onderzoek.

Bij vragen of als u klachten heeft, of uw bezorgdheid kenbaar wilt maken, neemt u dan aub contact op met de EUR data protection officer: [privacy@eur.nl](mailto:privacy@eur.nl).

### Vrijwilligheid

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen.

Dit betekent dat het voorafgaand aan het onderzoek besluiten om af te zien van deelname aan dit onderzoek op geen enkele wijze gevolgen voor u zal hebben. Tijdens het wandelinterview staat het u vrij ten allen tijde het onderzoek te beëindigen. Tevens kunt u tot 5 werkdagen (bedenktijd) na het interview alsnog de toestemming intrekken die u hebt gegeven om gebruik te maken van uw gegevens.

In deze gevallen zullen uw gegevens uit onze bestanden worden verwijderd en vernietigd. Het stopzetten van deelname heeft geen nadelige gevolgen voor u.

Voor meer informatie over dit onderzoek en de uitnodiging tot deelname, als u besluit om te stoppen met deelname aan het onderzoek kunt u te allen tijde contact opnemen met de onderzoeker: Pam van Schie | [545950ps@student.eur.nl](mailto:545950ps@student.eur.nl).

Als u vragen of klachten heeft, of uw bezorgdheid kenbaar wilt maken, of een vorm van schade of ongemak vanwege het onderzoek, neemt u dan aub contact op met de ESSB: [ethics@eur.nl](mailto:ethics@eur.nl).

Bij voorbaat dank ik u hartelijk voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek dat voor mij van grote waarde is.

Met vriendelijke groet,

Pam van Schie

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### *Toestemmings-verklaring*

Ik ga akkoord met deelname aan een onderzoeksproject geleid door Pam van Schie. Het doel van dit document is om de voorwaarden van mijn deelname aan het project vast te leggen.

1. Ik verklaar dat ik minstens 18 jaar oud ben
2. Ik kreeg voldoende informatie over dit onderzoeksproject, de manier waarop de onderzoeksgegevens worden verzameld, gebruikt en behandeld. Het doel van mijn deelname als een geïnterviewde in dit project is voor mij helder uitgelegd en ik weet wat dit voor mij betekent.
3. Mijn deelname als geïnterviewde in dit project is vrijwillig. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen.
4. Mijn deelname houdt in dat ik word geïnterviewd door Pam van Schie. Ik geef de onderzoeker toestemming om tijdens het interview geluidsopnames te maken en schriftelijke notities te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat, als ik toch bezwaar heb met een of meer punten zoals hierboven benoemd, ik op elk moment mijn deelname, zonder opgave van reden, kan stoppen.
5. Ik ben op duidelijke wijze ingelicht over de eventuele risico's die ik zou kunnen lopen door te participeren in dit onderzoek. Ik heb het recht om vragen niet te beantwoorden. Ik behoud daarbij het recht deze instemming weer in te trekken zonder dat ik daarvoor een reden hoeft op te geven. Ik besef dat ik op elk moment mag stoppen met het onderzoek. Als ik me tijdens het interview ongemakkelijk voel, heb ik het recht om mijn deelname aan het interview te stoppen.
6. Ik heb van de onderzoeker de uitdrukkelijke garantie gekregen dat de onderzoeker er zorg voor draagt dat ik niet ben te identificeren in door het onderzoek naar buiten gebrachte gegevens, rapporten of artikelen. Mijn privacy is gewaarborgd als deelnemer aan dit onderzoek. Als mijn onderzoeksresultaten worden gebruikt in wetenschappelijke publicaties, of op een andere manier openbaar worden gemaakt, dan zal dit volledig

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geanonimiseerd gebeuren. Mijn persoonsgegevens worden niet door derden ingezien zonder mijn uitdrukkelijke toestemming.

7. Ik heb de garantie gekregen dat dit onderzoeksproject is beoordeeld en goedgekeurd door de ethische commissie van de EUR. Voor bezwaren met betrekking tot de opzet en of uitvoering van het onderzoek kan ik me wenden tot de ethische commissie van de EUR.
8. Ik heb dit formulier gelezen en begrepen. Al mijn vragen zijn naar mijn tevredenheid beantwoord en ik ben vrijwillig akkoord met deelname aan dit onderzoek.
9. Ik heb een kopie ontvangen van dit toestemmingsformulier dat ook ondertekend is door de interviewer.

Handtekening en datum

Naam Deelnemer	Naam Onderzoeker Pam van Schie
Handtekening	Handtekening
Datum	Datum