Women’s strategies in Dutch philanthropy

Abstract

Dutch women have historically been philanthropists, with an emphasis on the giving of time. This article describes several strategies in which Dutch women have used philanthropy in different periods of time and in different social situations to widen their scope of action for themselves. The giving of time was partly related to the burgher ideal of domestic family culture, in which women were not supposed to join the labour force but instead become caring mothers and spick-and-span housewives. Another factor was the relative prosperity of the nation: the income of the male breadwinner was enough to support the whole household. To maintain social contacts and to gain prestige without abrogating social, religious and community norms, married women turned to philanthropic and volunteer organisations, especially in social services, welfare and health care. Many of them found a life-time occupation in volunteering. They created a parallel power structure in the public sphere. More recently, giving of time has become a means of gaining work experience. Volunteering has become an instrument to accomplish women’s liberation, by building women’s organisations, and interest and self-help groups.

Introduction

For Dutch women, philanthropy has primarily meant the giving of time within the so-called ‘societal middle field’ of private initiatives (non-profit organisations) and churches of diverse religions. Women developed their own strategies to widen their scope of action by ‘using’ philanthropy. Historically, volunteering by women has partly been related to domestic family culture in which women were not supposed to join the labour force. Another factor was the relative prosperity of the nation: one income – of the husband – was enough to support a household. To maintain
social contacts and to gain prestige without abrogating social, religious and community norms, married women turned to philanthropic and volunteer organisations. They were and still are the major participants in philanthropy, especially in volunteer organisations in social services, welfare and health care. Many of them found a life-time occupation in volunteering, creating ‘parallel power structures’ (McCarthy, 1994; see opening article in this issue) in the public sphere.

This article begins by detailing some distinctive features of the Netherlands: burguer society, an extensive welfare state, pillarisation, the ‘societal middle field’, and the extent to which time and money are given. It then examines some of the strategies adopted by Dutch women in the use of philanthropy. These include the giving of time as a means to gain experience for a paid job, or as an instrument to accomplish women’s liberation by building a variety of organisations, including interest and self-help groups. The article concludes with a discussion of threats and opportunities for modern Dutch philanthropy.

**Characteristics of Dutch society**

**Burguer society**

One of the features that makes Dutch society so different from other Western industrialised countries is the national heritage of the richburgers of the Golden Age, whose wealth peaked in the seventeenth century. They passed on a culture of respectability, orderliness, purity, simplicity, discretion, reclusiveness, and a strongly introverted family culture (see Goudsblom, 1968; Schama, 1988). During this Golden Age, the Dutch created a world empire with formidable economic power vested in a small country of less than two million people. The Netherlands became a land of plenty: artisans, unskilled workers and farmers all enjoyed higher real incomes, better diets and safer livelihoods than anywhere else on the continent. It was virtually impossible for a member of burguer society to avoid philanthropy: it was considered a strict duty, and neglect of it was regarded as a sin. Schama (1988) comes to the conclusion that for the Dutch people of today to be Dutch still means coming to terms with the moral ambiguities of materialism.

The invisibility of Dutch philanthropy can very well be linked to the burguer culture and the moral ambiguities of materialism. The tendency not to overdo Dutch society’s egalitarian character with a lack of emphasis on class or great wealth, have not created a favourable atmosphere for conspicuous philanthropy. This does not imply that there is no private giving, but rather that it is invisible.

**Women’s strategies in Dutch philanthropy**

**Pillarisation and the ‘societal middle field’**

Before the foundations of the welfare state were laid, the ‘societal middle field’ was extremely powerful and influential. Between the private sphere of the citizens and the relatively weak public sphere there was room for the ‘middle field’ in which citizens took their own responsibility for public life, without state interference (see Adriaansens and Zijderveld, 1981). It was the basis of ‘pillarisation’, which links political power, social organisations and individual behaviour. It was aimed to promote – in competition as well as in co-operation with other social and political groups – goals inspired by a common ideology, shared by its members for whom the pillar and its ideology were the main locus of social identification (Dekker and Ester, 1993). There were four main pillars in Dutch society: the Roman Catholic, the Protestant, the socialist and the liberal. These pillars encompassed political parties, socio-economic interest organisations, schools, universities, hospitals, health and welfare agencies, broadcasting companies, newspapers and leisure associations. Pillarisation was strikingly typical of Dutch society between 1917 and 1965. Instead of social stratification, the Netherlands was divided by pillarisation.

**The welfare state**

As the Dutch welfare state expanded in the late 1960s and 1970s, the notion of ‘philanthropy’ assumed a negative tone. It was associated with ‘patronising behaviour’ and the ‘soup kitchen’ (Schuyt, 1990; Schuyt and Van Triest, 1993). In theory, nobody had to be poor, needy or helpless, and nobody needed direct help, food, money or goods from somebody else. The welfare state became the anonymous provider for everyone. This prevented the problems of free riding and of the concentration of too much power in the hands of a wealthy elite, and gave governments the opportunity to steer society’s development. A proportionate amount of every citizen’s income was collected via taxes and lottery money, and used on social and public benefits and care arrangements. Private gifts of money or food were seen as indices of the failure of the welfare state.

In the zenith of the welfare state, the government looked down on volunteers, considering them unnecessary. For example, with the development of a co-ordinated local policy for the elderly in the 1970s, some volunteer activities of the Union of Women Volunteers, like meals on wheels, were taken over by or with the co-operation of local service centres (Stichting Landelijke Unie van Vrijwilligers, 1989; Van Daal et al., 1992). Giving help became solely the job of professionals, such as social and welfare workers. There was still a social consciousness...
with regard to social abuses — something ought to be done about it — but no longer was there a direct personal obligation to help (De Swaan, 1988). Philanthropic activities became less necessary and the social incentives for voluntarism decreased. The high level of prosperity and of education, the highly developed welfare state and secularisation had made Dutch citizens less dependent on each other and decreased their sense of social responsibility.

The welfare state began to come under attack in the mid-1970s as the increasing costs of public goods enlarged the national debt. Critics accused the welfare state of creating new needs and making citizens too dependent. There was a call for revived civic-mindedness. The citizens themselves could fill the moral and practical gaps in welfare arrangements. Since the end of the 1970s, central government itself has been pursuing a coherent policy to encourage citizens to participate in voluntary activities. The rediscovery of the volunteer and the concept of civil society in the Netherlands can therefore be related to the economic and moral crisis of the welfare state.

Survey of donations and volunteering

There is probably a substantial amount of private giving in the Netherlands. However, some of it is invisible and has not yet been studied. The total amount of private donations and bequests is estimated at roughly 1 billion Dutch florins (DF) (equivalent to US $565 million) a year (Schuursveld Schrijver, 1990). The substantial sums raised in part reflect the successes of national collections and enable significant expenditures by charitable organisations, such as the Dutch Red Cross and the Dutch Fight against Cancer (Schuyt and Van Triest, 1993). Television shows are extremely effective in collecting considerable sums of money. In 1983 a television appeal for Africa raised a huge amount (DF 83 million; equivalent to about US $47 million), and only recently a nationwide television show raised DF 71 million (US $40 million) for the people of Rwanda.

There are about 500 foundations in the Netherlands. Most of them operate as ‘pass-through’ agencies, such as the Queen Juliana Welfare Foundation. Only a few foundations are exclusively directed to women. They give small grants, mainly for academic education (like the Foundation Doctor Catharina Van Tussenbroek and the Foundation Woman and Study). There is one specific foundation, Mama Cash, that gives financial support to small businesses run by women entrepreneurs.

Unlike the giving of money, extensive research has been carried out, particularly by the Verwey-Jonker Institute, on the giving of time in the Netherlands. The Dutch government has defined volunteering as ‘work that is done for others or society, within any organised setting, unobliged and unpaid’. This does not include informal help or mutual aid between family members or neighbours (Van Daal and Willems, 1993). Dutch women are more likely to volunteer than men. There is a strong relationship between education and volunteering. Women who achieve a high level of education, particularly those who are unemployed for one year or less (60 per cent), are middle-aged (38 per cent), work part-time (37 per cent), or are housewives (37 per cent) are likely to participate. Also, women aged between 35 and 64 who attend church once a week or more volunteered more often (36 per cent) than church-going men.

Women are nearly twice as likely as men to volunteer in personal and public services. In this broad area, volunteers can be found in the field of health and home care for the sick, elderly and disabled (for example, Dutch Red Cross, Union of Volunteers, Neighbourhood Volunteer Services), organisations for social and emotional support (for example, telephone hotlines, legal aid), organisations for delivery of public services (for example, libraries, fire brigades) and day care for children. Women report more volunteering in schools, churches and — not surprisingly — women’s organisations than men. They volunteer somewhat more than men in interest and pressure groups, action groups and groups for environmental quality protection. Housewives or women working part-time are especially active in personal and public services, day care and schools. Men dominate in the sphere of recreational activities, such as sports and hobby clubs. A slightly larger number of men are active in political organisations, professional associations and labour unions. Also, men are more likely to be members of boards and committees. Highly educated women, particularly housewives, are often board or committee members but, unlike men, in addition to this task they also support their organisations by giving assistance at a lower level.

Overall volunteering by women consists more of supportive, assistant work than that of men. Women give more domestic and physical care, provide more emotional help, and carry out more services for others than men. In another important area of volunteering, community service — which comprises youth clubs and centres, community centres and adult education — men and women are equally represented (all data from Van Daal, 1990).
Women's strategies

Philanthropy as an instrument of distinction

Philanthropy by Dutch women has always been closely linked to their position in society. In burgher society, paid work was regarded as a disgrace to women, whereas unpaid charity work was seen as a virtue of the ideal woman. Although a small minority did have to work to support themselves or their families, for centuries the majority of Dutch women became housewives and mothers. Middle- and upper-class women worked for charity because they had the financial means to delegate housework and child care to their - mostly unmarried - female servants. In their spare time they could distinguish themselves from labouring women by philanthropic activities (Adriaansens and Zijderveld, 1981; Kooymans et al., 1983). Until a few decades ago, volunteering for organisations such as the Dutch Red Cross and the Union of Women Volunteers was a common status. They were proud they did not work for money (Van Daal et al., 1992; Van Daal, 1994). Nowadays, volunteering in the Netherlands is still partly a matter of noblesse oblige, but with the increased educational level of women and growing economic independence, 'working for free' does not provide the same prestige as in earlier times.

Philanthropy as a strategy to accomplish women's liberation

Before and during the Second World War, volunteering became an instrument for women's liberation. In light of the threat of war, several women's volunteer organisations were founded in the Netherlands in the late 1930s. These organisations were not only based on feelings of solidarity with the men who defended the country from the enemy, but also on feelings of responsibility for society. Women could contribute to society without increasing unemployment (Stichting Landelijke Unie van Vrijwilligers, 1989). Giving voluntary help and assistance were seen as typical female qualities. Performing these tasks would give a woman her own unique position in society. Women had to be aware of their responsibility for society outside the home, responsibility that was the extension of women's domestic tasks and suited the typical traditional perception of women as carers. This specific expertise had to be exploited by women. The first volunteer organisations were prominent, well-educated, liberated and often well-to-do. They were highly respected within their organisations and usually obtained executive positions (Erkelen, 1988).

These women's volunteer organisations formed the basis of the National Union of Women Volunteers (UVV) - officially founded in 1945 - which was to become one of the major women's service volunteer organisations in the Netherlands. Princess Juliana became honorary president of the UVV in 1946, and patroness upon her coronation in 1948 (UVV and Landelijke Unie van Vrijwilligers, 1989). In the post-war years the UVV initially developed as a feminist organisation (Melcherts, 1980; Erkelen, 1988). The UVV sought the liberation of its members by stressing the importance of female contributions to society outside the home, especially in the field of social and welfare work. These social feminists attempted not to free women from domesticity, like the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, but to domesticate society.

In the post-war years, feminist ideas did not appeal to many female middle-class volunteers. Women's liberation was an issue only for a relatively small group of women at the top of the organisation. Denominational women left the UVV and turned to their own volunteer organisations (Erkelen, 1988). Both the Catholic and the Protestant pillars were very powerful and were opponents of women's liberation (Verheul, 1983). The solidarity and co-operation between women's organisations that had existed during the war ended. The UVV turned into a non-religious organisation for middle- and upper-class housewives with traditional values regarding politics, religion and family life (see Stichting Landelijke Unie Van Vrijwilligers, 1991). Inspired by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service in the United Kingdom, the UVV concentrated in the field of health and home care for the sick, elderly and disabled. Since the 1970s the emphasis on women's responsibility outside the home has waned. This was underlined by the acceptance of men as volunteers in 1977. The UVV changed its full name to Union of Volunteers, but only a small percentage of its volunteers are male.

Nevertheless, social work became an important topic of governmental policy in the 1950s and 1960s. A significant factor was the appointment of Marga Klompé, vice-president of the UVV (1943-1953) as Minister of Social Work (1945-1963 and 1966-1971) (Erkelen, 1986; Jongschlegel and Bierlaagh, 1990). As a minister she stimulated private initiatives to conduct social work and encouraged the establishment of private organisations in fields where none previously existed (Van der Ploeg, 1992).

At the end of the 1970s, the governmental Commission on Women's Liberation showed some reserve toward the role of women's volunteer-in the welfare state, which they regarded as an obstacle to a better quality of work within traditional male-female roles (Emancipatieorganisatie missie, 1979; Adriaansens and Zijderveld, 1981). Feminists identified volunteering with the patriarchal family that made women no more than wives and mothers. So long as they remained at home, raised children and worked without pay, they would remain the weaker sex. Critics of women volunteers were primarily well-educated, middle-class
feminists, who in another time probably would have been volunteers themselves. Even so, the women's movement produced their own volunteer and voluntary organisations, including self-help groups, interest and pressure groups, which were highly dependent on the giving of time by women.

The end of the 1960s in the Netherlands was a turbulent time, especially in a city like Amsterdam. The founding of two action groups - the Man Woman Society (or MVM) in 1968 and Doli Mina (named after Wilhelmina Drucker, a nineteenth-century Dutch feminist) in 1969 - marked a revival of feminism. The impossibility of combining motherhood with work outside the home was the main reason for the rise of these groups ( Hettingers, 1992; Morée, 1992). In the following decades, many other women's groups were also formed, aimed mainly at self-help and consciousness-raising concerning women's position in society. The so-called Mother Schools for Advanced Education were subsidised by government. Special women's groups were recreated in political parties and labour unions. Since 1975 the central government has been pursuing a structural policy of women's liberation and finances many women's organisations. For the more traditional women's organisations, liberation became an issue in the 1980s.

Young Dutch women of today are not attracted to women's organisations or the women's movement in general. Whereas these organisations were characterised by separatism, modern women rather use an assimilationist strategy and try to co-operate with men (cf. McCarthy, 1994).

They want to enter men's society with respect for themselves as women and their own female characteristics. Present-day working women compare themselves more to men and less to full-time housewives. They admit that women's liberation is not complete, but education and labour participation are not issues for them. Nearly half of the student population in 1994 was female. Paid work for women is no longer just a matter of discussion. The most important issue for contemporary women's organisations is the division of paid and unpaid labour, including volunteering and informal care. Due to the long tradition of women's work as housewives, there is a lack of formal child care facilities. As a result, working women still spend twice as many hours in the household as men (Donker and Vinckx, 1994).

Philanthropy as a parallel power structure

Philanthropy has been used as a strategy to gain prestige, enhance status and maintain social contacts without breaking social, religious and community norms. It was the ideal alternative to paid work. These activities enabled women to have 'invisible careers' as volunteers, pursuing unpaid occupations within the voluntary arena (Daniels, 1988). Some women had a full-time occupation in volunteering. The importance of volunteering is underlined by the fact that women assign the same function to philanthropic activities as men allocate to paid jobs, such as self-expression and education, social appreciation and social relations (Van Dijl, 1976; van Luijk and De Bruijn, 1984; Brouns and Schokker, 1990).

Traditional Dutch women's organisations were characterised by a strong hierarchical structure and a division in ranks. It was possible for women to pursue a career in volunteering, just as their husbands did in paid labour. This career pattern for middle-class women who want to perform meaningful activities besides their traditional role of housewives is still manifested among middle-aged women in Dutch society today.

Volunteering women created what McCarthy (1994) calls a 'parallel power structure' in the public sphere outside the commercial and political spheres dominated by men. Through philanthropy women gained admission to public roles that provided leverage for political change. They could fulfill roles normally considered off-limits for middle-class women. McCarthy distinguishes three philanthropic strategies used by American women: separatism, assimilationism and individualism. In the Netherlands there are many separatist associations, such as unions of rural women, the Dutch Association of Housewives, the Women's Party, women's divisions in political parties and labour unions, the Union of Women Volunteers, women's organisations in health care, and women's self-help groups. Frequently women work as volunteers in organisations, institutions and associations where men work as well, often in management and on boards, like hospitals or the Dutch Red Cross. The individualistic approach has been rare in the Netherlands. Since women did not have much access to large sums of money, they have tended instead to pool their time and gifts. Women's fundraising skills were mainly based on their domestic skills: they made handicraft articles and sold them in charity fairs and bazaars.

Until the beginning of the 1980s, the women's movement strongly opposed politics and lobbying. The practice of lobbying was associated with bribery and it did not fit easily with Dutch culture. More recently, however, Dutch women's organisations have been active in influencing governmental policy regarding a range of women's issues, such as, for example, legal abortion and economic independence. Women's organisations wanted to be autonomous by working with and through women. There has also been a shift in recent years in attitudes towards the state. Since the 1980s women's organisations have been acknowledging the necessity and desirability of government support. They co-operate increasingly to influence government policy (Winsemius, 1990).
Although there are women’s divisions in the major political parties and labour unions, the general membership and participation by women in these organisations, and in works councils as well, is relatively low. Factors like the ‘double shifts’ of women (working outside the home and undertaking unpaid care work as well as formal child care and housework) and the lack of formal child care facilities, men’s culture in these organisations, and the tradition of not participating in the paid labour force contribute to these low participation levels (Brouns and Schokker, 1990; Leijenaar and Niemöller, 1992).

Philanthropy as a strategy for entering the labour market

It was only in 1957 that married women were legally declared capable of financial and legal actions on their own. In that same year, female civil servants no longer had to resign upon marriage (Buijink, 1991). Even so, the phenomenon of the ‘working mother’ was still highly unusual and met almost unanimous disapproval (Morée, 1992). This period coincided with a systematic extension of welfare arrangements and facilities, and a rise in wages (Buijink, 1991). In the 1960s the need for female workers in industry and in the expanding public service sector of the welfare state resulted in more latitude for working mothers. Nonetheless, in 1965 the majority of the Dutch population (84 per cent) reported that they did not like the idea of mothers of school-age children working (Morée, 1992).

Since the 1970s the right of women to develop their own personal lives has been supported by public opinion and stressed in public policy. Women became more conscious about their situation and realised that there were alternatives to the traditional pattern of motherhood and household. Recently the government has been encouraging women to enter the labour force. Since 1990 every female student has been encouraged to aspire to economic independence. However, just when paid work has become a real option for women, the job market is extremely tight. Owing to the shortage of paid jobs, women have to turn to volunteering as a means to obtain a position in society (Brouns and Schokker, 1990) or to gain relevant experience for a paid job (Emancipatiecommissie, 1979; Van Luijk and De Bruijn, 1984; Langeveld, 1985; Van Daal, 1990; Heiligers, 1992; Dashorst, 1993).

The labour participation of women is gradually increasing, but still amounts to as little as 46 per cent. Only 5 per cent of working women have a full-time job, the lowest level in Europe. The number of women in part-time paid employment is – together with Great Britain – the highest in Europe. Full-time jobs are relatively unattractive for married women because of the high tax burden and lack of formal child care facilities.
own choices. They are still willing to volunteer, but on their own terms. People like to carry out philanthropic activities without too much engagement. The 'calculating' Dutch citizens of today are motivated to volunteer for their own personal interests for specific groups in society or forms of assistance, for example as AIDS buddies or providing support in terminal care. Volunteering for the major traditional volunteer organisations or for churches or church-related organisations is less popular with the younger generation (Van Dal et al., 1992). Only in rural areas is there still a social obligation for women to carry out voluntary activities, especially in communities with relatively high church attendance (Adriaansen et al., 1991; Van Dal et al., 1992).

Secularisation and depolarisation

The trend toward individualisation has gone hand in hand with the process of secularisation and depolarisation, as religion has lost more and more of its influence over the various spheres of social life. During the last few decades, the industrialised countries, with the exception of the United States, have all experienced considerable secularisation. A recent survey shows that more than half of the Dutch population regard themselves as non-church members; only half believe in God (Becker and Vink, 1994), and only about a fifth attend church once a week (Giddens, 1993).

A decrease of supply

There is a growing demand for volunteers, but at the same time there are threatening developments for volunteer organisations. The last years have been marked by a dramatic decrease in the supply of volunteers in volunteer service organisations, especially in urbanised areas. The remaining volunteers are ageing (Van Dal et al., 1992). Policy-makers and non-profit organisations are trying to recruit new volunteers, but so far their efforts have not been very successful (Van Dal et al., 1992; Van Dal, 1993a). One of the solutions that occasionally has been suggested is the payment of volunteers. This is strongly opposed by the major volunteer organisations: they want to keep volunteering 'pure'. The identity of 'true' volunteering has already been threatened by the creation of unpaid work and tokenistic paid volunteering for unemployed and disabled people (Van Dal, 1994).

Entry of women to the labour market

Another threat for volunteer organisations is the entry of women into the labour market. This trend fits into the policy of women's liberation and is strongly encouraged by the government. Young women are encouraged to pursue an education and a profession. Middle-aged women with older children try to re-enter the labour market. Dutch women have developed a new strategy: to postpone pregnancy. Women in the Netherlands now bear fewer children than before and have their first pregnancy later in life. Well-educated women tend to make a career first, settle down and get pregnant when they are in their 30s. By that time they are in a better financial position to arrange child care, so they do not have to resign. These women, who might have been volunteers in earlier times, have made a shift from an 'economy of commands' to an 'economy of negotiation' (cf. De Swaan, 1982). They like to share domestic tasks and informal care with men. Noblese oblige is not their strategy any more.

Active elderly

Volunteering – particularly in the field of health care, welfare and social services – seems to be more often a strategy for middle-aged women without paid work and without the need to care for children to make social contacts. Empirical findings suggest that women aged 40 to 50 prefer volunteering to paid work, whereas women aged 20 to 30 favour a paid job. For a substantial number of middle-aged women, volunteering is a full-time occupation (Heiligens, 1992). With an ageing population, growing life expectancy and an expanding number of widows, this trend will possibly get stronger in the next decades. The elderly in the Netherlands already give an increasing amount of time to volunteer and charitable organisations, compared with other European countries (Timmermans, 1993).

New Dutch women

In the last decades the Netherlands has become a multi-cultural society. A considerable proportion of the Dutch population now comes from countries such as Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles. Recent research in Rotterdam – one of the largest cities in the Netherlands (with a 20 per cent immigrant population) – shows that immigrants rarely volunteer in general (non-ethnic) organisations. Members of ethnic organisations have a strong motivation to help fellow members of their own ethnic community, but the traditional Dutch volunteer organisations raise too many barriers for immigrants to participate. The culture, atmosphere, identity and image of the organisations hinder participation by members of ethnic groups. Besides, immigrants are seldom asked to participate in general organisations and committees. In the long run, this could lead to a shortage of...
volunteers in all sorts of organisations and will also prevent social integration. The local authorities see this as a serious problem (Van Daal, 1993a). Unlike present-day Dutch women, female immigrants are not always allowed to pursue activities outside the home. Giving time to perform meaningful activities outside the home or to join forces could become a strategy for these new Dutch women. However, they have yet to develop volunteering as a strategy for obtaining power or as a mechanism for assimilation and professional advancement.

Afterword

There are signs that private giving of money is increasing, now that the government is cutting back on its expenses. Recent reports show a strong increase in private giving. In 1992 Dutch-registered charitable organisations raised 26 per cent more money than two years before. Yet there is a tendency to make financial donations to professional, world-wide organisations, particularly environmental and animal-related organisations, rather than give time (Reijnders, 1993). However, the present Dutch welfare state gives substantial room for every aspect of philanthropy. Philanthropy is no longer just an act of benevolence, but is a powerful lever of social change. The question is: how long will women use these new possibilities? In the long run, as more women work full-time, they are more likely to give money than get involved in volunteering. Already, women working full-time are volunteering less than women in part-time paid employment. The giving of money would give them the power to establish women's facilities, such as child care facilities.

Notes

4 Esther Plemper is a researcher at the Verwey-Jonker Institute (Research into Social Issues), Kromme Nieuwegracht 6, 3512 HG Utrecht, The Netherlands (phone +31 302300799; fax +31 302330063).5

References


Women's strategies in Dutch philanthropy


Van Daal, H.J. (1993b) Vrijwilligerswerk binnen een veranderend zorg- en arbeidshet (Volunteering in a changing system of care and employment), Tijdschrift voor Arbeid en Beschaving (Quarterly for Labour and Consciousness), 17, 3, 185-95.


Esther PLEMPER


Women and philanthropy in Germany

Abstract

In terms of finances, the state and non-profit organisations in Germany are closely interrelated; philanthropy has until recently played only a minor role. However, with the financial crisis of the German welfare state, philanthropy and fundraising have started to play more important and more visible roles since the early 1990s. Yet most women’s organisations so far have neglected to tap or to develop private funding resources to a larger extent. While traditional women’s associations still predominantly rely upon voluntarism, autonomous women’s projects are heavily dependent upon government money. There is a huge untapped potential for philanthropy in Germany in general, and for women’s causes in particular, and several examples show that many women are prepared to support women’s causes when they are asked to do so. To foster philanthropy by and for women in the future will mean a strengthening of civil society in Germany.

Introduction

Philanthropy, ‘the giving of gifts of time or valuables ... for public purposes’ (Salamon, 1992), is not a common term in Germany; the word is rarely used because social welfare provision is basically considered a government responsibility (Bauer, 1991). In the course of industrialisation, the state actively assumed responsibility for social services, health care, education, science and culture. And while there is philanthropy in Germany, compared to the United States it has so far played only a minor role. For example, the share of private giving to non-profit organisations in the US is 18.5 per cent, yet in Germany it is only 3.9 per cent (Salamon and Anheier, 1996). Indeed, in Germany