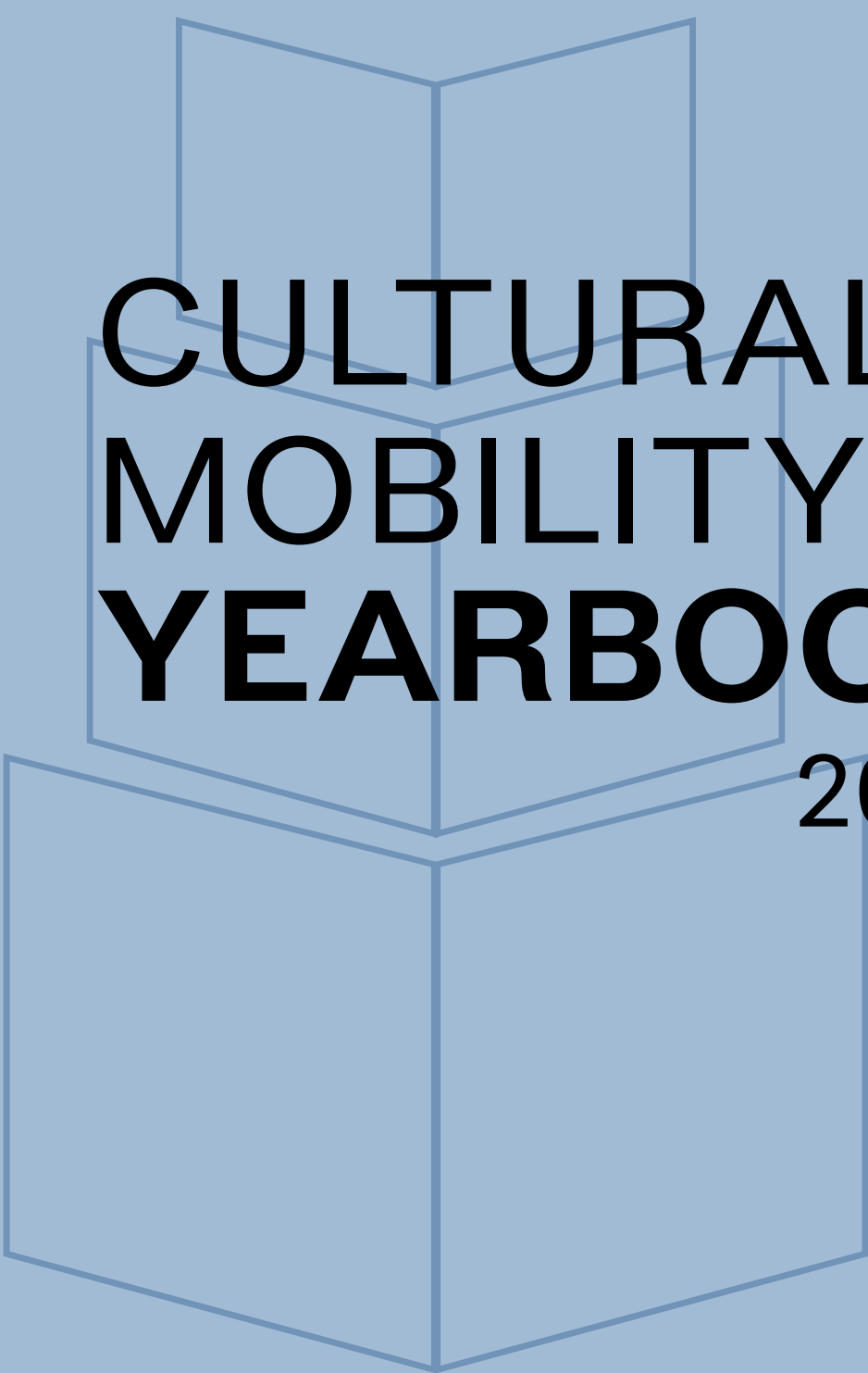


ON  
THE  
MOVE



**CULTURAL  
MOBILITY  
YEARBOOK**  
2022

Executive Summary



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# Executive Summary

In 2021, activity in the cultural mobility field was forced to thread between lockdowns, border closures, and a moving flux of national regulations. In the process, some old practices were discarded, others were dug out of storage, and some new forms arose – many of them online. This publication looks back on cultural mobility in 2021 in order to get a picture of these shifts in the sector.

For its first section analysing open call opportunities, the main source is data from the On the Move website, which in 2021 listed 641 calls for funded mobility opportunities with 76 countries as destinations. It tries to chart changes across regions, disciplines and types of mobility in order to get a broad view on what happened in 2021, and what might be coming next, with a particular focus on digital mobility.

The second section goes into greater detail with three articles that cover specific perspectives. Taking a personal view, project manager and curator Chiara Organtini recounts her experiences as an organiser and attendee of online meetings, festivals, and other events in the performing arts field – from endless meetings to (global) rural radio to digital raves. Moving to Southern Africa, IKS Cultural Consulting's managing director Andre Le Roux reports on research into livestreaming that underpinned the creation of the new Concerts SA Digital Mobility Fund, and on the risks, opportunities and value of livestreaming for the Southern African music sector. Finally, and as a special nod towards On the Move's twentieth anniversary, Mary Ann DeVlieg, On the Move's first president, reflects on the long history of the organisation – and with it developments in cultural mobility over the last two decades.

## Key themes and insights

**Covid-19 caused widespread disruption, but in-person mobility has continued.** In spite of cancelled or adapted activities, in-person mobility still made up the majority of activity within our data (70.6%).

**Covid-19 has affected the mobility process from start to finish.** Impacts range from reduced eligibility, to more complex and expensive travel processes, to an emerging demand for 'covid safe' or 'corona proof' formats.

At the same time, **digital mobility is growing.** 29.4% of calls in our data from 2021 were for digital/remote activities or for a mix of online and in-person work – more than in 2020. If 'online' was a country, it would have been the largest mobility destination in 2021.

**Digital formats were present across regions.**

- African organisations embraced digital mobility in 2021, with 62.5% of all calls involving organisers based in Africa taking place in either online or mixed formats.
- In the Americas, 48.6% of calls with US organisers took place online or in mixed formats, driven partly by adaptations of fellowship programmes linked to universities and private foundations.
- The Asian region covered a number of divergent situations in terms of cultural mobility, but in South-eastern and Eastern Asia, Japan, South Korea and Singapore have continued to be very active. In 2021, Japan accounted for around a quarter of all digital/remote/mixed calls in Asia, and half of those in Eastern Asia.
- In Europe, Northern and Western European countries were big drivers for digital mobility,

particularly with funding support from cultural export bodies. Where opportunities in 2020 concentrated more on presenting or adapting existing work, in 2021 the focus has shifted to commissions and project funding to create new digitally native works.

**This growth in online working has made categories less rigid.** Around a third of digital/hybrid calls accepted applications from both individuals and organisations. Roughly 4 in 10 were open to all disciplines or to interdisciplinary work.

**Formats are becoming more complex.** In 2021:

- **Hybrid calls adopted a 'phased' approach** – for instance programming an online research period of several months leading to a short in-person residency. Moving some activity online made it easier to support the lifespan of projects.
- **Projects frequently 'matchmade' artists.** 24.5% of online only calls and 15.8% of hybrid ones organised beneficiaries into pairs or groups to work on shared projects. There were fewer opportunities to apply with existing collaborators.
- **Virtual residency programmes restructured around support programmes:** 17.5% of online or hybrid residencies offered workshops or a training scheme and 12.5% arranged mentoring.
- **There were more opportunities to create and present natively digital work,** including a number of efforts to reimagine touring in virtual and remote formats.

In spite of this, **some activities are not well suited to online work.** Things that slip through the virtual cracks include opportunities to work with community groups (offered by only 1.9% of online/hybrid calls), to access archives and collections (1.9%), or to see work by peers (3.1%). Collaborative artistic work is channelled into meeting and exchange formats rather than live co-creation.

**Digital mobility takes place within existing structures.** Most 'new' initiatives or formats that arose in 2021 were adaptations of ongoing programmes or reallocations of existing funding.

**For participants, the openness of digital mobility can be deceptive.** Digital calls might be open to the world yet inaccessible for many individuals, due to language barriers or a lack of ICT skills or equipment. Only 4.4% of online and hybrid calls from our data provided extra funding for connection, software or equipment costs.

Still, **digital and hybrid mobility is likely here to stay,** not least because it can lead to somewhat greener ways of working. In-person mobility is also likely to continue because nothing beats being in the room. In an ideal world this can leave us with more individual choice, more opportunities for artists and cultural professionals, and potentially less environmental harm.