

Modern poverty: fact and fiction

by Godfried Engbersen

In the eighties the number of households which had to make do with the absolute minimum income mushroomed from 313,000 in 1981 to more than 800,000 in 1988. The permanent dependence on social security of large numbers of people and the loss of purchasing power have once again made poverty an issue. Especially in the period after 1985, various studies were published on the new poverty in the Netherlands. It is striking that the majority of the academic measurements, whether objective or subjective, led to high percentages of poor people. Many of the measurements have little credibility, since the finale figures are far too large. In this article a qualitative description is given of modern poverty as it occurs in the Netherlands. Modern poverty can be generally described as the structural exclusion of citizens from social participation accompanied by permanent dependence on the state. The effects of these two interrelated processes are evident in the seven features of poverty: little money, social isolation, lack of benefit from some public facilities, welfare dependency, feelings of relative deprivation, concentration in poor neighbourhoods and the emergence of a culture of welfare dependency. Secondly, attention is devoted to the role of social policy in the creation and the perpetuation of modern poverty.

Dutch policy with regard to immigrants

by J.M.M. van Amersfoort

The Netherlands has long refused to consider itself an immigration country. Consequently it had no policy with regard to immigrants. In so far as special measures were taken to facilitate the absorption of immigrants, this was done by the Ministry of Social Welfare. Only during the last decade this '*Welfare-approach*' developed into a '*Allochtonenbeleid*' (policy with regard to immigrants).

Because research on immigrants in the Netherlands has been predominantly commissioned by state organisations the interplay between '*Policy*' and '*Research*' in the definition of problems in this field is particularly interesting.

The present situation of immigrants is difficult to assess at a general level. Their position has improved on the housing market but deteriorated on the labour market the last ten years. Consequently the research and the political debate concentrate at this moment on the distribution of jobs and on the mechanisms regulating this distribution.

Ethnic minorities – Urban poverty – Ghettoisation

by H.B. Entzinger

During the last two decades substantial concentrations of immigrant minorities have developed in the older districts of the largest four cities in the Netherlands. This is an effect of changing urban housing markets, of the social and demographic composition of immigrant communities and of personal preferences of immigrants, rather than of discriminatory practices in the distribution system. It is argued that in the long run current distribution procedures will maximise the immigrants' dispersion. This may prevent ghettoisation, but it also hampers immigrant communities in developing an infrastructure of their own. Here the concept of non-discrimination appears to clash with the concept of multi-ethnic society. In Dutch public policy preference is clearly given to the former, in spite of lip service to the latter. The present approach reinforces socio-economic rather than ethnic cleavages in society: in the field of housing the Dutch tend to segregate their poor rather than their ethnic minorities.

Ghetto or concentration: gold coasts against slums?

by René Teule and Ronald van Kempen

This article describes the differences in housing situations between the minimum-income groups and the above-minimum-income groups in the four largest cities in The Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht). There appears to be an asymmetric discrepancy on the urban housing markets of these cities, which means that the above-median-income groups are relatively more concentrated in the cheaper dwellings than the minimum-income groups are concentrated in the expensive ones. Because of the fact that in these cities the cheaper and expensive parts of the housing stock are spatially separated, this discrepancy on the housing market causes a mixed population structure on the neighbourhood/district level according to income.

Fighting this discrepancy – one of the objectives of the housing policy in the nineties – has to be carefully weighted. There is a great chance that, by eliminating that discrepancy, the process of spatial sorting of different income groups can be stimulated.