

Halleh Ghorashi

NWO-VICI grant

LOVA-member and Professor of Diversity and Integration at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Halleh Ghorashi, has been awarded a VICI grant of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research for her research project entitled *Engaged scholarship and narratives of change in comparative perspective*. A NWO-VICI grant is worth 1.5 million for five years, and gives senior researchers the possibility to build up a research group. The project has the ambition of investigating and contributing to a more comprehensive and transformative form of co-operation between academy and society. The empirical goal of the project will be the societal inclusion of refugees, arguably the most urgent challenge of this decade. Its underlying assumption is that the social sciences have a role in enlarging societal and academic imaginations by connecting local, historical, and analytical knowledge to enable actual inclusion of disadvantaged groups. This project addresses the following question: What is the contribution of engaged scholarship in stimulating and stipulating the conditions and narratives of change towards inclusion of refugees in the light of competing societal and academic demands and structures?

Rahil Roodsaz

NWO-VENI grant



Rahil Roodsaz received a NWO-VENI Grant this year. As of January 2019 she will carry out this research project at the department of Cultural Anthropology at University of Amsterdam. The project is entitled: *The Paradox of Romantic Love: Negotiating Autonomy and Commitment in Intimate Relationships in the Netherlands*. This project will investigate the seemingly contradictory values of autonomy and commitment to untangle the paradox of romantic love in the Dutch context. Pursuing the ideal of romantic love is perceived as an essential component to personal wellbeing and happiness in contemporary western societies. Yet this ideal is challenged by a relatively high rate of divorce and separation, singlehood and loneliness. The paradoxical values of

autonomy and commitment underlying late-modern romantic love clash in the quest for establishing and maintaining intimate relationships and achieving happiness as promoted by a widespread therapeutic discourse. This project asks how autonomy and commitment are negotiated by individuals within long-term monogamous relationships or non-monogamous arrangements and by singles looking for a partner in Dutch society. It will focus on the themes of a) ongoing personal reflection, b) communication and c) negotiation in daily practices of d) intimacy, e) sexuality, f) parenthood and g) cohabitation. An intersectional perspective, using gender, class, race and religiosity as analytical lenses, will provide a diversity-sensitive approach to the constructions of love and intimacy. These constructions will be examined both at the level of everyday life and in various formal and informal therapeutic and self-help practices by employing ethnographic research methods.

Julienne Weegels

PhD defense

Julienne Weegels defended her PhD thesis *Performing prison: Power, agency and co-overnance in Nicaraguan prisons* on 5 September 2018 at the Aula of the University of Amsterdam, where she was granted a ‘cum laude’ distinction by the committee. Julienne was a LOVA board member between 2011 and 2016. She is now very happy to start a postdoc project with the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA) at the University of Amsterdam.



Various LOVA members at the defense of Julienne Weegels. From left to right: Annelou Ypeij, Irma Beusink, Julienne Weegels, Marina de Regt, Jolanda van de Boom en Reinhilde König.

Merel Arianne van Mansom

PhD defense

On 16 April 2018, LOVA-Member Merel van Mansom defended her doctoral thesis *Consumerism, moralism and the law; Governmentalities and spatial displacements of men who pay for sex in Sweden and the Netherlands*. One of the aims of this study was to draw attention to the specific academic and political gazes on sex work research, especially the continuity to perceive specific prostitution policy models in Europe as opposites, and the stigma of clients that is generated and reinforced by



these specific policy models. Studies on men that pay for sexual services often haphazardly (re)create client typologies perceiving the identity of men that pay for sexual services as a fixed, trans-historical and trans-national entity. Instead of asking ‘why’ men pay for sexual services this dissertation addresses ‘how’ men pay for sexual services. Drawing on interviews among heterosexual Swedish and Dutch (upper)

middle class white men, questionnaires and online forums, the ‘how’ is addressed through the men’s narratives. Van Mansom argues that Sweden and the Netherlands cannot be perceived as having oppositional policy regimes. Her thesis uncovered and unravelled the complex processes of becoming a client by the multitude of strategies that Swedish and Dutch men employ in their home countries and abroad.

Griet Steel

Action-research project

LOVA-member Griet Steel (PI) just finished a yearlong action research project: *Securing women’s land rights in Africa: Scaling impact in Senegal, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique*. The programme, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed to identify, build upon and scale successful practices and experiences of grassroots organisations and movements that work to strengthen women’s access and control over land and natural resources in Africa. LANDac (the Netherlands Land Academy) worked in cooperation with grassroots and development organisations, including ENDA Pronat in Senegal, GROOTS Kenya and ActionAid Kenya in Kenya, ADECRU and Fórum Mulher in Mozambique, and Oxfam in Malawi. More information about the project can be found on www.landgovernance.org.