



Laudatio ter gelegenheid van de uitreiking van de studentprijs voor de Beste Masterscriptie, 31 augustus 2020.

Auteur scriptie: Marrit Woudwijk, student MA Conflict Studies and Human Rights, departement Geschiedenis en Kunstgeschiedenis, faculteit Geesteswetenschappen
Titel scriptie: *The Lesser Truth. Truth Construction on Remote Warfare and the Case of the US-led anti-ISIS Coalition in Syria* (augustus 2019). Cijfer: 8,5
Begeleider: Prof. Dr. Jolle Demers

Dear Marrit,

This year the jury of the UU-thesis price received a total of 28 theses, written by students from all disciplines and all of very high quality. The members of the jury, who are connected to various faculties of the university, read these theses carefully. During the deliberations it quickly became clear that your thesis stood out in particular: because of the subject itself, the relevance of the subject and the way you handled your research methodically, theoretically and analytically.

Students within the MA-programme Conflict Studies and Human Rights often conduct field work in dangerous places: countries where conflict and violence are highly prevalent, areas that are recovering from war and terror. However, you chose not to travel to a war zone or a conflict area, but to stay in the Netherlands and do research on 'remote warfare' and the interpretation of this type of war by those who lived amongst it. Contemporary wars are often 'remote wars': by using drones and precision weapons and by targeting specific locations, these wars seem to 'save lives', legitimising the use of force and violence. In your thesis, you look at the interpretations of Syrians who currently live in the Netherlands of the airstrikes by the US-led anti-ISIS coalition between 2014 and 2018. You relate these interpretations to the 'regimes of truth' on this war that are prevalent within Dutch society. From the point of view of the survivors: what stories can be told or should be silenced when you survived the bombardments of Raqqa and now live in a country that was actively involved in these bombardments?

Your research reveals the construction of a 'lesser truth': a 'truth' that fits a society which was actively involved in this violence. By doing so, you not only give a voice to a silent issue, but you also critically confront Dutch citizens with our own violence.

In the words of your supervisor Jolle Demers, you succeeded fully: 'Marrit demonstrates a very good capacity to synthesize, using both inductive and deductive analysis. Her argumentation is lucid, coherent and convincing. In addition, she capably blends in the voices of her informants throughout the analysis, creating an enticing narrative, and bringing to life their everyday struggles, while keeping a balanced analytical distance.'

Currently you lecture with Taal- and Cultuurstudies and with Media and Culture Studies. Besides that, you continue your research within the project 'Intimacies of Remote Warfare', which enhances research and distributes findings on contemporary remote warfare. You presented two papers on the subject of your thesis at a seminar and an international conference and reached a wide audience by your article in *De Correspondent*. It is very clear that you have a very promising career laying ahead of you and the members of the jury do not doubt that you successfully will live up to that.