Monthly Seminar

Anthropology of Children

Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, VU University Amsterdam

Monday 12 March 2012  14.00-15.30
VU University Amsterdam, Metropolitan Building, room Z-009

Childhood as 'self-education' and as 'disciplined freedom': Applying the capability approach to children, education and democracy
Shanti George, independent researcher

Continuing the monthly seminar’s emphasis on children as social actors and as subjects, this presentation will argue that children are not too young to be full citizens participating in democracies, in this case democracy within the home – ‘the personal is political,’ when it comes to relationships between generations just as with relationships between the genders. Neither are young children too immature to have social science analysis extended to them, as the presentation will attempt to demonstrate by applying concepts of ‘self education’ and ‘disciplined freedom’ (essential to democracy) developed by Donald Schön in the context of ‘reflective practitioners.’ The presentation thereby disagrees with voices within the capability approach which assert that ‘when dealing with children, it is the freedom that they will have in future rather than the present that should be considered’ (Saito 2003). The presentation is intended to apply universally, questioning distinctions usually made between the so called Global South and Global North.