

Citizenship, Care, Gender:

Renegotiations of the Public and the Private in the Netherlands

Report >
Europe

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Unravelling the underlying assumptions and implications of the expansion, operation, retraction, and remodelling of welfare systems was the focus of two linked workshops held in Leiden on 16 and 17 May 2001. The research questions addressed by a team of Indian and Dutch anthropologists and an economist examining "The Impact of a Changing Social Welfare System on Relations within Marriage, Family and Social Networks and the Public Debate on this Process" (funded by Phase IV, The Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development) aimed to re-centre both anthropology and the study of social policy in that constant anthropological issue - human sociality. The project itself - collaborative research in a field usually reserved for economists from the north - was unusual (See IIAS Newsletter 21).

By: Rajni Palriwala

The workshops were innovative in method, for it is rare for academics in general and ethnographers in particular to return to their informants to discuss their initial or final analyses. On day two, the researchers reported on their findings to informants and interviewees at a meeting sponsored by the Municipal Council of Leiden and held in the spectacular Council Room of the Town Hall. The workshop held on the first day and entitled "Citizenship, Care, Gender" was sponsored by the International Institute of Asian Studies, IDPAD, and the University of Leiden. Both Wim Stokhof, IIAS director, and Jan Laurier, alderman-social affairs in the Municipal Council who opened the proceedings on the first and second day respectively, stressed that the implications of the research were wider than the immediate findings. Stokhof emphasized the cooperation that the project and the workshop expressed, while Jan Laurier expressed the opinion that this research venture could be termed development aid to the Netherlands!

A remark heard frequently during the research was that because of rapid changes, detailed rules, and constant "fine tuning", no one was familiar with the Dutch welfare system in its entirety; moreover, implementers were hard put to make the day-to-day decisions required of them. Did all the tinkering perhaps help to obfuscate the critical directions of change and continuity? In the morning session chaired by Han van der Horst, Maithreyi Krishna Raj charted the shifts and constants leading to a system resting on stricter conditional entitlements replacing universal entitlements, a trimmed breadwinner model, and a realignment of public and private responsibility in favour of the latter. She highlighted the conflict between the principles of equity and solidarity on the one hand and the economic rationale of reducing welfare costs and increasing national product by pushing "beneficiaries", such as the sick and disabled and single mothers into employment, and between women's employment and care, given continuing iniquitous gender relations. Based on her presentation and comments by Joyce Outshoorn, issues pertaining to macro-economic constraints, the EU context, and the implications and valuing of part time work and the provisions for care leave and care services were debated.

With Carla Risseeuw's talk and Tjon Sie Fat's comments the discussions shifted to fieldwork-based studies and to substantive, methodological, and theoretical questions pertaining to the cultural articulations and social practices of care and social relationships among different sectors of Dutch society over time. Dutch (policy-related) research on the so-called private domain - the individual/citizen within the family, the couple, intergenerational relations, friends' circle, neighbourhood - in relation to the experience of shrinking families described by informants were debated. Using descriptive ideas such as "forms of modern, clumsy sociality" and "cultural fuss", Risseeuw highlighted the articulation of practices of negotiation in primary relationships and among friends, and varied, indeterminate conceptualizations of the "modern" priority and separation, fluidity or replacement of family and friends.

In the afternoon session chaired by Judith Mbula Baemuka of Nairobi University, Kamala Ganesh described the social support networks of the dependent elderly living at home, in the context of policy which encourages informal and professional care at home, and where aging is a gendered phenomenon. Various dimensions of care are worked out in the interplay between the domains of "care", "work", and "leisure", gaps between official and popular discourses, and cultural (non-)articulations of dependence/interdependence, underlining human support as the weak link in the field of

care. Technical and organizational innovations have been unable to resolve the ambivalences and ambiguities in care arrangements. In the discussion, Marjolein Moree and Monique Kremer spoke of the differential perceptions of professional and non-professional care and dependency in various social relationships and age groups. They also built intra-European cultural variations on the fixing of private or public responsibility, pointing to the critical theme of the transmission of cultural messages in welfare policy.

The latter were among the issues raised by Rajni Palriwala in her focus on single parents. She emphasized that naturalized, gendered, and devalued positionings of care activity continue despite notions of a "caring economy". The latter are bounded by a macro-economics of profit and assumptions that the formal economy subsidizes care. This was contested by Annemiek van Drenth, who suggested that the interweaving of care and the labour market and changes in the breadwinner model in the Netherlands have taken it out of the heart of capitalist modernity. Palriwala argued that the autonomous, independent, bounded, employed-entrepreneur citizen and detached self-sufficiency as the ideal bases of connectivity and solidarity are embedded in policy and in models of child upbringing. The daily experiences and practices of many citizens, especially single parents, are thus

denied. Discussions concentrated on issues of value and choice pertaining to parenthood, care, relatedness, and responsibility.

Participants of both workshops questioned the researchers on the conditions in India and other countries, bringing to the fore issues of cross-cultural comparison. The discussions made explicit the complex issues entailed in an understanding of intimacy, validity, and quality of care and social relations as primary policy concern, within the problematic of the gap between formal and substantive citizenship and the issue of equitable gender relations. <

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Rajni Palriwala, Carla Risseeuw, Maithreyi Krishna-Raj, and Kamala Ganesh



Asian Artisans & Small Scale Producers in the Global Economy: Trends, Issues and Problems in the New Millennium

What does it mean to be an artisan in Asia in the new millennium? Do artisan and craft labour have a viable future? Have traditional crafts disappeared or are there new markets emerging for these goods? Can craft workers adapt to the global market? These are just a few of the questions that twenty-odd participants explored during a recent one-day workshop on Asian artisan labour and small scale production held on 4 January at the University of Amsterdam and organized by the IIAS branch office, Amsterdam.

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General

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By Tim Scrase and Mario Rutten

The globalization of production in the world economy has undoubtedly opened-up the markets of Asia to global competition and exchange. Producers and workers at all levels have been radically affected. While some have gained employment in offshore transnational enterprises, or migrated to large urban centres for wage labour, others have become displaced, finding that their skills and produce are no longer required. It would seem that artisans and small producers are particularly vulnerable - but is this so in all cases?

The main aim was to explore current literature, to identify key areas of research, and to highlight recent research and writings on the state of Asian artisan and small-scale production. We hoped to: (1) provide comparative data and research on artisanal and small-scale industries from both South

Asia and Southeast Asia; (2) identify the strengths and weaknesses of particular crafts and small industries and their ability to survive in the rapidly changing, global economic environment; and (3) enable the dissemination and comparison of micro-level, case-study data from a range of craft areas and industries. Papers were presented on a range of crafts (and themes) including: goldsmiths and diamond-cutters in India; furniture makers in Indonesia; placemat makers in the Philippines; leather workers in India; subcontracting arrangements; buyer strategies and networks; and artisan survival strategies.

During the workshop several areas were identified as significant and worthy of further investigation. Concerning the entrepreneurial side of artisan and small-scale production in Asia, a major difference in the focus of study came to light when comparing research on artisans and small-scale producers from India to that from Indonesia. Indi-

an research tends to highlight the occupational background and social factors as basic principles for understanding entrepreneurial behaviour. This partly explains the emphasis in these studies on the class and caste position of artisans and small-scale entrepreneurs in the Indian context. By contrast, Indonesian research often focuses more on cultural and geographical factors as organizing principles of artisan and small-scale production. This is shown in the emphasis in these studies on the significance of clusters of craft workers and small-scale entrepreneurs as examples of geographic and ethnic concentration of particular craft industries.

A second significant theme that emerged concerns the consumption side of artisan production. As was highlighted, very little, if any, research has been undertaken on the theme of artisan or craft consumption. As opposed to craft producers, very little is known about craft consumers - their motivations and thoughts that inspire the purchasing of, or desire for, artisan products, which is remarkable considering the wide range of recent, Western theoretical literature and academic interest, on the sociology of consumption. In the book Consumer Culture and

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