



Universiteit
Leiden

The unfinished project of reclaiming the city: Experiences from Cape Town and Santiago

Applicants

Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferably from two different institutes.

Supervisor Name	Institute
Dr. Ksenia Robbe	LUCAS
Dr. Daniela Vicherat-Mattar	LUC

Project description

Provide a brief description of the project (max. 300 words)

General theme: Art as a strategy and tactic to reclaim the city

This collaborative research project will comparatively investigate the role of art in social activism in Cape Town (South Africa) and Santiago (Chile) which aims to democratize city spaces in the context of neocolonial and neoliberal processes of gentrification. Both cities have historically been major transnational hubs, receiving flows of migration - from other areas of South Africa and Chile, other countries of Africa and South America, and trans-continently since their foundation as colonial centers. At the same time, both have developed as highly segregated cities as a result of apartheid policies in South Africa and as product of the exclusionary intersection of class and race hierarchies in Chile. Today, despite the democratization experienced by both countries, economic liberalization and the de-regularization of urban growth maintains socio-spatial segregation as an ingrained feature of both urban fabrics.

As a response to these processes, both cities have witnessed the reemergence of community art initiatives¹ that have been shaped by different agendas and actors in a move to reclaim the city. The particularity of these initiatives today is that, on the one hand, they are defined by local-government initiatives to regenerate particular areas of the city through commissioned art and creating spaces for tourism; whereas on the other hand, some of them retain their traditional activist form, through local civil society initiatives and projects by independent artists.

This project will explore the dynamics between these state-sponsored and activist projects by focusing on the role visual art plays in relation both to community life of specific neighbourhoods and the broader life of both in urban fabrics. The study will involve visual analysis of the artistic projects, along with examination of discourse of the municipal and activist projects, and their consideration within the context

¹ We speak of reemergence, since both cities witnessed very active and dynamic forms of urban art activism during the 1980s in response to the socio-political challenges experienced by each country.

of critical urban studies and scholarship on social movements. A comparative approach is not only innovative in the context of Chilean and South African studies; it will also contribute to the growing field of transnational research on art and activism in urban spaces.

Research Trainee Profile

Each proposal requests two Research Trainees. Describe the general tasks of the research trainees, whether they need any preliminary knowledge (regarding the topic and/or research methods) and which skills the research trainees should have. Also specify which type of students are eligible to apply (Ba, Ma, ResMa).

Desirable background:

- Basic methodological skills in visual and discourse analysis
- Basic knowledge of scholarship in postcolonial studies
- Spanish desirable but not indispensable for the research on Santiago
- Excellent English for both candidates
- Both advanced BA students and MA students are eligible to apply

Research trainees are expected to map the state of the art of the existing research for both cities; they will be trained in research design and the use of visual and discourse analysis when examining the interplay between art and activism.

Collaboration

If applicable: Describe how your research improves collaboration and cross-pollination between the disciplines involved (max. 300 words)

The project is situated at an intersection of several interdisciplinary fields, including urban studies, visual culture, aesthetics, study of social movements. Combining the two researchers' backgrounds in cultural/literary studies and sociology, this project will benefit from a dialogue between these different disciplinary perspectives.

The synergy of these disciplines can help both researchers to co-design a course to be suitable as elective for the Honours Academy, the BA/MA in Urban Studies, the Human Diversity major at LUC.

The project will consolidate the already existing collaborations between LUCAS and LUC (Ksenia Robbe has been teaching several courses at the LUC over the past 3 years).

Deliverables

Enumerate intended project results: papers, research proposals or otherwise. (max 200 words)

The main outcomes of the project will be **two individually written articles** which will benefit from the interdisciplinary discussions and research design and **one collaborative, co-authored article** based on the comparison of the two cities.

Other planned outcomes include a joint conference paper and the design of a co-taught course.

Planning

Provide a breakdown of the project into phases with tentative timing (max 150 words)

The project will be conducted in two phases:

- 1) Literature review and discussion of methodology;
- 2) Mapping of the art initiatives, consolidating the findings and identifying the gaps where the deliverables will make a contribution to existing research

The project will involve 6 group meetings, on average one per month, to discuss literature research, methodology, research design and sample analysis. The final meeting will take place in August to evaluate the whole process and experience.

Student Application

Provide information on how to apply e.g. required documents for application (resume, motivation letter etc.) and an email address where student applications should be sent to.

Students both from LUCAS and LUC can apply to these positions. They should send their CV and a short motivation statement that must include a reference on (i) why this research is interesting to them and (ii) why they think to be suitable candidates to engage as research assistants in this project. Applications should be sent to both researchers:

Dr. Ksenia Robbe: k.robbe@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Dr. Daniela Vicherat-Mattar: d.a.vicherat.mattar@luc.leidenuniv.nl