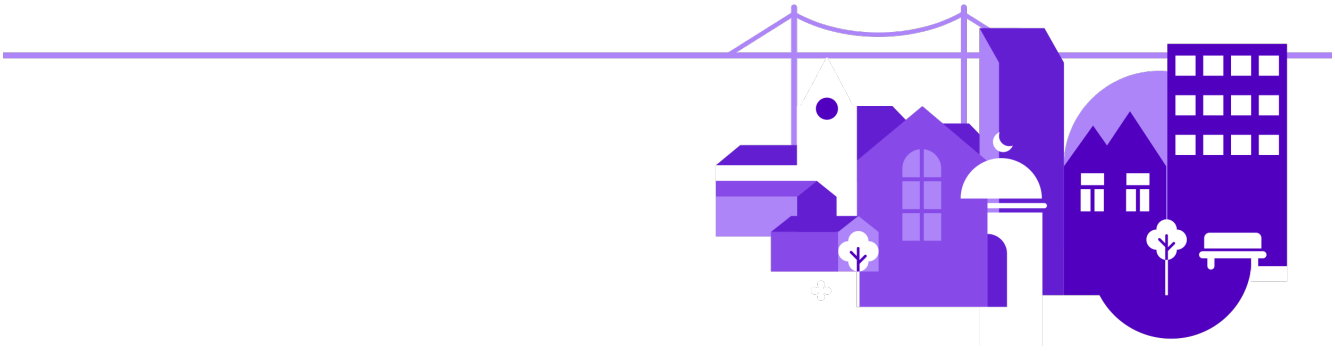


The Intimate State: Remaking Political Landscapes in the Netherlands
Inaugural lecture Anouk de Koning, University of Amsterdam, 6 June 2025

Madam Rector Magnificus,
Madam Dean,
Dear colleagues, friends, and family. Wonderful that you've made it here!
And welcome to those online. Let's begin.

I am here for you. Always nearby.
Call me if you have a hard time. I might be able to help.
We are in this together.
I would really welcome your input. Tell me about your dreams.

Who did you imagine just now?
I bet you did not think of the Dutch state.
But this is how the Dutch state reaches out to us.

It presents itself as a friendly, human state, one you can find nearby, in your neighborhood.
It might come to your house to see what you need, and what you can do yourself.
It seeks to co-construct social policy and welfare services, putting power differences aside.

Today, I'm going to talk to you about that new type of welfare state.

This new welfare state has been long in the making, but 2015 was a decisive year.
In that year, major welfare reforms refashioned the Dutch welfare state.
These reforms were meant to decrease claims on welfare state resources by responsibilizing and empowering citizens.

They envisioned a new, more proximate, human and efficient state, to be embodied by social neighborhood teams.
I spent over a year following Amsterdam's version of these teams: the Parent and Child Teams.

Meanwhile, similar reforms were underway across Europe.
Together with Anick Vollebergh and Milena Marchesi, working in Paris and Milan, we diagnosed these as an intimate state agenda.

This intimate state has been the focus of my research over the past 10 years—
first through my research with the Parent and Child Teams,
and more recently, in two projects that examine the remaking of welfare landscapes in the Netherlands and across Europe.

Today, I zoom in on that intimate welfare state.
My lecture consists of four parts:
In Part I, I discuss what anthropology can bring to the study of the welfare state.
In Part II, I make this more concrete. I turn to the Parent and Child Teams to sketch the dreams and convoluted realities of the intimate state.
Part III sketches what happens when intimate state principles are taken up in social policy, and traces the implications of this shift. I argue that intimate state principles generate what we might call a gluttonous state.
I end with a reflection on the potential of a critical anthropology with the state.

Part I:
So why an anthropology of the welfare state?

The welfare state is a defining feature of life in Western Europe—it is hard to make sense of European lives without it. But surprisingly few anthropologists have made it the focus of their work.
I am convinced that anthropologists can provide a valuable perspective on the welfare state—a topic commonly studied by other social sciences.

What might such an "anthropology of the welfare state" look like?

Anthropology is good at showing the state's puzzling, paradoxical nature. Writing in 1940, Radcliffe-Brown pointed out that the state 'as an entity over and above … society' is a myth.
There is no state that has a will or issue commands. No man with a big cigar.

We intuitively know that the state is an odd thing. Take the word overheid, the most common way to refer to the state in the Netherlands.
The overheid is a pervasive, diffuse presence in people's lives.
It is made up of public institutions working at different scales—national, provincial, and municipal—and with a wide range of roles.
Its boundaries are extremely unclear.
Some institutions may be easily identified as "state": a ministry, the police, courts …. But what about the university? Am I a state actor? Are schools "state"? Is public transport?

Despite its multiplicity and blurry boundaries, we casually invoke the state as an interlocutor—an entity that should act, care, and whom we can call to account.

"The welfare state" is even more fuzzy. It is an abstract term that encompasses the state's social and welfare tasks.
Many of these tasks are carried out by non-state organizations with public means. Think of social work organizations or housing corporations.

The state is thus no unified, bounded entity. "It" does not act, want or have hidden schemes. Other social sciences may want to ignore this paradoxical nature and simplify the state into something more manageable.
But for anthropologists, these paradoxes are at the heart of what "the state" is.

The Parent and Child Teams are a good example of this paradoxical nature.
To me, the Teams make up the core of the intimate welfare state. They are key players of Amsterdam's youth policy.
But Teams professionals hardly saw themselves as state actors. And formally they were not "state", since they are employed by a foundation that works on a public commission.
Their ambivalent state-ness impacts how they present themselves, how they operate, and how parents encounter them.

So… How to study such a pervasive yet slippery phenomenon?

I approach the welfare state through its institutions, each with their own remit, logics and commitments.
This means that there is no privileged vantage point from which to capture "the welfare state". Each institution provides us with a rich but situated picture.

Studying these institutions requires long-term ethnographic research.

My research with the Parent and Child Teams showed me the complex and unruly nature of institutional life—this was no bleak, lifeless bureaucracy. This welfare state was very much alive.

I found that the Teams were animated by fantasies of a friendly, proximate state. They were driven by professional commitments to do good and a desire for friendly, horizontal helping relations.
But they were also haunted by the lingering ghosts of an old welfare state and its paternalistic professionals.

Part II: The Intimate State

Let's take a closer look at that intimate state.

"We are here for you! Always nearby!" the bold letters on the Parent and Child Teams' website read.

Since 2015, Amsterdam's Parent and Child Teams have served as the entry point for questions about parenting and growing up. They also refer families to more specialized services, making them the linchpin of the youth welfare system.

These publicly funded Teams were designed to embody an intimate welfare state—always here for you, always nearby—that works closely with citizens to provide the support they need.
Each family gets its own friendly, familiar face: a youth or parenting professional who will "simply do what is needed".

This intimate state is one side of a dual configuration of the welfare state that revolves around tropes of activation—no more long-term welfare dependency
and responsibilization—making it your duty to care for yourself and those around you.

In the domain of benefits, activation and responsibilization give rise to strict conditional welfare regimes with sanctions and compulsory volunteering.

In contrast, in "the social domain", that of social and welfare services, activation and responsibilization take the form of the intimate state.

This intimate state is located nearby, in the neighborhood—
where it seeks to become part of the local social fabric, collaborating with other welfare providers and social initiatives, to provide integrated welfare.
And it is meant to encourage people to care for themselves and others.

At its core, it is about horizontal collaboration and eigen kracht, one's own strength.

Neighborhood teams across the Netherlands were designed to prototype this new welfare state—one that is more human, community-centered, as well as cost-effective and efficient. A win-win-win.

At an introduction meeting for new members, the director of the Parent and Child Teams laid out the program:

"A lot of people think we are small departments of youth protection," she said. "In certain neighborhoods, there is a lot of fear of youth protection. We want to give people a different impression: "We know who you are [as a person], and we'll solve the problem. We do, of course, keep an eye on child safety but we stand alongside parent and child."

As the director's words indicate, the Teams were envisioned in opposition to an old welfare state.
This old welfare state was imagined as an overly bureaucratic organization with pervasive fragmentation and overbearing and paternalist professionals who foster dependence and inactivity.

A municipal policy paper from 2013 argued that a radical change of mentality was needed "to give people back control" (Gemeente Amsterdam 2013:5).

It was up to Teams professionals to make this happen.
They were expected to help families find solutions to their problems in their own environment, using their professional experience to come up with inventive solutions.

The vision of a welcoming service for families in need of assistance aligned closely with professionals' personal commitment to fostering friendly, collaborative helping relationships.
This is captured in the mantra of "standing alongside parents" [naast ouders staan].
Professionals should not be positioned as authoritative figures above parents. They were partners, working alongside parents to find solutions.

This was the opposite of the overbearing professionals of the past—those who "went over the heads of parents," acting behind their backs and dismissing parents' perspectives and agency.

But the fantasy of a friendly, intimate state proved less clearcut in practice.

The tension between the old and new welfare state remained.
Even though the Teams prided themselves on working with parents and children at their request, they also remained responsible for monitoring the health, well-being, and safety of all children in Amsterdam, as they had been in the old system.

These tasks introduced interventionist logics that sat uncomfortably with the desire to stand alongside parents.

This became clear when I presented my initial findings to a gathering of Parent and Child Team professionals.
Around forty professionals trickled into the conference room in the city district office—many of them the same people who had generously welcomed me into their work lives.

During my presentation, I used the phrase "working with, for, and against parents" to describe the complexity of the Teams' helping relationships.
Professionals want to work with parents, I explained, but they also carry the responsibility for children's well-being. And sometimes, that responsibility means adopting a more forceful approach—one that might even feel like working against parents.

The atmosphere in the room shifted instantly.

"We never work against parents!" someone said. Others quickly backed her up. The very idea that they might work against parents struck a nerve.

I was genuinely baffled. Why did they feel so passionately about this?

As you may know, the reputation of welfare services in the Netherlands is quite ambiguous.
Almost every parent has ambivalent stories about the "Consultatiebureau," the youth health services that have been integrated into the Parent and Child Teams.
And Teams professionals often discussed the delicate balance of working with parents while also keeping an eye on child safety.

Why, then, did my observation strike such a raw nerve?

I have thought a lot about this moment. I have come to see these reactions as part of an institutional psychic life.

Institutional fantasies of a warm, human welfare state—a service there to help you!—circulate in the organization. They connect policy visions with professionals' ethical commitments and what Ghassan Hage calls fantasies of the self, stories we tell ourselves that make our lives worth living.

Such imaginaries of a warm, caring state and of professionals as a sympathetic helping hand relied on various forms of denial—
just think back of the reactions to my observation concerning the complex role of professionals.

The fantasy of a friendly, helpful service—so central to professionals' identity—made it difficult to openly confront the authority embedded in their work. The lingering specter of the paternalistic professional rendered power itself almost unspeakable, casting it as something tainted, to be downplayed or denied.

But these more forceful agendas and dimensions did not they go away. Instead, they existed as public secrets, woven into the common sense of institutional life (Nugent 2020).

As a result, professionals enacted an intimate state with a smiling face and an extended hand that "forgets" the monitoring and interventions that are equally part of its mandate.

Part III: A Gluttonous State?

What happens when this policy vision moves out of institutions? How does it reshape social policy and welfare landscapes?

These questions are central to my current projects, in which we study how intimate state agendas manifest in social policy and welfare programs across Europe.

In recent years, intimate state principles have become the golden standard of Dutch social policy.
After decades of New Public Management with its audit cultures and bureaucratic fragmentation, these principles hold the promise of a renewed, active role for the state.
One that does not return us to the classical welfare model.

Across the social domain, policy makers have embraced an integrated, collaborative, and area-based approach.
Social policy should be organized locally, so the mantra goes, and work in an integrated fashion through one familiar face, and through collaborative relations.
Policy should start from residents' strengths and initiatives.

The principle is clear: rather than a focus on providing services, the mission is to help people take care of themselves and each other.

This means that, increasingly, welfare publics are drawn into the provision of welfare services—a shift from social citizenship to what Andrea Muehlebach (2012) describes as ethical citizenship.

These policies invite, and urge, a wide array of new actors—from social entrepreneurs to community organizers, residents and volunteers—to take part in welfare governance and provision.

This is a collaborative state with extremely blurry boundaries: it is hard to tell where the state stops, and society begins.

Let me illustrate this by zooming in on two types of programs we study:
initiatives that seek to stimulate self-reliance and caring communities…
and collaborative urban social policy.

1. self-reliance and caring communities

Our Prototyping Welfare team studies welfare initiatives that provide food aid, run community spaces and organize volunteer help.

More NGO or social initiative than formal welfare organization, these projects are part of expanding circles of welfare governance.

Embedding the welfare state in the social fabric of neighborhoods and working with local social initiatives is expected to facilitate self-reliance and caring communities and alleviate claims on public services.
Here, the state is imagined as a partner and facilitator rather than a provider of services.

By facilitating and incorporating local welfare initiatives, intimate state agendas generate hybrid landscapes made up of a patchwork of more and less formal welfare organizations staffed by professionals and volunteers. Many volunteers.

It is not too far-fetched to say that the volunteer is a key figure of the intimate state.

We encountered volunteers in many forms: seasoned ones with long careers in associational life, as well as people who were made to "volunteer" as a condition of their welfare benefits.

For some, volunteering was a way to find meaning in a life at the margins of the labor market, while for others, volunteering provided access to crucial contacts, small business opportunities or even bare necessities.
In the intimate state's philosophy, you can never be merely a recipient of services; you must become a co-producer.

Activating, co-produced welfare spaces can provide a sense of belonging and community, as Vénicia Sananès found in a neighborhood workspace in Amsterdam Southeast.
Here, people from different walks of life found conviviality and purpose.

But the space depended on what Sananès calls "cheerleaders" of the welfare state, who unfalteringly present a positive narrative of potential and possibility. Unemployment, poverty must remain below the surface. The space offers respite, but no solutions.

Similarly, Tessa Bonduelle documents how poor volunteers working at a food hub in London found a sense of belonging in their daily volunteering work, but their personal need for the food products they helped distribute created tensions and suspicions, complicating the warm sense of family they so cherished.

These cases illustrate that fantasies of warm intimacy are sustained by sidelining questions about precarity and marginalization.

Moreover, such intimacy is produced through large amounts of free or badly paid labor. Labor that is made invisible through assumptions of natural warm neighborliness.

And creating proximity, especially with the poor, the destitute, those at the margins, is not always warm and comfortable.
Martha Kapazoglou found that, in Thessaloniki, the work of creating closeness may be delegated to people on insecure, temporary contracts, who are not much better off than then those they are tasked to help. To them, proximity felt deeply troubling, an unwelcome reminder of their own precarity.

Intimate welfare thus raise questions beyond the warm affects of its cheerleaders:
Can those in need be asked to spend much of their time producing welfare services for themselves and for others?
And what happens to the notion of social rights when one must rely on non-state shadows of the welfare state?

2. working with the neighborhood

We also encounter the intimate state in urban policy.

Policy makers in the Netherlands have enthusiastically embraced intimate state principles as a solution to tenacious urban problems.

All such policy is to be made with residents, with the neighborhood.

The neighborhood figures as a cure-all.
It is imagined as the space where the gap between the state and citizens can be bridged.
Where policy can be done in an integrated manner, can be made more democratic and more efficient.

Collaborative relations are at the core of these new urban policies.
But establishing collaborations requires effort, especially in the poorer, more ethnically mixed neighborhoods that are often the focus of these policies.

Such trust and collaboration can only be achieved when policy officials engage in "human relationships"—where they meet residents as fellow human beings.

This requires a new type of policy officer, an urban manager told us. One who is there in the evenings and weekends. Who picks up the phone when residents call.

Much like Parent and Child Team professionals, these policy officers must become the trusted face of complex and often unwieldy municipal bureaucracies.

These same officials must decide with whom to work: who can become a neighborhood representative?
Some residents volunteer to take up that position. They hope to influence policy and gain access to resources.
Policy officers may also create networks of key persons that can act as their counterpart in the neighborhood.

Either way, questions about representativity keep coming up: do these people really represent the neighborhood? Are their voices and wishes those of most residents? Or are they only there for people like them?

Whom to choose if there are several contenders for the role of community or neighborhood representative? And what about the interests of those not at the policy table?

Policy officials must manage these questions, deciding how to enact the intimate state's democratic promise.
How to assess the claims of residents sitting at the policy table? And how to weigh them against the city council's formal democratic mandate?

Once such collaborations gain momentum, new questions arise.
How to build horizontal, collaborative working relations with residents who don't have an institutional position, are unpaid, and may lack bureaucratic skills and access?
Even if one were to create paid positions, new questions arise—for whom, and how much?

Frontline policy officers may become micromanagers of neighborhood life.

This role is not without peril:
In her study of Marseille's politique de la ville, Alice Daquin observed how small funds for local associations in poor housing projects damaged social relations, creating competition for scarce resources among neighborhood mothers.

It is clear that this collaborative urban policy changes what it means to be a policy officer. They are the familiar face of a larger bureaucracy, connecting and mediating between residents' logics and policy processes and bureaucratic routines—a far from easy task. They must now also act as social workers and community organizers.

Janne Heederik found that the team that develops collaborative policies in Amsterdam North spends much of its time brokering between municipality and residents, and mediating tensions between them.

These policy officers of the intimate state engage these challenges and contradictions not as institutional representatives, but as individuals who are personally committed to the process, the collaboration and its outcomes. The resulting tensions and disappointments become very much their own.

I've provided some glimpses of the intimate state in welfare and social policy.
Let me draw out, more explicitly, how intimate state programs transform social policy and welfare landscapes.

I discuss three main points:
1. the gluttonous nature of the intimate state
2. the significance of invisible labor
3. how new welfare figures come to embody the contradictions of the intimate state.

1. the gluttonous state
Much like the Parent and Child Teams, today's social policy and welfare landscapes are shaped by alluring fantasies of a collaborative, horizontal, and democratic welfare state—one that nearly vanishes into "society", blending seamlessly into the fabric of caring communities.

In his 2009 inaugural lecture, Willem Trommel spoke about greedy governance, referring to state actors who seek to instrumentalize private and civic loyalties for the public good. Civil society is actively manufactured to take on public tasks, he argued.

The cases I have just discussed show a similar instrumentalization of local social life.

Ostensibly, policies that seek to shift welfare responsibilities from formal state and welfare institutions to individuals and "society" would lead to a diminished state presence and responsibilities.

In practice, intimate state programs stimulate, coopt and consume the dreams, aspirations, initiatives and networks of increasing numbers of people.

They allow the state to expand into the social networks of community figures and into the lives of people on welfare. Policy officers may become conductors of neighborhood life.

The intimate state generates hybrid zones—made up of the state, welfare institutions, social initiatives, community and neighborhood life, or a complex mix of them all. These seemingly peripheral zones become the core of welfare governance, loaded with high expectations and serious responsibilities.

This intimate state turns out to be a gluttonous state that works through incorporating people, networks and initiatives in expanding circles welfare governance.

2. invisible labor

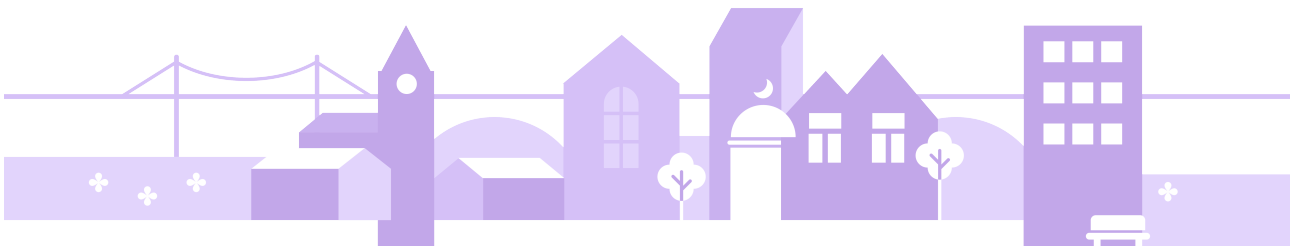
This intimate state relies on the intensive labor of a host of people drawn into welfare governance.
Despite its cheerful, optimistic take on collaborative policy and caring communities, the intimate state proves deeply taxing to those who have to realize it.

Residents, community organizers and volunteers are given much space and funding opportunities. But this comes with greater responsibilities, and increasingly serious tasks.
They volunteer countless hours to deliver services, build community, and represent their neighbors. They are asked to act professionally and find that their volunteering has become indispensable.

Intimate state policies routinely disregard this crucial free labor, wishfully naturalizing social networks and activities as an inherent part of neighborhood life.

We have seen the commitment, energy and joy with which people respond to calls and openings in social policy, but we have also documented the toll it takes.
We've seen people give up, disillusioned and burned out after years of effort that never quite amount to anything enduring or transformative enough.

In this sense, too, the intimate state is gluttonous as it consumes vast amounts of personal dreams and aspirations, free labor and social relations.



3. living contradictions

As you might have surmised, this intimate state is full of paradoxes and contradictions.

I already mentioned some:

- New welfare figures are asked to invest their time, personal connections and social capital for free or on the cheap despite their precarious economic situation.

- Power differences haunt supposedly horizontal collaborations in which some are paid and trained institutional actors and others are there exactly because they are not.

- And the wish to work with residents often fails to translate in procedures that allow such collaborations to flourish. Instead, we see them strand in inflexible policy demands and procedures.

The intimate state's new welfare figures—residents, volunteers, community organizers, frontline professionals, and policy officers— often come to, quite literally, embody these contradictions.

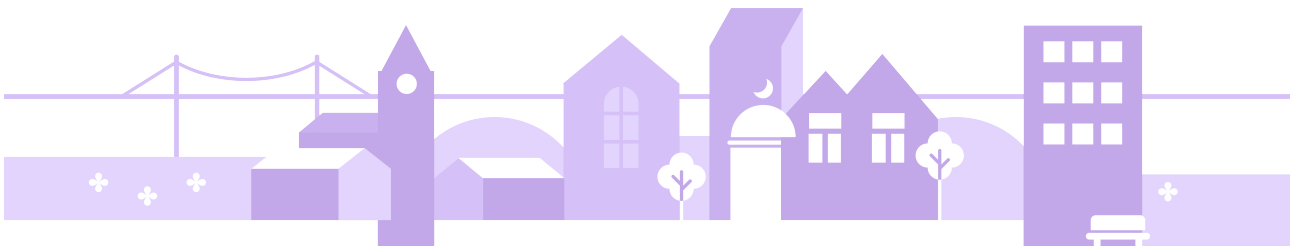
A telling example are the experts by experience that Charlotte van der Veen studies. Experiential expertise is increasingly sought out to break down barriers and hierarchies in welfare and social policy—enabling a better and more democratic connection between "life" and "system world".
These experts by experience must perform professionally in policy worlds but should also remain representatives of their marginalized position.

Other new welfare figures face similar conundrums: they have to be professional enough to act as reliable counterparts but should remain normal enough to represent "ordinary people".

Such tensions are often also racialized ones.

Intimate state policies are framed in generic terms of residents and neighborhoods. But in fact, they often focus on poorer neighborhoods with many people of color. They are home to communities seen as insufficiently integrated and troublesome. Neighborhoods where trust in governance actors and institutions is felt to be most frail.

This racialized dimension is rarely made explicit. Instead, we read about neighborhoods that require attention and populations that are "hard to reach".



New welfare figures are often recruited from such racialized communities—hailed to mend relations and establish closeness.
They act as representatives of society's most precarious and suspect members—a bridge to those considered risky and at-risk. But their presence is shadowed by the stigmas associated with these groups.

Such racialized inequalities haunt collaborative urban policy.

Lieke Wissink and Yannick Drijfhout document how these new governance actors, representatives of the "hard to reach", find themselves navigating white, middle-class policy landscapes on white middle-class institutional terms.
They see how pervasive racialized inequalities lead to simmering tensions—until they erupt —as happened with the Masterplan in Amsterdam Southeast.

To sum up, I have discussed the alluring vision of a more proximate, human and democratic state. This intimate state is also tricky, exacting, and volatile. It draws increasing numbers and spaces into its remit. And it may reproduce social inequalities under the guise of empowerment and democratization.

IV: an anthropology with the state
I hope to have given you a glimpse of what an anthropology of the welfare state has to offer.
But… one may ask, offer to whom?

Anthropology has a long history of siding with the poor, the marginalized.
As a result, much of anthropology's focus has been on the oppressive and disciplining nature of the state. Stef Jansen called this an anthropology against the state.

Of course, states do enact violence and repression, especially against marginalized populations.
But a singular focus on its violent character does not do justice to the state's role in providing the gridding of our everyday lives. It also does not speak to the promises of social citizenship that the welfare state embodies. And it makes it hard to acknowledge state actors' commitment to the public good.

In the past decade, anthropologists have started paying increasing attention to people's investments in and hope for the state. They document the logics, ethical and affective investments that animate states at work.

My work is part of this move, explicitly positioned to reflexively and critically engage with the state through the study of everyday welfare state practices.

Instead of an anthropology against the state, I am advocating for a critical anthropology with the state.
The goal of such an anthropology is not to unmask hidden disciplinary agendas, but to engage in a critical dialogue.

In our projects, we position ourselves alongside frontline workers—the policy officers, social professionals and community organizers who struggle to make good on promises of a more caring welfare state, a more democratic social policy.

They often do so with limited means, in unwieldy policy landscapes and in a political climate that is, increasingly, out of sync with their efforts.

A critical anthropology with the state means excavating the unsaid, the lingering contradictions and dead ends, drawing out and staying with the trouble without, however, dismissing the commitments and dreams that animate state institutions.

Many of the people in our research valued such critical dialogues, including when we pointed to more ambivalent, tricky and even violent outcomes of their work.

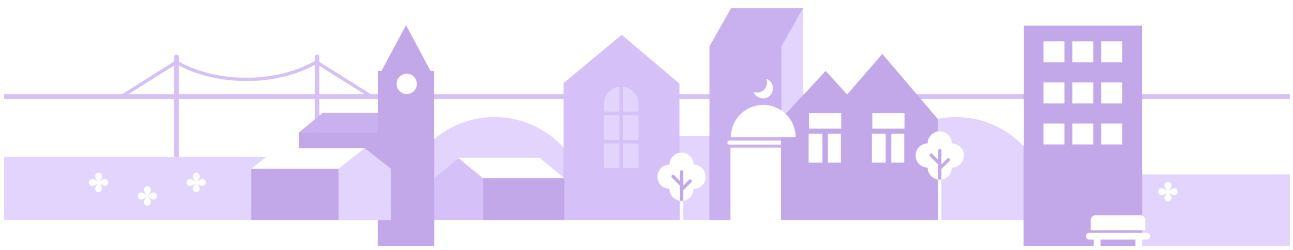
Such an anthropology with the state provides food for critical thought and action—an opening to imagine and work toward a better state.

– **Thank you!**

Now that I have set out my research agenda, I can get to something I have been looking forward to. The thank you's.

Almost 20 years ago, I stood here to defend my dissertation on emerging social divides in Cairo.
It is a great honor and pleasure to stand here again, after an academic journey that has taken me across the Netherlands and the globe, to inaugurate my chair in Power, Politics and the State in Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam.
My heartfelt thanks to the Executive Board of the University of Amsterdam and our Dean for their confidence in me.

My favorite aspect of academia are the interesting, wonderful and quirky companions you meet along the way. To everyone who has been part of this journey: you have greatly enriched my life.



My first taste of academic life was when Peter Geschiere and Bonno Thoden van Velzen opened their PhD course to undergraduates and showed us what academic conviviality and generosity looks like.
Working with Roekmienie Sewradj-Debipersad on my master's research in Suriname taught me the joys of collaborative research.

When I went on to do a PhD here at the University of Amsterdam, I became part of a wonderful cohort. Thank you Eileen, Yatun, Courtney, Pia, Shifra, Miriyam, Ines, Martijn, Irfan and Francio for sharing that intellectual journey and for years of solidarity and fun. Vazira Zamindar, I cherish our friendship across continents; it's moving to have you here today.

Mostafa, Dina, Dina, Mohammed and Noha, thank you for welcoming me into your lives and making Cairo my second home. Alf shukran ya habiyib, nawwaru hayati.

As an assistant professor at Radboud University, I saw what a commitment to students and teaching looks like. Thank you, Toon van Meijl for taking me on, and Martijn Koster for being such a great colleague and friend.

At Radboud, I recruited my first team to study the making of postcolonial Europe. Anick, Milena, Wiebe, Lucrezia and Soukaina, thank you for sharing this adventure and for all the learning and thinking we did, and still do, together.
I am deeply indebted to the Parent and Child Teams professionals who taught me so much about the welfare state.
I was lucky to find in Wayne Modest a wonderful companion for thinking about the complicated realities of race.

My move to Leiden introduced me to an amazing group of colleagues. The department offered a warm and inspiring space, thanks to Annemarie Samuels, Jasmijn Rana, Andrew Littlejohn, Tessa Minter, John Boy, Bart Barendregt and Sabine Luning, among others. I miss you all.

Working with Femke Kaulingfreks and Maartje van der Woude, we dreamed big, developing our unwieldy but inspiring Crafting Resilience project. Combined with my Vici grant, I was able to recruit the amazing Welfare Futures team you've heard so much about today: Charlot, Yannick, Janne, Venicia, Martha, Tessa, Alice and Lieke, what an honor and what fun to be working together.
Sarah, Iris and Iris, thank you for keeping us afloat and on track with such verve and joy.

Over the past year, I have become part of the sprawling, anarchistic, creative and buzzing anthropology department at the UvA, with many old and new colleagues and friends. I still feel honored and slightly dazed by my new position.

Thank you Tina Harris, Yatun Sastramidjaja, Jorge Nunez, Natashe Lemos Dekker, Nafis Hassan, Rachel Spronk and Kristine Krause and all the others, for your wonderful collegiality and friendship. Hebe, my old friend, I'm looking forward to working together in the coming years.

A big thank you to Muriël Kiesel, Cristina Garafolo and Janus Oomen for making it all possible.

I also want to take a moment to think of the people have passed away this last year: Maria Perquin, John Schreijer, Arnoud Gevers and Sabine Luning. You are sorely missed.

I am the luckiest person to have such a loving family. My parents, Tom and Marijke de Koning, have always been there for me. I may be a professor now, but to them, I will always be their somewhat quirky daughter.
My brothers Martijn and David, now joined by Hannah, always make me feel I'm home.

As for chosen family: Rivke Jaffe and Eileen Moyer, you are so much more than colleagues and friends. I could not have done any of this without you. Together, academia is never too daunting or lonely.

Ivo—your steady love, support and humor have kept me afloat all those years. And Nour, the light of my eyes, you have brought me such joy and continue to teach me about what it is to grow up in this crazy world of ours.
Ik heb gezegd.