

**Putting Care at the centre of equity and development: challenges for gender aware economies based on an ethics of care for people and the environment.**

The Prince Claus Chair in equity and development focuses on inequalities in our world's rapidly changing economic, ecological and technological environments. In addressing today's pressing issues, within the broad framing of Sustainable Development Goals, societally relevant research can provide the in-depth understanding of how inequalities are felt most harshly and directly by poorer and more marginalized communities in both the Global North and Global South. As a contribution to the needed strong focus on rising racial and gender inequalities due to the uneven impacts of environmental, technological and economic change, the Prince Claus Chair for Equity and Development 2021-3 will focus on putting care at the centre of equity and development. The Covid-19 pandemic makes these concerns even more vital as it has brought to world attention a crisis of care: the work of caring for humans, non-humans, and the shared biosphere. As we emerge from the Pandemic we need to learn from that experience in order to understand how to put in place equitable care-full social transformations towards a just, sustainable, and convivial society.

**A focus on care**

Being cared for by others is a critical need in almost all facets of our lives, indeed, for our everyday survival. The issue of care is as old as the family or society, yet has taken a very long time for the value of care work and the gendered nature of care to become a legitimate research subject and a relevant issue for public debate and policy making (Razavi 2007). Feminist theorists have long pointed out that women have been disempowered by their traditional roles in care work — both within the family and without — and at the same time, care work provides important resources for developing human capabilities. While care is so necessary, responsibilities for the care and nurturance of dependents impose significant financial and time constraints on many women to the extent that women may not wish to do other forms of paid work because of their responsibility for the well-being of children and other dependents (Folbre 2006). In recent years, building on the feminist critique of the importance of care for social and economic equality, cultural economists have argued for an ethical revaluing of care in economic policy. Social movements searching for more sustainable economies in solidarity economic networks and the degrowth movement argue for a “care revolution” as part of their vision for a good life - placing care work at the core of its social critical analysis and political action. Others such as feminist political ecologists and community economies researchers argue that sustaining humanity requires much more care for nature and other than human creatures or what Val Plumwood calls ‘Earthothers’ (1993).

As studies have shown, care work happens on numerous levels: as unpaid duties in the family; as volunteers in community service; in poorly paid informal domestic labour or sex work; and

more recently in the precarious world of digital gig economies where home care work is transformed into zero hour contracts. Yet, although care is so necessary, it remains structurally undervalued economically, restricted to the question of private or public commodification of care. Instead broader questions have to be asked including: who (in terms of gender, class, race, age, ethnicity etc) does the care, where and how, who is the care for, and what can we do to support care work and to value it economically and politically and ethically? What feminist economists political ecologist, cultural economists and solidarity economy movements show it is important that care work is recognized and valued differently: it is key to how our communities, our relationships and our environmental futures will flourish. They underline that valuing care work and making it visible and central to equity and development is becoming even more important given the current environmental and economic crises.

The PCC will have the opportunity to address these critical concerns with an opportunity to reflect on how we can move from the pandemic moment to collectively imagine ways of living and working with more time for community, relationship building, and care for each other as well as the non-human world. The two-year research project that places the value of care work at the centre of economies and societies in order to build an ethics of care not only for people, but also for the environment. The PCC will be invited to undertake a series of case studies and joint collaborative papers which will look at care at the intersection of gender theory, political ecology and economic values. The research will build on the work done on care in the different literatures and approaches in order to help to conceptualise how care is central to equity and development. The intent of the research will be to see in what ways care work is ‘the alternative’ value to growth, in response to the pandemic the envisioning of a provisioning economy that recognizes and regenerates non racialized social and ecological reproductive capacities.

The PCC will study diverse understandings of care through a range of analytical approaches, contexts and case studies, fully aware of the opportunities digitalization and technologies offer but also potential dangers of divisions between the rich and poor in both the Global South and the Global North. The PCC will pay particular attention to the complicated nexus between re/productivity, nature, womanhood and care bringing together the different theories of care and paying particular attention to how care is practices and recognized in different ecological and economic life-worlds. The PCC will explore the infrastructures of care and how they can flourish, learning from the lessons of the pandemic by examining: what kind of transformative policies can centre around the (re)production of life and the commoning of care. Building on the work of scholars in gender, environment and development degrowth and community economies (Harcourt 2014, 2017; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; Singh 2017) the PCC will look at how care determines the relations among humans and with the socio-natural world or what Joan Tronto calls a ‘complex, life-sustaining web’ (Tronto 2017) and the efforts of various communities to ‘reappropriate, reconstruct and reinvent our personal and political life-worlds’ (Escobar and Harcourt 2005).

By asking ‘with whom, with what and where do we care’ the PCC will help to define how we can build equitable economies where care work and care-ful relationships with society and nature are central to social and cultural life. Bringing together the different literatures and approaches to care (listed above and explained further below) learning from the pandemic how to ensure that economics is based in care, stewardship, cooperation, sharing, and commoning, racial, social and environmental justice. The PCC will help to define what a caring economy would look like, and what type of care-ful policies would be required to bring about social, economic and ecological change.

## **Academic Background**

The search for equity and development frameworks which combine environmental and social justice critical development approaches need to deal more clearly with gender issues around care (Razavi, 2007). Shahra Razavi in ground breaking work on care in the Global South has shown the importance of connecting gender analyses of care in developing countries to the conceptual and theoretical work on care in the Global North. As Nancy Folbre (2010) boldly states ‘if we want to care for others we need to build social institutions that encourage care, rather than take moral sentiments such as greed and lust as given’ (Folbre, 2010). Silvia Federici underlines that the current climate and economic crisis compels us ‘to construct an alternative to life under capitalism, beginning with the construction of more autonomous forms of social reproduction’ (Federici, 2012). It is women’s care work, paid and unpaid, she argues, which is at the heart of family and community survival. JK Gibson Graham (2006) elaborates on this in their book *Post Capitalist Politics* which looks at how ordinary people, particularly women, are transforming politics and economies in different locations. Such care activities are described as the ‘politics of economic possibilities’. By studying how people are building community economies it is possible to see new relations and ways of living together creating ‘a world with an ever-replenishing sense of room to move, air to breathe and space and time to act’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Chandra Talpade Mohanty builds further on this vision of care and responsibility as central to economic and environmental sustainability. She argues that ‘gender justice’ is central to ‘socio-economic practices and structural arrangements that value equity in access to resources, participation, leadership and the politics of knowledge’ (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012).

These inspiring visions about why care is central for equity and development are the foundations from which the PCC will build in an innovative and path-breaking exploration of the importance of care work to economic and social development policy. The PCC will also learn from the many insights by different feminist scholars and activists writing about the importance of care-full economies during the pandemic (for example see FaDA 2020). The PCC will review and build on scholarship, policy application and grounded practical experiences which focus on care as central to economic and ecological problems. By researching on how it is possible to integrate care into the way we deal with today’s economic

and ecological problems, the PCC will aim to bring the concept and application of care from the margins to the centre of resilient and sustainable equitable policy.

### **PCC Embedded in global, societally relevant research**

The PCC will work with a number of key global networks to select case studies to be undertaken with communities which have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in innovative and exciting ways, and to contribute societally relevant and where possible, policy-relevant papers. These global networks (The Well-being, Ecology, Gender and cOmmunity (WEGO); Community Economies Research Network (CERN); Revaluing Care in the Global Economy; Pollen Political Ecology Network; The International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) and Degrowth R&D) are closely linked to ISS and will provide a strong analytical, policy and practical basis for the PCC to undertake cutting edge research that is collaborative and embedded in influential economic, ecological and technological debates

The Well-being, Ecology, Gender and cOmmunity (WEGO) coordinated by ISS and funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764908 is an innovative and path-breaking project that works with communities in the Global North and the Global South in order to build resilient, equitable and sustainable futures with a focus on care. Working with WEGO, the PCC would develop research on diverse economic and ecological practices in order to create new forms of gender relations, livelihoods and care activities, in response to the growing lack of resilience of the economy and the ecosystem.

Community Economies' Research Network (CERN) is a global research network inspired by JK Gibson Graham that aims to bring about more sustainable and equitable forms of development by cultivating and acting on new ways of thinking about economies and politics. Working with CERN, the PCC would look at the diverse and interconnected ways human communities secure livelihoods, rethinking economy as a space of political possibility, highlighting the centrality of women's care work in particular, along with an ethic of care. The CERN network would provide the PCC with the tools for analysis and for practice for analysing care at the local level, drawing on studies from communities in the Pacific, Asia and Europe.

Revaluing Care in the Global Economy is an international, interdisciplinary project and network led by Duke University, USA and University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The project aims to critically think about the value of care labour and care economies. The PCC can build on the findings of the network that has worked across disciplines on the different facets of how to 'value' care work economically.

The International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) is the key network for cutting edge work on feminist economics. IAFFE will provide the PCC with a vital set of intellectual perspectives and methodologies to analyse inclusive and resilient economic and political systems for the sustainability of life with a focus on gender and care.

Political Ecology Network (POLLEN), a recent and dynamic network of academics working on political ecology, provides a ‘cross-fertilization’ of ideas critically engaging with and ‘unpacking’ the multiple and overlapping crises of our times. Pollen aims to encourage critical reflection around the entanglements and encounters of political ecology with a variety of theories, approaches and philosophies, feminist perspectives within political ecology. The PCC will be provided with innovative, transdisciplinary engagements and collaborations in political ecology that will help shape understandings of care within environmental studies.

Degrowth R&D is an academic association dedicated to research, training, awareness raising and events organised around degrowth. Working within Degrowth is the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA) that aims at making feminist reasoning an integral part of degrowth. Through connections with Degrowth R&D the PCC will explore some of the more radical ideas of how care needs to be the ‘alternative/other’ to growth, analysing in what ways the downscaling of production and consumption could increase human well-being and enhance ecological conditions and equity on the planet. Care in this vision is seen as central to a future where societies live within their ecological means, with open, localized economies and resources more equally distributed through new forms of democratic institutions.

### **Main issues to be examined**

The Prince Claus Chair will take up the following main sets of learning opportunities:

**Learning from the academe:** Care and responsibility at the intersection of feminist political ecology and economy – conceptualising care as central to equity and development

An interdisciplinary study of the main debates on care in economics, social science, development and environmental studies bringing together academic research in collaboration with IAFEE, Pollen and Revaluing Care in the Global Economy networks, including the findings of earlier research in the 1990s/2000s on care by UNRISD and concepts such as the Care Diamond (Razavi 2007).

**Learning from the ground:** Community economies: Careful-work in communities for humans and the more-than-human before during and after the Covid-19 pandemic

A study of examples of how care is organised in practice in communities that are working on the margins of mainstream development in order to learn from those practices and principles engaging with the community economies research network building on the research findings of WEGO and CERN in Europe, USA, Australia, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

**Learning from policy in practice:** How care is centred in current economic policy based on principles of equity and gender justice particularly in the response to Covid-19 pandemic

A study of current social policy programmes that focus on care and gender justice in the Global North and Global South. The focus will be on both community level and state level linking to LA where ISS and WEGO are linked to current local and national government processes and to Europe specifically Italy, Germany and Spain working with the WEGO, CERN and R&D networks.

## **The Research Questions and Output**

The PCC Chair would undertake a collaborative research working in collaboration with CERN, WEGO, FaDA and IAFFE and the global research network revaluing care in the economy.

The research will focus on changing forms of social relations of reproductive labour and the complicated practices and ideologies informing who performs what types of reproductive labour and under what conditions, paying close attention to class and race as well as gender roles. The research will aim to look at the diverse human experiences of care informing occupational and social lives including questions of care for the environment and the more than human and the question of love as well as labour.

Two main research questions that could be explored 1. in terms of the larger global narrative around care and 2. in specific geographic contexts (to be selected by the PCC according to experience and knowledge) could be:

1. How does the COVID-19 pandemic allow for a revaluation of care work in general contexts of global economic, social and ecological crises and specifically in relation to the relation between public health and development? (working with Pollen, IAFFE, FaDA and global research network revaluing care in the economy)
2. How is valuing care organized in practice in communities that are building community economies aware of ecological limits? What are some of the new ways of living among communities where the ethics of care and shared commons are emerging? (working with CERN and WEGO)

We are interested in the candidate working with these initial questions to develop questions on actual situations and well as conceptual approaches.

The output will be a set of academic and policy papers based on case studies and workshops on ‘Putting Care at the centre of equity and development: challenges for gender aware economies based on an ethics of care for people and the environment’ written individually or in collaboration with the different networks that the PCC would be able to engage with during the two years.

## **Framework for collaboration**

In The Netherlands, ISS will partner with the University of Wageningen which is institutionally linked to ISS through the WEGO project and is a hub for the Dutch based members of the Community Economies Research Network and the Pollen network.

As mentioned above, the Chairholder will work closely with a number of transnational networks linked to the current research and societally relevant work of ISS on gender, environment and sustainable development, which reaches across academic and policy interests. More practical details of the networks are included here to indicate the scope and framing of the research possibilities.

The Well-being, Ecology, Gender and cOmmunity (WEGO) coordinated by ISS and funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 764908-WEGO. WEGO is made up of scholar-activists working on feminist political ecology from ten institutions in five European Union countries: Germany, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom; and eight institutions from seven countries for training and secondments: Australia, India, Indonesia, Italy, New Zealand, Uruguay and USA.

<https://www.wegoitn.org/>

Community Economies Research Network (CERN) is a member-based organization dedicated to furthering research, education and advocacy for economic practices that help us all to survive well together. ISS and WEGO are members of CERN.

<https://www.communityeconomies.org/>

Revaluing Care in the Global Economy is an international, interdisciplinary project and network led by Duke University, USA and University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, that brings together scholars from around the world to think critically about the value of care labour and care economies. ISS has been invited to lead the European hub of the network on ecologies of care.

[www.valuingcare.net](http://www.valuingcare.net)

The International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) is a non-profit international association dedicated to raising awareness and inquiry of feminist economics. It has approximately six hundred members in sixty-four countries. The association publishes the quarterly journal Feminist Economics. ISS academic staff have worked closely with IAFFE since its foundation in 1992.

<http://www.iaffe.org/>

Political Ecology Network (POLLEN) is a global network, consisting of a large variety of political ecologists. As individuals or small groups, these political ecologists have formed so-called 'nodes' and interact through POLLEN. The aim of POLLEN is to facilitate interaction and creativity through 'cross-fertilization' and to promote the important field of political ecology world-wide, among academics as well as others. Wageningen hosted the first Pollen secretariat and conference and WEGO is one of the hubs of Pollen.

<https://politicalecologynetwork.org/>

Degrowth R&D is an academic association dedicated to research, training, awareness raising and events organised around degrowth. FaDA is a group of 40 feminists working on feminist degrowth. ISS staff are closely linked to the degrowth scholars in ICTA, Barcelona and ISS will be co-hosting the 8<sup>th</sup> Degrowth Conference in The Hague, August 2021.

<https://degrowth.org/>; <https://www.degrowth.info/en/feminisms-and-degrowth-alliance-fada/>

**The Prince Claus Chair 2021-3 will:**

Be a young (typically under 45 or with a PhD gained in the last 15 years) excellent academic  
Originate from Africa, Asia or Latin America

Have expertise in gender studies, environmental studies, equity (particularly on welfare and care) and a critical development perspective

Have a broad global perspective

Take an interdisciplinary intersectional approach, and be able to link well with colleagues from various social sciences, economics, environmental ethics, social policy and social movements

Have good skills for communication, collaboration and societal outreach

Be willing and able to contribute to an academic programme during 2 years including some extended periods of stay in The Netherlands

Be fluent in English; command of other languages is valued positively

Add or consolidate important contacts for the host groups.

**Search Committee**

Professor Wendy Harcourt, Professor of Gender, Diversity and Sustainable Development ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam (chair)

Professor Bram Buscher, Professor and Chair Sociology of Development and Change, University of Wageningen

Professor. Arjo Klammer, Professor of Cultural Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Dr. Rosalba Icaza, Associate Professor of Gender, Diversity and Politics, ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Dr Chizo Sato, Assistant Professor, Sociology of Consumption and Households, University of Wageningen

**References**

Bauhardt Christine and Wendy Harcourt. 2019. (eds) *Feminist Political Ecology and the Economics of Care: In Search of Economic Alternatives*. London: Routledge

Escobar, Arturo and Wendy Harcourt. 2005. "Introduction", *Women and the Politics of Place* London: Zed Books. 1-19.

FaDA (2020) *Collaborative Feminist Degrowth: Pandemic as an Opening for a Care-Full Radical Transformation* <https://www.degrowth.info/en/feminisms-and-degrowth-alliance-fada/collective-research-notebook/> (accessed 22 April 2020)

Folbre, Nancy. 2006 "Measuring Care: Gender, Empowerment, and the Care Economy" *Journal of Human Development* Vol. 7 (2), 184-199.

Folbre, Nancy. 2010. *Greed, Lust and Gender: A History of Economic Ideas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006. *A PostCapitalist Politics*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press



- Federici, Silvia. 2012. The unfinished feminist revolution, *Commoner*, February, <http://www.commoner.org.uk>
- Harcourt, Wendy. 2014. The future of capitalism: a consideration of alternatives *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Volume 38(6):1307–1328.
- Harcourt, Wendy. 2017. “Gender and Sustainable Livelihoods: Linking Gendered Experiences of Environment , Community and Self.” *Agriculture and Human Values* 34(4):1007–19.
- Mohanty, Talpede, Chandra and Sarah Miraglia. 2012. Gender and Alternatives to Privatization in the Global South, Position paper, Canada/South Africa, Municipal Services Project, [www. Municipalservicesproject.org](http://www.Municipalservicesproject.org)
- Plumwood Val. (1993) *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. 2015. “Making Time for Soil : Technoscientific Futurity and the Pace of Care.” *Social Studies of Science* 45(5):691–716.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. 2017. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.
- Razavi, Shahra. 2007. *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context. Conceptual Issues, Research Questions and Policy Options*. Geneva: UNRISD.
- Singh, Neera. 2017. “Becoming a Commoner: The Commons as Sites for Affective Socio-Nature Encounters and Co- Becomings.” *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 17(4):751–76.
- Tronto, Joan. 2017. "There is an alternative: homines curans and the limits of neoliberalism". *International Journal of Care and Caring* 1: 27-43.