



**Universiteit
Leiden**

Who are the Squatters?

**Mapping and documenting squatting in Leiden
as a cross-over project between Public History and Academic Research**

Applicants

Supervisor Name	Institute
Bart van der Steen	Institute of History
Peter Burger	LUCL Journalistiek en Nieuwe Media

Contents

<i>Project description</i>	2
<i>Research Trainee Profile</i>	4
<i>Collaboration</i>	5
<i>Deliverables</i>	6
<i>Planning</i>	7
<i>Student Application</i>	8

Project description

This project sets out to map, document and analyze instances of squatting in Leiden from 1970 to 1990, in order to set up an online Digital Archive of Squatting in Leiden. This archive will function as an online resource for academic research, as well as a starting point for public activities such as a historical walking tour through Leiden.

Although the practice of squatting houses in the Netherlands is currently near-extinct, the word continues to evoke lively images of punk youths who confront (riot) police in spectacular conflicts over occupied houses and buildings. In fact, the image has become a staple in Dutch popular culture and even European cultural memory.¹ In reality, however, the group of people who squatted was much more diverse.

The sociologist Nazima Kadir has recently criticized the exclusionary nature of the stereotype of the anarchist squatter – ‘usually represented as a thin, white man in his late teens or early twenties’ –, noting that it has not only informed the media, but also the focus of many researchers and even the agendas of many activists themselves.² Researching the phenomenon of squatting in Leiden creates possibilities to both question and move beyond this image. As this project focuses not on (radical) squatter *movements*, but on the highly diverse multitude of *people* who took recourse to the act of squatting (alternative youths, political activists and working class families), the definition of squatting is challenged and broadened.³

An example of this is the family Van Gellecum, that tried to squat a house in a *hofje* owned by the protestant church. When the police arrived the same night to evict them, the father told the police that the family had nowhere to go, after which the police generally offered them a police cell to spend the night (they were explicitly not arrested). In the following days, mister Van Gellecum deliberately used the local media to pressure local institutions to provide him with a home, which eventually worked. ‘The police feel for us, every now and then they come by and chat with us – they even brought me a bottle of cider. I can stay up late and read.’⁴

Focusing on these individual cases allows for this project to not only document the diversity of the squatter population, but also to analyze how perceptions and images of (decent) housing and housing activism changed, what caused these changes and what its effects were.⁵ This is done by taking newspaper articles as a starting point, to see what was reported on local squatting events and how they were represented in local news media.

The project is directed by Bart van der Steen and Peter Burger, but depends on the work of a group of six students who have worked in close cooperation with Bart van der Steen for over a year. It seeks to combine

¹ B. van der Steen, ‘De papieren van de revolte. De kraakbeweging en haar geschiedschrijving’ in *Tijdschrift voor Stadsgeschiedenis* vol 9 (2014) nr. 2, 166-181.

² N. Kadir, ‘Myth and Reality in the Amsterdam Squatters’ Movement, 1975–2012’ in B. van der Steen et al (red.), *The City is Ours. Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe from the 1970s to the Present* (Oakland 2014), 21-61.

³ B. van der Steen, ‘De metropool voorbij. Krakkers en de weerklank van “1968” in Leiden’ in *Tijdschrift voor Stadsgeschiedenis* [te verschijnen]

⁴ ‘Krakers sliepen op bureau’ in *Leidsch Dagblad*, 19 augustus 1970; ‘Krakers sliepen ook vannacht weer in cel’ in *Leidsch Dagblad* 21 augustus 1970; ‘Gekraakt hofje’ in *Leidsch Dagblad* 24 augustus 1970; ‘Krakers kraken huis van ex-kraker’ in *Leidsch Dagblad* 12 september 1970.

⁵ On the links between media and social movements, see: R. Amann, *Der moralische Aufschrei. Presse und abweichendes Verhalten am Beispiel der Hausbesetzungen in Berlin* (Frankfurt am Main 1985); M. Hermann, *Hafenstrasse. Chronik und Analysen eines Konflikts* (Hamburg 1988).

academic research by Leiden University staff members with the training of student volunteers and to further academic outreach by organizing activities for a broader public. The first phase of this project was successfully concluded in August 2016, when the Digital Map of Squatter Events in Leiden, 1970-1990 was finished.⁶ The information for this map was drawn from the recently digitized Leiden Newspaper *Leidsch Dagblad*.⁷

In the coming year, we wish to establish a Digital Archive, which consists of an extended chronology of the main Leiden squatter events, digitized movement material (photos, pamphlets, newspapers) and ego-documents in the form of interviews and memoirs. The information in the Digital Archive will form the basis of a walking tour on the theme of squatting in the history of Leiden. Furthermore, it will form the basis of a scientific paper on the perceptions and experiences of squatters in Leiden. As a precursor to this, a paper on Leiden squatting in the 1970s will appear in the upcoming issue of *Tijdschrift voor Stadsgeschiedenis*.

The possibility of employing two Research Trainees would allow for a swift development of the Digital Archive. Even the help of one Research Trainee would already considerably benefit this ongoing project. The Research Trainees will help set up the website that will host the Digital Archive, finalize the extended chronology of squatter events in Leiden, digitize documents and assist in writing out and editing interviews. In doing so, the Research Trainees will play an important role in this project and develop both their research and organizational skills.

⁶ The map can be found on: <http://maps.squat.net/en/cities/leiden>. For a reflection on the project of mapping squatter movements internationally, see: T. Aquilera et al, 'Mapping the Movement: Producing maps of squatted social centres in Western Europe' (2016) on <https://www.trespass.network/?p=231&lang=en>.

⁷ On newspaper research for social movement history, see: C. Eilders, 'Die Darstellung von Protesten in ausgewählten deutschen Tageszeitungen' in D. Rucht, (eds.) *Protest in der Bundesrepublik. Strukturen und Entwicklungen* (Frankfurt am Main 2001), 275–311; Marcel Broersma, 'Nooit meer bladeren? Digitale krantenarchieven als bron' in *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* vol. 14 (2011) 29-55; Barbie Zelizer, 'Why memory's work on journalism does not reflect journalism's work on memory' in *Memory Studies* vol. 1 (2008), 79-87.

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 style. In helping with the organization of a historical walking tour through Leiden, they furthermore expand their cv with practical and organizational experience. The Research Trainees will play an important role in the development of the Digital Archive. They will help set up the website, do an important part of the newspaper research and co-author the extended chronology of squatting in Leiden. Additionally, they help digitize movement publications and assist in writing out and editing interviews.

Newspaper research consists of processing the information from an already compiled digital clippings archive, so as to create a chronology of the main squatter events in Leiden in the period 1970-1990. This chronology functions not only as a source of information for a broader audience, but also informs the work of the students who will focus on organizing interviews. Since the first six years have already been done, there is a clear format for this task, which can easily be adopted and expanded upon.

Digitizing movement material consists of scanning photos from squatters, as well as movement publications such as pamphlets, posters and newspapers. The main source of this material are the archives of the Leidse Kraakbond (held at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam), and of the Fabel van de Illegaal (Leiden), as well as material that squatters may wish to share with us.

While other students involved in the project will focus on doing interviews, the Research Trainees will assist the former in writing out the interviews and editing the material, so that it can be published through the Digital Archive website. The Research Trainees thus develop important skills in organizing, academic writing and editing.

Although preliminary knowledge on 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 have to be an expert in computers. 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 ReMa students.

Collaboration

In various ways, this project furthers the collaboration between the Institute of History and the LUCL Journalistiek en Nieuwe Media.

Peter Burger and Bart van der Steen have already collaborated on a paper that used 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 (to be submitted to T-SEG).

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 mold 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, in focusing on the creation of a Digital Archive as a means of making historical information accessible to a general audience as well as researchers, the exploitation of new media is well represented in the project's outline and goals.

Deliverables

This project aims to deliver within one year the following three things ('products'):

In the first place, this project works toward the development of a Digital Archive of Squatting in Leiden. This website will contain the already developed Digital Map of Squatter Events in Leiden, 1970-1990.

Furthermore, it will harbor an extended chronology of the main squatter events during this period. The first six years of this chronology have already been produced by one of the students, so that it will be easy to explain the format to new Research Trainees.

Additionally, the Digital Archive will contain digitized movement media, such as photos, pamphlets and other movement publications. This part of the project will focus on publications by the Leidse Kraakbond and the *Stadskrant*, as well as documents that interviewed squatters may wish to share.

Thirdly, the website will contain interviews, written out and edited in part by the Research Trainees. At this point, three interviews have been held, and a list of potential interviewees has been compiled.

The information obtained and processed through the making of the website will be used as the basis for a one hour walking tour on the history of squatting in Leiden, that will start at the Plexus and end at the new Vrijplaats on the Middelstegegracht. Through this tour, which will be open to the general public, the main events and developments in Leiden squatting will be narrated in a popular and accessible format.

Finally, the material processed for the Digital Archive will be presented to an international academic audience through a paper on the history of Leiden squatting, to be submitted to the *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research* or *Urban History*. Starting with the critique of Nazima Kadir on the exclusionary nature of the squatter stereotype, and noting that historical research on squatting has traditionally focused on Amsterdam and West-Berlin, this paper asks how the social profile of squatters in Leiden differed from this stereotype, how it developed over time (1970-1990) and how local newspapers negotiated institutional and activist representations of the squatting issue. Ultimately, this paper will aim to assess whether the city government responded differently to the actions of different kinds of squatters.

This paper will, among other materials, build on earlier publications by Bart van der Steen, such as K. Andresen & B. van der Steen (eds.), *A European Youth Revolt. European Perspectives on Youth Protest and Social Movements in the 1980s* (Palgrave 2016) and B. van der Steen et al (eds.) *The City is Ours. Squatting and Autonomous Movements in Europe, 1980-2014* (PM Press 2014).

Planning

This project would enable two Research Trainees to spend almost one day a week on this project, for the period of one year (1,5 fte). Their work is divided into four phases (excluding August as a holiday month) of each three months, which will all have a specific focus.

First Phase: December to February

The first phase will, after a brief introductory training period, focus on newspaper research and further development of the extended chronology of the main squatter events in 1970-1990. As this project is already set in motion and the first six years have already been covered, there is a format for this task that can easily be adopted by new Research Trainees. However, as this part of the project is very time consuming, some of it may spill over to the second phase.

Second Phase: March to May

This phase is dedicated to digitizing and processing movement media. Publications such as the Leidse Kraakbond's newspaper *Kraakhelder* and the main texts from the *Stadskrant* will be scanned and digitized, as well as pamphlets and posters. This phase may also see the scanning of photos that are being shared with us by interviewed squatters. This section of the project can easily be done in three months, perhaps even leaving some time to already start phase three.

Third Phase: June to July

While other students involved in the project will focus on doing interviews, the Research Trainees will assist the former in writing out the interviews and editing the material. Just as with the first phase, this may be time-consuming work. The focus therefor lies on quality over quantity, aiming to write out, edit and present a select number of interviews.

Fourth Phase: September to November

During this last phase, the previous work will come together in the conceptualization and organization of a walking tour and accompanying script that will make it possible to organize the walking tour regularly and allow for a smooth transfer of the required information from one tour guide to the other.

Simultaneously, Peter Burger and Bart van der Steen will set out to conceptualize and write the paper for the *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research* or *Urban History*, in close cooperation with the Research Trainees.

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