

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

PhD Conference 2021

14 October 2021



**Young Scholars at the
Intersection of Uncertainty,
Possibility and Responsibility**

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

PhD Conference 2021

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Young Scholars at the
Intersection of Uncertainty,
Possibility and Responsibility

Anthropologists, by vocation and by profession, stand at the intersection of the familiar and the unknown. From our desks to our field sites, we embrace uncertainties and the possibilities they engender.

Events since 2020, however, have generated unprecedented challenges for our academic careers and the communities we collaborate with. Most significant of these is the Covid-19 pandemic, and the various social re-configurations and re-interrogations it has prompted in the matters of health and social justice, labor, gender relations, education and conducting research, race and discrimination, and others.

Standing at this intersection, we are then challenged to ponder this crisis, its impacts, and possible near futures. Under such circumstances, the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology of Leiden University has organized the CADS PhD Conference 2021 to shed light on uncertainty and possibility in your careers and fields—by rethinking our responsibility and tracks of training together.

Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University studies the everyday practices of individuals and groups around the world in relation to the complex global challenges of diversity, sustainability, and digitalisation.

As a discipline concerned with social relationships across space and time, Anthropology provides an in-depth understanding of human behaviour in context essential for tackling today's social, economic, and political challenges. The strength of an anthropological approach lies in its ability to connect global crises to people's everyday strategies of resilience.

PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

	Time	Speakers	
Opening	13:00 – 13:10	Welcome	
	13:10 – 13:30	Keynote Address	
	13:30 – 13:50	Keynote Q & A	
Parallel Session 1		Session 1A	Session 1B
14:00 – 15:00	14:00 – 14:05	Introduction	Introduction
	14:05 – 14:15	Siyun Wu	Fang-i Chu
	14:15 – 14:25	Wiebe Ruijtenberg	Fernanda de Gobbi
	14:25 – 14:35	Nikki Mulder	Tamara Hernández
	14:35 – 15:00	Q & A	Q & A
BREAK			
Parallel Session 2		Session 2A	Session 2B
15:15 – 16:15	15:15 – 15:20	Introduction	Introduction
	15:20 – 15:30	Siyun Wu	Esther Van de Camp
	15:40 – 15:40	Ancois De Villiers	Isabela Vianna Pinho
	15:40 – 15:50	Q & A	Subhankar Dutta
	15:50 – 16:15		Q & A
BREAK			
Summary and Closing	16:25 – 16:30	Summary Session 1A	
	16:30 – 16:35	Summary Session 1B	
	16:35 – 16:40	Summary Session 2A	
	16:40 – 16:45	Summary Session 2B	
	16:45 – 17:10	Open Discussion	
	17:10 – 17:15	Closing remarks	

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



"Perspectives on Possibilities"

Dr Coco Kanters

Dr. Coco Kanters is program director at the interdisciplinary undergraduate program Liberal Arts and Sciences at Utrecht University. She teaches interdisciplinary skills and she coordinates the honours program of the School Liberal Arts.

Her research focuses on intersecting the anthropology of money and institutions with feminist economic theory and the politics of economies. She is especially interested in alternative finance, circular cities, as well as the digitization of money. Coco defended her NWO-funded (Talent Scheme) PhD, titled 'The Money Makers: The Institutionalisation of Alternative Currencies in North-West Europe', cum laude at Leiden University. She is currently working on a book manuscript based on this ethnography.

PARALLEL SESSION 1 | Thematizing Uncertainty

Session 1A

HANUM ATIKASARI (Session Chair)

SIYUN WU (Leiden University)

Lost in the Flow: Uncertainty in Estonian music heritage practice

WIEBE RUIJTENBERG (Leiden University)

On knowing Race in the Netherlands: Egyptian parents in Amsterdam

NIKKI MULDER (Leiden University)

Haunting as a temporal metaphor

Session 1B

ANDREA RAGRAGIO (Session Chair)

FANG-I CHU (Leiden University)

The shadow of prosperity: fame, wealth, and risks of being a diving coach on Green Island

FERNANDA DE GOBBI (Federal University of São Carlos)

The practice of popular loan sharking as a survival strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil

TAMARA HERNÁNDEZ (Utrecht University)

Irregularity and Uncertainty as a way of belonging

PARALLEL SESSION 2 | Approaches, Method, Fieldwork

Session 2A

MARIA VASILE (Session Chair)

SIYUN WU (Leiden University)

“But we appreciate your expertise”: working as a PhD. in the heritage field

ANCOIS DE VILLIERS (Leiden University and Stellenbosch University)

Coherency and creative tensions: A transdisciplinary research design for a complex, contested and uncertain context for landscape restoration

Session 2B

WENLAN WANG (Session Chair)

ESTHER VAN DE CAMP (Leiden University)

A Socialised Life Cycle Assessment

ISABELA VIANNA PINHO (Federal University of São Carlos)

An ethnography about the cocaine market in Brazil: challenges and possibilities

SUBHANKAR DUTTA (Indian Institute of Technology)

‘From Anonymity to Familiarity’: Ethnography, Pandemic, and the New Lessons

ABSTRACTS

Session 1A

SIYUN WU (Leiden University)

Lost in the Flow: Uncertainty in Estonian music heritage practice

As David Lowenthal eminently points out, the past is a foreign country. Playing music from the past, even from the culture that one sees his/her own root in, could be just as foreign and uncertain. In Estonia, where people often regard themselves as a 'Singing Nation', 'a country inspired by music', music heritage stands as a source of entertainment, artistic creativity and more importantly, of identity, nationally and individually. With rich collections of folklore archive and music recordings being increasingly digitalised and freely accessible, music heritage is kept "alive" among not only professional musicians but also common public across regions and generations in the country. Attending to archive to approach music from the past, the prominent sonic material engenders uncertainty and challenges for Estonian practitioners to trace and recreate music on the one hand, and on the other, open space for alternative experiences, skills and creativity. In this paper, with a small experimental performance on site if possible, I want to show how the exploration through sound and listening I learned from Estonian practitioners, which seem less certain and accurate than music score and note-reading pillared in Western-European classic music, could lead to new aesthetic, engagements and uses of music heritage, which in essence is always fluid and alive in itself.

WIEBE RUITENBERG (Leiden University)

On knowing Race in the Netherlands: Egyptian parents in Amsterdam

In the wake of the Second World War, as race-thinking was declared to be something of the past, enduring racial inequalities were denied as such, as manifestations of race/racism, and instead understood as class, cultural, religious, or immigrant problems (*Ibid*: 356). This has certainly been the case in the Netherlands (Essed and Hoving, 2014; Wekker, 2016), where racism has been ignored, denied, and disavowed through 'taken for granted claims of race neutrality, color blindness and [a] discourse of tolerance' (Essed and Nimako 2006: 282). In recent years have race and racism become a topic of intense public debates again, in large part thanks to the efforts of anti-black Pete and black lives matter activists. Against this backdrop, I found that Egyptian parents in Amsterdam often sensed that their children were discriminated against, for example when they were pushed towards lower-tier schools, but were never sure, because there were always alternative explanations, and surely did not discuss their concerns with their children's teachers, as they knew well that doing so could jeopardize their relationships. Instead, they developed all sorts of alternative strategies to divert racism, with varying outcomes. In this paper, I argue that my interlocutors doubt about what is, what is true, and what to do in the Netherlands, results both from the legacies of Dutch raceless racism and the ways in which racism is nowadays exposed, or made legible.

ABSTRACTS

NIKKI MULDER (Leiden University)

Haunting as a temporal metaphor

In this presentation, I explore the analytical potential of haunting as a temporal metaphor. I take my cue from David Zeitlyn who recently observed that the anthropology of the future suffers from a lack of concepts that, moreover, are applied by various scholars to mean very different things (Zeitlyn 2020, 296). I develop the concept of haunting to grasp the apparent paradoxical temporalities at play in places of chronic violence where untimely deaths can be experienced as always imminent and sudden at the same time. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in black, working-class communities in New Orleans, I show how people orient themselves to a present filled with uncertain, negative potentialities (Vigh 2011) by anticipating violence and its potentially fatal consequences. Yet these moments of violence cannot be understood solely as anticipated events, because the temporal nature of violent encounters, and the injuries and untimely deaths they produce, is one of shock, terror, and horrification. So, although ghosts in a classical sense tend to be understood as coming from the past, fatal violence in places of chronic crisis may be thought of as a specter that has not yet arrived and that haunts and jolts the present.

Session 1B

FANG-I CHU (Leiden University)

The shadow of prosperity: fame, wealth, and risks of being a diving coach on Green Island

This presentation center around local residents' contradictive attitude toward being a coach of diving activities on Green Island, Taiwan: both being a popular, high-income job, and a source of uncertainty and anxiety due to high rates of accidents. Such attitude connotes a distrust of the certificate system applied to the coach. Due to the lack of legislation, several international diver training organizations issued different levels of certifications for recreational diving in Taiwan, based on varied levels of knowledge and skills, from beginner to professional coaches. However, to what extent these certifications are valid is questionable in multiple domains. First, from a local perspective, whether the certificate reflects the coaches' capacity in terms of familiarities to local underwater environment and personal teaching skills, remained contested. Second, from the state's governmental perspective, these certificates do not lead to a formal recognition of recreational diving, as an occupational category and result in weak protection. These circumstances push coaches into a more precarious status, financially and mentally, and can endanger the well-being of their clients/students

ABSTRACTS

FERNANDA DE GOBBI (Federal University of São Carlos) The practice of popular loan sharking as a survival strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil

In Brazil, the transition from a prosperous economy in the 2000s to a scenario of impoverishment aggravated by the covid-19 pandemic is an unavoidable issue. Thinking about the arrangements that are being experienced in this new scenario of impoverishment, and about the agency of informal and illegal markets, in view of the practice of loan sharking as a survival strategy in Brazil, is what my paper proposes to discuss. Activating the interfaces of Economic and Urban Sociologies, the research is inscribed in the emerging literature that analyses the informal-illegal transactions that compose legal and illegal markets, in different scales, a debate that has been contemporarily constructed.

The informal-illegal lending system in Brazil, largely filled by loan sharks, is still a gap. The understanding of this phenomenon, captured in its social and political specificities, seems to be able to contribute to an already consolidated discussion of studies on the popular economy worldwide. Considering that different researches concerned with these themes produced a structural approach to the economy, often concerned with global institutions, the discussion about survival strategies in Brazilian peripheral universes, from an ethnography of popular loan sharking, seems relevant. This work takes into account these dimensions and focuses on the particularities of the Brazilian experience, and on the specificities of the circulation of money in the popular strata in the current pandemic context, in which the practice of loan sharking is changing every day.

TAMARA HERNÁNDEZ (Utrecht University) Irregularity and Uncertainty as a way of belonging

While conducting fieldwork with migrants in Valparaíso, Chile from December 2020 onwards, I have developed several ways of approaching my participants. With some I get to walk along while they are working on the streets, with others we meet on a cell phone screen while we both cook or prepare things for our kids' next day in day-care. In other cases, we get to sit down on a bench at a local park and talk over coffee. The different realities in terms of family situation, perception of risks, employment condition, among others, have set the basis for my approach to these men and women that so generously share some time with me. My research focuses on their political subject formation as activist in different migrants' organizations and I am gradually trying to apply a biographical approach to the interviews. However, of course Covid-19 takes up a big part of our conversations and rather than fighting it I have tried to see it as a way for me to start understanding how they confront uncertainty, how they maneuver control and the strict movement constraints imposed, and overall, how this pandemic has rearranged their lives. This presentation aims to reflect on how my fieldwork has been marked by the pandemic, and how the irregular status of my participants relates to the ways they have strengthened their networks and organizations to face the economic lash out of the different lockdowns implemented during these past months.

ABSTRACTS

Session 2A

SIYUN WU (Leiden University)

“But we appreciate your expertise”: working as a PhD. in the heritage field

Heritage is a powerful signifier of the past, inheritance, ownership and identity. It is also a combination of policy, practice and philosophy that spans across various scales, boundaries and power relations. As an Anthropologist PhD. working on heritage practices in the sociocultural context of “the others”, in my case Estonia, I started my fieldwork by positioning myself first and foremost an apprentice of Estonian ways of understanding and practicing heritage, of Estonian culture and social relations. Such positionality as an apprentice, a learner, an explorer of other ways of doing and thinking engenders uncertainty and at the same time possibility. One has to probe into or even stumble through every possible aspects to learn and to find the likely connections. While feeling being a student learning about heritage practices and Estonian life from scratch, however, I was reminded by my local teachers at one point that I was viewed beyond merely a PhD. Doing her fieldwork learning local heritage. Questions, aspirations, and even requests asked “back from the field” lead me to other roles and responsibilities I might and could have while acting in and engaging with the field.

ANCOIS DE VILLIERS (Leiden University, Stellenbosch University) Coherency and creative tensions: A transdisciplinary research design for a complex, contested and uncertain context for landscape restoration

Landscape-based initiatives to support the restoration of natural resources are potentially undermined by a predominant emphasis on technical interventions and biophysical attributes of “success” in practice. This narrow focus overlooks the powerful psycho-social dimensions of transformative processes and the importance of considering interconnected ecological and social outcomes. Transdisciplinarity, an increasingly popular conceptual and methodological framework, facilitates the integration of *inter alia* ecology and social sciences as well as researcher-practitioner collaborations that could help to address this gap. However, transitioning transdisciplinarity from aspiration to practice remains a challenge. Implementation is hindered by fundamental disparities in the knowledge systems, worldviews, norms, needs, expectations, and incentives of those involved. These tensions cannot be easily reconciled as they are rooted in deep-seated paradigms of values and beliefs.

This challenge can be particularly intimidating for a young researcher, contributing additional burdens onto a PhD candidate. Yet, a transdisciplinary approach provides the freedom and creativity to adapt one’s research in a volatile context, and work towards a meaningful academic and social contribution. Therefore, this presentation shares the development of a transdisciplinary PhD involving a researcher-practitioner partnership and integrating environmental anthropology and conservation ecology to explore case studies of transformative multistakeholder initiatives implemented in South African landscapes. The PhD will focus on the role of social capital, “inspiration” (including values, beliefs, meaning and identity) and learning in collaborative restoration projects within a complex uncertain and contested context.

ABSTRACTS

Session 2B

ESTHER VAN DE CAMP (Leiden University)

A Socialised Life Cycle Assessment

This study presents a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of gold from Eastern Region Uganda at the intersection of uncertainty, possibility and responsibility. The LCA is part of a PhD that researches transformations to sustainability in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM). LCA evaluates inputs, outputs and environmental impacts of a product's life cycle from cradle to grave. As anthropologist, with a background in industrial ecology, it is my aim to socialise this exercise. Core steps of the life cycle, of which I compare sets of technology options, are: extraction, crushing, washing, and concentration and refinement. An ethnographic perspective highlights the associated dynamics, such as the accessibility of technologies and the interruptions (weather and momentum) and underground materialities (water and gold vein structures) that affect technology usage. The global pandemic interrupted my fieldwork in 2020 as well as LCA data collection. Challenging as this was, and is, a potential return to Uganda would actually enable discussing with miners a more advanced assessment. An important take away from the pandemic is the endorsement that miners "have so many challenges", as Pijpers and Luning (2021) argued. Tough stories about rains, groundwater and mine collapse have, since my return to the Netherlands, outnumbered stories about COVID-19. Familiar questions about responsibility (regarding both writing mining worlds and relations with co-labourers) gained new context in the pandemic, but should be addressed in a more relational perspective.

ISABELA VIANNA PINHO (Federal University of São Carlos)

An ethnography about the cocaine market in Brazil: challenges and possibilities

The expansion of illegal markets is an emerging theme in socio-anthropological literature. With the arrival of Brazilian criminal groups at the borders, in ports and airports, the scale of circulation of goods expanded, consolidating global circuits. The relationship of these economies with Brazilian conflict has also been highlighted, but little is known about its operation in everyday life and its practical modes of expansion. Considering the enormous economic strength of these markets, their transnationalization and their violent effects, especially in the favelas, the research aims to contribute to empirical studies on illegal markets and violence in Brazil. As an objective, this research intends to analyze how money and violence are socially distributed in the illegal cocaine market. That is observed from an ethnographic research, which reconstructs the double journey of cocaine that crosses the Port (wholesale) and the Pouca Farinha favela (retail) in Santos, located in São Paulo state. With the Covid-19 pandemic, this ethnography has been reconfigured, anyway ethnographers have to often deal with uncertainties and possibilities in our field sites and in our careers. I'm doing several interviews (online and face-to-face) and collecting a lot of news and documents. However, I face difficulties doing fieldwork, due to the risks and responsibilities with myself and interlocutors. In addition, this research has particular challenges for dealing with crime, like sometimes people are not comfortable to talk online. So, I'm challenged to reflect on many pandemic effects, in which Brazil is being greatly impacted, especially about the circulation of drugs.

ABSTRACTS

SUBHANKAR DUTTA (Indian Institute of Technology)

'From Anonymity to Familiarity': Ethnography, Pandemic, and the New Lessons

The onslaught of the ongoing pandemic has hit the globe really hard. The massive death tolls, public restrictions, government mandates, and the intensification of the pre-existing social inequalities have brought new questions related to different conceptual flips of ethnography, field research, the idea of locality, and community research. Whereas crisis, disaster, pandemic, and its associated happenings have never been something out of the critical purview of anthropological engagement, the recent emergence of digital drive, globalized culture, and transnational subjects are bringing new dimensions to the spectrum of doing ethnography and immersive fieldwork. The paper aims at sharing the multiple shades of doing ethnography with a rural festival community in Bengal (India) during the pandemic time: the challenges, possibilities, and innovations. It focuses on the reciprocal relationship that a field and the ethnographer have, where each of them tries to learn from the other through various intersections of intersubjective space, contexts, values, and ideas. With an embodied process of accommodating the uncertainties of the pandemic within the rural folk pantheon, the communities are looking for an alternative narrative of crisis. The paper tries to critically assess where a young ethnographer stands in these larger uncertainties, within and beyond the research project, and imagines a new future to emerge for ethnographic research in general and the community in particular.

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