

## Jury report

### Internetscriptieprijs - Internet en geestes- of maatschappijwetenschappen 2018

**Laureate: Sal Hendrik Hagen (Universiteit van Amsterdam)**

*Here I Am, Praying to an Egyptian Frog. Exploring Political Fluidity on 4chan/pol/*

We are delighted to award the 2018 master's thesis prize Internet 'Internet en geestes- of maatschappijwetenschappen' to Sal Hendrik Hagen for his thesis called: *Here I Am, Praying to an Egyptian Frog. Exploring Political Fluidity on 4chan/pol/*. The thesis was submitted as part of his research master's study at the Department of Media Studies, University of Amsterdam.

The jury received 25 theses from across the country to consider for the prize, and shortlisted five for this year's prize. We evaluated the submissions for their overall scholarly quality, their innovativeness in topic and method, and their capacity to cast social, cultural and political issues in a new light. The jury found 'Praying to an Egyptian Frog' exemplary across all three criteria.

'Praying to an Egyptian Frog' tackles an important topic in a very innovative way. Sal Hendrik Hagen examines how the word 'trump' provides insight into the political views of those participating on the anonymous imageboard 4chan, known for its offensive humour and trolling campaigns. In its early days it was largely associated with left libertarian politics, but since 2014 has been increasingly associated with the far right. Because of the fluidity and anonymity offered by 4chan it has been difficult for researchers to make sense of what happens there, using traditional methods and concepts. Sal Hendrik Hagen offers a very ambitious approach to dealing with the theoretical and methodological challenges. Drawing on insights from the French sociologist, Gabriel Tarde, and using innovative digital methods, Sal Hendrik Hagen is able to make sense of 4chan as a political space. He uses a set of experimental text mining methods to identify how word associations change over time. He took 'trump' as a case, for five different weeks between the end of 2015 and the end of 2017, thus covering the US presidential campaign and election. He shows how Trump became embedded in a vernacular of hate speech, marked by the presence of extremist contributors to 4chan.

As social science and humanities researchers and as citizens, we need to understand what is variously called the alt-right, angry white men, nativism, populism. It is clearly having a major impact on politics throughout the world. Sal Hendrik Hagen's thesis offers us not only insight into what motivates Trump supporters active online but also provides tools for making sense of the vast volumes of data that can be found on internet discussion platforms.

**Honourable Mention: Timo Korstenbroek (Vrije Universiteit)**

*Why we are angry @them. Towards a more profound understanding of the expression of nativism within the context of the virtual community*

The jury decided to award an honourable mention to Timo Korstenbroek, for his thesis called: *Why we are angry @them. Towards a more profound understanding of the expression of nativism within the context of the virtual community*. This thesis was submitted as part of his master's degree in sociology at the VU University, Amsterdam.

Timo Korstenbroek offers his readers a rich account of 'nativism' in the Netherlands, drawing on the growing literature about 'white anger', in order to understand why these citizens are angry and how they use digital media to express their anger. He deploys a range of qualitative research methods to address these questions. Not only does he trace the ways in which this nativist discourse emerges in online environments, he also interviews people active in those environments. Timo Korstenbroek provides an intellectually rich but also emotionally moving account of his encounters with these angry white people, resulting in a deeper understanding of the phenomenon for himself, for those who have read his thesis, and perhaps also for some of his respondents. In the conclusion, he points to some of the practical implications of his work, for individuals and for cultural and political institutions.

The need to understand what Timo Korstenbroek calls nativism is urgent. His thesis provides us with valuable insight into the world views of nativist communities in the Netherlands, and offers suggestions for how politicians and policy makers can take seriously their concerns without pandering to their prejudices.

*Prof. dr. V.A.J. (Valerie) Frissen, directeur SIDN Fonds, hoogleraar ICT en sociale verandering Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam*

*Prof. dr. B. (Bibi) van den Berg, hoogleraar Cybersecurity Governance Universiteit Leiden*

*Prof. dr. S.M.E. (Sally) Wyatt, hoogleraar Technology & Society Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Universiteit Maastricht*

The jury deliberations took place 5 October 2018 and were presided by Prof. dr. Th. Mulder, 'directeur' KHMW. Also attended Prof. mr. A. Soeteman, former Secretary of Social Sciences and Humanities KHMW and Drs. S. van Manen, Secretary KHMW.