Lockdown ... it’s good that it happened. I think it was or still is an exercise, a rehearsal, an opportunity, yes, definitely an opportunity to close the drastic gaps between people. I think that what is now important, and even fundamental, is transparency and action, and above all, radicalism and firmness in every area of our lives.

This is not about bringing individual closer to individual, but about changing the relationship that exists between them. It’s about reducing the differences that build boundaries. It is about abolishing borders, the free circulation of information, experiences and emotions. And above all, solving fundamental problems, such as hunger and its effects in the form of nine million starving people. What the FUCK?!

On the other hand, waste; 600,000,000 tons of food are thrown away every year.

Lockdown taught me how to count! Thank you, Corona! And so I count this hunger, this food waste, as a lack of respect for what we have and a lack of respect for other human beings, for other living beings, for our planet.

This system doesn’t work properly. Democracy has lost its essential meaning. Citizens’ participation in exercising power, and thus also in creating public space, is getting narrower. On the other hand, the prohibitions directed at citizens, which fill the public space and even sneak into the private space, such as the prohibition on hugging or kissing, or other prohibitions against fundamental human rights, are widening.

Does the government have the right to enter my apartment, my studio, my bed? How is it possible that there are homeless if we have so many empty, but closed houses and...
Ban Bang

Square in Łódź, Poland. Within the square, a huge number of road signs and plaques with commonly encountered or invented content that banned various activities were placed: “No entry”, “Silence”, “It is forbidden to grow anything”, “Do not touch”, “Everything is forbidden” and “It is forbidden to prohibit” – a slogan known from the still fresh reminiscences of the Parisian Spring of ’68.

At the time, the exhibition was interpreted as a criticism of Communism and its attempts to control all aspects of life. Today, almost 50 years later, Communism in Europe is a distant memory. Capitalism won the Cold War, and the “oppressed masses” were liberated. But the work of Ewa Partum has once again become a relevant critique in contemporary Western societies.

We should not forget that the processes of polarization and exclusion play a significant role in managing western societies, determining the social actions of most people. Due to globalization and the Internet, we are increasingly locked into online “bubbles” generated by social media and search engine algorithms, where we are fed a diet of only the known and expected, constantly reinforcing our own world view and prejudices. Therefore, every example of prohibition or surveillance in public space needs to be questioned through art investigation; to ask; under what conditions do we accept the status quo; to ask what kind of social dynamics force us to get used to the new reality; to ask what kind of processes tame us to become accustomed to the prohibitions of common public life; to become indifferent and not ask about the freedom of society.

Our tolerance for the different, other or unknown has turned into a fear of everything that is not part of our reality. Here the role of public space is crucial, because only in public space can these “bubbles” be burst by coming into contact with and experiencing the unknown, the unexpected.

Yet opportunities for such encounters are constantly being curtailed. The ever-increasing
POLIZEI VERBOTEN
Those questions are important for me. I believe that access to resources such as public space is fundamental to blurring the boundaries of inequality and in my opinion, the growing number of prohibitions in public space can not be combined with the concepts of inclusive societies. How can society be free when the common person is controlled by commands and prohibitions, which, of course, do not apply to the elites, the politicians, businessmen and the mafia?

To face public bans and divisions that shape social dynamics, it is necessary to re-think the “invisible” components (social and individual experience) of the public text. First of all, we think the world must be changed. We want the most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined. We know that such a change is possible through appropriate actions.

Guy Debord

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number of prohibitions and bans in public space attempting to regulate our behaviour, our movements, and even our appearance are creating a homogeneous society which does not tolerate any deviation from the norm. There has been an explosion of bans all over the world, which have increased because of the Corona pandemic. In public parks, it is often forbidden to run, cycle, or walk your dog on the grass. Excessive hugs and even greeting kisses are forbidden in Hungary; Homelessness is banned in Poland; Children are banned from many pubs in England; Reusable cups are banned on Irish Rail; It is forbidden to die in the Houses of Parliament in the United Kingdom and the Norwegian town of Longyearbyen; Citizens of Denmark can only choose a name for their baby from a list of government-approved names; Winnie the Pooh is banned from playgrounds in Poland; eating and drinking near churches and public buildings is banned in Florence, Italy; In Seville, Spain it’s illegal to hang your underwear on a line; In Switzerland, it is illegal to flush the toilet after 10pm if you live in an apartment; In Portugal, urinating in the sea is forbidden. Surrounded by a set of instructions, I do not feel included but rather excluded from public space. Olafur Eliasson said: How do we create a public space? What does it mean to make a space accessible for collectivity and individuals? How can we make people feel included, rather than excluded, from the space?

The point is that access to resources such as public spaces is fundamental to blurring the boundaries of inequality. In almost all EU countries, smoking in bars and restaurants has been banned. But in the 1930s, thanks to a cigarette PR campaign in New York, “Torch of Freedom”, smoking became a symbol of the emancipation of women. How does this prohibition change our cooperation in public space? How can any kind of prohibition in public space be combined with the concepts of inclusive societies?