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Labour migration

Erasmus University Rotterdam



From the **Editorial Board**

Global transitions and real-world experiences

In October this year, ISS celebrated its 72nd anniversary. Like all anniversaries, it provided an opportunity to celebrate the past but also, and maybe more importantly, to look ahead to the future. With a group of seven ISS alumni who graduated from the institute 30 years ago, the past was well represented. Looking to the future, the panel discussion with both young and more established researchers considered the direction of development studies and how the field can contribute directly to just transitions. Their discussion focused on three-fold fundamental transitions that societies are currently navigating: resources and food security, global connectedness, and knowledge acquisition and sharing.

In this DevISSues, we investigate these important transitions, moving them from the realm of theory to the real-life worlds and experiences of the individuals and communities dealing with them.

Our two themed articles by Siegmann and Hatmanti, investigate the lived realities of migrant labour working in the Dutch agricultural and domestic spheres. Lifting migrant workers, many of whom are living in a context of financial and legal precarity, out of the sphere of mere statistics, they clearly illustrate the interconnectedness of a globalized economy.

This theme is also taken up in the Staff-student discussion (Van Staveren and Ospina Celis) in their conversation about the fallacy of the free market economy. Moving beyond the question of the rights and wrongs of a global free market economy dominated by monopolistic and oligopolistic interests, they discuss some real-life alternatives that communities around the world are adopting to counter those interests.

In our Focus article (Papyrakis and Van Stapele) we highlight an innovative project investigating the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth and refugees, and how these can be addressed. Again, not just a theoretical investigation, this project has a strong autoethnographic component, foregrounding the experiences, knowledges and expertise of the very community it is investigating – young people and refugees who identify as queer.

This DevISSues therefore makes clear how global questions around resources, connectedness and knowledge are translated into real-world problems and solutions – solutions that are conceived and carried out by the communities most affected. And as it enters its 73rd year, ISS will continue to work with these global communities to investigate and address the questions raised in this issue.

Jane Pocock – Editor, DevISSues

Colophon

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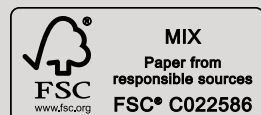
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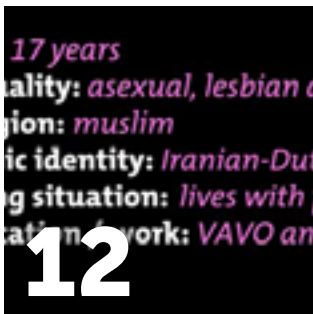
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Rector's Blog Global village?



It was in the 1960s that Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan coined the term 'global village'. His idea was that media and technology enable the whole world to communicate directly as one big village. Sure, it was overly idealistic and has been disputed by others, but the ideal of connectedness stayed alive and Artificial Intelligence is making great steps to overcome language barriers.

ISS itself is an example of a global village. Small but highly international, we practice transnational and transcultural communication daily. And our alumni network is an even better example of connectedness across time and space. We have learned together the value of encounters with colleagues bringing entirely different perspectives, and we communicate through Zoom, Whatsapp, Facebook or whatever medium with our scattered community.

And yet, we live in a world where disconnections seem more powerful than connections. Fake news dominates our media, and social media is a source of connecting but at the same time also of bullying and segregation. If anything, commercial parties have been more successful than anyone else in cashing in on those opportunities. The McDonaldisation of the world has not brought more community but has in fact just become a new form of economic colonialism.

And politics. Ah, politics. Many countries, including the Netherlands, voted for right wing parties, effectively showing a transnational movement in which nationalistic sentiments are combined with rejection of whoever is 'foreign'. Migrants are in many cases labelled as a risk to society, resulting in xenophobic policies and political claims, which in turn legitimizes new forms of racism, sexism and anti-LGBTI+ slurs.

Maybe that is in fact an unexpected but not unintelligible response to the same globalization that coined the term global village. If the world becomes so large and connected, the desire may grow to return to our villages that were comprehensible and more homogeneous. Global diversity may be enriching, it can also be confusing. And those most vulnerable to the economic consequences may easily be recruited for a nationalist agenda.

Probably the dream of one global village is gone. But the calling remains to build global connectedness as well as local rootedness. We are driven by the responsibility to live and work from the awareness of interconnectedness with the whole planet and its inhabitants. And we can only do so if we also feel at home in our village, wherever it may be.

Ruard Ganzevoort, Rector ISS

Migrant work and the future of food cultivation in the Netherlands

"[...] agrarian companies exist thanks to us. We contribute to the survival of these agrarian companies."

Polish migrant worker employed in a horticultural company (cited from Siegmann et al. 2020: 7)

Migrant workers make up a large and growing part of the agricultural labour force in the Netherlands, yet their essential work is made invisible in debates about the future of our food. Between 2010 and 2022, the share of farmworkers in the regular agricultural workforce rose from 30 to 40 per cent (CBS 2023). Among those, migrant workers form the backbone of the labour necessary to cultivate, harvest and process vegetables and fruit. Jointly,

these horticultural items top the list of agricultural exports from the Netherlands that make the country the world's second agricultural exporter after the USA.

While the future of food has moved to the centre of public attention in the Netherlands, migrant workers remain positioned at its periphery. For example, media headlines about the farmers' protests featured many tractors but no migrant farmworkers. The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands underlines that a future-proof agricultural agreement must involve many relevant stakeholders and also benefit workers; yet farm workers were not invited to the accord's negotiating table. This invisibility contrasts with the significance of his work that a Polish migrant worker soberly expresses in the opening quote.

Migrant workers: weakest link in the Dutch agri-food chain

Migrant farmworkers form the weakest link in the Dutch agri-food chain. In different parts of the Global North, these chains have been characterized as

'supermarket models', dominated by few powerful retailers. In the Netherlands, the two largest supermarkets jointly hold an almost 60 per cent share in the retail market, while many smaller supermarkets work together in a national buying group. Supermarkets, but also consumers, have benefitted from this oligopolistic competition, with retail prices of labour-intensive fruit and vegetable cultivation declining. As a result, farmers' income is squeezed and only large farmers are able to cope. Migrant workers pay for the downward pressure on food prices passed on to them in the form of low wages and insecure contracts.

The number of migrant workers in Dutch agriculture is high, yet the exact figure is disputed. In 2020, Statistics Netherlands' (CBS) Migrant Monitor counted 21,200 workers from EU countries as directly employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The majority of them were Polish nationals, followed, at some distance, by persons from Romania and Bulgaria.

Official figures on migrant work, however, veil rather than reveal. Most migrants working in Dutch agriculture hold contracts that are signed by temporary employment agencies rather than growers. This widespread use of indirect agency employment has been catalysed by the flexibilization of the Dutch labour market. Since the introduction of the 1999 Flexibility and Security Act, indirect contracts with employment agencies have become



Karin Astrid Siegmann is Associate Professor in Labour and Gender Economics at ISS.



legal. They provide workers with phased economic and social entitlements that enable growers to lower labour costs. Besides veiling migrant farmworkers indirectly employed through agencies, CBS figures may exclude seasonal workers working a maximum of four out of six months in the Netherlands as registration is not mandatory for them (Inspectie SZW 2021: 12-13). Horticultural employers estimate their sub-sector alone to provide structural employment to 139,000 people, with the number rising to 248,000 during peak periods (Dutch Horticulture 2023).

Keeping these disclaimers in mind, CBS data do give a rough idea about the overall distribution of migrant workers across regions and sectors as well as their labour conditions. They reflect that the share of migrant workers from Central and Eastern European¹ (CEE) countries in the total labour force is highest in the horticultural hubs of South

Migrant workers pay for the downward pressure on food prices ... in the form of low wages and insecure contracts.

and North Holland, Limburg and North Brabant (CBS 2023). South Holland is the capital of greenhouse horticulture; a large number of open field fruit and vegetable farms are located in Limburg and North Brabant; while North Holland is a hub for flower bulb production and other open field floriculture.

The downward pressure on food prices in the 'supermarket model' of the Dutch agri-food chain translates into low wages for migrant workers. The average hourly pay of workers from CEE countries is lowest compared to Dutch and other foreign workers. In 2021, the vast majority of farmworkers born in Romania, Poland or Bulgaria held a job that paid around the minimum wage of less than €15 per

hour, with a higher comparative share of women migrants earning low wages (CBS 2023). Not only are migrant workers' incomes low, they are also insecure. This is reflected in the fact that the majority of CEE migrant farmworkers are employed on fixed term contracts.

National and EU framework shapes migrant farmworkers' 'regulated precarity'

Dutch regulation of agency work forms one root of migrant farmworkers' precarity. Illegal in some other countries, after the legalization of contracts with employment agencies in 1999, indirect employment emerged as the dominant contract type held by migrant farmworkers in the Netherlands. The relevant collective

¹ Here, CEE countries mainly refers to the EU member states of Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

bargaining agreements provide agency workers with staggered economic and social entitlements, with the first phase lasting up to 78 weeks. During the first 26 weeks of this phase, their contract may be terminated at any time and workers are only paid for hours worked. Workers in the last phase must be offered a permanent contract and receive payment even if there is no work for them (Inspectie SZW 2021: 22). Dismissal after the first phase and reemployment after a period of unemployment is common. As a result, most CEE migrants hold first phase contracts.

Interlinked agency contracts that combine 'bed and job' aggravate migrant farmworkers' dependence on

their employers. Newcomers to the Netherlands appreciate 'package deals' that combine the employment contract with the offer of accommodation, health insurance and transportation. For their employers, this is financially attractive because Dutch tax legislation enables the deduction of expenses for migrant workers' housing and health insurance up to a maximum of 25 per cent of the minimum wage. The agency's labour costs are reduced by this deduction of so-called extraterritorial costs from workers' pre-tax earnings. Yet, coming with the simultaneous fear of homelessness on top of dismissal, this system disciplines migrant farmworkers and curbs complaints

against indecent working and living conditions (Siegmann et al. 2022).

EU regulation also flanks the flexibilization and cheapening of migrant labour for Dutch agriculture. The Posting of Workers Directive (1996/71/EC), in particular, enables employers to post workers from a company in one EU member state to a company in another. Such postings can reduce labour costs because wages, taxation and social security remain under the auspices of institutions in the sending member state (Siegmann et al. 2022: 233).

The sketch above puts question marks behind the government's upbeat portrayal of migrant workers as 'no second-class citizens' (Ministerie van SZW 2022). Instead, Berger and Oudman's (2021) sober, if not understated summary seems more accurate: 'The people who take care of our food are not well taken care of.'

...recognition of the essential value of food needs to be matched by dignified conditions for those involved in its production.



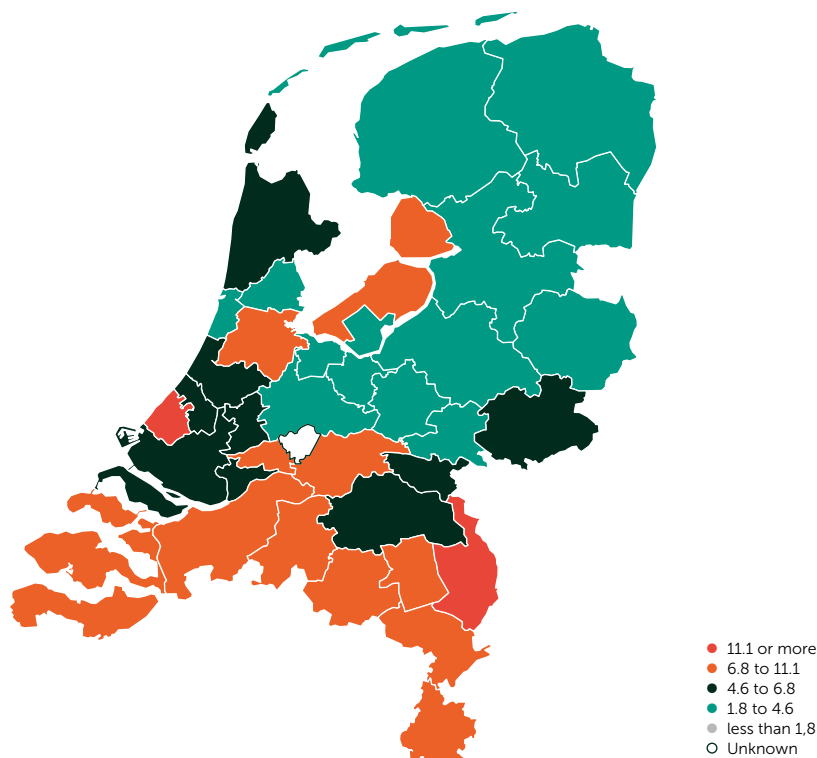
Outlook for change

Alongside and often intertwined with care, food is at the centre of life-making processes. In capitalist agri-food chains, these processes commonly involve the commodification of both labour and nature that results in the devaluation of food and of the labour involved in its cultivation and processing. The widespread invisibilization of migrant farmworkers in statistics, policy and media discourses, and the precarity of their working and living conditions outlined above, are mechanisms that underpin this devaluation.

For a change towards a sustainable future of migrant work in food cultivation, greater recognition of the essential value of food needs to be matched by dignified conditions for those involved in its production. Different actors in the agri-food chain should and can support shifts of power, resources and recognition towards migrant farmworkers:

- State regulation of agri-food chains in ways that ensure retailers' accountability for labour conditions along this chain is possible and in line with EU commitments to fair trading practices.
- The experience of the Fair Food Program (FFP) in the US shows that, even in a highly internationalized food system, value redistribution across the agri-food chain to the (migrant) labour force is possible based on the market mechanism or on public-private partnerships.
- Regulations that effectively guarantee the equal treatment of agency and directly employed workers, e.g. through a public licensing system for employment agencies, has been a demand of EU directives.
- Small mechanisms to revalue food, such as solidarity-based payment, taxation and subsidies may offer a regulatory alternative towards sustainable, yet affordable food production.
- Furthermore, SOS Rosarno's example demonstrates that insistence on a living income for farmworkers and farmers does not need to deprive poorer segments of society from access to good food cultivated under decent conditions – if the oligopoly

Concentration of EU migrant workers in the Netherlands per region (%) ©CBS 2023



power of the current supermarket model is addressed head on.

- Trade unions have a key role in helping to visibilize migrant workers' central role in food production and to amplify their voice. This way, effective organizing can be a win-win for migrant workers and the Dutch trade union movement.

The ongoing fierce debate about the future of food production in the Netherlands offers a window of opportunity for change towards a sustainable future of migrant work in the agri-food chain. It should be seized by the Dutch government, advisory bodies and other actors in the Dutch agri-food chain alike.

This article is a shortened and slightly adapted version of an essay published in the The Netherlands Institute for Social Research volume *De internationale verwevenheid van ons voedsel: tien essays over oorzaak en gevolg van internationalisering in het voedselsysteem* (The international interconnectedness of our food: ten essays on cause and effect of internationalisation in the food system) edited by Arjen van der Heide.

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The struggles of immigrant domestic workers

Siti's story and the complexities of migration



Melisa Try Hatmanti graduated from ISS in 2023. Her master's thesis, written in collaboration with an Indonesian domestic workers union, was nominated for the research paper award

In 1999, with hope and determination, Siti (not her real name) came from Indonesia to the Netherlands. Not knowing what her future would hold, all she could think about was how she could earn a better salary to support her family. Six months prior, Siti's husband had had an accident, breaking his hip which then caused him to lose his job. Siti could not afford her husband's medical expenses on her own and she had a hard time financing her daily needs.





Desperate for money, Siti saw an advertisement in a newspaper in Indonesia about a job vacancy in the Netherlands. She became interested as the job offered her a monthly salary of €1,000. She had already heard from her friends that if she wanted to earn a good salary, she needed to work abroad. Little did she know that from that point forwards, her life would change completely.

Siti reached out to the so-called 'agent' who had posted the job advertisement in the newspaper. She was called for an interview, for which she was asked to pay IDR 2 million (€117). After the interview, Siti was asked to pay another IDR 14 million (€816), which she was told was for her work visa. Siti ended up having to sell her motorcycle to cover all the costs demanded by the agent.

When Siti finally arrived in the Netherlands, she was picked up by someone who told her she had to pay €550 for transportation and accommodation. In the end, Siti did not get the job offered in the newspaper advertisement, and it later transpired that the agent had no connection with the company offering the job. Instead, she

Economic difficulties are the main reason for Indonesian workers to seek work abroad.

was forced to work as a domestic worker, earning far less than she had expected. She became an undocumented migrant domestic worker and was left with a significant debt. She not only had to cover her husband's medical bills; she also had to repay the agent who sent her to the Netherlands.

Siti is still working as an undocumented domestic worker in the Netherlands, earning €700 a month. She has managed to pay off her debts, pay her husband's medical bills and send her children to university. Despite this, and after 25 years of living in the shadows and being invisible, Siti remains in the Netherlands,

afraid that she will not be able to find a job in Indonesia or that her salary there will be much lower.

The complexities surrounding undocumented migrant domestic workers

Siti's story is just one example of the many stories of undocumented migrant domestic workers in the Netherlands. There are many other 'Sitis' currently working as domestic workers, facing unfortunate circumstances or even worse conditions than Siti. This highlights the complexities surrounding immigrant domestic workers.

Soraya (2020), a former secretary-general of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), a union based in the Netherlands for Indonesian migrant workers, argued that economic difficulties are the main reason for Indonesian workers to seek work abroad. It is difficult to find a job in Indonesia and the salaries are low. High expenses, such as healthcare and education, as well as daily living expenses, add to the pressure. Looking more broadly, however, this issue is not simply a matter of economic difficulties; the urge to find a job abroad also underscores global inequality. Milanovic (2012) explained that 80 per cent of global income inequality is due to the large differences in the average income between countries, where the wages of unskilled workers in wealthier countries are 10 times higher than in poorer countries. This is one of the major driving forces for workers from poorer countries to seek jobs abroad; just like Siti, tempted to go to the Netherlands to earn a better salary. For Siti, this meant that she could transfer her income to her family back in Indonesia, paying her husband's medical bills and financing her children's education.

Siti came to the Netherlands because she thought she had found a job through an agent: yet the agent deceived her about both the job and her work visa, resulting in her becoming an undocumented worker. According to Soraya (2020), the process of sending Indonesian workers to Europe has been an issue for some time, due to the absence of formal agreements between countries, leading

Workers are caught between the promise of better livelihoods abroad and the harsh reality of undocumented labour.

to abuse of the legal processes. Because there are no formal agreements, Indonesian migrant workers are not officially recognized as formal employees. Consequently, they live in host countries without legal status and work without proper permits, facing a variety of social and professional difficulties as a consequence. As they are unaware of the complex procedures of working abroad, such migrant workers have no option but to trust the 'agency' which helps them migrate, even if they have to pay and are left in debt.

Yet conversely, there is demand for immigrant workers in the Netherlands, particularly for domestic workers, as Dutch people rarely take these jobs. This again reflects the lack of policies in the host country, where workers remain undocumented despite the high demand for their labour.

Undocumented domestic workers bear a heavy burden as they have to remain invisible. They have to stay under the radar to avoid getting caught and be forced to leave the country. As a consequence, they cannot claim rights such as access to healthcare and social security, nor to decent working conditions such as working eight hours a day and receiving a minimum wage. Some of these workers decide to become visible so that they can claim these rights. One of the ways they do this is to actively participate in a workers' union. For Indonesian domestic workers in the Netherlands, this usually means participating in and becoming a member of IMWU. The union makes it easier for workers to access their rights and become socially recognized and protected. In the case of IMWU, participating members receive their own membership identity card which they can use in encounters with the police. Many migrant workers have indicated that they feel more confident and secure with their union ID card (Eleveld and Hooren 2018). IMWU also provides members with access to legal professionals who can assist them if they encounter problems.

However, IMWU as a union can only do so much. It provides a support system, but it cannot claim rights for domestic workers. It participates in campaigns, such as that for the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention 2011 No. 189 (C189) by the International Labour Organization, but that is all. Undocumented workers in the Netherlands thus find themselves in a complicated situation. On the one hand, they may choose to be visible to claim their rights, yet on the other they fear that this visibility will endanger their position. As Tazzioli and Walter (2016) explained, these workers want to show the Dutch society that they exist by

saying: 'We are part of this society, acknowledge us, respect us.'

Being a domestic worker in the Netherlands

The issue of undocumented domestic workers in the Netherlands is an ongoing debate. There are many workers like Siti, who come to the Netherlands based on false promises by agents, and who are then left in debt and unable to return to their home countries. The challenges faced by such immigrant domestic workers are not isolated but rather part of a larger global phenomenon shaped by economic inequality, migration policies and labour exploitation. These workers are caught between the promise of better livelihoods abroad and the harsh reality of undocumented labour. Addressing their struggles requires not only support systems but also structural changes to immigration and labour policies and laws. Only when these issues are resolved, can workers like Siti finally gain their rights and be respected as an employee working in another country.

A full list of references is included in DevISSues online.



Where are they now?



Pinar Coskun

Study programme MA - Politics of Alternative Development Strategies

Year of graduation 1994

Country of origin Turkey/Netherlands

Current occupation Founder Erasmus Food Lab

What made your time at ISS special?

Meeting like-minded people and discussing how to make the world a better place for all.

What is your best memory of ISS?

There are plenty...Talking to my classmates was so important, enjoyable and unmissable for me that I rented a room in the dormitory to be close to them all the time although I had a house in Rotterdam.

What does ISS mean to you now?

ISS plays a very important and unmissable role in the academic world in the Netherlands. Issues raised now like degrowth, decoloniality, global wars and conflicts would never be analysed and discussed from a real global perspective without ISS.



Esther Kirabo Kafeete

Study programme Diploma - Universalising socio-economic security

Year of graduation 2005

Country of origin Uganda

Current occupation Assistant secretary, Kabale University, University

What made your time at ISS special?

The quality of the lecturers and the special attention they give to students. Time management was key.

What is your best memory of ISS? A trip to India to complete my studies. I was able to live, feel and experience the poverty. This widened my view of poverty.

What does ISS mean to you now? It motivated me to go on to further studies. I have since then accomplished my Master's and will embark on a PhD.



Maria Libertad Mella (Libby)

Study programme MA - Local and Regional Development

Year of graduation 2003

Country of origin Philippines

Current occupation Humanitarian Gender Advisor, Oxfam

What made your time at ISS special?

It made me more open and wiser in understanding the world. It is so special to engage with classmates from diverse backgrounds and with professors with egalitarian views; their competent, thought-provoking ideas nourished my heart and mind. And yes, it was great to also nourish our body with all the food from different countries.

What is your best memory of ISS?

ISS helped me deal with family issues which were affecting my study. I will never forget Martin Blok. The International Day was a memorable moment.

What does ISS mean to you now?

Before diversity became a buzzword, it was already a living element in our day-to-day interaction. ISS means diversity of identity, of ideas, of background, of aspiration.

Calling
all
alumni!

Did you study at ISS would you like to be featured in DevISSues? To tell us what you loved about ISS, what it meant to you and how it impacted your life? **It's easy!**

Simply complete this very short questionnaire with your details and answer the few questions about your time at ISS. Include a good quality, recent picture of yourself and email it

back to
devissues@iss.nl
We'll see you in the next issue!



Urban struggles: Navigating the complex world of **queer youth** and **queer refugees** in the city of The Hague



Elissaios Papyrakis,
ISS



Naomi van Stapele,
The Hague School of
Applied Science

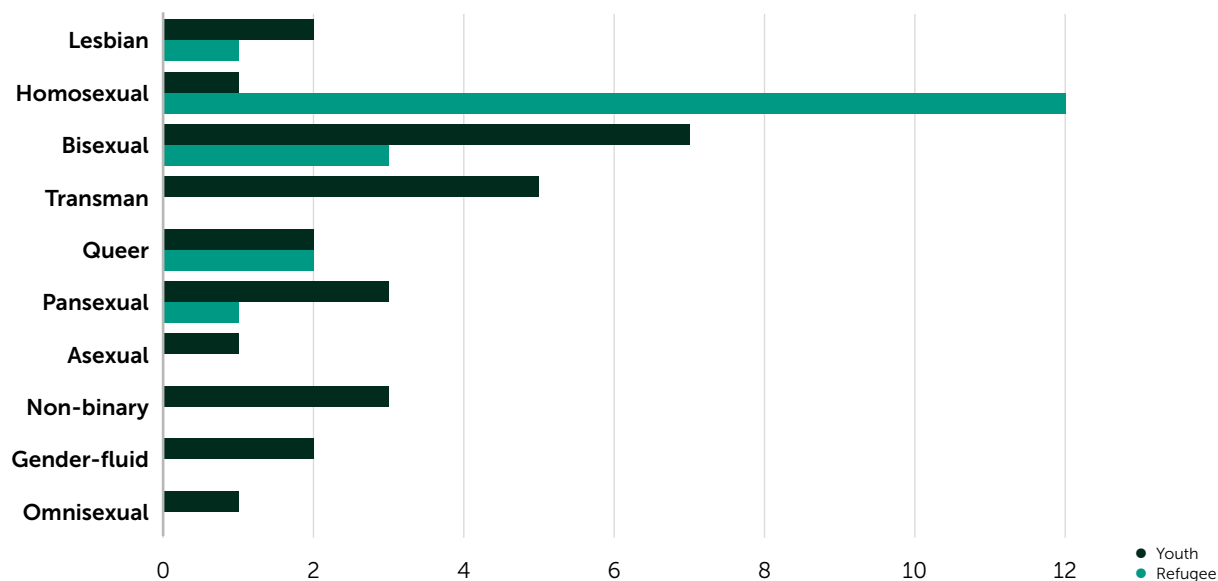
Hidden in plain sight, certain queer subgroups face vulnerabilities that demand urgent attention and targeted support. Among the most affected are queer youth and refugees; they are particularly susceptible to stigmatization, isolation and mental health challenges. Queer youth in particular, experience higher risks of social isolation and depression, often struggling to find acceptance among peers. The problem is especially critical for those still living in conservative family environments. Meanwhile, queer refugees face discrimination on multiple fronts – be it in housing, employment or their social interactions – often finding little acceptance within their own refugee and diaspora communities.

The project *Helping municipal policy makers and school children better understand the life experiences of LGBTQ youth and refugees in The Hague*, funded by the municipality of The Hague, is an ongoing project that started in April 2022. It is a collaborative effort involving researchers from two academic institutions (the International Institute of

Social Studies and The Hague University of Applied Sciences) and two LGBTQ+ NGOs in The Hague (the Jong&Out group of COC Haaglanden and Rainbow Den Haag). The project researches the recent life experiences of queer youth and refugees in The Hague, aiming to draw relevant policy recommendations for municipal policy makers and raise awareness through a 10-min documentary available in both Dutch and English.

The project has a strong autoethnographic component. Queer research often fails to include queer researchers in the research design, execution and analysis. For this reason, the project is 100 per cent LGBTQ+ driven with all senior and young researchers identifying as queer. The project hired six queer young and refugee researchers who carried out in-depth interviews with 17 queer youth and 19 queer refugees residing in The Hague. This had multiple important benefits. Firstly, it helped to equip these six queer youth and refugees researchers with new skills that will strengthen their career perspectives within the city of The Hague (queerpowerment). It also meant that the project questionnaires

Figure 1 Sexual orientation and gender identity of respondents



were prepared with invaluable input from the queer youth and refugees who belong to the researched communities and could therefore link their personal lived experiences with the broader project objectives. Respondents also felt more comfortable being interviewed by members of their own queer communities. This helped create more trusting, safe spaces where interviewees could open up when discussing their personal lived experiences in The Hague.

Characteristics of study participants

The residential location of the participants was widely dispersed, with the queer youth living in several areas of The Hague. Several currently live in neighbouring cities but worked or lived in The Hague until recently. The queer refugees also all live in The Hague, with one recently relocating to the city from nearby Rijswijk.

Analysing the combined sample of queer youth and refugees reveals a broad spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities (Figure 1). The majority self-identify as homosexual or bisexual (13 and 10 respondents respectively).

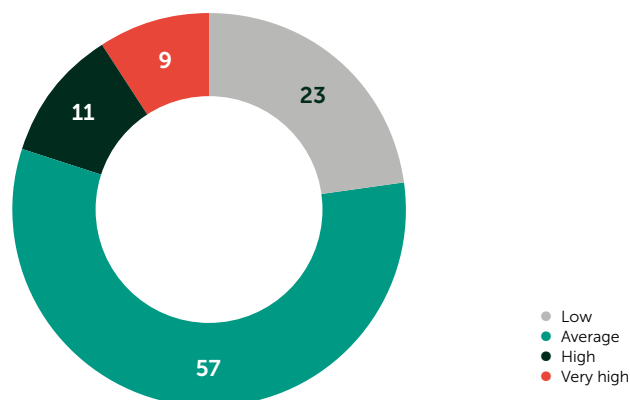
However, there are substantial differences between the two subgroups. Queer refugees tend to self-identify from fewer categories (e.g., homosexual, lesbian, queer, bisexual and pansexual), while queer youth self-identify from a much wider range of categories. Furthermore, the queer refugees appear to self-identify with a single category. In contrast, seven respondents of the queer youth adopted multiple identities (e.g. transman + pansexual, transman + homosexual, transman + bisexual, queer + non-binary, asexual + lesbian + gender-fluid, bisexual + gender-fluid + non-binary or pansexual + non-binary + omnisexual). Five of the queer youth identify as transmen.

Some key findings Perceptions on the LGBTIQ+ friendliness of The Hague

The majority of respondents (57 per cent or 20 participants) consider the LGBTIQ+ openness/friendliness of The Hague as average, 23 per cent (or 8) as low, 11 per cent (or 4) as high and 9 per cent (or 3) as very high (Figure 2).

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queer

Figure 2 LGBTIQ+ openness of The Hague as a place of residence



Sana* (20, lesbian) feels that The Hague scores low in terms of LGBTIQ+ openness because of the widespread use of derogatory terms:

*From my personal experience in my neighbourhood, it's much scarier to be homosexual here compared to places like Utrecht or Amsterdam, where I often visit. I hear words like 'cancer f*ggot' daily on public transportation and, in the past, at my high school as insults directed at homosexuals. This makes me feel unsafe being openly gay because you know that the majority in your environment views it negatively and are also capable of verbally abusing you.*

Several respondents have experienced incidences (related to their sexuality/gender identities) in public that made them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

[The] project helps provide a voice to the often unheard concerns of vulnerable queer communities

Sana (20, lesbian) mentions cautionary feelings about holding hands in public:

Last year, I never dared to hold my girlfriend's hand in public. I am by nature cautious of the people around me, and I noticed that when we did, people would give us dirty looks and walk away. It made me feel unsafe, and since then, I've stopped doing it.

Amir (30, bisexual) concurs:

[When] I came to Den Haag, I thought I would express myself more with no fear, but I heard a lot of time calling me homo because I had coloured hair and piercings, till the moment I stopped expressing myself and try my best to pass as heterosexual person.

Yusuf (16, transman, pansexual) discusses the mental impact of anti-LGBTIQ+ communication:

I once experienced religious people in the city preaching against LGBTQ, handing out flyers. Someone tried to force a flyer into my hand while shouting things like 'homosexuality is a sin', even though I didn't want it at all. I found them quite aggressive, and I really felt unsafe at that moment.

Some hostile incidences take place at school.

Edwin (19, queer, non-binary) explains how they have felt unsafe at school:

Because I was openly queer, I quickly became a target of verbal bullying ...

My negative experiences have made me insecure. I don't really dare to be openly queer anymore.

Luuk (18, transman) says that intimidation at times goes beyond verbal abuse:

I was part of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance and when we organized events for Purple Friday, we got things thrown at us. They would film us when we got out of the gender-neutral bathroom.

Paul (23, transman) explains some of the specific challenges faced by the trans community and how difficult it is to navigate in a society that is dominated by binary gender identities:

I find public restrooms uncomfortable because I never know which one to use. Often, there are no gender-neutral options either. I also feel uncomfortable in fitting rooms for the same reason. Clothing stores usually have clear divisions between men's and women's clothing, which always gives me a weird feeling. I experience discomfort in any situation where I have to choose between male or female.

Some concluding remarks

Our project helps provide a voice to the often-unheard concerns of vulnerable queer communities. For example, many expressed the need for schools to take anti-LGBTIQ+ behaviour more seriously. Daan (24, gay, transman) noted that

The majority of respondents consider the LGBTIQ+ openness/friendliness of The Hague as average

some initiatives fall short, citing instances where rainbow flags were burned during Purple Friday events, with little consequence for the students involved. Kees (16, pansexual) thinks that the biggest problems lie with families from non-Dutch ethnic backgrounds, where LHBTIQ+ tolerance is lower. Sabrina (18, bisexual) and Lieke (bisexual) mention the need for more LGBTIQ+ safe meeting spaces for queer youth who are younger than 18 years of age. Dirk (17, bisexual) and Farid (23, queer) say that more surveillance on streets would help reduce violence and bullying on the basis of sexuality or gender identity.

Sabrina (18, bisexual) and Andrei (39, gay) believe that healthcare provision should become more LGBTIQ+ friendly and informed. They refer particularly to the provision of relevant information (e.g. communication strategies about gender transitioning) but also about the training of medical personnel so that they do not automatically assume a patient's sexual orientation. Several respondents highlighted the need for greater visibility of queer identities (including Jeroen (17, bisexual), Ali (24, gay), Amir (30, bisexual), Akello (46, gay), Ejau (30, bisexual), Amina (34, lesbian), Andrei (39, gay), Daniel (34, bisexual), Farid (23, queer), Isaberiye (28, gay), Jamila (25, pansexual), and Mateo (27, gay)). Amir (30, bisexual) suggests that this should also be the case at asylum seeker centres (AZCs) with Farid (23, queer) and Mateo (27, gay) adding that this is especially important in neighbourhoods that are considered conservative.

Isaac (38, gay) says:

There should be more rainbow flags in different public buildings and neighbourhoods in Den Haag.

Zahra (17, asexual, lesbian and gender-fluid) adds:

In June, you could see those small LGBTQ flags hanging on the trams in The Hague. It was very subtle, so you

only noticed it if you looked for it or paid attention. It really made me happy to see that.

(See Figures 3 & 4)

*Pseudonyms are used throughout.



Figure 3 Zahra narrating their lived experiences (Excerpt from the documentary)



Figure 4 Zahra's Identity (Excerpt from the documentary)

Want to read more about this project?



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Celebrating 7 years of academic excellence *research*

ISS blog **BISS** is celebrating 7 years of sharing groundbreaking research, insights and global perspectives! The blog is now moving forward, aiming to further amplify diverse voices, tackle pressing challenges and provide cutting-edge content to its growing audience.



Master open day *education*



Erasmus University Rotterdam is hosting a hybrid Master Open Day on 23 November 2024. Come to the event – online or in Rotterdam – to find out about ISS' MA programmes in development studies and public policy.

Professor Rosalba Icaza new ISS Deputy Rector
Research Affairs *staff*

Rosalba took over the position on 1 September. In this role, she will seek to encourage a team-based, dynamic research that responds to shifts in the direction of development studies in a move towards forms of solidarity, reciprocity, reparation and restitution. She will also further improve the supportive and caring PhD research environment at ISS and foster closer working relationships between the PhDs and the research support and advisory offices.



Veni grant for Dr Luisa Cortesi awards

Dr Luisa Cortesi has won a prestigious Veni grant to study how people in Europe experiencing first-time disruptive flooding deal with their new circumstances. The three-year project will use a reflective and reciprocal research approach to support local learning processes and contribute to bottom-up disaster intervention policies.



New collaborations with universities in the Global South collaboration

The EU has awarded ISS several grants to help intensify collaborations with partner universities in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Vietnam, Indonesia and Colombia. The collaborations include new teaching courses, community-driven research projects and skills-enhancement programmes.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

72nd Dies Natalis ISS

On 10 October, ISS celebrated its 72nd anniversary. The panel discussion centred on the direction of development studies and how it can contribute to just transitions. Did you miss the Dies? You can rewatch the panel discussion here.

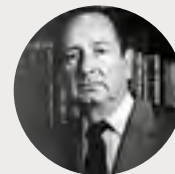


In Memoriam

As an ISS community we send our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of those former students and staff who have passed away in recent months.

Rafael Rivas Posada

Rafael Rivas Posada from Colombia passed away in August this year. He studied at ISS in 1962-1963.



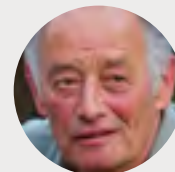
Bach Macaraya

ISS alumnus Bach Macaraya sadly passed away in August 2024. Originally from the Philippines, Bach was part of the 1986-1987 MA batch.



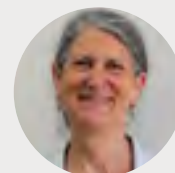
Andr s Krahl

Former colleague Andr s Krahl passed away in July this year at the age of 80. A warm person with a sharp and critical mind, Andr s worked as a documentalist in the ISS library for many years.



Liana Gertsch

Former student Liana Gertsch sadly passed away in July of this year. Liana did her MA at ISS in 1987. She had worked for various NGOs in Bangladesh, Malawi, the Kyrgyz Republic and Liberia.



Karamat Ali

Alumnus Karamat Ali passed away in June. Karamat was in the Labour and Development programme at ISS in 1983. He was a great advocate of peace and harmony in South Asia.



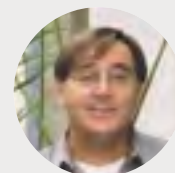
Qamrul Islam

Alumnus Qamrul Islam from Bangladesh passed away in June this year. Qamrul did his MA at ISS in 1990, specializing in the Politics of Alternative Development Studies.



Jan Kees van Donge

Former ISS professor Jan Kees van Donge passed away in May this year aged 78. He had taught at ISS for many years, mostly in the area of public administration and management.



PhD defences PhD



Jimena Pacheco Moranda

18 October 2024

The impact of crises on human capital formation: Cases from Ecuador



Francesco Colin

30 September 2024

Articulating spaces for citizenship: Performing the right to petition Moroccan municipalities



Sanchita Bakshi

11 July 2024

Paradoxes of development polarization: Why does the rising tide not lift all boats?



Anderson Macedo de Jesus

5 July 2024

Values education in Brazil: A study of three educational initiatives focused on values formation



Mausumi Chetia

10 June 2024

A home of our own? Lived human (in)securities and experiences of home in disaster-related displacements in Assam, India



Jaffer Latief Najar

31 May 2024

Violence, unfreedoms, marginalization and gaps in anti-trafficking governance in India: "I see them [the anti-traffickers] as worse than the dalals [pimps]"

New minor with University of Indonesia collaboration

The Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Universities alliance has recently started a new minor with the University of Indonesia on **Co-creating sustainable practices in and beyond the Indonesian city**. ISS' Dr Oane Visser gave the opening lecture to a group of students from LDE and Indonesia.



ISS MA graduation education



Join us in person or online on 20 December as the 2023-2024 MA in Development Studies batch receive their diplomas.



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The Prince Claus Chair recently presented its 2023-2024 Highlights Report, marking two decades of fostering academic excellence and international collaboration in equity and development.

Download the report.



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- Social Policy for Development
- Governance of Migration and Diversity track

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How about experiencing a day as a student and exploring the ISS environment and teaching methods first-hand? Or perhaps you'd prefer to speak with a current student or recent graduate to hear from them what it's like to study at ISS? Get in touch with our student advisor, Darren Baradhan, at study@iss.nl.

Ready to start your new academic journey? Apply to our MA in Development Studies



Professor Irene van Staveren and ISS alumnus Daniel Ospina Celis talk about the fallacy of the free market economy.

The fallacy of the free market economy

Daniel Ospina Celis (D): You've just published your book *The free market doesn't exist** and you're known as a pluralist development economist. Can you explain what pluralist development is and how it's important in a conversation about the free market?

Irene van Staveren (I): Currently the discipline of economics is dominated by just one perspective. Other perspectives are either ignored or marginalized. I think it's important to bring in other perspectives than just the mainstream.

D: I see. Because when people say that the free market economy doesn't exist, they usually mean that governments have created a lot of regulations which lead to market distortions. The suggestion is that the free market should exist, but that it doesn't because of government actions. Is this also what you understand by the free market doesn't exist?

I: No. And I think that's clear in my book. The title describes the ideal of a pure, free market without any government or market power intervention. I question this ideal: should we have a free market?

D: In your book you mention the housing and health sectors, but are there any other examples of sectors where free market forces create more bad than good?

I: Yeah. One is the fossil fuel industry. It has so much power that any government regulations are simply lobbied away. I believe we should partly nationalize some of these firms to bring them under democratic control and force them to become sustainable. This sector should be partly left to the community economy, with solar energy and wind energy co-ops to generate sustainable energy.

D: But do national and cooperative organizations have adequate incentives to transform this business model?

I: Well, we see that worker cooperatives and consumer organizations are producing and using their own energy. Any profit that is made, for example, is reinvested in the community or in the business. So that's already a different business model.

D: There's a theory that nature-oriented business models should take environmental costs into account, but you seem very critical of that.

The True Price Movement says that all workers should be paid a living wage

I: Well, there are two sides to it. One is that if we put a price tag on nature, as the IMF did by calculating the value of a whale to be US\$2 million, then we reduce nature to a simple market value without intrinsic value; it becomes a market product which can be bought. But on the other hand, normal consumer goods contain some natural resources. And the production and transport of these goods leads to the emission of CO₂. Prices should include these costs.

D: I agree. But it's not only an environmental issue, it's also a social one; workers need to be paid a fair wage. Including all these costs would, of course, increase the final price of a product.





The suggestion is that the free market should exist, but that it doesn't due to government actions.

I: Indeed. The True Price Movement says that all workers should be paid a living wage, that is, the wage needed to feed their family, pay their children's school fees, have decent housing and so on. And yes, this increases the price of products which may mean that some people will no longer be able to afford them. But don't forget that the people who may not be able to afford to pay for these products are the same people who are now paid below the minimum wage. Once they get higher pay, more products will come within their reach.

D: We sometimes forget about the redistributive role of the state. The state could, for instance, develop policies to give out food vouchers, introduce a universal basic income or guarantee employment.

I: Indeed. I think the state should take more responsibility for setting a minimum for people's livelihoods. There are great historical examples. For example, Thomas Piketty mentions that in the 1970s countries had marginal income tax rates higher than 70 per cent or even 80 per cent because politicians in the Western world were afraid that people would increasingly vote for communist parties. They hoped that greater redistribution would prevent people from voting for such parties. As soon as the Cold War was over, marginal tax rates declined. So external pressure forced states to take action. Nowadays that pressure comes from ageing societies and climate change.

D: I totally agree. Furthermore, we're now living in a globalized economy

based on bi- and multilateral free trade agreements. How do you see the future of such agreements?

I: Well, we should be discussing global trade in terms of to what extent it helps people with their livelihoods and how it helps our planet. In terms of goods and services, we should go back to the trade theory of the classical economists who said that countries have comparative advantages. The debate should be about which country can produce certain goods best whilst respecting the social minimum and respecting the environment. Why not shift all the European steel factories to Sweden, for example, where it can produce steel at a decent cost price without hurting people and the planet? Other countries can then specialize in producing other things that they are good at.

D: I agree with you. This is very much connected to what we said about true price. Many people in the Global South, for example, earn very low wages which distorts their comparative advantage, creating artificial advantages in these countries.

I: Of course, and that is problematic. We need to include the true price and then discuss where products can best be produced.

D: And then the Global South may no longer be the best place to produce clothes, for example, because people would be paid more. You argue for an economy of connection, but what's the difference between that and an economy of globalization?

I: Every contemporary and historical economy consists of three domains – the market, the state and the community. The community domain includes women's unpaid work, caring for the environment, but also energy cooperatives developing solar or wind energy. It also includes community farmers who produce together. An economy that works for people and planet requires a community economy in which the market only produces goods that the community economy can't or that would be inefficient or impossible for the state to produce: a hospital and drugs for example. This is a new balance, in which the community economy forms the basis with the state providing support and a basic minimum livelihood.

D: What you say makes a lot of sense but could also be very disruptive. Is it feasible in a political system that gives a lot of power to those who wouldn't benefit from your proposed system?

I: First, we should give the market back to the people. It needs to function well for us and for the planet. And second, we as consumers can take responsibility in our purchasing choices. By doing so, we'd help community firms to grow, and the bigger they become, the lower the market demand for the goods and services from big monopolists and oligopolists.

D: Yeah, I agree with you. That's a great point on which to end this conversation.

*Original title: *De vrije markt bestaat niet*

You can read the full edited version of this conversation at deissues.nl

Development and Change

Development and Change is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal devoted to the critical analysis and discussion of current issues of development. It was established by the ISS in 1969, in response to the perceived need for a multidisciplinary journal dealing with all aspects of development studies.

Volume 55, Number 3, May 2024

The political economy of 'failure' in the World Bank-funded Bisri Dam in Labanon

Mona Khneisser

Developing countries and joint statement initiatives at the WTO: Damned if you join, damned if you don't?

Shamel Azmeh

The sectoral politics of industrial policy making in Brazil: A Polanyian interpretation

Sebastián Fernández Franco, Juan M. Graña and Cecilia Rikap

Dependency in the digital age? The experience of Mercado Libre in Latin America

Renato H. de Gaspiand, Pedro Perfeito da Silva

Livelihood trajectories of rural young people in Southern Africa: Stuck in loops?

Flora Hajdu et al.

State-owned enterprises and the politics of financializing infrastructure development in Indonesia: De-risking at the limit?

Dimitar Anguelov

Working Papers

The ISS Working Paper series provides a forum for work in progress which seeks to elicit comments and generate discussion. The series includes academic research by staff, PhD participants and visiting fellows, and award-winning research papers by graduate students.

Migrant work and the future of food cultivation in the Netherlands

Karin Astrid Siegmann, ISS Working Papers Series no. 726.

Caring for Earth: decoloniality and feminisms in dialogue

Agustina Solera, Wendy Harcourt, Khayaat Fakier, ISS Working Papers Series no. 725.

Exploring relational agency in feminist transnational encounters

Mónica Grau-Sarabia and Wendy Harcourt, ISS Working Papers Series no. 724.

New publications

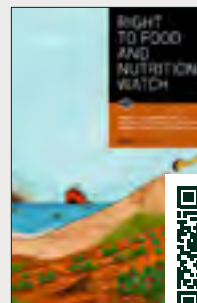
On the Inaccuracies of Economic Observations

In this book, Peter van Bergeijk tackles the persistent inaccuracies in economic statistics, highlighting their global impact on economic analysis.



Right to Food and Nutrition WATCH

Published by the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition, this report argues that industrial food systems have failed to meet the nutritional needs of the planet's population.



STUDENT LIFE



A very Dutch afternoon at Zaanse Schans.



Cheering on the ISS sports team.
Photo by Amina Said



Bullseye in darts during the sports day.
Photo by Amina Said



ISS students participated in fun a paddleboarding activity to clean up The Hague's canals. Photo by Diego Ternera & Luisa Fernanda



Study trip to a university in Bonn, Germany.



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