

Jury Report NALACS Thesis Award 2010-2011

The Netherlands Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (NALACS) aims to promote the study of and attention for this region, within and beyond academic circles. To contribute to this objective, NALACS has instituted an award for the best MA thesis on the region written at a Dutch university.



The poster features a teal header with a network diagram of blue and white squares and a map of Latin America and the Caribbean. The main body is light blue with a large map of the region. Text is centered and left-aligned, providing details about the award competition, criteria, and submission information. The website www.nalacs.nl is at the bottom right.

**Thesis award
2010-2011**

Written a good Masters thesis on Latin America or the Caribbean?

NALACS, the Netherlands Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, invites you to enter its Thesis award competition.

The best thesis receives a € 500 prize.
Submit before 1 September 2011. All disciplines are welcome.

Criteria for thesis:

- Completed between 1 Sept. 2010 and 1 Sept. 2011 with a grade of 8 or higher
- At a Dutch university or academic institution
- Own research, with a theoretical basis and use of primary sources
- The thesis must be written in Dutch, English or Spanish

Selection criteria:

- 1) Scientific quality and originality
- 2) Writing style and structure of the thesis
- 3) Societal relevance

Send 3 copies of your thesis before 1 September 2011 to
NALACS, c/o CEDLA,
Keizersgracht 395-397,
1016 EK Amsterdam,
mentioning 'NALACS scriptieprijs 2010-2011'
Questions? nalacs@cedla.nl.

www.nalacs.nl

Important criteria in evaluating the theses are:

- Scientific quality and originality
- Writing style and structure of the thesis
- Societal relevance

The jury for this year's thesis award consisted of Mieke Lopes Cardozo (University of Amsterdam), Silke Heumann (Institute of Social Studies) and Edwin Rap (University of Wageningen). The fifteen participating theses with marks higher than an 8 were of high quality and it was a pleasure to read them.

The contributions came from a range of disciplines and methodological approaches. Four submissions came from Leiden University, three from the University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University and one each from the Free University, Nijmegen University, CEDLA, the ISS and KU Leuven/HUB. The theses deal with different countries in the region and the attached power point presentation contains a nice map of that.

The increasing internationalization of higher education in the Netherlands is

highlighted by the diverse backgrounds of participants and the languages in which the theses were written. Of the 15 theses a rough estimation shows that Dutch, other European and 'Latin American' students each compose a third of the total. These mixed audiences make it such a pleasure and challenge to work in academic education nowadays. Six contributions were written in English, two in Spanish and two in Dutch.

We see a continuation of the trend noticed in previous years in terms of the remarkably strong representation of young female scholars. This year, twelve of the fifteen theses were written by women and the three scholars selected for the shortlist were all women.

In broad terms the participating theses can be classified as pertaining to the disciplines of anthropology, Latin American studies, international development studies, gender studies, political and social sciences. The themes of the theses varied greatly: from regional integration in Latin America, favela life in Brazil, international circuits of migration and care, genocide in Guatemala, cross-boundary trade, regional mobilization in Potosí, *trabajadoras de la casa* in Lima, to mention just a selection.

Each thesis offers unique perspectives on political, social, economic or cultural developments in contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean, which made the selection not an easy one. After careful consideration the jury composed a shortlist of three nominees.

These were:

- *'Orgullo Potosino': Awakening Regionalism: Explaining Record Mobilizations during Popular Protests in Potosí, Bolivia* by Diana Iftodi (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam);
- *'Kids on the Frontline of Haiti's Fault Line: Children's Perspectives on their Earthquake Relocation'* by Talitha Stam (University of Utrecht);
- *'The Plight of Small-scale Microfinance and Globalization of Development: Tales of Organizational Struggle'* by Katarzyna Cieslik (University of Amsterdam)

These three theses will be presented below in more detail.

In our opinion, these three theses came closest to the criteria for awarding the NALACS Thesis Award. We then faced the difficult task of selecting the final winner and agreed that this would be Talitha Stam with her study of children after the earthquake in Haiti. The thesis combines original empirical research, impressive ethnographic data with insightful theoretical reflection.

This year two innovations created attention for the NALACS Thesis Award: Firstly, a new poster was designed to attract more candidates for the Award, which worked in spite of more strict criteria (mark > 8). Secondly, the shortlist for the Thesis Award was presented during the annual NALACS conference 13-14 November 2011 in Leiden, giving extra attention to the three selected theses and showing pictures from their fieldwork.