

JURYRAPPORT NVK SCRIPTIEPRIJS 2013

Given that one of the authors is not proficient in Dutch, we decided to present the jury report in English.

Like last year, and the year before, representatives from the Dutch criminological departments were asked to nominate what in their eyes was the best master thesis written by a student from their institute for the yearly NVC-thesis award. This year each institute was only allowed to nominate one thesis, which had to have been completed between March 1st 2012 and March 1st 2013. In total, this resulted in 5 theses – from Erasmus University, Utrecht University, Leiden University and VU University of Amsterdam - that were submitted to the jury.

This year the jury consisted of Anja Dirkzwager, from the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement, Wim Huisman, from VU-university Amsterdam, and myself – Arjan Blokland – from Leiden University and NSCR.

The NVC-thesis award consists of a sum of 250 Euro, a membership of the Dutch Criminological Society for the period of one year, and a one year's subscription to the Netherlands Journal of Criminology – TvC. The author is also cordially invited to - if necessary - rewrite her or his thesis in the form of a peer-reviewed article - and submit the manuscript for publication in that journal.

This year – like every year - the jury had the difficult tasks of comparing five master theses that differed widely in terms of topic, methods used, page count, and time span of the underlying study. The posters that have been on display during the breaks and which are based on these manuscripts testify to the diversity of both topics examined and the research methodologies used. Furthermore, though the curriculum usually states that the master thesis is written in 3 months, for some of the current theses the field work alone spanned double that time. Likewise, page counts ranged from 22 to 115 pages. At times therefore, we felt that we were - to some extent - comparing apples and oranges.

However, seminal contributions in the criminological field have come to us in the form of chunky books as well as flimsy journal articles, and have dealt with extra ordinary as well as very mundane crimes and criminals. So, in the end, it is not the page count, nor the remote location of the fieldwork that is crucial to the quality of the work. Neither size nor exotics matter when it comes to science.

The jury reviewed each manuscript on the basis of a number of criteria, and searched for the thesis that stood out most due to:

- An original and well developed research question
- A clearly defined and applied theoretical framework
- Methodologically sound research
- A clear and accessible writing style

Based on these criteria, the jury has made a short-list of three manuscripts that stood out on some or all of these. I will list the authors and their work here, in alphabetical order:

Jelmer Brouwer: External support for insurgencies. The case of the Karen National Union in Burma, which deals with the nature, extent and implications of external monetary support for armed Karen rebels, supervised by Joris van Wijk, VU university.

Laura Gutiérrez Gómez: Accumulation by dispossession through state-corporate harm: The case of AngloGold Ashanti in Colombia, dealing with the nature of the harms resulting from the interaction

between the multinational gold mining industry and the Colombian government, supervised by Damian Zaitch, University of Utrecht.

Marieke Saan: It's a hell of a job, research into the relation between the level of stress and specific mental health outcomes among family detectives (LU), looking into the link between work stressors, post-traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, burn out and secondary post-traumatic growth in family detectives especially assigned to a case to support the victim's relatives, supervised by Maarten Kunst, Leiden University.

In a unanimous decision, the jury for the 2013 NVC-thesis award, has come to the conclusion that this year's award is granted to:

Laura Gomez, for Accumulation by dispossession through state-corporate harm: The case of AngloGold Ashanti in Colombia.

The jury based its decision on (amongst others) the following arguments:

- The thesis deals with the relatively new topic of state-corporate crime, in which the concept of crime is no longer defined by legal rules, but by the harm it causes. Stated briefly – and far less eloquently as in the thesis - state-corporate crime focuses on the harm that results from governments collaborating with commercial companies based on their shared economic interests and in disregard of the interests and wellbeing of other parties, often ordinary citizens.
- Using the anthropological notion of 'friction', the author is able to describe and tie together the processes operating at different levels, from the global to the local, that facilitate and constitute state-corporate crime. Offering a detailed insight into the events leading up to the harm caused.
- Methodologically, this thesis successfully combines firsthand interview data with secondary data to paint a comprehensive and very much alive picture of the processes and events that are taking place. This thesis clearly has a story to tell, and, written in a very accessible style, that story makes even the reader novice to either the concept of state-corporate-crime or the anthropological concepts used, want to turn the next page to find out how the story ends.
- Finally, despite of the ease of falling into the trap of 'blind' activism, the author is fully aware of, and makes every effort to counterbalance, the potential limitations to her own research methods. Yielding a balanced and scientific account of the societal harm resulting from the collaboration of the Colombian government and AngloGold Ashanti.

In sum, the jury unanimously feels this award is very much deserved.

As a final point: we would like to note that like last year's winner this thesis was supervised by Damian Zaitch so our congratulations extend to him as well.

Leiden, June 2013

Arjan Blokland
Anja Dirkzwager
Wim Huisman