2 Positions, Governing and Building the City (1200–1600), UCLouvain

UCLouvain, Belgium
Application deadline: May 15, 2024

Nele De Raedt, UCLouvain

Within the research group “Super-Positions” at the Research Institute for Landscape, Architecture, Built Environment (LAB, UCLouvain), we are hiring

- One PhD-student in the History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture (full-time, 48 months, proposed starting date September 2024)
- One Post-Doctoral researcher (0.8 FTE, 28 months, proposed starting date September 2024. These terms of contract are negotiable).

The positions are part of the research project, “Governing and Building the City (1200-1600): Mirrors-for-Magistrates as a lieu for theoretical reflection on architecture”, within an Incentive Grant for Scientific Research, financed by the FNRS (Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique).

Project description

The study of late medieval architectural theory in a European context presents methodological challenges, as the rise of architectural theory as a discipline is primarily linked to the emergence of the architectural treatise as a literary genre in the Italian Renaissance. Historians of architectural theory have mainly studied these treatises, as their authors chose to theorize architecture as an independent discipline and practice. Apart from treatises, other writings on how to make architecture, providing guidelines for design and construction (such as building manuals), are continuously being included in the corpus, suggesting these too present theories on what architecture is and how it should be made. However, architecture was also discussed in other texts, submerging it in discussions on politics, ethics or religion. In such texts, architecture is not discussed as an independent discipline, defined by its own internal principles of good practice, but as something that can serve an end, external to itself. Historians of architectural theory, focusing on geographical areas both North and South of the Alps, have started to turn to these texts, recognizing these too present theories on architecture, even if (and especially because) this theoretical reflection is subordinate to, or in function of, other political, moral, religious… questions. This project furthers this emerging tradition, proposing to study political advice books, addressed to urban magistrates (such as citizens, alderman, mayors) for the theories they present about architecture.

The project specifically turns to this kind of literature, variously called Stadtsregimentslehre, Ratsliteratur or Mirrors-for-Magistrates in contemporary scholarship, as it is mainly interested in how the built environment of the city was conceived in relation to questions of good governance in the

late medieval period. The Italian Peninsula, the Low Countries and the German Lands, and this between 1200 and 1600, will be the main focus of our study. During this period, cities across these areas not only developed into flourishing entities that were governed by rulers with overlapping and complicated jurisdictions. Citizens, alderman, mayors… also actively engaged in shaping the physical environment of the city. In other words, focusing on this period also provides the possibility to study whether and how the ideas discussed in the texts were reflected in the built environment.

The project thus aims study how the built environment of the city was theorized in relation to questions on good governance in the late medieval period. It also aims, more broadly, to extend the body of sources relevant to the study of architectural theory for the period 1200-1600; to explore the interactions between concepts developed within political theories on urban governance and architectural theories on the city; to broaden our knowledge of the socio-political function attributed to architectural patronage and design in a certain historical context; and to create new criteria and methods to discuss architectural theories comparatively between different geographical regions. The project considers the urban realm as a specific microcosmos in which ideas (and ideals) on the social, political and physical structure of the city cannot be separated from one another.

Including an approach coming from the Digital Humanities, the project will engage ditigal tools to perform text analysis and studies of the built environment of the city. Experience with the Digital Humanities is not a requirement to apply, but will be considered an asset. Prospective candidates should, first and foremost, have the curiostiy or interest to critically explore the possibilities of the digital humanities for the research project.

Applications:

Within the project, we offer a full-time PhD scholarship (48 months) and a 0.8 FTE position for a Post-Doctoral Researcher (28 months).

The PhD Student

Your main assignment will be to participate in the research project, carrying out a PhD thesis within the field of history, theory and criticism of architecture under the supervision of the PI, prof. Nele De Raedt. You will study Johann Von Soest’s poem Wy men wol eyn statt regyrn sol in relation to the political and architectural context of late-medieval Worms. Von Soest presented this poem on good urban governance to the city council in October 1495. The case is particularly rich, allowing not only to question how the poem created its own forms of architectural theory, but also how this thinking on architecture related to a complicated political and architectural context.

Your research activities will include an in-depth study of Johann Von Soest’s poem in relation to the political and architectural developments in the city. For this work, you will have the opportunity to be involved in research seminars and workshops throughout the project. This includes doctoral training, focusing on the digital humanities, and the development and writing of a thesis more generally. You will equally have the opportunity to perform research stays abroad, both for on-site studies and archival research.

Your profil:
- We are looking for an excellent candidate who is passionate about research in the field of the history, theory and criticism of architecture.
- You hold a Master degree in one of the following fields: architecture, art history, history, neo-latin studies, literary studies, or related fields (or you will have obtained it by the time you start to work).
- You can demonstrate excellent study results, or you have distinguished yourself in a similar way during your academic career or professional life. You are able to illustrate your writing skills by means of an article or master thesis.
- You show a pro-active attitude and have the commitment and ability to work as part of a team.
- You are able to work independently and take initiative in conducting research.
- You have an excellent knowledge of English and German. The ability to read Latin sources will be considered an asset.
- You have experience, or at least an interest in the Digital Humanities.

Working conditions:
You will participate in an innovative research project and join a small but dynamic research team. You will be part of the research group “Super-Positions” at the research Institute of Landscape, Architecture and Built Environment (LAB) at UCLouvain (https://www.super-positions.org/). The research team is located in Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels. The status is that of a full-time research fellowship for a period of 48 Months.

To apply for this position, please send the following documents to professor Nele De Raedt (nele.deraedt@uclouvain.be) and this by 15 May 2024 at the latest:
- A cover letter presenting the motivations to apply for the position
- A detailed cv
- Academic transcripts of the candidate for their Bachelor and Masters degree
- A table of contents and extract from the Master's thesis (or an academic publication if you have one)
- One recommendation letter

Short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview over the course of May/June 2024. The proposed starting date is September 2024.

The Post-Doctoral Researcher

We equally offer a 0.8 FTE appointment for a post-doctoral researcher (28 months). These terms of contract are, however, negotiable.

Your main assignment will be to study the corpus of texts, in close collaboration with the PI, and engaging tools from digital text analysis. This part of the project is specifically interested in how discussions on the built environment of the city related to political concepts such as authority, good rulership, social harmony, public health, the common good… Candidates from diverse disciplinary backgrounds are welcome to apply (i.e. architectural historians, political historians, literary studies…).

You will have the opportunity to participate in workshops and seminars, including training in the

digital humanities with a specific focus on digital text analysis. You will equally have the opportunity to organize an international conference in close collaboration with the PI, leading up to the publication of an edited volume. International mobility, to consult library and archival collections across Europe, will be required.

Your profil:
- We are looking for an excellent candidate who is interested in text analysis, and this in relation to questions of good governance and the built environment of the city.
- You hold a PhD in one of the following fields: architecture, art history, (political) history, literary studies, or related fields (or you will have obtained it by the time you start to work).
- You show a pro-active attitude and have the commitment and ability to work as part of a team.
- You are able to work independently and take initiative in conducting research.
- You have a good knowledge of English, German and Italian. The ability to read Latin sources will be considered an asset.
- You have experience, or at least an interest in digital text analysis.

Working conditions:
You will participate in an innovative research project and join a small but dynamic research team. You will be part of the research group “Super-Positions” at the research Institute of Landscape, Architecture and Built Environment (LAB) at UCLouvain (https://www.super-positions.org/). The research team is located in Louvain-la-Neuve and Brussels. The proposed working schedule is 0.8 FTE for 28 months, yet these terms are negotiable.

To apply for this position, please send the following documents to professor Nele De Raedt (nele.deraedt@uclouvain.be) and this by 15 May 2024 at the latest:
- A cover letter presenting the motivations to apply for the position
- A detailed cv
- A recent publication
- One recommendation letter

Short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview over the course of May/June 2024. The proposed starting date is September 2024.

For questions or more information about the project, please contact prof. Nele De Raedt (nele.deraedt@uclouvain.be), PI of the project.

Reference:
JOB: 2 Positions, Governing and Building the City (1200-1600), UCLouvain. In: ArtHist.net, Mar 7, 2024 (accessed Nov 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/41391>.