Article

Caminante, No Hay Camino, Se Hace Camino al Andar: On a Creative Research Project in Urban Planning

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Abstract
This article looks back at a creative research project conducted in Geneva, Switzerland, which, by experimenting between art and science, sought to understand how citizen narratives can participate in the making of an urban plan. The approach presented here brought together geographers, architects, and novelists. Citizen narratives produced at writing workshops imagined the city of the future in ways that significantly contrasted with visions gathered from events organised by public authorities. These narratives were taken up by the novelists, who helped produce a piece of fiction containing the power to reveal the qualities of the present. This piece has since become a novel. By discovering what their future city could be, participants in this project were led to identify the places that should be preserved. Their narratives thus helped identify an ordinary heritage that could be included in an urban planning document. This reflective look at a project that gradually took shape could be useful to anyone wishing to conduct creative research in urban planning, particularly from the perspective of a more inclusive city.

Keywords
art; creative research; fiction; inclusion; inclusive city; narrative; urban planning; urban policy

1. Introduction

This article focuses on how narrative can play a role in more inclusive urban planning. Borrowing from the essay genre, it reflects on an action-creation research project that took place for over a year and a half in working-class neighbourhoods in the metropolis of Geneva, Switzerland. The initial research question was deliberately broad. The aim was to observe whether the production of narratives would involve residents in ways which bypass the well-known limitations of public participation in urban planning (Berger & Charles, 2014; Blondiaux, 2008; Lee et al., 2015): low representation of the so-called working class; feelings of illegitimacy that lead some to self-censorship; a framing effect resulting from the type of questions asked by public authorities to residents. The wide-ranging research question led to the development of an approach that allowed us to identify, through the fictionalised imaginations of residents, a list of heritage sites susceptible to being subject to a policy of protection and/or conservation. The approach developed thus invites reflection on creative research in urban planning. Gathering narratives constitutes much more than collecting the raw material to sustain development plans without any further mediation; it is first and foremost a way to enable the expressiveness of all audiences. The crux, however, is to find a way to bring together each collected story, to capture a

collective meaning that can be translated into the language of urban planning. We attempt to answer these questions by example, in a genre that is more akin to a reflexive and subjective testimonial than a conventional scientific article.

2. From Narrative To Narrative For Planning: The Narrative Turn of Urban Planning

2.1. Urban Planning as a Narrative Activity

The question of narrative emerges in the field of planning theory under the influence of critical epistemology on one hand and the linguistic turn in social sciences on the other. Indeed, the pioneering works of Patsy Healey or James A. Throgmorton play a role in putting the expertise of planning professionals into perspective, mobilising knowledge—such as experts' knowledge and residents' knowledge—during planning projects in a more symmetrical manner.

Noticing that stories told by the residents are just as informed as the experts' diagnoses, Healey (1992) called for a "communicative turn in urban planning," which would make way for a practice of debate that is more respectful of inter-subjectivity. As for Throgmorton (2003), his work showed that major planning projects are always characterised by a strong narrative dimension that generates persuasion. This narrative dimension makes the planner a novelist like any other, a storyteller rather than a cold technician.

Extending this reflection on the narrative power of major development projects, many researchers have also studied the virtues of storytelling when considered as a communication tool that could help broaden the range of audiences likely to take an interest in the production of the city. Many authors have emphasised the need to structure the narrative to legitimise, share, and think about space (Dionne, 2018; Eckstein & Throgmorton, 2003; Forrester, 1999; Lambelet, 2019; Lussault, 1997; Matthey, 2011). Articulated around a plot, the narrative brings events together, giving them coherence and meaning that can be understood by all (Vitalis & Guéna, 2017). Thus, it is a means of democratising the production of the city, as it enables everyone to grasp and debate development projects. More critical approaches have also studied storytelling in urban planning used as a guiding tool for the reading of development plans produced by public administrations and facilitating their acceptance (Ernwein & Matthey, 2019; Matthey, 2014; Matthey et al., 2022).

2.2. Storytelling as a Raw Material for Urban Planning

The question of storytelling in urban planning was also addressed as a raw material available to urban planners. The stories told by residents, the historical or fictional accounts that build a collective memory are *such stuff as future spaces are made on*, borrowing Shakespeare's

famous line. However, noting the diversity of these stories, some studies have proposed methods better suited to capture the heterogeneity of the narratives to develop more inclusive approaches (Bloomfield, 2006; Eckstein & Throgmorton, 2003; Fischer, 2009; Forrester, 1999; Holston, 2009; Sandercock, 2003, 2010; van Hulst, 2012).

Many of these authors focus significantly on storytelling in urban planning as a modality of urban participation that provides access to information. They posit that narrative is a method for limiting the disruptions associated with situations of investigation or public participation (Erfani, 2021; Marschütz et al., 2020). For instance, the narrative could lessen anticipation of the expectations of those seeking out or leading participatory workshops, such anticipation being the root cause of the orientation bias. Moreover, the detour via fiction is presumed to encourage expression from people who tend to censor themselves. Thus, storytelling can be a way of observing the world and collectively creating information.

3. Between Collaborative Urban Planning and Participatory Research: What Can Narratives Do for the World We Plan?

This is precisely where the contribution of our article lies: Through reflexive testimony, we look back at a creative research project conducted over 18 months. This research, which was part of a larger project on the use of narrative in planning, sought to answer a deliberately broad question. We were wondering how citizen narratives can participate in the making of an urban plan (in this case, a Swiss cantonal master plan) in other ways than the standard forms of public participation, some limitations of which academic literature has amply commented on (Bacqué & Sintomer, 2001; Berger & Charles, 2014; Blondiaux, 2008; Lee et al., 2015; Mazeaud & Talpin, 2010). It may be worth explaining who this "we" refers to. We are not dealing with an abstract authority once used in academic writing. It refers to a group of academic geographers, Swiss contemporary authors and architects who are active in the field of participation in urban planning.

If the question that our group wished to answer was part of long-standing reflections in urban geography as well as planning theory, we would not initially have had a very clear idea of the research device we were going to set up. Only one premise, stemming from research findings in the field, guided our thinking. Narrative methods help avoid some self-censorship effects ("I am not an expert," "my opinion is not important"), which discourage some from engaging with the participatory events organised as part of development projects ("I don't master the subject," "I won't have anything to say"). This type of research appeared appropriate in a context characterised by the increasing use of the vocabulary of collaboration in urban planning, a context in which the part of the world where we intended to develop our approach seemed emblematic.

3.1. Holding Writing Workshops in Neighbourhoods and Avoiding the Aporias of "Genevan-Style" Collaborative Planning

Our project started when the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Switzerland, was embarking on a new planning cycle in its region. Indeed, a new cantonal master plan is soon due to replace the one developed at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Placed under the sign of the Anthropocene, the production of this new plan adopted a collaborative approach. Thus, for the past few months, civil society had for the first time been invited to participate in its development. This involvement from civil society happened in various ways. For example, the public administration in charge of the master plan had included in its deliberations the results of an international consultation conducted by a public utility foundation. It had also launched many surveys in an attempt to gauge the population's aspirations for 2050. A citizens' forum, made up of 30 of the canton's inhabitants, selected by lot, was also organised. This was meant to find answers to a question that was at least as broad as the one we, ourselves, wished to answer: "How do we want to live in the Genevan region so we can live better together while respecting nature and dealing with climate change?" (Revello, 2021, pp. 6–7).

Whilst intentions were collaborative, the process was still closely regulated. In any event, these initiatives struck us as being tightly controlled. The administration seemed, in a way, to be operating like a curator. From the results of international consultation, it selected what chimed with a particular political vision of how the region should be organised. It chose the questions the population was invited to consider as part of a survey. The citizens' forum was meant to debate topics that were imposed on it with the help of experts listed by the public authorities. The desires, concerns, expectations, and suggestions gathered as material for the preparation of the future cantonal master plan were inevitably determined by the device set up by the public administration departments.

Our aim was not to criticise the techniques used as part of these initiatives. We were not seeking to show how they directed results and constructed "a" reality, as had been done in social-science methodology in the context of studies commenting on the various translations of the observer's paradox (Aktinson & Hammersley, 1998; Rock, 1979). First and foremost, we wanted to treat it as a problem, which could act as a showcase example. Rather than inviting people to discuss a desirable future based on topics identified by experts, wouldn't it be more fruitful to allow relevant topics to emerge from creative activities loosely connected to the problem at hand, namely the city of the future?

In any event, holding writing workshops seemed to us to be a possible means to learn what was on the minds of the public concerned by this city of tomorrow. On the one hand, these workshops would allow us to focus on the issue of narrative in urban planning (which was one of the dimensions of the deliberately broad question we were asking). On the other hand, they would provide us with an opportunity to distance ourselves from the search for material that could be used immediately. The creative activity would potentially mitigate the risk of self-censorship or lack of interest from those taking part in the project.

3.2. Deregulating: Describing, Writing, Playing, "Distributing the Sensible"

Between November 2021 and February 2022, we organised writing workshops in various districts of Geneva. The participants (110 in total at this first stage) came together primarily to write. The principle of the workshops was to gradually stimulate their imagination by drawing on everyday situations.

All participants were first invited one by one to go and draw their daily routes on an A1-sized map provided at the various venues (schools, associations, care homes for the elderly, workers' universities, etc.) that hosted the workshops. They were then split into small groups based on the similarities between their routes. Each group was given two items: a smaller version of the map and a pack of playing cards with questions written on them (Figure 1).

Each group drew five cards and wrote notes, short texts, and almost minimalist poems based on the situation suggested. The following extracts emerged from the prompt "Describe a detail about your district only you have noticed":

> Tropical flower without name
>
> Nature is vital
>
> Trees are very clever, they grow leaves, leaves, leaves. When do they blossom? They hide their flowers and then suddenly bam!
>
> A small pond
>
> A party hall with a large square
>
> I would love to have water
>
> A great exchange
>
> It's a bit peace & love, but it's really good

A new pack of cards (Figure 2), which targeted other dimensions, was then introduced to encourage the groups to develop micro-narratives by imagining a parallel city. The cards invited them to spell out some of the sensory regimes ("What sounds can be heard?"), bring to life heroic figures ("Who lives in this area?"), or express certain desires ("What would you like to see there?" "How would you like to get around?").

| Describe a place in your district which has changed a lot.

What has changed?

How has this impacted you life? | Describe a place in your district that you like. | Is there something in your district you do not understand? | Describe a detail about your district only you have noticed. | If you were going out on a date, where would you go?

Why?

How do you image it? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Describe a place that you think needs to change.

How?

Why? | Is there a dangerous place in your district?

Describe it.

Why is it dangerous? | Is there a place where you would really love to go but you are not allowed?

Describe it.

Why do you want to go there? | How would you describe the atmosphere in your district? | |

Figure 1. Facilitating the description of everyday places.

The following extracts emerged from the prompt "What heroic figure(s) live(s) in this area?"

A Pegasus in the city

Horses

Turtles and dolphins

Animals that invite us to ride on their backs

And the following emerged from the prompt "How do people get around?":

Putting bridges between buildings, boats, we could walk on water

Zip wires and slack lines

Waterproof buildings

We can fly in flying trams and hydrofoil trams

We could spread our wings and glide above water

The participants were then asked to individually work on producing a narrative text based on a single writing instruction:

What prevails in this district (animals, plants, etc)?	Where can wood be found?	What happens to the rainwater?	Where is it hottest, darkest, and coolest?	Where do people like to meet?
Which street name appeals to you the most?	How do people get around?	What sound can be heard?	What heroic figure(s) live(s) in this area	

Figure 2. A pack of playing cards used to stimulate the imagination.

A person, walking about the district, comes up against a completely unusual element in the landscape, which takes on the function of an event. It is up to the participants to imagine that person's reaction and, using the first person, write a story about what it is, what it looks like, and how it fits into the urban landscape.

To that end, participants had to use an element that had come up during the group production of the micro-narratives. The following extracts emerged:

Around me, through the transparent walls, I can see the lake—it is a wonderful sight. A shoal of giant perch waltz as a tiny pike makes its appearance. They have retained their ancestral fear of the predator even though genetic engineering has changed their size. The tench calmly go on their way when a common coot dives in beside them. There are water fireflies lighting up the lake and feeding the fish….I walk out of the fantastic gallery and head towards the passage to Geneva's Flower Clock. The waterjet flowing behind me sends a winter chill down my back. Evaporated drops blown by the north wind reach my translucent hood, which is automatically triggered. (Arthur, 27 years old)

I walk out of my home and splash! I am shoulder-deep in water. Very surprised, I look around me: the land is covered in water. Fish are swimming between my legs. Amazed, my gaze lands on the people rowing boats, in the streets. Buildings are covered in plants and flowers. I then notice turtles and dolphins coming towards me, encouraging me to ride on their backs. Which is what I do, and when I arrive at school, the teachers announce that everyone will be having

a swim lesson that day. Since then, every morning, I wait for the dolphins to take me to school. (Camille, 12 years old)

The workshop participants and organisers then got together to discuss and circulate the texts produced, establishing a way of sharing imaginaries similar to Rancière's (2000) "distribution of the sensible." The group discussion revealed that, "at one and the same time, the existence of the shared and the divisions that define[d] respective places and roles within" (Rancière, 2000, p. 12). It gradually opened access to both an individual and collective imaginary of the future city.

Water was omnipresent in the narratives produced by the participants. They dreamt of a place that, in a way, lived to the rhythm of its drainage basin, sustained by its watercourses; in short, freed from certain shackles of modernity, which canalised and buried the rivers. The lake pulsated everywhere. The smell of the rivers permeated the air. The water could be heard flowing. There were dreams of a city crisscrossed by canals. But isolation—probably due to the Covid lockdowns—seemed to be a massive concern: there were repeated references to meeting places, natural spaces, and "freedom.''

From preliminary descriptive instructions to more sensitive requests (and thus mediated by a pack of playing cards), the gradual engagement with a narrative process made it possible to better grasp the extraordinary in ordinary places. This narration of the ordinary also made it possible to sketch the contours of what kind of region participants wanted to live in, which seemed to be far removed from what had emerged from the participatory events organised by the public authorities. They certainly did not take the form of administrative turns of phrases such as "landscape quality" or "equity of access to the

region's amenities" (République et canton de Genève, 2021, p. 27).

3.3. Amplifying: Fictionalising Imaginaries and Anticipating the Future

It was obvious to the novelists who were part of our research group that these imaginaries could be used to create fiction, which is what they set out to do. A fictional piece started to take shape. A storyboard began to circulate, proposing an initial pitch for a future book. This gave a more radical form to the spatial figures sketched out in the literary productions that had resulted from the writing workshops. It conjured up what could be a completely flooded Genevan metropolis, where a form of social atomism reigned. It deliberately employed all the signs of speculative fiction: It explored a future world characterised by a radical change in natural conditions, giving rise to other ways of being together and creating a society. The following pitch for a future book materialized:

> Geneva is underwater. Parks have become a lake. Streets have become rivers. Having returned to a wild state from which no return is possible, the city no longer dominates life. Plants, animals, and humans commingle. Biotopes and sociotopes are out of control. Humans have had to adapt their way of life: upper floors and roofs have become "blocks" organised into quasi-autarchic microsocieties. The streets, which have turned into muddy canals, are still being used for travel and trade—boats protected by iron cages can be seen, although airways are often preferred and for good reason: These urban waters are home to beasts over three meters long, which are feared and respected: giant catfish. This poses a problem: As the monsters come and go randomly between the lake and the city, the inhabitants are constantly on the lookout for another dreaded Day of the Catfish. New rituals thus appear in this world after the "Great Flood." When the Day of the Catfish comes, alarm bells ring. A "fear quarantine" is decreed, everyone has to stay at home, schools are closed. This lasts a few hours, a few days, or, in exceptional circumstances, a few weeks. The eddies, the limp strokes of the tail, and the swallowed pigeons attest to the presence of the catfish in the muddy water. No inhabitant ventures onto the water anymore.

In a way, the project could have stopped there. We had produced a counter-narrative in the form of speculative fiction, which sketched out a future that contrasted sharply with the proposals stemming from the participatory events organised by the public authorities. It would now be up to the latter to come up with a response to this form of paradoxical injunction, typical of the order of desires and phantasmagoria: going back to nature before the city, but without the atomisation of the social body. We had, in a way, answered our initial broad question by obtaining a new imaginary and another vision of the future of the Genevan metropolis.

However, we thought it would be worth looking at things from another perspective. Could we use fiction not just to forecast the future, but to reveal the qualities of the present? The fiction that came out of the writing workshops seemed to us to be sufficiently evocative, that is immersive, to prompt a process of remembering what would be gone when everything or almost everything was flooded. It could help reveal places that today are popular and important for one reason or another, which could soon disappear. This was also the reason why professional writers were invited to join our research-creation group. The narrative had to take its recipient into the depths of a possible world to make the present resonate. The aim of the project was not to hold a few writing workshops to give contemporary authors a pretext to make up stories. These workshops were supposed to provide an understanding of what mattered today to people who often did not speak up and did not come when invited to take part.

3.4. Expanding: Map out Places of Attachment; Publishing a Novel

Thus, the fiction that amplified the visions of a metropolis restored to its watercourses, haunted by the spectre of social isolation, opened up a new stage, which unfolded between May and September 2022. On the one hand, the aim was to return to the people who had taken part in the initial writing workshops and offer them the opportunity to produce new narratives. On the other hand, we wanted to expand to public concern by inciting passers-by to react to this fiction through an installation (Figure 3).

Emblematic images of a Geneva underwater caught the attention of the metropolis's inhabitants, making them responsive to questions: What are the places that will be gone once the "Great Flood" has happened? What are the reasons? What stories were they the stage for? What would have to be recreated on the surface? What would be better left under water?

Participants reacted by using pieces of paper stuck onto the photomontages themselves, sharing their chosen places with others.

It occurred to us that an archive of places of attachment at a given moment in Geneva's history was beginning to take shape at this stage in our project. It included a school "where our family likes to go for walks"; a cinema "to remember history"; a record shop "that needs saving"; a chess set in a park "where everyone can play and watch"; the market "where quite simply everything happens"; a field, "our hideout"; a swimming pool "where I am learning to swim"; the station "where you take the train to Italy"; a shore "because there is sand and waves," and so on.

Figure 3. Returning to the workshop participants and asking questions to passers-by.

One hundred and eighty contributions were collected and then transcribed into a file and located on a map. From stories to anecdotes, this archive of places of attachment was growing. Fragments of a "lover's discourse" (to play with the title of Roland Barthes's famous work) were linked to places, which seemed to us to offer the possibility of drawing a subjective map of the region. The map produced would never stabilise. The narratives gathered the fiction that came out of them, and the resulting stories about places would potentially generate a constantly evolving geography of attachments (Figure 4).

We, therefore, came up with the idea (still being developed) of a website that drew together all the stories that had been prompted, created and recorded during the project. The site would eventually sketch the contours of a more collaborative tool (the prototype is available here: https://www.jour-des-silures.ch). A map would situate the collected fragments in the Genevan metropolis. Extracts from the fiction produced by professional storytellers would sometimes be activated. Visitors would eventually be able to tag other places by linking one or more stories to them.

Meanwhile, the piece of fiction has developed into a novel titled *Le jour des silures* ("The Day of the Catfish"), published in May 2023 by Zoé (Figure 5). Its contemporary authors drew on all the material gathered during the writing workshops and encounters in the public space to create a polyphonic narrative.

Figure 4. A possible map of places of attachment.

Figure 5. From narratives to a novel.

This novel was a means to challenge the story inherited from previous planning projects. What does rational planning mean when uncertainty becomes the new normal? What is left of a planned city when everything returns to a wild state? Some of the narratives collected from the inhabitants gradually took shape within the novelistic space, making room for places, objects, and symbols of everyday life in 2021–2022.

4. It's When Narratives Exceed Their Own Limits That They Affect Reality

We thus gradually found the answer to our deliberately broad question. Narratives only disrupt planning if they end up outgrowing their own bodies. Otherwise, they are condemned to remain anecdotes, little stories, or discourse elements feeding the storytelling of administrations, whose task is to operationalise a given political vision.

The narratives developed by the participants in the writing workshops gave rise to a piece of fiction, which has since become a novel published by an established Swiss publisher. This fiction, which could have been the end of our experiment, made it possible to identify uncertain, fragile places; places that would undoubtedly be missed by the inhabitants should the metropolis be flooded by an inexorable rise in the levels of Lake Geneva. In this sense, they made up a heritage in need of acknowledgement—an ordinary heritage. The popula-

tion was fond of them because they were linked to either individual or collective memories that mixed imagination with actual experiences. These places surely deserve to be specifically addressed in a cantonal master plan, in the form of goals, a heritage inventory and safeguarding measures.

In retrospect, it seems to us that the methodology employed contributed to more inclusive planning in three ways. First, the stories collected during the writing workshops constitute an important documentary resource on ordinary life in the selected neighbourhoods. We gain access to an imaginary and intimate aspect of living spaces, enabling us to get closer to the dimensions of urban life for the audience concerned (without ever asking the question directly).

Secondly, these narratives reveal questions and visions about the city of the future that are barely present or apparent when we ask residents how they imagine the city of tomorrow, or when we survey their hopes and expectations for the city. The stories collected in the writing workshops carry desires, but also a strong concern about the city's ability to perpetuate social ties for the near future. Does this mean that our audience suffers from isolation, reinforced by a recent pandemic, or that they struggle to find their place in society? Or is it rather the result of a method that encourages expression? It is impossible to answer these questions with the data available. Nevertheless, it remains that the issue of the social contract in big cities of the future is not a recent concern as it emerged in the 19th century, but it takes here an unsuspected acuteness, an acuity rarely pointed at before in available studies. These results should challenge urban policies, whether urbanistic or social.

Lastly, the method makes it possible to identify spaces which conventional land-use planning struggles to identify. This probably explains why that dimension is, to date, absent from land-use planning. Analysis of land-use planning by professionals usually tends to focus on categories such as networks, potentials, meshes, sites and other noteworthy entities as well as on protected areas. Ordinary landscapes, despite some manifestos (Bigando, 2008; Dewarrat et al., 2003; Jackson, 1984), are not looked at as issues for master planning, but rather as subjective dimensions of living spaces meant to be transformed. Their identification and processing are therefore generally postponed to later stages of space production, i.e., the space project. When participatory approaches are implemented, answers are guided and biased by the planning professionals: What are the qualities and faults of the neighbourhood? What does urban quality mean to you? This gives rise to the self-censorship and framing effects that have been present in qualitative research for many years.

Yet it is precisely because the methodology allows us to probe the often-invisible dimensions of ordinary spaces, that it encourages the expression of concerns that are repressed or illegitimate in other contexts.

Finally, the system developed here makes it possible to identify an ordinary heritage and thus has encouraged more inclusive planning.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Jade Rudler has been studying connections since 2012 when she began research for her master's project in architecture: connections between people, connections between places and, above all, connections between people and places. Following her studies, she moved from theory to action by founding the Transmission Collective. At the same time, she completed a thesis in urban planning and sociology at EPFL, whose themes and reflections she now applies and deepens within the OLGa studio.

Aude Seigne is a novelist. She began writing at the age of 10, poems first and then short stories; in 2011 she published her first collection of travel chronicles, *Chroniques de l'Occident nomade*, which won the Nicolas Bouvier Prize at the Étonnants Voyageurs festival in Saint-Malo, and was shortlisted for the 2011 Roman des Romands. *Les Neiges de Damas* was published in 2015, followed, in 2017, by *Une toile large comme le monde*. At the same time, Aude Seigne has been working with Bruno Pellegrino and Daniel Vuataz on the literary series *Stand-By*, the two seasons of which will be published in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Anne-Sophie Subilia studied French literature and history at the University of Geneva. She has a degree in literary writing from Bern University of the Arts. She writes for collective works and magazines, for radio, and for the stage with Hyperborée, a performance inspired by a voyage along the coast of Greenland. A poet and novelist, she is the author of *L'Épouse* (Zoé, 2022), *abrase* (Empreintes, 2021, Pro Helvetia grant), *Neiges intérieures* (Zoé, 2020, Zoé poche 2022), *Les hôtes* (Paulette éditrice, 2018), *Qui-vive* (Paulette éditrice, 2016), *Parti voir les bêtes* (Zoé, 2016, Arthaud poche 2018, Leenaards grant), and *Jours d'agrumes* (L'Aire, 2013, ADELF-AMOPA prize 2014).
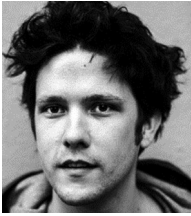
Daniel Vuataz is the author of *Terre-des-Fins* (a railway station novel) and *Stand-By* (a literary series) with Aude Seigne and Bruno Pellegrino, *Vivre près des tilleuls* (with AJAR, Flammarion, and J'ai lu), and *Big Crunch* (a musical with Renaud Delay). He has also written a book on the revival of the literary press in French-speaking Switzerland in the 1960s (Franck Jotterand et la Gazette littéraire, L'Hèbe), and was editorial secretary for Histoire de la littérature en Suisse romande (Zoé). He is involved in programming Lectures Canap and Cabaret Littéraire in Lausanne. In 2022, with Fanny Wobmann, Aude Seigne, and Bruno Pellegrino, he founded the collective writing studio la ZAC (Zone à créer, à conquérir, à chérir—à choix).

Matthieu Ruf is a freelance journalist and member of the AJAR writers' collective. He studied Spanish literature and history at the University of Lausanne, then literary writing in the Master CAP programme at Bern University of the Arts. His first novel, *Percussions*, won the Prix Georges-Nicole.