

Louis Volont

Interdisciplinary social scientist, focusing on future-making practices in the urban public sphere

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RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER

HafenCity Universität Hamburg | Urban Future-Making College | August 2022–present

- Project 'Sacred Acts in Secular Times: Exploring The Dramaturgy of Urban Future-Making'
- Analyzed narratives, rituals, and symbolic practices among future-making citizen collectives
- Organized research seminars and lecture series, coordinated collective publication projects
- Advised over 20 doctoral students on research design and the application of social theory

FULBRIGHT POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

MIT | Program in Art, Culture & Technology | September 2021–June 2022

- Project 'Choreographing the City: Seeking Sustainable Collaborations between Urban Publics and Policy in Boston'
- Conducted action research with dancers, engineers, and policymakers to reimagine Boston's mobility futures
- Coordinated the project's final exhibition and developed a year-long series of debate evenings

DOCTORAL RESEARCHER

University of Antwerp | Faculty of Social Sciences | October 2016–January 2021

- Project 'Shapeshifting: The Cultural Production of Common Space' (dissertation as monograph)
- Conducted participatory action research with citizen collectives in Rotterdam, Berlin, and London
- Developed a typology of urban future-making practices through Lefebvre's spatial triad

JUNIOR RESEARCHER

Centre 'Arts in Society' (Groningen) and Smart Belgium | January 2013–September 2016

- Performed qualitative research for the project 'Sustainable Creativity in the Post-Fordist City'
- Conducted in-depth interviews and a survey on the precarity of creative labor in European cities

DIPLOMAS

DOCTOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: SOCIOLOGY

University of Antwerp | Faculty of Social Sciences | 2021

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SOCIOLOGY

KU Leuven | Faculty of Social Sciences | 2012

BACHELOR OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

KU Leuven | Faculty of Social Sciences | 2011

PUBLICATIONS

DOUBLE-BLIND PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Volont, L., Altstädt, S. & Hawxwell, T. (2026) (Forthcoming). Threshold temporality: Understanding times of in-betweenness. *Time & Society* 35(3).

Volont, L. (2026) (Forthcoming). Iconic architecture, meaning-making, and the social drama of Antwerp's 'Farmers' Tower'. *Cultural Sociology* 20(3).

Volont, L. (2024). The future as a cultural commons: Grammars of commonality in crisis-ridden Wilhelmsburg. *Social Inclusion* 12, 1-16.

Otte, H. & Volont, L. (2023). Force fields of Montaña Verde: Spatializing the commons in the city-as-oeuvre. *Space & Culture* 26(4), 543-559.

Smets, P. & Volont, L. (2022). The politics and aesthetics of the urban commons: Navigating the gaze of the city, the state, the market. *Social Inclusion* 10(1), 84-90.

Smets, P. & Volont, L. (2022). Institutionalizing non-institutionalization: Towards sustainable commoning. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities* 4, 1-10.

Volont, L. & Dobson, T. (2021). The political intricacies of common space: A Rancièrian approach to the Public Land Grab. *Antipode* 53(6), 1853-1872.

Volont, L. (2021). Urban commoning: An assessment of its aesthetic dimension. *Social Inclusion* 10(1), 141-151.

Volont, L. (2020). Is common space politically potent? A reflection on Raumlabor's aesthetic gesture. *FORUM+ for Art & Research* 28(1), 12-19.

Volont, L. (2019). DIY urbanism and the lens of the commons: Observations from Spain. *City & Community* 18(1), 257-279.

Gielen, P., Volont, L. & van Andel, W. (2018). Creativity under pressure: The effect of marketization on creative labor. *Art & Identity Politics* 19(2), 15-43.

Volont, L. (2012). An uncommon sociology of the commonplace: Elucidation and agenda for research. *Secessio: Experience and Imagination in Modernity* 25(3), 33-45.

BOOK CHAPTERS

Volont, L. & Dobson, T. (2026). Commoning as instituent praxis: Creation in the cracks of the Loughborough Junction. In I. Iaione (Ed.), *Cities of the commons: Commoning as urban practice*. TU Delft Open Books.

Volont, L. (2025). The elementary forms of future-making: Sacrality and contingency at Hamburg's building exhibition. In M. Grubbauer, L. Pohl, & J. Thiel (Eds.), *Contingencies in urban future-making: Pitfalls, potentialities, and transformative practices*. Transcript.

Volont, L., Manganelli, A. & Grubbauer, M. (2024). Theorizing conflicts in urban future-making: Arenas, negotiation, and affect. In M. Grubbauer, A. Manganelli & L. Volont (Eds.), *Conflicts in urban future-making: Governance, institutions, and transformative change*. Transcript.

Lijster, T., Volont, L. & Gielen, P. (2022). Cultural commoning in the city. In L. Volont, T. Lijster & P. Gielen (Eds.), *The rise of the common city: On the culture of commoning*. ASP Editions.

Volont, L. (2018). Who steals the goose from off the common? In P. Gielen & N. Dockx (Eds.), *Commonism: A new aesthetics of the real*. Valiz.

EDITED VOLUMES

Grubbauer, M., Manganelli, A. & Volont, L. (2024) (Eds.). *Conflicts in Urban Future-Making: Governance, Institutions, and Transformative Change*. Transcript.

Volont, L., Lijster, T. & Gielen, P. (2022) (Eds.). *The Rise of the Common City: On the Culture of Commoning*. ASP Editions.

MONOGRAPHS

Volont, L. (2021) (Doctoral dissertation). *Shapeshifting: The Cultural Production of Common Space*. Antwerp University Press.

POLICY REPORTS

Volont, L. (2015). Creativity, labor and remuneration in the post-Fordist city. *Arts in Society Research Centre & Smart Belgium*.

Dujardin, A., Rajabaly, H., Volont, L. & Burton, R. (2015). Third spaces, shared ateliers, and co-working in Belgium. *Smart Belgium*.

POPULAR SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

“Seizing the future as a cultural commons”. Recorded YouTube interview in the series *Let’s Talk About*. Link at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYKh-IGUkml>

“Community and commons”. Interview in the *Urban Political Podcast*. Link at https://urbanpolitical.podigee.io/50-community_commons

“De commons als alternatief?” Blog entry for *Kunstenpunt*. Link at <https://www.kunsten.be/nu-in-de-kunsten/louis-volont-over-ruimte-en-commons/>

“Commoning club culture”. Opinion piece on the occasion of the enforced closing of the youth center *Lintfabriek*. Link at <https://www.stockmansartbooks.be/en/het-lintfabriek-archieven-1982-2007.html>

“Collectief wonen: Een politieke daad?”. Opinion piece in *Wijzgerig Perspectief*. Link at <https://www.aup-online.com/content/journals/10.5117/WP2020.3.003.VOLO>

EVENT ORGANIZATION

CULTURAL VULNERABILITY AND PLANETARY PROBLEMS

Academic conference | Sapienza University of Rome | 21-23 January 2026

Member of the organizing committee, developed theme and sessions, selected abstracts

URBAN FUTURE-MAKING: SITUATING AGENCY WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Academic conference | HafenCity Universität Hamburg | 5-6 May 2025

Member of the organizing committee, developed theme and sessions, selected abstracts

THE FUTURE OF CULTURE IS COMMON: ACTIVISM, AESTHETICS, AND POLICY

Academic conference | University of Antwerp | 1-3 June 2022

Member of the organizing committee, developed general theme, invited keynote speakers

TIME FOR SPACE: A RESEARCH DAY ON SPACES FOR ART AND CULTURE

Research symposium | University of Antwerp | 3 March 2020

Organized a research day together with Kunstenpunt, invited guests and secured funding

THE CITY AS A COMMONS: EXPLORING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AS A COMMON GOOD

Summer school | University of Pavia, Italy | 10-11 September 2019

Co-organized an international summer school on urban commons with Italian colleagues

CITY AESTHETICS AND CITIZENSHIP: URBAN DESIGN AND THE URBAN CITIZENRY

Summer school | University of Antwerp | 16-18 July 2018

Co-organized a summer school on urban citizenship, developed theme, proposed keynotes

MAKING PUBLIC DOMAIN: CITIZENSHIP IN THE URBAN PUBLIC SPHERE

Research symposium | Art Centre Extra City, Antwerp | 11-17 September 2017

Co-organized a symposium on urban citizenship, developed theme, proposed keynotes

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

University of Antwerp | BA level | 2024–2025

Taught a weekly course on the foundations of social theory

TIME AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Universität Hamburg | BA level | 2023–2024

Developed and taught research-based weekly seminar on temporality and futurity

THE CULTURE OF URBAN COMMONING

Universität Hamburg | MA level | 2023–2024

Developed and taught a research-based weekly seminar on urban community formation

URBAN TERRITORIES I

HafenCity Universität Hamburg | BA level | 2022–2023

Taught methods for urban research, focusing on walking, ethnography and mapping

URBAN TERRITORIES II

HafenCity Universität Hamburg | BA level | 2022–2023

Taught epistemology for urban research, focusing on assemblage, ANT and critical theory

ART AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

University of Groningen | BA level | 2020–2021

Co-taught a course on how public art can reinforce citizenship in the urban public sphere

MASTER'S THESIS SEMINAR

University of Antwerp, HafenCity Universität Hamburg, Groningen University | 2021–2025

Supervised over 10 MA theses concerning urban futures, urban activism, and citizenship

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

“MAKER OF SPACE, MASTER OF TIME: A DRAMATURGY OF URBAN FUTURE-MAKING”

At the symposium ‘Topologies of Agency’ | Lauenburg, 3 July 2023

“URBAN FUTURE-MAKING: A HAMBURGIAN TALE OF TIME AND PERFORMANCE”

At the ‘Sociology Higher Seminar’ | Uppsala University, 17 December 2023

“THE NOTION OF COMMUNITY IN ACTIVIST URBAN PRACTICE”

At MIT's 'Artistic Research Conversations' | Cambridge, 1 April 2022

“COMMONS, CULTURE, AND ART IN THE URBAN PUBLIC SPHERE”

At the panel 'The City as a Laboratory for Creativity' | Library of Berchem, 17 June 2018

“SUSTAINABLE CREATIVITY IN THE CAPITALIST CITY”

At the panel 'Fair Arts and Cultural Policy' | Art Centre Kanal, Brussels, 18 May 2018

“CREATIVE ACTION UNDER PRESSURE”

At the lecture series 'Alternatives for the Future' | Community Centre Molenbeek, 1 May 2018

“CREATIVITY AS A VALUE”

At the summer school 'Crossovers between Art and Culture' | Utrecht, 18 July 2017

GRANTS

FULBRIGHT POSTDOCTORAL GRANT (2021)

USD 27,000 | Awarded by the Fulbright Association Belgium-Luxembourg

ONDERSTEUNING JONGE ONDERZOEKERS – OJO – GRANT (2021)

EUR 1,500 | Awarded by the Antwerp Doctoral School

KIEM – CREATIVE INDUSTRIES GRANT (2015)

EUR 5,000 | Awarded by NWO

REFERENCES

Prof. Dr. Monika Grubbauer (Supervisor postdoc project, HafenCity Universität Hamburg)
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