

The launch of the FENN website took place on 25 January 2002 in The Grand hotel in Amsterdam

The texts of the speeches given on the occasion by Hedy d'Ancona, Nout Wellink, Hettie Pott-Buter and Ruta Aidis can be found under Activities.

Feminist Economists launch unique website

Opening address by Hettie Pott-Buter

The origins of the feminist movement

There have always been individuals - men as well as women - who opposed the unjust imposition of constraints on women simply by virtue of their sex. But such opposition seldom led to organised action. The first signs of a more organised feminist *movement* can be detected just before the French Revolution, but the actual starting-point is usually taken to be the first women's rights convention, held in Seneca Falls (US) in 1848.

Three types of feminism

Three types of feminism can be distinguished within the overall movement in the Netherlands. The first has emerged since the establishment of MVM - the Man Vrouw Maatschappij (Man Woman Society) action group - and manifests itself as a drive for emancipation via the achievement of equal rights and opportunities for both sexes. This type of feminism is by far the most widespread. The second, sometimes called the feminist socialist movement (or fem-soc), employs terms like oppression and liberation and was brought to prominence in the Netherlands by Dolle Mina. The third type is radical feminism, also known as the autonomous women's movement, which adopts an isolationist approach to improving the situation of women. These theoretical dividing lines are, of course, less sharply drawn in practice and all three types of feminism have helped to improve the lives of women in the industrialised world.

Inspired by Hedy d'Ancona

Personally, I never used to identify much with any type of feminism. As a member of the first generation of Dutch women from deprived backgrounds to benefit from the wider access to secondary education brought about in the 1950s and eventually to attend university (in my case to study pharmacy at the University of Groningen), I saw myself as privileged and emancipated rather than the victim of discrimination.

All that changed, however, when - as a married woman with three children - I enrolled on a degree course in economics at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Around 1978, that course brought me into contact with women like Hedy d'Ancona, Marga Bruyn-Hundt and Hieke Snijders-Borst. It was only then that I learned about the extent of the discrimination being practised against women in the Netherlands, not only in day-to-day life, but also through the legislative system. A weighty tome published in 1975 under the title of "Anders geregeld" lists all the statutes then incorporating discrimination on the grounds of sex and marital status.

From then on, I called myself a feminist and worked to change the statutory position of women. I was not in the forefront of things like Hedy d'Ancona, who had already joined hands with Joke Kool-Smit as far back as 1968 to set up MVM, but beavering away in the background in support of the programmes and ideas being advanced by people like her. Hedy herself was clearly one of the pioneers of the first wave: the initially highly successful women's emancipation movement, which achieved, for example, the passing of the Dutch Equal Pay Act. However, the arrival of Dolle Mina in 1971 and the influence of radical feminism eventually led to the disintegration of MVM. Hedy d'Ancona went on to other things and I was thrilled when she was appointed as state secretary in charge of emancipation in 1981 and delighted when she subsequently moved responsibility for the coordination of emancipation policy from the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

That change occurred in the same year that I was appointed to the staff of the UvA Faculty of Economics. Before the end of the year Marga Bruyn-Hundt and I had organised a women's group and in 1983 a handful of us in the

faculty set up the working group on Women and Work. The university itself established a women's studies research centre, later to become the Belle van Zuylen Research Institute. It was partly as a result of these activities that a new special chair in employment issues within emancipation policy was awarded to our Faculty of Economics. The chair was established by Hedy and in 1986 Monika Triest, and in 1989 Siv Gustafsson was appointed to fill it. (Indeed, she still holds the position and is a member of FENN.) The reason for appointing first a Belgian and then a Swedish woman was that in 1986 there was no Dutch woman with a doctorate in economics (and certainly no Dutch feminist economist) available to occupy the position. In fact, at that time only three women had *ever* obtained a doctorate in economics at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Moreover, the first of *them* was foreign and the next two were joint phd's (Roel Huijsman, the third, is a medical doctor). Right through to 1994)ⁱ it was a rare event for a woman to obtain a doctorate in economics in the Netherlands.

Inspired by Nout Wellink

Without a detailed knowledge of government finance, the social security system and taxation, it is impossible properly to criticise these systems, let alone to propose or evaluate possible changes in them. In the 1980s, Dutch textbooks on these subjects were few and far between. The first one I read (in my spare time) was a standard work on government finance by Koopmans and Wellink. I learned a lot from it and that book laid the foundation for some of my later research. To be honest, I have to admit that it only recently struck me, when I took my old 1984 edition of the book down from its shelf again, that it makes no mention at all of the extent to which tax and social security were then based on discrimination by sex and marital status. It is striking, for example, that it constantly assumes *as a matter of course*, that the *head of the household* is a *man*, that *he* earns the family income and that it is *his* income that needs to be protected by the social security system.

Fifteen years on

Back then, whoever would have thought that the world would change so quickly in a mere 15 years after the establishment of the chair? Later editions

of Nout Wellink's book did refer to the unequal treatment of men and women and such inequality has now been officially stamped out, partly thanks to people like Hedy d'Ancona. In the 1980s we hoped for that sort of change and could even foresee that it might happen one day. But I could never have dreamed that by 2002, a mere fifteen years on, it would be so easy to construct this marvellous website full of academic articles and critical notes by an organisation like FENN, chiefly made up of young feminist economists.

Two pillars: feminist ideas and economic expertise

The various waves of the feminist movement are now a thing of the past and it is clearly unlikely that their results will disappear into the sand. Within the UvA Faculty of Economics there is an established stronghold of feminist thinking, safely embedded seven years ago within the nationwide FENN network. The history of FENN is explained on the website. FENN is firmly based on its two pillars of feminist ideas and economic expertise, and it is hard now to imagine how we ever did without it. Internet is a powerful medium for the dissemination of knowledge. Via the World Wide Web, every feminist economist in the world can now know that a government plans to do away with female friendly measures and can be asked to comment. And via the FENN website, translations of the speeches given at today's opening will go round the world. I hope that the ideas of today's new generation of young feminist economists and the inspiring contributions of the next two speakers, disseminated in that way, will have as great an influence on a wider public as they have always had on me.

¹ 1970 J.N. Yates-Potter
1983 R.R.R. Huijsman-Rubingh (together with T.R.A.M. Wagenaar)
1985 W. Jansen (together with H.P.M. Jägers)
1990 M.T. Brouwer
1991 J.G. van der Linde
A.E. van Heerwaarden
1992 A. Hakkenberg
1993 H.A. Pott-Buter

The "F" in FENN in 8 points

Speech by Hedy d'Ancona

1. The feminist struggle of the last 30 years has not been in vain. The first Dutch government policy document on women's emancipation identified three aims:
 - to establish sexual equality
 - to bring about a re-evaluation of characteristics traditionally associated with women
 - to break down established role models.

Progress on the first point has been good. Women in the Netherlands have caught up in education and are making steady progress in fields like politics and employment (especially that of married women with children).

2. However, the other two aims withered on the bough. The social context was not conducive to progress on them. The excitement and revolutionary fervour of the 1970s gave way to a more businesslike approach. The question of women was relegated to a junior minister in the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work. In the 1980s, when I got my hands on the levers of power [as a junior minister for social affairs and health, ed.], it seemed to me that it would be more effective to move responsibility for women to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. I had two reasons. Firstly, a section of the women's movement felt that the oppression of women was directly linked to their lack of economic independence. Secondly, the Netherlands would soon have to comply with Brussels directives in the social security field.

3. I asked Marga Bruyn-Hundt, the founder of feminist economics in Amsterdam, to give a series of private lectures to Ien Dales [junior minister for social affairs and health 1981-'82, ed.], Joop den Uijl [leader of the Socialist Party, ed.] and myself in the hope that this would help to cure my colleagues of their reluctance and scepticism.

4. A similarly expert approach was also needed to other vital socio-economic issues, like the contribution made to the economy by housewives and the myth

that it cost society too much to provide facilities to enable mothers to go out to work. In short: there was a practical social need for feminist economics. And it was soon to be met!

5. Over the years, the issues changed, to some extent as a result of changes in society and in the economy. When unemployment was high, we championed the adoption of the 5-hour working day for all. This was partly to allow both partners to work and partly because we didn't want women to be dragged into the male rat-race. We wanted an equitable distribution of work both in the home and outside it.
6. The present debate about care leave is a watered down version of this. Our aim was not only a fair division of working hours, but also the change in established roles that we had set out to achieve in the beginning. The debate was about skills and about providing a proper setting in which to bring up children.
7. The second aim - the re-evaluation of female characteristics - also seems to be cropping up here and there these days. Take Fukuyama and his vision of a future in which women have a key part to play. Or my own documentaries about the stars of Europe. Do women make leaders of a different kind?
8. The women's movement has lost much of its old impetus. But it was always to some extent a paper revolution and it seems possible that there may be a miraculous rebirth of this via the Internet. We are already seeing sporadic signs of it.

Now as always, the aim is to share knowledge and ideas, and to inspire, conspire and protest.

The “E” in FENN stands for Economics

Speech by Nout Wellink, President of the Bank of the Netherlands

EQUAL TREATMENT IS IN THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF ALL

Introduction

- This is a very special day: a day to celebrate, if only because it is a rare treat to address an audience made up mainly of women. I have been asked to say something about the E in FENN, which stands for economics, but I shall also take the liberty of referring to the F, which stands for feminist.
- When I think about women and economics, the first thing that comes to mind is the position of women in the labour market. Something can and must be done about that. This is an obvious point, but I say it not just because I think women deserve better, but also - and perhaps primarily - because it would be good for companies and for society as a whole. We need not just a quantitative increase in the number of women in work, but a qualitative improvement in terms of the women reaching higher positions. With the appropriate remuneration, of course. Because even where women achieve male heights - if I can put it that way - they are at present not always paid as well as their male colleagues.

Some statistics

- Let's start with some statistics. A recent European Central Bank publication lists figures for male and female employment in Euroland and in the United States.¹ The bad news is that the female rate of employment in the Euro zone is about 13% lower than that in the US. The good news is that the gap is much less for the 24 to 45-year-olds than for older women. However, the figures actually paint an unduly rosy picture, because they fail to differentiate between full and part-time

employment. Moreover, the number of working women has traditionally been lower in the Netherlands than in most other countries in the Euro zone. Even so, the increased rate of employment among younger women shows that something is changing, and that the economic position of women has improved in recent decades. This is important not just for the women concerned, but also for the economy as a whole. As the ECB points out, the lower rate of employment in the Euro zone is one reason why growth in per capita income is less here than in the US.

- But Europe is also under-performing with regard to the quality of women's employment. Let's just look at the Netherlands. According to Paul Schnabel, director of the Social and Cultural Planning Office, the situation in 1998² was as follows. None of the top 25 companies in the Netherlands (based on shareholders' equity) had a single woman on its management board. In the top 100 companies, there was just one woman among more than 400 men and even in the top 5000 no more than 2.5 per cent of board members were women. Things were a bit better on the supervisory boards, but not exactly good: on average, there was one woman to every 12 men. Where top executive positions were concerned, it was the same story, not just in industry but also in the public sector. And in the universities, things are really bad in the Netherlands, especially compared with other parts of the world. Although almost half of all PhD students and an increasing proportion of lecturers are women, more than 90 per cent of mainstream professors are men. That is true across the board, but the position in the field of economics is even worse. We recently had a graphic illustration of this at the Bank of the Netherlands. Our research department organised a gathering of professors engaged in research at Dutch universities in fields relating to our work at the Bank. The aim of the meeting was to establish a network, to exchange ideas and to compare experience in the research field. And the entire guest list included not a single woman.

¹ Monetary Policy in the Euro Area, ECB, September 2001, pp. 16 and 17.

Women at the Bank of the Netherlands

- Of the 11 members of the Bank's supervisory board, one is a woman. Our Bank Council, which is supposed to reflect Dutch society and which includes representatives of employers' organisations and the trade unions, is entirely male. This is hardly our fault, because the membership of both these bodies is simply a reflection of the general situation in Dutch society. But I have to admit that things are not much better in our own internal organisation. All our directors are men. These days two of our eight assistant directors are women and so is one of the 19 heads of department. This is an improvement on the past, and in the next tier down there has also been an increase in the proportion of female managers over recent years: 10 of the 56 assistant heads of department are now women. But this is still not nearly good enough and we are making active efforts to increase the number of women employed at the Bank of the Netherlands and to promote more of them to top positions. This is important for a number of reasons. For one thing, I believe I have a responsibility to ensure that we get the best out of our staff and the human capital they represent to the organisation, irrespective of sex. I also think that an organisation with a mix of men and women at all levels is likely to offer a pleasanter working environment and therefore to perform better. After all, women are different from men, and we should welcome that difference. The world would be a less attractive place without a female presence in it, and so would organisations, whether in the private or the public sector.

Poor position of women in the labour market: an explanation

- When I think about the possible reasons for the poor position of women in the labour market, my first question is naturally about the role of supply and demand. Where *demand* is concerned, I think that people are still failing to recognise the merits of women. They are too often passed over as potential candidates for appointment or promotion. It's not just a question of a glass ceiling: there's a man-

² Wer will das Weib?, Paul Schnabel, Financieele Dagblad newspaper, 16 October 2000

size wall as well. Some people think this is deliberate, but I am more inclined to see it as an unconscious process resulting from a stereotyped view of the world. It's odd given the strengths that women possess, but not really all that surprising when you think how long men have been running the world: we just don't know any better.

- Where *supply* is concerned, women themselves have a role to play and there are various reasons why women fail to put themselves forward. Women tend to be less self-confident than men, or perhaps I should say - with appropriate (if unusual) male humility - tend to over-estimate themselves less than men. This means that women are less likely to regard themselves as suitable for a post and therefore to press their candidature. And maybe I'm being too romantic about this, but I suspect that, deep-down, women want to be *asked*, rather than to *offer themselves*, even in the labour market and even if the oldest profession in the world is one practised by women. Another factor, of course, is that women sometimes have different preferences regarding the combination of work and family life, or feel a greater responsibility in this regard. That is something we have to respect, and it means that wherever possible we have to provide the right conditions to enable parents to combine work and child care. Not every job can be done part-time, but there are very many positions - including high-level ones - that can offer the flexibility that women often need to accommodate their private lives.

Equal treatment calls for positive discrimination

- I am very much in favour of equal treatment. To be honest, though, I think that in order to achieve it we have to practise a bit of positive discrimination in favour of women. This may sound paradoxical, but it isn't really. Take a small domestic example. Like me, my wife works during the week. So on Saturdays we do the shopping together. We have clear and, I have to admit, traditional roles in this respect: she does the thinking while I push the trolley. Sometimes I get one of those awkward ones that you have to keep correcting because it automatically veers off to one side. Constant pressure is needed to keep the trolley moving in the

right direction. It's the same thing in the labour market: positive discrimination is mainly a matter of correcting a process that would otherwise result in automatic discrimination in favour of men.

Conclusion

So you will understand why I welcome the launch of the FENN website. It's a way for women to bring themselves and their female colleagues to attention. A shop window for women and their abilities. That is good for women, for the organisations they work in, for the labour market and for the economy as a whole. I congratulate FENN most warmly on this excellent initiative and hope that the website will attract many visitors of both sexes.

Website Demonstration

Speech by Ruta Aidis

Computers and economists... two things with much in common. In both cases, for example, you have to feed in vast amounts of data before you get anything out. It's the same with the website. We've had to enter large amounts of information to achieve the present good results. In the case of economists, however, good results are far from guaranteed.

FENN is a butterfly

I see FENN as a seven-year-old caterpillar. As an organisation, we've spent most of the last seven years building up and reinforcing our own knowledge base. We've been mainly inward-looking. Like the very hungry caterpillar, we've chomped our way through a huge amount of information and we needed time to digest it. But today we're finally taking to the air. We've become a butterfly!

FENN's aims

The website is the first big step in the further development and professionalisation of FENN. Before demonstrating it to you, I would just like to recall the aims of the organisation. FENN's overall mission is to contribute to the public and academic debate on the economy and socio-economic policy. We think it's important above all to remind people of the diversity of our society and to participate in debates on current issues.

Aims of the website

FENN also has specific aims for the website. Firstly, we wanted to make FENN more visible, accessible and effective. Secondly, we wanted to open up the organisation to the general public. For example, by involving more people from different sections of society. Up to now, it's been quite difficult for people (especially non-members) to get information about FENN if they couldn't attend one of our seminars or conferences. Now it will be easy for them to use the website to download summaries, reports and papers. We hope that people will find it easier this way to obtain information on gender and economics, even if they don't want to join FENN and may indeed prefer to

remain anonymous,. The website will be open to everyone 24 hours a day and members of the public will be able to use it whenever they like to look up information about FENN and make use of it. We think it's important for the future development of FENN that the organisation should be more open and ready to exchange information. And we have deliberately chosen to launch the entire website in both Dutch and English. While FENN's activities are primarily focused on the Netherlands, we think it's extremely important to conduct the debate at an international as well as national level.

We also think it's vital that the website should be dynamic and interactive. Visitors must have the opportunity to add their thoughts and contributions to the discussion and to build their own networks. Finally, we wanted the website to look both professional and refreshingly different. It had to be user-friendly and welcoming. We certainly had high standards! But fortunately we've had a marvellous and highly experienced team to help us achieve them: Colette van Essen (Cascade) and Ricard Spek (Netminded).

The FENN website has eight main sections: information about FENN, details of members, current events, FENN-Mail, discussion platform, reports, literature and links. These are listed on the FENN homepage. If you visit it, you will be welcomed by a figure that will keep you company as you examine the website. So you need never feel lonely! And on your next visit you may be met by a different figure: a man or woman representing a different section of society or age group. This is FENN's way of making everyone feel at home!

Innovative parts of the website

One of the most innovative parts of the FENN website is the 'expertise list'. Access to this is restricted to FENN members. To consult it, you need a password provided by FENN. It contains a list of members with their personal details, job titles, areas of expertise, backgrounds, special interests, relevant experience and publications. Its purpose is to assist networking among FENN members. They can use it to find a speaker to run a seminar or look for a source of information on a particular topic. There are many ways to exchange information and knowledge. And every FENN member can update the list, for example by adding new publications as soon as they

appear. This will help ensure that information remains up to date. When new members supply their details for inclusion in the expertise list, they will be asked if they know of any literature or website links worth adding to the FENN site. The information they provide will automatically be added to the site. So new FENN members mean new information for the website.

We have also included an interactive discussion platform. This is designed to allow everyone to read the initial propositions and visitors' responses to them. Everyone is welcome to contribute to the discussion, but to do so you first have to register. When you do so, you are offered two additional options. Firstly, you can opt to have the full text of any reactions to your contribution automatically e-mailed to you. That way, you'll be kept up to date automatically and won't have to keep going back to the FENN website to follow the discussion. Secondly, you can opt to have your details permanently recorded so that you never have to go through the registration procedure again before contributing to a website discussion. The website will remember you and give you automatic access. Discussions are intended to take place over a limited period (1-3 months), after which they will be archived.

These are just two sections of the FENN website which I think are especially innovative. There are many more areas that are both informative and entertaining and I hope you will take the time to explore all of them. This is just the start of the website's evolution. I hope you will visit it often, for information and inspiration, to contribute your ideas, to join in discussions and to network. FENN has spread its butterfly wings and is on the air for you 24 hours a day.

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