

Assessing a former pioneer of gender equality: lessons from the Netherlands

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- For anyone trying to understand the dynamics of gender equality policies, the Netherlands is an excellent case study because of its:
 - Long history of gender equality policies
 - Innovative methods and pilot projects
 - Strong presence in international fora
- Yet...

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- Yet, especially for the last years there is also:
 - Strong criticism from CEDAW,
 - Strong criticism from academia,
 - Strong criticism from the feminist community

 - Ongoing gender inequality

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn?

- Ongoing inequality?
 - A political party – SGP -in the Parliament that excludes women
 - An ongoing pay gap of 19%
 - Only 69 % of Dutch women are economically independent (data 2004, in 2001 it was 72 %)
 - Participation of men in caring stagnates at 35%
 - Migrant women are in a particularly unequal position, only 20% of the women from Turkish or Moroccan origin are economically independent,

[Source: Emancipatiemonitor 2006 Wil Portegijs, Brigitte Hermans, Vinodh Lalta. SCP: The Hague]

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Main objectives

- Objectives of emancipation policy since 2000 (Multi-year Plan on Emancipation Policy) :
- *the creation of the conditions for a diverse society in which everyone, regardless of gender, or its interaction with other social organizing principles such as ethnicity, age, civil status, fitness, and sexual preference, has the opportunity to gain an independent existence and in which women and men can achieve equal opportunities, freedoms, and (social) responsibilities.*
- The successive cabinets have maintained these main objectives.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Specific objectives

- Work and care: As far as possible, people can combine economic independence with responsibility for care: more women employed, more men caring, more possibilities to combine work and care
- Daily routine: space-time policy for the contemporary work-private life
- Proportional representation of women and men in decision making
- Realize and uphold women's rights (equal rights under law, regulation and treaty, as well as combating discrimination), intensify prevention of violence against women
- Equal participation in the knowledge society. Using the knowledge society to speed up the emancipation process.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn?

- Strong innovative methods and pilot projects:
 - Gender impact assessment tool since 1994
 - Bi-annual gender equality monitor since 2000
 - Independent assessment committee (ERC/VCE) of gender mainstreaming efforts

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn?

- Focus today on institutional mechanisms:
 - Experiences with 10 years of gender impact assessment (Roggeband & Verloo 2006 Policy and Politics 34,3:615-623)
 - Assessment of gender mainstreaming efforts (conclusions ERC/VCE. See <http://www.visitatiecommissie-emancipatie.nl/home>)
- And on intersectionality:
 - Evaluation of Dutch policies on gender, migration and evaluation (Roggeband & Verloo Social Policy & Administration 2007 3)

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? 10 years of Gender Impact Assessment

- *GIA- Gender Impact Assessment* (EER 1994) enables an 'analysis of the impact of proposed policies on gender'.
- The Dutch GIA has been characterised as the best-developed gender analysis instrument so far (Bacchi, 2003; Bacchi & Eveline 2005).
- Since 1994, the instrument has been used at least twenty-one times at the national level.
- However, its application seems random and its success is relative, both in the range of policies analysed as well as in the quality and impact of its implementation.
- The relativity of its success makes the Dutch GIA a good case to analyse which factors have contributed to the GIA's success and failure and what has determined its actual impact.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? 10 years of Gender Impact Assessment

- Using a political process approach to analyse the (relative) success and failure of the Dutch Gender Impact Assessment both:
 - at the level of structure (in terms of political opportunities, including discursive opportunities)
 - as well as at the level of agency (in terms of mobilising networks and strategic framing).

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? 10 years of Gender Impact Assessment

- Politics of construction
 - Positive pattern of political opportunity, entrepreneurs and strategical framing
 - Problematic consequences
- Politics of implementation
 - Random use: success AND failure
 - Political changes irrelevant
 - Obstruction by civil servants
- Politics of evaluation
 - Showed low commitment 'floor'
 - Absence of learning processes
 - Resistance of civil servants

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? 10 years of Gender Impact Assessment

- Political opportunities have not been excellent at all, and were mainly present in support and actions from some parliamentarians.
- Backing from administration was random, entrepreneurs crucial.
- Mobilizing networks were weak.
- Poor fit between feminist frames of equality officials and gender experts and the gender blind policy frames of all others.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? 10 years of Gender Impact Assessment

- Opportunity-networks-framing constellations are not stable, and occasional openings in the opportunity structure close quickly.
- Entrepreneurs matter!
- Voluntarism does not really work...

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Conclusions from the ERC/VCE

- According to the decree of 25 June 2004 (Government Gazette, 29 June 2004) the Netherlands Emancipation Review Committee has the following tasks:
 - to review the integration of the male/female perspective [*] within policy drafts and policy implementation;
 - to provide insight to the responsible member of government into opportunities for improvement and to point out policy areas that have priority for additional attention;
 - to record good examples and make these available to members of government;
 - to provide insight into general progress in implementing gender mainstreaming and if necessary make proposals to adjust to the coordinating member of government.
- [*] *By “integration of the male/female perspective” the general concept of “gender mainstreaming” is meant.*

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Conclusions from ERC/VCE

- Methods used by the Review Committee:
 - Introductory discussions with nearly all Ministers and State Secretaries
 - Inventory workshops in nearly all departments, with electronic meeting system, each time discussing three general policy ‘dossiers’ with 6 policy makers and 5 external experts
 - Additional interviews and study of texts
 - Five panel discussions with NGO’s
 - Active participation of the Committee in public debates and events on gender equality policy
 - Two review rounds, one ending 2005, one ending 2006.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Conclusions from ERC/VCE

- Overall very critical, because of:
- An almost total absence of gender expertise at the departments. Hardly any knowledge of the international obligations on gender equality, or of the existing tools.
- Commitment of the political top 'in theory', but lack of commitment of civil servants.
- An infrastructure in decline or already destroyed: random focal points, lack of coordination, lack of civil society interfaces.
- A growing tendency to claim to do Diversity policy wherein gender is forgotten and not articulated (and diversity policy is hardly articulated).
- A tendency to blame decentralization (national to local) for the lack of attention to gender equality.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Recommendations from ERC/VCE

- Database of external expertise, and integration of gender in training for civil servants (and evaluation of these efforts), development of specific training on gender equality policies, promoting gender expertise
- Dissemination of knowledge on gender mainstreaming tools, using gender budgeting
- Develop methods to transfer gender expertise and accountability for gender equality in processes of decentralization
- Explicit attention for allochthonous women. Pilots on diversity policy, and separate political responsibility for gender and diversity.
- Strengthen coordination of gender equality policies

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Policies on gender, migration and integration

- The Netherlands is frequently mentioned as a clear example a policy shift from multiculturalism to re-assertion of national identity and stricter integration demands.
- In recent Dutch policy it is stipulated that people must integrate and understand the norms and values of the Dutch society.
- A crucial value of Dutch society is considered to be gender equality
- Unequal gender relations in minority groups are now seen as a core problem
- The last years showed an increasing focus of gender equality policies on 'allochthonous' women.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Policies on gender, migration and integration

- 1995-1998: Stressing the value of diversity
 - Cultural diversity as source of richness but ambivalent.
 - No political contestation.
 - Participation and access frame (migrant women).
- 1998-2002: Diversity becomes problematic
 - New restriction frame (Right) and vulnerability frame (Left).
 - Growing political salience migrant women.
- 2002-2005: A neo-liberal approach to migration
 - New individual responsibility frame. Integration of migrant women should result from demands and obligations on them.
 - Left created attention, Right decided on content: culturalization.

Case study the Netherlands: what is there to learn? Policies on gender, migration and integration

- What first was seen as a social structural problem is increasingly also becoming a 'cultural' problem (mainly of Muslim culture): the problem is 'growing'.
- While the state as a principal agent was held responsible for doing something, increasingly the individual citizen is the only one responsible: the prognosis is shrinking
- Migrant women are created as a homogenous category, all attention is on Muslim women
- There is a major shift in that minority policies become gendered, with a simultaneous shift that ethnicizes gender equality policies.
- The emphasis on their 'problematic' culture obscures their vulnerable socio-economic position.
- This stigmatizes rather than supports them.

Assessing a former pioneer of gender equality: lessons from the Netherlands

- What is there to learn from these three case studies?

Assessing a former pioneer of gender equality: lessons from the Netherlands

- Stronger attention needed for sustainability of gender equality policies and infrastructures, including civil society interfaces.
- International obligations are important for everyone, also for former pioneers.
- Pilot projects and all methods that are not part of formal duties are not enough.
- Gender expertise, access to gender expertise, and hence also the development of gender expertise is crucial.
- Political opportunities change, and should not have such a high influence on the quality of gender equality policies.

Assessing a former pioneer of gender equality: lessons from the Netherlands

- Intersection of gender and integration policies shows bias in addressing the intersection of gender/ethnicity/religion.
- Strong need for more knowledge on intersectionality, in order to make gender equality policy a policy for all women (and men).

