

# Europe Uncanny: academics on contemporary society and culture

## Abstracts

for the Conference of the **Société Européenne de Culture (NL)** on 20 november 2019  
Universiteits Bibliotheek van de Universiteit van Amsterdam, Singel 425,  
de Doelenzaal

### Debra Solomon

*Soil in the City for the Anthropocene*

This talk is about citizen-expert collaboration with more than humans in the design, implementation and maintenance of public space urban greens in Amsterdam. Metropolitan natures are valued in Dutch spatial planning according to how they are 'experienced' by human citizens. Yet with urban greens planted as monocultures composed of expansive lawns, tall trees, and defensive shrubs, Amsterdam's greenest boroughs have both highest levels of obesity and lowest levels of outdoor physical activity. Counted among the negative effects of urban natures so designed, are costly maintenance, allergenic plantings, lack of use, and the perception that the pocket wilds are unsafe. Expert citizen-groups are readying themselves to access, steward and 'produce' these public green spaces in new ways and for different purposes, despite being enrolled in policy documents as consumers of these natural world leisure landscapes. As climate chaos and plummeting biodiversity further pressure urban natures to perform ecological roles, how can rethinking the role of the more than human produce more accessible urban greens?

In this talk, Solomon brings forth the notion of multispecies urbanism. The multispecies urbanism concept was first formulated in *Soil in the City: The Socio-Environmental Substrate* where the chapter suggests a new paradigm in which urban natures are stakeholders in their own right – engaging with civil society reciprocally. Multispecies urbanism addresses the fact that the global effects of capitalist urbanisation unequally affect urban inhabitants, and is a proposal demonstrating a form of urban development empowering urban ecosystems and their functioning in their own right.

<https://dutchartinstitute.eu/page/1990/debra-solomon>

### Thijs Lijster

*Critical commons / commoning critique; on the dialectic of the common and critique*

In the past decade, there have been several philosophical, societal and artistic critiques of critique. Although such attacks have their reason, I will argue that we should not give up on critique too hastily, even though that might mean that we have to search for alternative concepts of critique. What I want to do in my lecture is to consider the concept of critique in relation to the concept of the 'common', that has been so widely debated in recent political philosophy and art theory. To do that I will first discuss the tensions between these two concepts, and next try to go beyond this tension by bringing them into a dialectical relationship, by investigating the implications of a 'critical common' and a 'common critique'.

<https://www.rug.nl/staff/t.e.lijster/>

### Erdem Colak

*The Challenging of National Images by Contemporary Artists in Turkey*

This lecture will address the construction of national images of Turkey and how those images have been given new meanings by contemporary artists over the past three decades. As can be seen in many nation states, symbols have also been created to represent Turkey. These symbols vary, according to the type of government in the country in question. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic by Atatürk (1923), discourses and symbols of a secular-

nationalist nature were dominant. In the 1990s however this gradually changed as religious-nationalist parties began to gain strength. Also starting in the 1990s many contemporary Turkish artists began to tackle the question of the national image. Using irony and deconstruction, artists examined the scope of the national image and what it represents. This lecture will consider the national images of Turkey as they have evolved over the past century. It will ask how artists draw attention to political deficiencies in their country through the use of national images.

<https://www.uva.nl/profiel/c/o/e.colak/e.colak.html>

## **Hanna Muehlenhoff**

*Women, Peace and Security 20 years in the making: how the Netherlands implement the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda*

Almost 20 years ago, the United Nations Security Council decided on Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). In short, this almost revolutionary agenda focuses on four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. The goal is to consider the specific situation of women but also of gender relations more broadly in contexts of conflict and war, but also in the prevention of war and processes of peacemaking and peacekeeping. More than 70 countries around the world have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement the resolution. The existing literature on NAPs in the Global North is critical of how states use the WPS Agenda for traditional security goals and hardly consult civil society. The Dutch NAP has not been studied yet although it builds on a very different relationship between the government and civil society as Dutch civil society organizations are partners and signatories of the NAP. My analysis focuses on the governance structure of the Dutch NAP and argues that, on the one hand, its cooperative character has created a Dutch community around WPS and has led to a more comprehensive security understanding in the NAP. On the other hand, the NAP is mainly a funding instrument only available to signatory organizations. The funding requirements have created competition between different civil society groups, rewarding big development and peace organizations and side-lining women's rights and diaspora organizations.

<https://www.uva.nl/profiel/m/u/h.l.muehlenhoff/h.l.muehlenhoff.html>

## **Ronald Kroeze**

*A Rediscovery of Corruption in Western Democracies*

Over the past three decades corruption has become a subject of intense debate in Western Democracies. Not that it had been an unfamiliar phenomenon before, but the recent spate of academic, political, and journalistic publications have propelled it to hitherto unknown levels of general awareness. Moreover, it led to the realization that large-scale corruption is not confined to authoritarian regimes and "third-world" countries only, as was the dominant idea for a long time. In my contribution I will focus on how to understand this rediscovery of corruption by, first, looking at the eruption of a series of corruption scandals that came to occupy the mass media and political elites alike, especially since the 1970s. Next, I will discuss the rise of international anticorruption laws and globally active organizations that have been established with the purpose to curb corruption in recent decades. Finally, I will explain why accusations of corruption are such powerful weapons in politics, which will help to understand why the rhetoric of corruption is used more frequently, not the least by and against populist politicians.

<https://research.vu.nl/en/persons/dbr-kroeze>

## Wiebe Hommes

### *Human Rights in Europe, an interaction between European and national legal spheres*

'The most important human rights document in the world', a 'civilizing instrument' and a lawyer noting that 'where the United States has its constitution, we have international law!'. These are but a few qualifications of the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty which, along with its accompanying European Court of Human Rights, has evolved into arguably one of the most authoritative instruments for human rights protection today.

It is therefore all the more striking to note this position is something of a very recent date. Although the treaty was set up in 1949, it went through a slumbering existence tucked away in the margins of public, legal and academic attention for almost 30 years, before, in a flurry of activity, its meaning and standing changed in a revolutionary way.

How did we come to appreciate European human rights in the way we do now? In this lecture we will follow the development of this treaty, not in a traditional legal narrative of ever expanding process but rather as a story of metamorphosis, a fundamental change in meaning over and in time. In doing so, we come across questions such as the merit of European human rights overseas, the discovery of the European Court as a problem solver and the unexpected influence of the Coup d'état by the colonels in Greece.

<https://www.uva.nl/profiel/h/o/w.e.hommess/w.e.hommess.html>