



UVA in Ghent:

Global Internships in Education, Society, and Human Services

Summer 2020

Internship position: Super-diversity and death rituals research assistant

Organization/unit: MixIt Expert Centre

MixIt is an expert center at the Faculty of Education, Health and Social Work (University College Ghent). In spite of the countless differences and the uniqueness of each human being, MixIt chooses to focus on those universally shared characteristics of human beings in order “to bring people together.” MixIt does not ignore or minimize possible differences between people, but instead of making those the focus of polemics and discord, as is all too often the case, MixIt emphasizes the “unity in diversity” with the aim of contributing to a more constructive public dialogue. Living/together, where the slash stands for both the differences *and* the connections between people, is a statement whereby MixIt wants to stimulate reflection on the accepted terminologies used to designate our society. Diversity, super-diversity and inclusion have become hot issues in recent years and discussions seem to imply that once there was a prototype society that was not diverse. MixIt points out that, in spite of these recent discussions, living/together is, and always has been, simply a fact. As such, it is the starting point for all activities of MixIt, i.e., research projects, seminars, publications, teaching, etc.

Research Project:

In the past, MixIt was engaged in several research projects on “rites of passage” and their importance for social cohesion in societies. Recently, a project was finished on alternative death rituals in Flemish society. This research looked at the changing death rituals from the perspective of the historical transition from religious to secular societies in Western Europe. This transition has been characterized as one of “opening up space,” mentally and physically, and the question arises in how far this process can be taken in light of current super-diversity.

In September 2019, MixIt released a CFP with the goal of publishing an edited volume on “Super-diversity and death rituals.” We asked several authors around the world to reflect on how death rituals change under the influence of increasing diversity in societies. By the end of June, we expect contributions from South-Africa, the US, Canada, Vietnam, Brazil, Denmark, and India.

Description of position:

- The intern is expected to participate in the preparation of the publication by:



- Conduct some semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews with members of ethnic and cultural minorities in the city of Ghent on how they organize their death rituals. These interviews will provide the data for an article in the volume on “super-diversity and death rituals.” The following activities will be done in close collaboration with Joris Van Poucke.
- Set up an interview guide
- Follow up of the contacts and to make the necessary appointments
- Conduct the interviews
- Analysis of the data
- Preparing of a draft article
- The intern is also expected to work on an interview conducted by Christian Van Kerckhove with an expert on death rituals in Toronto (Canada) in order to make it publication-ready.
- The research intern can expect to develop/learn the following:
 - Increased knowledge on super-diversity (In Belgium, but also globally)
 - Increased knowledge on the rites of passage, specifically death rituals, their functions and structure.
 - Developing qualitative researching skills (conducting semi-structured interviews, analytic and synthetic thinking, systematicity, etc.)
 - Developing academic writing and presentation skills
 - Developing critical, open and creative attitudes
- Supervisors: Christian Van Kerckhove and Joris Van Poucke

Preferred qualifications:

UVA requirement: All candidates must be in good academic and disciplinary standing.

- Student of Anthropology; Global Culture & Commerce; Global Studies; Philosophy; Sociology; Literary & Cultural Studies; Political & Social Thought; Political Philosophy; Policy & Law; Sociology; Women; Gender & Sexuality; or other relevant discipline/programme.
- Given that experience with academic research is required, we prefer advanced undergraduate or graduate students.
- Other relevant qualifications/qualities include (among other things): knowledge of interpretative research methodologies, excellent writing skills, communication skills, ability to analyse critically, ability to think innovatively and design-oriented, planning and time management, independent worker and team player.
- A strong interest and basic knowledge of diversity/inclusion is required for this position.
- Knowledge of MS Office (Word, Outlook & Powerpoint)

Language:

- Dutch is the everyday language of the workplace but English is spoken and widely understood by HoGent community members. Selected students will be offered the opportunity to commence



self-study of Dutch prior to their arrival in Belgium (during the Spring 2020) semester, as having even a basic knowledge of the language would be beneficial for daily life in Ghent.

More details:

- Working hours: M-F, 9am-5pm with lunch break
- Dress code: Business casual (please be aware that many Europeans- both students and professionals- tend to dress more formally than their counterparts in the U.S.)
- Location: HoGent's Schoonmeersen campus

Pre-internship preparation requirements:

- Read:
 - Super-diversity and its implications by Steven Vertovec (2007) in Ethnic and Racial Studies Vol. 30 (6), 1024-1054.
 - The Introduction by David I. Kertzer of Rites of Passage by Arnold Van Gennep (2019)
 - The CFP for Super-diversity and death rituals
- The supervisor at University College Ghent will expect a summary and a critical reflection from the student.
- Will be discussed with the selected student before their arrival in Belgium. Background research and/or technical skills development may be required in advance of arrival.

Previous interns' reflections:



What was it like to do a global internship with the Mix!t Expert Centre?

My time at University College Ghent in Belgium taught me a new way to look at life! I created relationships and was exposed to literature that expanded my language skills and understanding of Belgium's divided society. The time frame of six weeks forced me to revamp my work ethic for the better and produce an entire research article at the end. I also quashed misconceptions and learned how to interact across cultures in a professional setting. Support from the



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faculty members at UVA and University College Ghent allowed me to prosper intellectually and further confirm my interest in the international field.

~JOVERIA JAVED (Summer 2019)