**Els Witte PhD Dissertation Prize 2024**

*Jury report announcing the winner of the Els Witte PhD Dissertation Prize for 2024 on behalf of the selection committee*

It is a pleasure to announce the winner of the Els Witte PhD dissertation prize for 2024.

This year, the members of the selection committee were:

* Gisela Hirschmann (Leiden University)
* Jonas Lefevere (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
* Herwig Reynaert (University of Ghent)
* Daphne Van der Pas (University of Amsterdam)
* Chendi Wang (Free University Amsterdam)

This year, thirteen excellent dissertations were nominated for the Els Witte prize. After a careful assessment of all nominated PhD theses, the committee shortlisted four dissertations which stood out in terms of their theoretical depth, empirical rigour, and overall contributions to the field:

* Dr. Imogen T. Liu (Maastricht University) – Investing for the state: a finance-sensitive reading of the transnationalisation of Chinese state capital in Europe
* Dr. Franziska Petri (KU Leuven) – One message, many messengers? The role of European Union Delegations in implementing climate and energy diplomacy across the globe
* Dr. Željko Poljak (University of Antwerp) – Negativity in politics from election to election: attacks in parliaments throughout the electoral cycle
* Dr. Emma Turkenburg (KU Leuven) – On Silver Tongues and Silver Linings: Examining controversial political communication and its effects on citizens’ reasoning

The committee would like to explicitly mention that all the shortlisted dissertations were of high quality. Each of them engaged with topics that are central to discussions in the field of political science, and all four skilfully combined different methods and came to insights that are relevant from a scientific and societal perspective.

It is common practice for juries to lament the difficult decision they have to make, and this year was no different. It even turned out to be impossible to choose between the two best dissertations, which were completely different but equally deserving. Therefore, this year the prize goes to two new doctors: **Imogen Liu** and **Emma Turkenburg**.

**Imogen Liu**’s dissertation is highly innovative, thinking outside of the box and challenging common misconceptions in current debates on the role of China in the world. It investigates the transnationalization of Chinese state capital in the so-called ‘rise of China’. In so doing, it challenges state-centric approaches in IPE with a new theory on financialization. The empirical effort to support these arguments is extraordinary – and was no doubt challenging. Based on roughly 100 interviews, complemented by document analysis and field observations across a variation of countries, the breadth of empirical evidence underpinning the conclusions drawn in the empirical chapters is impressive. Ultimately, this dissertation makes us rethink the connection between the state and capital in light of a rising power from the Global South, and will inspire future work on contemporary evolutions in the transnationalisation of state capital.

The thesis of **Emma Turkenburg** is very different, but no less impressive. Her dissertation is very topical and timely, addressing core issues of regarding the quality of contemporary political communication. It focusses on an innovative combination of three core aspects of potentially problematic elite communication: incivility, unsophisticatedness, inaccessibility. The thesis is striking in its ability to advance the state of the art by bringing together literature related to a wide variety of subdisciplines - political communication, political science and political psychology - to create an original research puzzle. Despite this, it maintains a clear focus in its buildup, and leverages a variety of methodological design to consider both the prevalence of controversial communication, and its effects on the public, and never loses site of the normative implications. Finally, this is a topic with very clear societal relevance such controversial communication is unlikely to go away any time soon – and this thesis will likely have continued relevance in the future.

Many congratulations to the four shortlisted candidates for their excellent dissertations and to this year’s winners: Imogen Liu and Emma Turkenburg!