

NVC scriptieprijs 2017

Beste aanwezigen, geacht bestuur, en een bijzonder welkom aan de schrijvers van de genomineerde scripties,

Dear criminologists, NVC Board, and a warm welcome to the writers of the nominated theses,

This year we will break with the tradition to deliver the speech of the jury mainly in Dutch.

Although we dearly realize that some of you might not agree with that – after all, we are at the Annual conference of the *Dutch Society of Criminology* – we also must recognize that more and more master programs of Criminology are *international* programs, which attract a lot of international students. This is illustrated by our nominees today: two of three wrote their thesis in English and are bilingual or do not speak Dutch. And although they are not all here today, we do want to honour them in a language they all understand.

Moreover, we do *not* want to exclude our international master students from this thesis award; rather to the contrary! Last year, a non-Dutch thesis won the award. And who knows what will happen this year...? Any way, we want to encourage our international master students to continue ‘put your best leg forward’ – as the good Dutch saying goes 😊 – and we’d like Dutch students to live up to the challenge and write beautiful theses. In English or in Dutch.

Having said this, let me elaborate on this years’ Dutch Criminology Thesis Award. The jury existed of:

Karin van Wingerde from Erasmus University Rotterdam

Maarten Kunst from Leiden University

and (me): Brenda Oude Breuil from Utrecht University

We received 7 theses from universities with master programs in Criminology: Amsterdam Free University, Tilburg University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Leiden University, Utrecht University, Free University of Brussels, and the University of Leuven. We were particularly glad with the addition of the Belgium theses and the jury expresses its dear wish that they send their best theses next year again.

We have enjoyed the reading, in particular the **diversity** of the theses, both in terms of **methodological schools** (three theses were based on quantitative research, four on qualitative

research) as well as **chosen topics**, which covered the criminological fields of life course approach, crimes of the powerful/ state crime, environmental crime, gender and crime, biology and crime, and crime and security. As such we can safely claim that the theses of this year represent a broad spectrum of what contemporary criminology is about. We were happy to see that.

The theses were also diverse in length – ranging from research article format to book works that could almost – in terms of length – be compared to PhD theses. This made our task pretty complicated. We have decided that ‘size does not matter’ in our scoring. After all, students cannot be held responsible for the requirements of their master programmes; these happen to deviate a lot.

So what *did* we use as criteria in the choice of the best thesis of 2017?

First of all: the winning thesis had to be based on solid criminological research, meaning:

- it should have a clear, transparent research question;
- its methods should fit the research question, should be well applied, and the student should properly reflect on the methods used;
- the research should not be preconceived or biased, and
- the research should be academically relevant.

Second criteria: the winning thesis should be original, innovative and/or creative, and should convince us that the student is able to do research independently, and to take a sovereign, independent and critical stance in the academic debate.

We deem the latter of particular importance in contemporary times, where criminology is subject to (and some may say: hijacked by) an international, hegemonic securitization discourse. Considering the quite recent, urgent plea from scientists all around the world, to guarantee academic independence, we took the liberty as a jury to give extra weight to students exhibiting the potential to conduct sovereign, autonomous research and analyse and report on it likewise.

Thirdly and finally, the winning thesis should be accessibly written, in a clear and pleasant academic writing style.

Let me now elaborate on the three nominated theses. I will first elaborate on all three of them in random order, after which I will announce the winning thesis:

Marilena Drymioti: Troika: The triptych profile of a criminal or the saviour of ill-managed economies? A case study on Cyprus

Utrecht University, supervisor Damián Zaitch

This thesis elaborates on the support given to Cyprus (the case study in this research), following the financial crisis of 2008, by the economic committee consisting of the *European Commission*, the *European Central Bank* and the *International Monetary Fund*. The author asked herself how the Cypriot authorities and economic institutions, as well as this 'Troika', handled the financial crisis in the country; she also goes into the harmful effects for Cypriot society. She did this through qualitative research conducted in Cyprus, in which she combined ethnography, auto-ethnography, open interviews, media content analysis and visual analysis. The jury found the thesis original and courageous, considering the fact that even 'settled' criminologists have hardly risked to burn their hands on the topic of the European financial crisis. Marilena manages to explain complex financial strategies of corruption and fraud in understandable terms, and wrote an accessible, ethnographic account of this European issue.

Tessa van Wyk: Divided by walls. A qualitative study on middle class residents' choice to live in- or outside gated communities in Johannesburg, South Africa

Erasmus University Rotterdam, supervisor René van Swaaningen

In this thesis the author studies how middle class residents of a gated community, on the one hand, and residents of freestanding houses, outside the gated community, on the other hand, perceive crime, safety, and segregation in their residential areas and how they choose whether or not to reside behind gates. The author critically questions, both theoretically and based on her ethnographic fieldwork, whether a person will actually feel (and be) safer in a gated community, than outside of such structures. She interviewed 30 respondents in South Africa of which about half lived inside, and half outside a gated community. Being lodged in the gated community herself, she was able to give an in-depth, 'thick description' of living 'fenced in', in surroundings characterized by fear of crime and class based 'apartheid'. The jury found this thesis original, creative, with a decent integration of literature and empirical findings, and well written. Tessa's managed well to give us an in-depth insight in the pros and cons of living behind gates.

Martine Ceton: Boef op eigen erf? Motieven voor regelovertreding door vleeskuiken-houders

VU Amsterdam, supervisor Fiore Geelhoed

This thesis is a highly original contribution to the criminological field of environmental harms and crimes, and, related to that, the food industry. The research revolves around the question what are the motives of broiler chicken farmers (in Dutch: vleeskuikenhouders) to trespassing rules and regulations, and what could be incentives for them to rather stick to those rules? Thereto, she interviewed farmers of different sized farms, up to 220.000 broilers per cycle – thus: from being brought into the farm until being slaughtered. The jury took interested notice of the inside knowledge, perceptions, jargon, habits et cetera of the broiler chicken ‘business’. Martine has been well able, through her solid and partly applied research – the question how to be able to better regulate the business was crucial – to unveil the often hidden world of the bio-industry of food producers in the Netherlands.

The winner of the Dutch Society of Criminology Thesis Award was best able to combine and balance solid, unbiased research with an original, creative and critical approach and analysis. We appreciate the fact that this thesis scored well on ALL criteria, notwithstanding the difficulty of the fieldwork. We have positively evaluated the author’s valuable reflections on her own biography, which exemplified the inside, often taken-for-granted perception on security, demystified in this thesis.

We therefore congratulate: Tessa van Wyk with her thesis ***Divided by walls. A qualitative study on middle class residents’ choice to live in- or outside gated communities in Johannesburg, South Africa***

We also congratulate her supervisor René van Swaaningen, as behind a good thesis, we can assume a motivated, hardworking, inspiring and inspired, supervisor.

Congratulations also to the other nominees, and their supervisors.

And will Tessa now please come forward? You receive a price of 250 euros, and the possibility to rewrite your thesis, or parts of it, for the Dutch Journal of Criminology.

Congratulations and the jury wishes you a successful continuation of your criminological career!