

Propositions PhD Thesis

Pleasure near the Port: Spaces and Legacies of Notorious Entertainment Culture in 20th-Century Rotterdam Vincent Baptist

1. Within the particular context of modern port city history, the concept of ‘pleasurescapes’ can be utilized to establish a more long-term research perspective that links former sailortowns to contemporary, revitalized waterfront areas. (See chapter 1)
2. The various writings on the Zandstraatbuurt by Rotterdam reporter M. J. Brusse during the first decades of the twentieth century are illustrative of the ambivalences and contradictions inherent in urban nostalgia. In addition, Brusse’s writings also show how sentiments of nostalgia are not necessarily consistently sustained over time. (See chapter 2)
3. The visually stereotyped character of a maritime urban pleasure environment like that of the Schiedamsedijk, together with the figures that populate it (sailors, prostitutes, street kids), easily generates opposing perceptions of safety. At the same time, it also holds cultural and commercial potential that can help negate or overcome such oppositions. (See chapter 3)
4. The disintegration of Rotterdam’s Katendrecht as a disreputable twentieth-century pleasure district was fundamentally different from that of the Zandstraatbuurt and the Schiedamsedijk, as it showcased how port city authorities were confronted with the outcomes of their own progress-driven ideals and civilization offensives, through protests of residents pointing them at their negligence, indecision and stigmatization regarding specific local communities. (See chapter 4)
5. Despite the predominantly negative connotations linked to gentrification in public debates and discourses on urban neighborhood redevelopments, observations and interactions with local residents can uncover more multifaceted and nuanced views on the phenomenon, including attitudes of appreciation. This is particularly the case when it comes to the upgrading of the built environment in ways that restore and enhance its past recognizability, as the example of Katendrecht shows. (See chapter 5)
6. As the term ‘Digital Humanities’ is steadily evolving into a pleonasm, History, as an academic discipline and field of study, is increasingly confronted with a fundamental transformation that replaces its traditional focus on (the transmission of) knowledge of the past by digitally oriented skills and data-driven methods to unlock, re-examine and present that knowledge. This inevitable development should be seen as an exciting opportunity, rather than a threat, for the future of the discipline.
7. A researcher *writes*: writing regularly, and in a variety of formats, is ultimately what keeps the research process going. A tweet can become an article, a blog post can turn into a dissertation (free after Jean-Marie Straub).
8. A researcher *listens*: more than often, the most useful and clear-cut questions about one’s research do not so much come from the closest academic colleagues, but rather from friends and family who are further removed from the subject matter at hand.
9. Rather than the transfer of scholarly knowledge and expertise, the most important role of research supervisors lies in the stimulation of (self-)confidence, motivation and enthusiasm. The same goes for teachers in their interactions with students.
10. With the COVID-19 pandemic as an unmistakable catalyst, the future of (international and collaborative) research and education will be shaped by telework, Zoom calls and Google Docs, not necessarily because this is the most preferred or desired way of working, but rather because it is the fastest and most productive one.
11. Team work makes the dream work.