

## Teaching in the LOVA summer school

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In the summer of 2017, I presented my research at the LOVA international conference, for which I received a NRSFH grant. LOVA is a network for gender and feminist anthropology hosted by the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Following from this, the network asked me to teach in their international summer school a year later; a invitation I happily accepted. Together with Marielle le Mat – a PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam whose research focuses on gender based violence and sexuality education in Ethiopia – I prepared a two hour lecture titled “*Unschooling development: girls’ and sexuality education as ‘neutral’ development goals?*”. The aim of the summer school was to ‘unschool’ the anthropologist by critically and playfully examining held beliefs and attitudes towards several broad themes that commonly arise in the work of anthropologists. Every day a different theme was center focus. Ours covered the development sector. With examples from our research in Malawi and Ethiopia we challenged the participants to critically think about development goals, and the role of Nongovernmental Organizations.

Our lecture started with a role play. Through an ‘aid chain’ – from a donor country in Europe to girls as recipients of an INGO project – the participants experienced how development projects are shaped by the positionality of each actor. Afterwards, we discussed their experiences and connected this to theoretical perspectives from the anthropology of development and medical anthropology. I also presented the first article of my PhD thesis which analyses the role of junior public servants – such as teachers – in the implementation of NGO projects. Then we moved on to discuss the role of culturalism in development initiatives. We explained how culture is overemphasized and blamed for different social problems, such as teenage pregnancies, HIV, and gender based violence. This is an important finding in both Marielle’s and my own research. Marielle asked the participants to place cultural practices in categories. After this for anthropologists challenging exercise, she explained how people in Ethiopia make these distinctions. We also discussed the concept of ‘harmful cultural practices’. The afternoon session was led by Wouter Oomen, chair of IDleaks (the Dutch equivalent of RadiAid), where we critically analyzed NGO’s promotion videos.



I very much enjoyed this valuable teaching experience. It allowed me to experiment with different teaching techniques - such as roleplaying - and communicating my research to the participants in an interactive way. The collaboration with Marielle was also very fun and fruitful. Although we focus on different countries and she has a background in educational sciences and I in medical anthropology, we discovered important overlap in our findings. Perhaps this might result in a joint publication in the future. All in all, teaching in this summer school has been a positive experience and I would definitely recommend other PhD candidates to do the same if given the opportunity. The LOVA summer school itself could also be interesting to participate in.