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Situating "wicked" women: gender panic and savoir vivre in urban Senegal

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Curriculum Vitae

Loes Oudenhuijsen (1994, Sint Maarten) attended high school at the Koninklijke Scholengemeenschap in Apeldoorn. She holds a bachelor (*cum laude*) in International Development Studies from Wageningen University, and a research master (*cum laude*) in African Studies from Leiden University. Loes works at the intersection of African Studies, anthropology, and gender and sexuality studies. Her PhD research, which commenced in 2019, built upon research she conducted for her MA studies on the lives of young same-sex desiring women in Senegal. The PhD project was carried out at the African Studies Centre, Leiden University (ASCL). At the ASCL, Loes was part of the Graduate Programme in African Studies.

During her PhD, she taught multiple courses in the MA programme African Studies, as well as delivering guest lectures and teaching at summer schools at other universities in the Netherlands and abroad. Loes is board member at Lova, the Netherlands Association for Feminist Anthropology and Gender Studies. She is editor-in-chief of Lova's annual peer-reviewed journal, and she is a member of its working group Safety in the Field.

The past years have seen an increasing attention to female sexualities and “homosexuality” in the Senegalese public sphere. This putting into discourse of female and dissident sexualities runs against cultural expectations and values of discretion around matters of sexuality, and it signals a growing anxiety with the loss of control over (women’s) bodies and sexualities. This dissertation analyses women’s agency in a context that is characterised by broad public concern with women’s unruly practices and sexuality in particular that emerges as social transformations bring about shifts in gender hierarchies and -relations. Drawing upon ethnographic research conducted with *fémunistes* (feminists), *lesbiennes* (lesbians), and *ñi génn guddi* (those who go out at night, who engage in commercial sex), the focus is on how women shape their everyday lives while navigating public debates and the gender norms and expectations that underlie them. It sheds light on how gender dissident women craft ways to live their lives by drawing upon trickery, secrecy and ambiguity. In the process of navigating heteronormative public debates, family expectations and moral obligations, women furthermore cultivate forms of sociality which ground them in social networks and enable them to sustain dissident lives. Exploring the shifting articulations between gender panic, gender norms, and women’s agency, this study expands our understanding of gender and sexuality studies in Africa through the figure of so-called wicked women.



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