

PhD defence Tanja Ahlin

Care Through Digital Connections: Enacting Elder Care Through Everyday Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Indian Transnational Families.

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University of Amsterdam - Amsterdam



Dit is de omschrijving

Supervisors

- Prof. Dr. Jeannette Pols (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
- Prof. Dr. Susana Narotzky (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain)
- Prof. Dr. Koen Peeters (ITM)
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Abstract

What becomes of elder care when family members are scattered across vast geographic distances? Based on ethnographic fieldwork with families of nurses from Kerala, South India, this thesis explores how care may be reshaped in a transnational context. Specifically, I ask how everyday information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones and webcams, participate in elder care at a distance. Drawing on material semiotics, I analyze care practices of adult children, who migrate abroad for work, and their elderly parents who remain in Kerala. I maintain that ICTs join the parents and their children in enacting care within ‘transnational care collectives’. I explore the dynamics of these collectives and how they shape care practices of ‘good care’ that are possible at a distance, such as frequent calling. Additionally, the thesis investigates how gender and kinship are enacted in new ways within ICT-mediated elder care practices. The thesis further reflects on the practice of fieldwork, proposing the notion of ‘field events’ to account for the active involvement of ICTs in shaping the field.

In conclusion, I consider some practical implications of this thesis for the ‘crisis of elder care’ which lies at the nexus of intensified international migration and the demographic shift towards aging populations.