



## 20x20 Vision for walking in 2040 from Julie Poitras Santos - Transcript

Hello, I'm **Julie Poitras Santos**, and I'm talking to you from Portland, Maine, United States.

Around the world, some 79.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. Five years ago, in 2015 Europe received unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants arriving by boat, but also overland on foot, as a result of the Syrian War. In recent years increasing numbers of Central American migrants and asylum seekers have arrived at the US southern border with Mexico, traveling by foot as well as other modes of transport.

Experts agree that severe drought played a major role in triggering the Syrian war, as well as conflicts in other places. In Central America, during the extreme drought of 2018, crop losses in the Dry Corridor left 1.4 million people without adequate amounts of food. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that in 2019, nearly 2,000 disasters, most of them weather hazards, triggered 25 million new displacements. Climate change is a threat multiplier; and the last decade was the hottest on record. Even with significant changes made to our way of living, the planet will continue warming for the foreseeable future. By 2040, still more people will need to move, and many of them will be moving on foot.

The Covid-19 pandemic is but one symptom of our perilous climate relationship, one that for the moment has kept many more privileged travelers, such as myself, home and encouraged greater attention to our local contexts. This summer and fall, I organized [Platform Projects/Walks: ecologies of the local](#) here in Maine. The project mobilized 20 artists and scientists, and over 150 community members, to consider climate related changes through walking. Leaving minimal trace, participants used walking as methodology and research to listen to the surround and respond, locating the unnoticed and unheard, and in process revealing the intrinsic value and complex network of interactions between organisms and their environments.

Walking allows a human-scale interaction with the environment; unfolding at the pace of three miles an hour. *Ecologies of the local* allowed us to foster new ways of seeing, propose speculative futures, and expand or cross disciplinary boundaries, in particular creating bridges between site, visual art, and science, but also importantly with indigenous understandings, foraged food ways, and public space policies. Making connections and establishing affective, active conversations between diversely intersecting communities, and encouraging a sensitive attention to the contexts we inhabit in proactive ways seems crucial to addressing the critical problems of our time.

As we witness massive climatic shifts and changes, we know individuals will be walking not only for pleasure but also out of necessity. I think an intimate understanding of our local ecological environments – some of it fostered through walking – will be necessary to moving forward. And for those who are walking toward a new life, that knowledge can serve as welcome ground for future care and wellbeing, in 2040 and beyond.