



**Universiteit
Leiden**

Mapping Squatting in Leiden:

Deconstructing the Image of the Militant Squatter

Applicants

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Project description

The term squatting evokes images of radical metropolitan youths who engage in spectacular street fights with the police over the use of large buildings. This stereotype has informed popular accounts of squatters in documentaries, films and books. It has also influenced historical research, which has traditionally focused on militant squatting in large cities. This has led to a one-sided and historically inaccurate stereotype that obscures the experiences of many squatters, and overlooks the impact that squatter actions have had on urban landscapes.¹

In reality, squatting was much more diverse. The squatter population encompassed working class families, artists, migrants and alternative youths. Furthermore, squatting was never limited to metropolises, but also occurred in middle-sized cities and small towns. Uncovering these stories leads to a more inclusive and accurate account of squatting and shows in what ways urban citizens influenced the city and housing policies.

The history of squatting in Leiden shows both the diversity of the squatter population and the prominence of squatting in middle-sized cities. Over the last year, we have systematically analyzed Leiden newspaper reports on squatting in the 1970s and 1980s with the help of two Research Trainees. By doing so, we have both reconstructed the full variety of people involved in squatting, and explained how newspapers reported on these events, thus providing clues as to how the previously mentioned stereotype came into being.

The Research Trainee Programme has allowed us to set up an extensive research project on squatting in Leiden. We have mapped and analyzed the history of squatting in Leiden between 1970 and 1990. This has resulted in four deliverables. We have 1.) created a digital map of all the 220 squatter events in this period;² 2.) as well as a professional website with historical reconstructions, photos, interviews and primary sources.³ Furthermore, we have 3.) held lectures⁴ and organized historical walking tours,⁴ and 4.) co-authored four academic publications.⁵

¹ Nazima Kadir, 'Myth and Reality in the Amsterdam Squatters' Movement, 1975–2012', in Bart van der Steen, Leendert van Hoogenhuijze, and Ask Katzeff (eds.), *The City is Ours: Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014), 21-61.

² The map can be found here: <https://maps.squat.net/en/cities/leiden/squats#>.

³ The website can be found here: <http://www.krakeninleiden.nl>.

⁴ These include a lecture for the Historische Vereniging Oud-Leiden (April 2, 2017); the Political Culture and National Identities Research Programme at Leiden University's Institute of History (April 11, 2017); a lecture for mayor Lenferink as part of his visit to the Humanities Faculty (June 1, 2017) and a contribution at the Illegal Housing Conference at University College London (June 22-23, 2017).

The historical walking tours were among other part of the Nacht van Kunst en Kennis programme (September 16, 2017). See: <http://nachtvankunstenkennis.nl/act/squatters-tour>.

⁵ Charlotte van Rooden, Merel Snoep en Bart van der Steen, 'Krakende kattenvrouwtjes en banketbakkers: Nieuw onderzoek naar de diversiteit en dynamiek van kraken in Hollandse steden', *Holland: Historisch Tijdschrift* (accepted for publication, 2018-1).

Ibid., 'Een stad van onderop: De effecten van kraken op het Leidse stadsbeeld', *Leidschrift: Historisch Tijdschrift* (submitted for publication, 2018-1).

Ibid., 'Who are the squatters? Challenging stereotypes through a case study of squatting in the Dutch city of Leiden, 1970-1980 (submitted and pending review *Journal of Urban History*).

Ibid with Udo Grashoff, 'From Leiden to Leipzig: Comparing urban squatting in a first world and second world city' (in preparation for Udo Grashoff (ed.), *Comparative Approaches to Informal Housing around the Globe* (forthcoming 2019)).

The size and scope of the project's achievements are testimony to the success of last year's project.⁶ The project has enabled an extraordinarily fruitful and productive cooperation between students and staff members. Furthermore, it has combined broad academic outreach – in the form of a digital map, a website, lectures and historical walking tours – with innovative research in the form of four academic publications and a conference contribution.

Building on the successes of the past year, we wish to expand and finalize the project with a new team of Research Trainees. In this second year, we aim to document, map and analyze squatting in Leiden between 1990 and 2010. In doing so, we can build on the experience and knowledge gathered during the previous year. However, we also intend to add an innovative feature to the project.

Newspaper research remains the backbone of the data gathering. By continuing with this work, we can compile an extensive and systematic data set, which will serve as the basis for the expansion of our digital map, historical website and academic analysis. Next to this, we will produce a mobile app that enables people to go on historical walking tours on squatting in Leiden whenever they choose.

The Research Trainees will take the lead on all of the project's aspects, but will be guided and aided continuously by the two staff members. It is the cooperative aspect of the Research Trainee Programme that has proven to be the key to the first year's successes.

Next to the abovementioned deliverables (an expanded digital map and historical website, and a mobile app), the research findings will be processed in one research article for a peer-reviewed journal, co-authored by the Research Trainees, just like the past year. The article will focus on the history of squatting in Leiden during the 1990s and early 2000s, contrasting its development with Amsterdam.

⁶ The project was also discussed in the local press, see V. Bongers, 'Leidenaren deden dit niet', *Mare*, September 14, 2017.; L. Janson, 'Wandelen langs kraakpanden', *Leids Dagblad*, September 15, 2017.

Research Trainee Profile

This project offers Research Trainees the opportunity to greatly enhance their research skills, by critically analyzing newspaper reports, sorting information from different sources into a coherent story and write about it in an accessible way. In helping with the organization of historical walking tours through Leiden, as well as the development of the app, they furthermore expand their resumé with practical and organizational experience. Finally, the Research Trainees will co-author a research article aimed for a peer-reviewed journal.

Although preliminary knowledge of the history of Leiden is appreciated, the main skills that are required in the Research Trainees are excellent writing skills, being able to organize effectively and work accurately, and being able to communicate and delegate in a clear and collegial manner. The student must be tech-savvy, but does not need to possess coding skills or advanced database and web publishing experience. Candidates must have a historical interest, but do not have to be history students. The project is open to either third year BA students with high grades for written assignments or MA or ResMa students.

Collaboration

In various ways, this project furthers the collaboration between the Institute of History and the LUCL Journalism and New Media.

Peter Burger and Bart van der Steen have already collaborated on a research article that uses newspaper and new media research techniques to analyze and deconstruct a story that is often seen as typical for Leiden history: how Minerva students supposedly amused themselves by throwing red-hot coins to the Leiden poor and watching them burn their fingers. The article has been accepted for publication by *The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History*.

In the current project, newspaper research again plays an important role. It has often been stated that newspapers are not neutral transmitters of news, but rather mould and even distort stories because of ideological bias or financial concerns (selling newspapers). This is well illustrated in a number of newspaper articles on squatting, in which ideology, prejudice and reality clash. Extensively analyzing newspapers not only offers the opportunity to acquire basic facts on the history of squatting in Leiden, but also to analyze in great detail the way in which newspapers depict and describe squatters.

In this way, the project links the research interests of the supervisors of this project, as well as historical and media research practices. Finally, through the further development of the digital map and the historical website, as well as the production of a mobile app, the convergence of historical research and new media development forms an integral part of the project's outline and goals.

Deliverables

Last year's Research Trainee program has enabled the setting up of this extensive research project that has led to four main deliverables: the digital map, the historical website, the historical walking tour and four academic publications.

We wish to build on these achievements and expand the project further. First of all, the digital map will be expanded to include all squatter events mentioned in Leiden newspapers from 1990 to 2010. Furthermore, the historical website will be expanded with historical reconstructions of squatter events in this period, and analyses of how newspapers reported on them. Finally, the resulting data will be included in an updated and expanded historical walking tour.

The project's second year, however, will also introduce a new feature to the project: the development of a mobile app that allows people to take the historical walking tour at their own time of choosing. For the construction of this app, we have contacted the Leiden app maker Zooma, who is willing to help with the construction.⁷

Finally, the gathered data will drive innovative academic research, as we aim to co-author a research article of a peer reviewed journal on squatting in Leiden during the abovementioned period, contrasting this with developments in Amsterdam.

⁷ <https://www.zooma.nl/>

Planning

This project will enable two Research Trainees to work 5.7 hours per week on this project, for the period of eight months. Their work will be divided into four phases, which will all have a specific focus.

First Phase: January to March

The first phase will focus on newspaper research and the mapping of squatter events. This phase will familiarize the Research Trainees with both the historical events and the source material. The entries from the years 1970 to 1990 will provide a model for the new entries in the digital map.

Second Phase: April to June

The second phase is dedicated to selecting the most important squatter events, reconstructing the events and analyzing the ways in which newspapers reported on them. The resulting reconstructions are published on the website and provide the basic source material for the research article.

Also during this phase, the lay-out of the app is discussed and its construction planned in cooperation with Zooma.

Third Phase: July

During the third phase, the app is constructed under the supervision of the Research Trainees, who will provide the content for the app.

Furthermore, during this phase, the layout of the research article is drawn up, in order to ensure that all the necessary data is in place, allowing for additional data gathering if necessary.

Fourth Phase: August

The last phase is dedicated to the writing of the research article.

Student Application

Students can apply by sending a resume, motivation letter and a recently written academic paper to:
b.s.van.der.steen@hum.leidenuniv.nl