



European
Research
Council

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Part 1: Research Agent Recruitment

The Project:

Sonic Street Technologies: Culture, Diaspora and Knowledge

Sonic Street Technologies (SST) emerge in marginal environments in the cities and societies of the Global South to spread across the planet, becoming an essential part of popular culture. Jamaican reggae sound systems, Brazilian mobile carnival *trio elétrico*, Mexican *sonideros* and Colombian *picos* are among the representatives of these rising "street" technologies. The European Research Council-funded SST project is exploring the sophisticated practices and techniques used by SST and the social and cultural motivations in their communities of origin. The project will map the "technological diaspora" of SST and use a cultural studies methodology to compare different local SST, study their social and economic conditions and detect possible Jamaican or African influences. The project addresses the relationships between culture and technology, how this generates new knowledge and the extent to which SST low-tech innovations can produce alternatives for individual and community well-being and self-determination. SST adopts a practice-as-research methodology as a respect for the knowledge embodied in current sound system and similar street cultures and to help build capacities for their autonomous development.

The Commission Brief

Summary:

We are looking to commission experienced researchers / curators / writers to contribute a Case Study to the SST research project. Each Research Agent will be responsible of conducting an in-depth investigation in a local sound system or SST scene, under the supervision of the Goldsmiths-based SST team. The Case Study will require doing quantitative and qualitative research; arranging, leading and coordinating a documentation process; and drafting a written research report. The Research Agent will be expected to have existing network of contacts with practitioners and other entities in the field, and a commitment to capacity building and a collaborative, non-extractive research methods. As well as the Covid-safe fieldwork, the Research Agent will liaise with SST team on a regular basis via email, telephone and meeting apps. Commissions will be for about three or four weeks work, possibly spread over a longer time period.

Research

Outputs:

- A description of a local sound system scene and its relevance to their particular Case Study.
- A series of recorded interviews (video and audio) and their transcripts (machine generated)
- Fieldwork notes from participatory ethnographic research
- Documentation including posters, flyers, FB and Instagram pages, websites etc
- The written Case Study Research Report (6k to 8k words) including a selection of the above to be published on the SST website and to contribute to journal article and book chapters etc.
- In addition, information to contribute to a census of operating SST in the local scene

Research Activities:

- Collaborate with the Goldsmiths SST team and report back to them with regular meetings.
- Recruit (subject to SST team approval) photographer and/or videographer to assist in documentation process (stills, videos).
- Coordinate and supervise documentation process (filming, stills, ephemerals)
- Ensure to establish positive, long-term, mutually benefiting research relations with practitioners and other existing entities, organizations or other research agents in the field.

Research Agent Person Specification

Qualifications and Knowledge:

- A first or postgraduate degree in social sciences and/or equivalent work experience
- A familiarity with some theoretical frameworks, such as, those of sociology, anthropology or cultural studies
- Knowledge of and a network of contacts in the local sound system scene

Relevant Experience:

- Collaborative and interdisciplinary fieldwork in on subjects related to popular music, culture, technology, economics, urban studies etc.
- Writing for academic or educational publications or curating content for journals, magazines, TV or exhibitions, printed or online
- Shared online research environments (e.g., shared cloud drives, websites) and digital communication platforms (Zoom, Whatsapp) across different time zones.

**Skill
is:**

- Ability to establish positive face-to-face relationships, build mutual trust and respect with practitioners and professionals.
- Excellent time management and organisational skills. Experience of working under pressure, on own initiative and to adapt to challenges quickly.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Good understanding of the local language and any dialect.

To be considered for this commission please provide:

- Your CV.
- A cover letter saying (a) why you are interested in this work; (b) what you would bring to it; and (c) few sentences on the kind of case study/ies you would be interested in researching.

Email to sst@gold.ac.uk

Part 2: Case Study Brief

A Case Study Research Report might be built around, for example:

- 1) **An existing entity or person**, such as an SST owner, engineer, crew, selector, dancer or other practitioner, according to the following criteria:
 - **Typical:** young or small practitioner, engineer, builder or player in the field, consistent with the local scene description.
 - **Exemplary or pioneering**, inspirational figure within the local scene. A veteran, leading or trend-setter practitioner, engineer, crew or brand, widely recognized locally and / or internationally (eg. In Jamaica Stone Love Movement).
 - **Outliers:** practitioner, builder or other entity that might be unique amongst the local trends in terms of style, technology, way to operate, still recognized as part of the scene, (eg., Kingston Dub Club in Jamaica).

- 2) **A peculiar theme or issue**, such as a social, technological, environmental, political features recurrent in or relevant to the local scene, eg: a special piece of technology or craft skill, a challenging issue (eg., Noise Abatement in JA), a commercial opportunity or business model, a venue, a style etc.
 - Case Studies will probably privilege **present day** persons, entities or conditions, though a historical dimension to the present can also be addressed.
 - Research Agent can work on the CS **in collaboration with a third party** so that CS could also provide the basis for local capacity building.
 - The presence of **existing female owners, crews, players or female-run enterprises** are of particular interest, also intergenerationality and cultural mixes.

A Case Study Research Report will include:

- **Local Scene Description:** this provides a detailed, historical and up to date overview of a given sound system scene. This is a key part of the Agent's Research Report. The local scene description might include a survey of existing or active sound systems, a brief historical overview of the local scene and its main features, focus on social and economic conditions, significant events, geographic environment, maps, diagrams, technological specificities, prominent historical and contemporary figures, representative venues, music genres, etc.
- **Fieldwork materials** gathered together and written up as appropriate to tell the story of the particular Case Study, including filmed interviews with crew members and followers, stills, ephemerals etc.
- **Draft analysis of the materials** as evidence to answer the question: What does this Case Study tell us about its particular scene? And possibly how does this Case Study contribute to SST research project? This will be written in collaboration with the Goldsmiths SST team.

Fieldwork Research Process

Fieldwork (3 to 5 days) aims to provide the following research materials:

- **Interviews:** filmed, sound recordings, transcripts.
- **Stills** (by recruited photographer).
- **Archive materials:** flyers, posters, newspaper cuttings, social media profiles and web links, and other ephemerals.

The Research Agent will:

- Recruit and supervise a **camera operator with kit** (at Goldsmiths SST cost and approval)
- Recruit and supervise a **photographer with kit** (at Goldsmiths SST cost and approval)
- **Set up** the shooting day(s), including scoping out locations and interviewees.
- Arrange for **archive material** (eg dance footages, old pics, dance posters and flyers) to be collected (shared – pictured –scanned).
- Ensure that **release forms** are signed and agreed by all those involved to grant SST future rights to use fieldwork findings to serve research purposes; ensure copyrights are respected.
- Adhere to Goldsmiths **data protection** protocols and **ethics requirements**.
- **Oversee** quality and timely delivery of the resulting research materials.

All research notes, unedited interviews and all other materials to be deposited with Goldsmiths SST team.

Please Note: The Research Report or parts of it with other material could well be used as the basis of

- An SST website article, an academic journal article or book chapter
- To contribute to an exhibition, installation or picture book, or parts thereof
- *TBC is free to use the materials gathered in the course of the research for their own projects (as specified in the release form)*

In every instance the Research Agent will be credited as an author of the research.

Part 3: Research Plan Guidelines

A Case Study will be formally commissioned on the basis of the Research Agent's **Research Plan**, to include

Theoretical frame (about 800 words), including:

- A slightly more detailed account of the agreed CS and its relevance to the local scene and to SST project.
- An overview of existing coverage of CS, if any (in the form articles, books, documentaries, exhibitions etc.) and how CS will expand on, reframe or consolidate existing research.
- Expected research outcomes and why they will be relevant to SST research framework and methodology.

Research Schedule (about 400 words), including:

- List of people to be interviewed, locations to be filmed, ephemerals to be collected, etc.
- Draft schedule of the fieldwork, (2-5 days, including interviews, filming, stills etc.).
- Draft budget additional costs (eg., travels, accommodations, interview fees where needed, etc.)
- Suggestions for camera operator and/or photographer with kit, willing to do the job.

SST will contract the Research Agent/s with a letter of engagement with agreed fee, payment schedule and work schedule, issued on the basis of an agreed Research Plan.