

We congratulate the winners of the Prince Bernhard Scholarship 2023: Lieke Prins and Pablo Campaña. They will receive a 5,000 euro grant to conduct their innovative fieldwork, and in doing so contribute to social scientific research in Latin America.



The history of Lago Agrio: the intimacy with the jungle in a petroleum city in the Amazon, 1969-1989

In 1967, Texaco found oil in the northeast of Ecuador. Two years later, the first peasants arrived by canoe. Within the next two decades the place, called Lago Agrio, became the biggest city in the Ecuadorian Amazon. For these reasons, the history of the city has sublimated oil, at the expense of undermining the human relation with the jungle.

In the first decade colonist had to learn the agricultural practices from indigenous people. Only with this knowledge and their close observation of the forest, were they able to cultivate their lands and drain the swamp to build the new town. After ten years, in 1979, the oil infrastructure was massive, but the interaction with the jungle was permanent. Peasant's farms became a membrane between the jungle and the city because many of them did not have a fence in the backyard, letting different animals use the space. In addition, the self-building of houses made people aware of the different kinds of timber that the forest had. In their everyday life, fishing, hunting, and using the river to collect water was part of the routine. In the eighties, most of the city had an organic urban infrastructure that hosted more than 20.000 people. The research proposes to understand all these different relations between Lago Agrio's inhabitants with the surrounding landscape during the first two decades of urbanization.



Painting futures: activism and new opportunities in street art in medellín, colombia

This is an ongoing PhD study about street art practices in Medellín that aims to develop a novel theory of resistance practices and processes of commercialization and legalization within popular culture studies. It tells the story of how street artists, on the one hand, employ strategies to translate social imaginaries into sociopolitical murals confronting issues of injustice, inequality, and structural violence; and, on the other hand, consider economic opportunities of legal, institutional, and commercial assignments. Since the start of this participatory research project in 2016, I have unraveled strategies of young artists to respond to major crises such as the peace dialogues, the referendum on the peace agreement and the (lack of) implementation, the 2018 presidential elections, the COVID-19 pandemic, el paro Nacional, and the presidential campaign and election of 2022. Amidst these political tensions, the reception of street art changed and the popularity of the practice increased, provoking processes of legalization and commercialization. After studying the considerations of artists regarding the economic opportunities and cultural co-optation of their practice, I will focus on the perspective of authorities and policymakers concerning legalization and commercialization. This contributes to the current debate within urban studies on 'post-politization' and 'post-democratization' where culture and sustainability frames are used in new urban interventions. Positive framing helps mayoral administrations to build a political constituency since it is impossible to disagree with interventions – however, the frames cover up the social and political implications of the urban interventions. Street art can be(come) part of these 'post-political' approaches and can be used in these cultural, livable, and sustainability frames. By stimulating street art projects authorities can push their political agendas and control the narrative of the creative public expressions. Studying the perceptions, political agendas, and strategies of authorities and policymakers is therefore relevant to our understanding of 'post-politization' and 'post-democratization' approaches.