

## Jury report

### J.C. Ruigrok Prize 2018 - Social Sciences

Administered by the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities, the Ruigrok Prize has been created by the J.C. Ruigrok Foundation in 1984, to encourage young scholars in the social sciences on the basis of their PhD research. Each year the prize is awarded to doctoral research in one of the social sciences, and this year's prize is devoted to the social sciences more narrowly defined, that is sociology, criminology, cultural anthropology, political science, etc.

The jury of the 2018 Johannes Cornelis Ruigrok Prize consisted of Professors Aafke Komter of Utrecht University and Erasmus University Rotterdam, Beate Volker of the University of Amsterdam, and Rudy Andeweg of Leiden University, presided by Ir. Maarten van Veen, and supported by Professor Arend Soeteman.

The jury was struck by two facets of the nominations. First and foremost was the sheer volume and quality of the doctoral dissertations that have been submitted. We received no fewer than 33 dissertations, all defended in the past five years, from all of the Dutch universities, including the technical universities! They cover a great variety of topics, as is exemplified by titles such as *Local Bans on the Public Use of Soft Drugs; Four Faces of Political Legitimacy; Amplifying Islam; Gangs, Masculinities and Belonging; Uncertainty in Bureaucracy; and Amphibious Anthropology*. Together, these dissertations testify to the high quality of social science research in the Netherlands.

A second striking phenomenon is that almost two thirds (21) of the 33 nominations were of female scholars. This fits with the long-term trend in academia, but it would seem that the social sciences have particularly advanced in this respect.

The large number and high quality of the nominations and dissertations made the work of this year's jury a difficult one: there were so many submissions worthy of a prize. But the dissertation that stood out in the eyes of the jury was Jessica Di Salvatore's study entitled *Peacekeepers Against Ethnic and Criminal Violence: Unintended Consequences of UN Peacekeeping*, defended at the University of Amsterdam in 2017 and awarded a *cum laude*, and supervised by Professor Brian Burgoon and Dr. Ursula Daxecker. The relevance of this study hardly needs explanation. Although Dr. Di Salvatore is careful to emphasize that her study does not undermine the general finding that peacekeeping is beneficial for alleviating conflict, she also makes clear that sending in blue helmets may have unintended negative effects. Depending on the local conditions, such as the geographical distribution of armed ethnic groups, peacekeepers are not always equally effective. In cases of ethnic violence, peacekeeping may actually backfire and lead to the escalation of violence against the very civilians that were targeted for protection. In cases of *political* violence, peacekeeping may actually create favourable conditions for *criminal* violence. By carefully analyzing the conditions that exacerbate the risk of such unintended adverse effects, Dr. Di Salvatore offers material for the future design of better and more comprehensive peace-keeping strategies that may reduce collateral effects.

The conclusions are all the more compelling because of the rigorous methodology that underpins them. Dr. Di Salvatore selected four cases of peace-keeping efforts in Bosnia, in Sierra Leone, in South Sudan, and in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Somalia. Such conflict-ridden areas are not known for the ready availability of relevant data. This study stands out in

its painstaking and often creative mining and combining of disaggregated data from different sources. For example, when data on civilian casualties do not include the ethnicity of the victims, as was the case for Bosnia, they are combined with data on one-sided violent events from another dataset, geocoding both data to develop a new variable. And when the geographic deployment of peacekeepers is known, but not how many blue helmets are involved in which region, UN budget allocations that do contain a regional breakdown are used as well. Even for control variables, proxy measures are creatively used, such as geo-coded light emission as an indicator of a region's economic situation, when more direct measures are not available. The study pays particular attention to the potential problem of spurious correlations. Peacekeeping missions are not sent to randomly selected countries, which means that other variables than the peacekeeping efforts may cause some of the findings. By using sophisticated models, this risk is reduced considerably.

In conclusion: this study is remarkable for its application of state-of-the-art methodology to a wide variety of geo-coded data, to test hypotheses derived from a sound grasp of the theoretical literature, to contribute to our understanding of a most relevant question. Dr. Jessica Di Salvatore is a worthy recipient of the 2018 Johannes Cornelis Ruigrok Prize in the Social Sciences.

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The jury meeting took place on March 20, 2018 and was chaired by Ir. M.C. van Veen, former president of the KHMW. Also attended Prof. mr. A. Soeteman (Scientific Secretary) and Drs. S. van Manen (Secretary).