

Grant application full proposal form 2024

NWO Talent Programme – Vici scheme

Applied and Engineering Sciences
Social Sciences and Humanities
Science



1. General information

1a. Title of the research proposal

Care and Coercion. Patriarchy, (Forced) Labour and Caregiving in the Household in the Dutch Empire, c. 1750-Present

1b. Scientific summary of research proposal

Historically, women have borne the brunt of domestic and caregiving tasks, and (poor) people of colour more so than affluent white people. Because care and cleaning are generally low paid, or unremunerated, this sustains major gender and racial inequalities, both within societies and globally.

The proposed Vici-project studies the historical roots of such entangled inequalities. It analyses different degrees of coercion that play out at the level of the household in order to explain continuities and changes in the allocation of care and (paid) work in four regions within the (former) Dutch empire 1750–present, connecting the colonial and postcolonial periods. The project takes an intersectional approach, sensitive to gender, race/ethnicity, class and age, to study the intimate, but also often coercive relationships between household members, including living-in enslaved and servants.

By using a wide variety of sources and qualitative as well as quantitative comparative methods, the project exposes micro-level power mechanisms affecting allocations of paid and unpaid domestic and caregiving labour and explains how and why these changed over the long term. It makes innovative empirical and theoretical contributions to the fields of New History of Slavery, by integrating gender and the household into analyses of forced labour, and to Gender Studies, by including the study of degrees of coercion.

Moreover, the project aims to enhance public awareness about coerced labour in relation to care work in the Dutch empire by building an online knowledge hub together with professionals and citizens. It will combine academic insights with contributions from citizens, including an online textbook for primary and secondary education as well as visual and audio sources for amateur historians. The project is firmly grounded in my expertise in gender and global labour history and is enriched by my extensive national and international collaborations.

Word count 1b: **293**

1c. Keywords

Forced Labour; Gender; Domestic Work; Colonialism; Households

1d. NWO domain (Choose one)

- ☐ Applied and Engineering Sciences (AES/TTW)
- ☒ Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH/SGW)
- ☐ Science (ENW)

1e. Main field of research

	Code/Field of research:
Main field of research:	27.50.00 Social and economic history

1f. Public summary of your research proposal

NL

Zorg en Dwang. Het Patriarchaat, (Gedwongen) Arbeid, en Zorg binnen het Huishouden, ca. 18^e-20^e Eeuw
<i>Prof. dr. E.J.V. van Nederveen Meerkerk, Universiteit Utrecht</i>
Over de gehele wereld zijn huishoudelijke en zorgtaken onevenredig verdeeld tussen de seksen en etnische groepen. Dit onderzoeksproject bestudeert de historische wortels van deze vormen van ongelijkheid, door te bekijken hoe zorg en dwang verstrengeld waren binnen de intieme context van het huishouden. Het project concentreert zich op vier gebieden in het (voormalige) Nederlandse koloniale rijk, waarin verschillende vormen van gedwongen arbeid bestonden, variërend van slavernij tot meer informele vormen van dwang. Hierdoor is het mogelijk ontwikkelingen in vier continenten te vergelijken in Nederland en zijn koloniën, zowel tijdens het kolonialisme als na de onafhankelijkheid.
Word count: 95

ENG

Care and Coercion. Patriarchy, (Forced) Labour, and Caregiving in the Household, c. 18th-20th Centuries
<i>Prof. dr. E.J.V. van Nederveen Meerkerk, Utrecht University</i>
Around the world, domestic and caregiving work are highly gendered as well as racialized. This research project aims to study the historical roots of these entangled inequalities, by looking at how forms of care and coercion interacted at the intimate level of the household. The project concentrates on four interrelated regions in the (former) Dutch empire, in which various forms of forced labour ranging from slavery to more informal forms of coercion existed. It compares regions on four different continents and over time, thus connecting metropole and colonies as well as colonial and postcolonial developments.
Word count: 95

2. Research proposal

2a. Description of the proposed research (max. 14 pages)

2a1. Overall aim and key objective

Care and coercion: the central problem

Around the world, paid and unpaid **domestic and caregiving work are highly gendered as well as racialized**. Within the household, women on average spend 2.6 hours more per day on domestic and caregiving tasks than men (UN Women 2023, 5). This seriously restricts their opportunities in the labour market as well as their free choice in time allocation. The so-called “care penalty” hampers the economic opportunities of women, and restricts them in achieving sufficient agency over their own lives, even though their educational level and political representation have improved over the past decades (UN Women 2023, 1). As feminist economist Nancy Folbre (2020, 31) puts it: “Many women are conscripted into a permanent army of caregivers, pressed to serve selflessly on a daily basis and stigmatized if they fail to do so”. Thus, while progress has been made for women’s emancipation, systemic historical gender inequality is continued through the uneven allocation of care tasks between men and women.

However, gender is only one part of the picture. Compared to women in other parts of the world, European and North American women on average spend less time on domestic and care work. Part of this results from middle-class households taking in *au pairs*, nannies and migrant domestic workers to perform various forms of “intimate labour”, often under poor working and living conditions (Salazar Parreñas 2001, 99-112; Boris & Salazar Parreñas 2010). This frees up time for the employer households, particularly women, to seek gainful employment, and spend more time on leisure, thus enhancing inequalities between women of different classes and racial backgrounds. Officially, around 20% of all domestic workers globally have a migrant status, but considering that many of them are undocumented migrants, this is probably a gross underestimation (Tayah 2016, 25). According to recent estimates, over 50% of all personal and household services in the European Union are performed by documented as well as undocumented migrants (EFFAT 2021, 4). Aside from first-generation immigrants, people of colour have historically performed a disproportionate share of paid and unpaid domestic labour. They often work long hours, face low pay and experience other exploitative working and living conditions (Hoerder 2015). It follows that domestic work constitutes “a microcosm of structural inequality” (Nadasen 2023, 74), interlinking gender, race and class relations (Glenn 1992).

This research project aims to study the historical roots of such entangled inequalities, sustained at the intimate level of the household. Premilla Nadasen has recently argued that in the United States there are deep systemic connections between the role of black women in the present-day care economy and the gender and racial inequalities that historically prevailed under colonialism and slavery. She proposes that capitalism, coercion, and care have been intertwined for centuries. Nadasen draws parallels between, on the one hand, the huge profits companies make within the contemporary neoliberal care economy by exploiting lower-class people of colour, who perform lowly remunerated “social reproductive” tasks such as cleaning and childcare for middle-class people, and, on the other hand, gains made by capitalists in earlier centuries by commodifying the bodies of colonized and enslaved people – including coercing black women into domestic and caregiving tasks in the plantation household. She argues that “the trajectory of the paid labor of social reproduction is tied to slavery, colonialism, immigration and forced labor” (Nadasen 2023, 30).

Inspired by these bold claims, the proposed Vici-project aims to study how forms of coercion within households have influenced the allocation of paid and unpaid care and domestic work in different regions of the Dutch empire, and how and why this changed over time. Previous studies have shown that capitalism had very different effects on (labour) markets in distinct institutional contexts in the past (e.g. Bavel 2016), but we know little about how such differences historically impacted allocations of work and care, and how this interacted with various degrees of coercion. While the historical connection between coercion and care-work may be straightforward in the US, due to centuries of slavery and institutionalized racism, they are less obvious in the Dutch context. Unlike the US, the Netherlands has not known institutionalized slavery in its metropolitan territories. However, the colonial link is all the more relevant. Over the past centuries, **various gradations of unfree labour loomed large in many of the Dutch empire’s colonies** – ranging from outright domestic slavery to contract labour and other, more informal forms of coercion. Colonized, captured, as well as “freely” migrated women and men performed paid and unpaid, voluntary and involuntary domestic and caregiving labour.

Moreover, such coercive colonial relations also permeated the metropole, as the case of Lina Kondé shows. Lina was an Ambonese girl who travelled with the Dutch family she had served in the East Indies when they were repatriated to the Netherlands in 1920. Although she had negotiated a monthly salary of 15 guilders, Lina received no payment, even though she alone was burdened with the straining task of taking care of all household chores as well as four children. Moreover, Lina was usually not allowed to leave the house, effectively being locked inside the home against her will. When she asked for resignation, her mistress refused, and threatened to send her, still a minor, back to the Indies. Eventually, Lina ran away and found shelter in Persinggahan, a hostel for Indonesian personnel. Additional cases of more or less enslaved domestic staff brought from the Indies were reported, probably only forming the tip of the iceberg of

coercive relations within repatriated households (Poeze 1986, 236-237, see Figure 1). Studies of the postcolonial period suggest that **up to the present, implicit racial biases and colonial attitudes shape the labour market participation and work experiences of women of colour** in the Netherlands, particularly considering domestic and caregiving work (e.g. Marchetti 2014).

Figure 1 – Indonesian nanny (“baboe”) with Dutch child in The Hague, 1920s © Haags Gemeentearchief



For many reasons, studying the case of the (former) Dutch empire is highly appropriate. First, the Dutch exerted worldwide colonial influence over several centuries: in Asia, Africa, and America. In all of these regions, the Dutch imposed slavery as well as more informal forms of coerced labour on the indigenous population, including forced domestic services. Both in eighteenth-century South-Africa and in Suriname until the 1860s, more enslaved than free people were living in either colony (Worden 1985, 11; Hest 2019, 29). Racial relations in the colonies formed an “uneven playing field” for coerced labour relations, further complicating inequalities of class and gender that also existed in the metropole. For instance, in colonial settings, relatively many men – often derogatory referred to as “boys” – were involved in domestic and caregiving duties (Nederveen Meerkerk 2015). At the same time, there were distinct differences between the colonial contexts, which this project aims to systematically compare (see **2a2, Project Description**).

Second, while the impact of colonialism and slavery on present-day societies and economies of the Netherlands and its former colonies is increasingly being recognized (e.g. Cooper & Stoler 1997; Oostindie e.a. 2012; Wekker 2016; Combrinck & Rossum 2021; Oostindie 2023), historians have seldom linked the current gendered labour participation in the metropole to the coercive history of colonialism. Nor have they established long-term analyses of postcolonial divisions of labour and domestic and caregiving work between migrants and non-migrants (for exceptions see: Marchetti 2014; Nederveen Meerkerk 2019). In fact, most of the historical literature on gender, race and coercion in relation to domestic and caregiving tasks pertains to the United States and Great Britain (e.g. Boris 2022; Dussart 2022; Glenn 2010; Haskins 2012; Haskins & Sen 2022; Hochschild 2015). For continental Europe, where neoliberalism and capitalism are arguably at a less “high state” than in the US, the relationships between coercion and domestic work are much less explored, historically. But here too, many of the activities that were once predominantly performed in the household, ranging from cooking to care for the elderly, have to a lesser or greater extent been outsourced to the market. Often, people of colour are overrepresented in these low-paid jobs. In the Netherlands today, tens of thousands of undocumented migrants perform paid domestic labour (FNV 2020) and documented postcolonial migrants are overrepresented in lower paid (domestic and caregiving) services (Marchetti 2014, 43; Rijksoverheid 2023).

Third, there are multiple interesting intra-imperial as well as trans-imperial connections in Dutch colonial history, ranging from enslaved Asian domestic workers being transported to South-Africa in the eighteenth century to indentured workers from Java as well as India contracted for Suriname in the nineteenth century (Ally 2015; Bhagwanbali 1996; Worden 1985, 8-9). Many studies on such colonial and postcolonial connections, also in relation to domestic and caregiving work, have recently appeared for the former British empire (e.g. Chakraborty & Grover 2022; Dussart 2022; Datta 2023), but these interlinkages are grossly underexplored for the Dutch imperial context.

Research questions and major contributions

The proposed project aims to systematically study **what explains continuities and changes in the allocation of care and paid work across regions and over the long run**. It does so by scrutinizing degrees of coercion within the household, and how these interact with broader socioeconomic forces, most notably formal and informal institutions, colonialism, and the development of global markets. Much is still unknown about how forces of patriarchy and degrees of coercion within the household interact to determine decisions on divisions of labour (work and care, paid and unpaid). For a large part, this has to do with the highly varying – and partial – approaches to this problem taken by different strands of literature. Neoclassical economic models tend to focus on rational choice theory, often neglecting the power relations and constraints under which individuals make choices (for a notable exception see: Acemoglu & Wolitzky 2011). While, conversely, many scholars of the New History of Capitalism as well as many Marxist Feminist scholars do indeed consider such power relations, they have tended to analyse these as *binary* oppositions, for instance: Global North vs Global South, capitalists vs workers, men vs women (Folbre 2020, 24). Moreover, the latter fields tend to focus on particular case studies, often shying away from generalizations or theory building (Clegg 2020, 76). This Vici-project does contribute to theory formation on the dynamics between care and coercion in the household, by using the recently developed **Intersectional Political Economy framework** to study the interactions of structure, agency, and intersecting identities in human behaviour, combining analytically useful elements from Neoclassical Institutional Economic theory, Marxian theory and Feminist theory (Folbre 2020; see next section for more elaboration).

The goal is to study mechanisms of control and asymmetrical dependency relations between different members of the household in different parts of the Dutch empire over the past two and a half centuries. In the analysis, it is assumed that within the constraints of uneven power relations that were prescribed by rules and social norms (=institutions), the various actors within households – male heads, wives, children, and, if present, servants or slaves – exerted differential forms of agency to shape their lives and work (Winnebeck e.a. 2023). Caregiving and domestic tasks are not only persistently gendered, but these activities have also been among the most dominant activities that households “outsourced” to additional members, usually of different social and ethnic background. In most societies from ancient Rome to present-day Saudi Arabia, households have included coerced labourers into their households, ranging from underpaid domestic servants to outright enslaved people (e.g. Edmonson 2011; Sarti 2014; Vlieger 2012). In the absence of servants or enslaved household members, more subtle coercive mechanisms regarding expectations as to who performed “non-productive” or “social reproductive” household labour were in place, for instance between spouses, or older and younger siblings.

How can such forms of coercion be reconciled with the intimacies of relations and care within the household? In order to tackle this intriguing puzzle, I claim that we need to analyse the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity and class. To enable my team to answer the broader research question how to explain regional and temporal differences in the allocation of care and paid work, I propose to break it down into manageable sub-questions (SQs), some of which are more descriptive [d], and others more analytical [a]:

- SQ1: How were work and care allocated to the different members in the household in various parts of the (former) Dutch empire? [d]
- SQ2: How did forms of coercion within the household impact the position of the different caregivers, taking into account gender, age, racial-ethnic, and class relations? [d & a]
- SQ3: How and why did changes occur over time? What effects did the abolition of slavery and decolonization, for example, have on labour allocation in the household? [d & a]
- SQ4: What commonalities, differences and *connections* can be discerned between the studied regions, and how can we explain them? [a]

This research aims to make **several contributions** to the existing scholarship:

Theoretically, it will enhance the emerging fields of the New History of Slavery and the New History of Capitalism, that pay much attention to race and ethnicity inequalities, but in which a gender analysis is generally underrepresented. The project aims to approach household labour with an intersectional lens, where gender, race, class and age come together. Focusing on the household as a unit of analysis allows for an intersectional approach, as this is the micro-level where all these relationships are played out. At the same time, the long-term comparisons between different regions will reveal broader patterns of continuities and changes of how households have outsourced care under different systems of coercion. This allows for theory formation on the weight of explanatory factors such as ideology, colonialism, or state intervention.

Empirically, the project will bring new knowledge about how histories of coercion and care have been intertwined throughout the history of the Netherlands and its most important colonies. It aims to bring in the voices of women of colour, who are much underrepresented in Dutch historiography. Secondly, and more related to contemporary societal problems, the project aims to trace how inequalities of gender and race continue to influence divisions of paid and unpaid domestic and care work in the regions until the present day. Therefore, it aims to focus on what have been highly precarious workers in past and present.

Methodologically, the project will make comparisons as well as connections between a major part of the Dutch empire, over a long period, including the colonial and the postcolonial period in four different continents. This is innovative, as it

transcends the often regional case studies. It aims to do so by comparing developments at the micro-level of the household, using a mixed-methods approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative archival as well as survey study. Moreover, the project connects the colonial and postcolonial periods, a long-term perspective that is still lacking in many studies (see e.g. Ekama & Ross 2021).

Why households?

Studying power relations within the household in relation to broader socioeconomic structures of oppression is vital in order to explain variations in different societies and across time. In the past, even more than in the present, **the household was the fundamental unit in which social relations as well as economic behaviour took shape**. Most individuals socialize, are taken care of, and partake in reproduction, production and consumption at the level of a shared home with other people – usually, though by no means exclusively, close relatives (Boris 2018, 330). Within the household, many decisions on the allocation of labour and care tasks between its different members take place. Whereas these household members form intimate relations and genuinely care for each other, paradoxically, these relationships are often permeated with power imbalances. Who decides how labour is allocated depends greatly on attributes such as gender, age, and race. Patriarchy, which in feminist scholarship has come to be defined as “the social and political system of male domination and female subordination” (Quek 2019, 116), literally means “rule of the father”. Thus, patriarchal relations begin with the decision-making power of the (usually male) head of household. At the same time, while many of the choices of labour allocation happen at the household level, it is important to bear in mind the systemic inequalities in society that influenced the “individual” decisions of the family. How decision-making power in households was distributed between the sexes, social classes and generations, and how this has affected the development of labour relations, was highly contextual and varied markedly throughout time and between different societies.

This project defines the household, as “a social unit composed of those living together in the same dwelling” (Merriam-Webster 2024). Nevertheless, what this “living together” constituted differs across societies and periods. Demographer and anthropologist Emmanuel Todd’s worldwide classification of family systems presents five different categories, within which there was ample variation (Todd 1985). In the nuclear family model, which prevailed in North-Western Europe and North America as well as postcolonial Latin America and Ethiopia, individuals were comparatively free to decide on marriage partners. Adult children in principle moved out of the parental household, and nieces and nephews did not typically intermarry. Remarkably, Todd does not mention servants living in the nuclear household, whereas this was common practice until the early twentieth century (Hoerder 2015). The second model is the authoritarian family household, prevalent in Southern, Central and parts of Eastern Europe, as well as in Japan and Korea, and in diasporic Jewish and Roma communities. In this system, parents determined the spouse, and the married (male) heir typically continued to live with his parents. Third, in the community family model *all* brothers with their spouses continued to live together in the parental household. This model prevailed in most of Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam and North India, as well as the Arab world, Turkey, parts of the Middle East and most of Central Asia. Fourthly, the African family household features as a system prevailing in sub-Saharan Africa, characterized by the frequent occurrence of divorce and polygamy. These types of cohabitation generally have a strong exogamous obligation, meaning no preference for intermarriage between cousins. Finally, Todd distinguishes the “anomic family” in which partners had more agency in spousal choice, with flexible inheritance practices. The cohabitation of married children with their parents was in theory rejected, but often in practice accepted. This system prevailed in large parts of South and Southeast Asia as well as in South-American Indian cultures (Todd 1985, 31).

In short, the type of cohabitation, in combination with societal norms and regulations formed the basis for the agency different household members could exert, including the degree of voluntarism with which one worked for the household and which tasks one performed. Importantly, Todd does not include in his categorization that in many regions, **servants and slaves were in some form or another integrated into the household**, which again adds layers of more complex power relations. For instance, white women on small plantations in the early nineteenth-century US South were often highly dependent on their domestic slaves for running their household, but at the same time could exert forms of cruel power to channel their own frustrations of being subjected to their husbands (Mutti Burke 2008, 44). Similar mechanisms existed on white plantation households in Suriname (Jumnoodoo 2023). Likewise, while in recent decades classical historians tend to agree that the imperial Roman family was often “nuclear”, their cohabitation with tens or sometimes hundreds of slaves, especially in elite families, calls for a reconsideration of such categories (Dixon 1992, 8-9). Other, often less well-studied examples can be taken from sub-Saharan Africa, where internal slavery took many forms, and the role of coerced labourers within households ranged widely from domestic servants to enslaved field workers or full-time cloth weavers (Ally 2015; Austin 2008, 614).

Theoretical framework, relevance and innovation

This research proposal is situated at the crossroads of neoclassical economic institutional theory, Marxian theory and Feminist intersectional theory scholarship. While taking into account the importance of *individual choice* within the constraints of institutions (New Institutional Economics), it also includes more structurally imposed inequalities arising within patriarchal capitalism (Marxist theory). At the same time, it avoids the pitfalls of the predominant Marxian focus on capitalism and class struggle as the driver of all inequality, as well as its neglect of human agency (Berman 1984, 409).

This proposal aims to move beyond such preponderance of either agency or structure by analysing more complex formulations of inequalities of gender, race/ethnicity that *interact* with class differences (Folbre 2020, 46).

The household takes centre stage in this analysis. Remarkably, many rational-choice economists view the household as the only locus in which human beings *do not* make self-interested choices, but rather base decisions on affection and empathy (Becker 1981; Evenson 1976; Parsons & Goldin 1989). However, this perspective entirely disregards structural power imbalances based on gender or age *within* households, which Feminist economists have for long established (e.g. Agarwal 1997; Bennett 1987; Duffy 2011; Kongar & Price 2017). While Marxist economists do acknowledge these household power imbalances, they have predominantly framed them as a result from the rise of capitalism, in which a gendered division emerged between “productive” labour for wages and “reproductive” labour. They define reproductive labour twofold: both the literal reproduction of a new generation of workers and the maintenance of workers in the household by women’s unpaid domestic and caregiving tasks (Nederveen Meerkerk, Neunsinger & Hoerder 2015, 5-6). However, the gendered division of tasks in households preceded capitalism and was prevalent in most – though not all – societies throughout the world. Moreover, in many societies before and during capitalism, households managed to outsource many of their “reproductive” tasks to enslaved people and servants, who often were part of the household unit. Nevertheless, so far, important new analyses of forced labour have paid relatively little attention to the household (e.g. Pargas & Schiel 2023; Rossum 2022a; Schiel & De Vito 2020). This is a missing link in the study of forced labour relations, because power dynamics within the household are crucial for divisions of tasks between its members.

This research project aims to fill this gap by **connecting histories of slavery and other forms of coerced labour with gendered family history**. Rather than distinguishing between “slaveholding” and “non-slaveholding” societies (Finley 1980), scholars in the fields of Global Labour History as well as New Studies in Global Slavery have over the past two decades moved away from the binary of “free” and “enslaved” labour and instead investigate a much wider spectrum of coerced labour relations (Linden 2008; Pargas 2023; Rossum 2022a). As each labour experience contains elements of domination and dependence, even if it is entered into voluntarily, it is important to investigate how these mechanisms of control are constituted, how they affect people’s lives, and how this differed according to race, gender and age. This also requires looking at workers’ autonomy and resistance within the boundaries of their power (De Vito, Schiel & Rossum 2020, 652-653).

It is crucial to integrate such fluid notions of coerced labour in the context of the household, firstly because it does justice to historical complexity, but secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because an analysis in terms of coercion **includes both structural conditions and the degree to which individual agents in practice responded** to coercive labour relations (see Figure 2). Studying this historically allows us to establish how allocation choices of (paid and unpaid, “productive” and “reproductive”) tasks are established within households, thus clarifying the extent of coercion leading to such divisions even in the absence of outright slavery. Not coincidentally, the famous sociologist and slavery scholar Orlando Patterson drew interesting comparisons between bonds of marriage and slavery, claiming that “husbands also have proprietary claims and powers in their wives, powers that they all too frequently exercise with naked violence” (Patterson 1982, 22). In the conceptualization of sociologist and labour historian Marcel van der Linden – unless the marriage is forced – the enslaved would be in a position of entering this provision of domestic and care-work by *physical compulsion*, whereas the wife would do so by *constrained choice*. Nevertheless, both types of labour relations can be considered to result from certain degrees of coercion (Linden 2023, 87, 89, 102).

Figure 2 – Explanatory factors

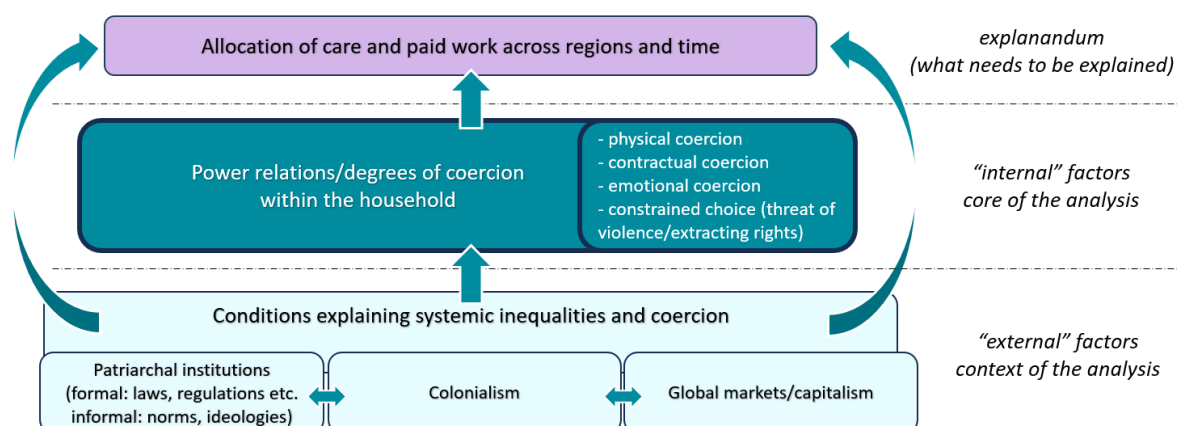


Figure 2 graphically depicts the project’s explanatory model. The core of the explanation lies in the darker shaded “internal” level of the household. Within the household, several degrees of coercion may be exerted on individual members, ranging from physical violence to implicit consequences if a specific household member does not conform to what the more powerful members of the household expect them to do. These expectations are partly a result of individual traits (character, preferences), but also stem from broader societal ideologies and practices, such as

institutional racism or market inequalities. Thus, while factors “external” to the household, such as the presence of colonial relations, gender norms or forces of globalization may directly affect the allocation of labour in a society, in this project their *indirect effects*, through power relations in the household, are the central explanatory mechanisms. The innovation of this project lies precisely in the **systematic comparison of these mechanisms on the household level**, between individual households, between societies, and over time. Often, the various types of coercion depicted in Figure 2 coexist within the household. The case of Ambonese Lina in the introduction was an example of constrained choice, the mistress threatening to send her back as she was still a minor, but her confinement to the house can also be interpreted as a form of physical coercion.

All in all, this Vici-proposal aims to push the scientific knowledge frontier by taking a **systematic comparative scope**, connecting developments in four continents, and between the colonial and postcolonial periods, to explain how different forms of coercion in the household have led to varying outcomes. Looking at this diversity historically will also inform present-day variations in the division of care and paid work between men and women of different colour and class, and on working conditions of caregivers across societies.

Demarcation, sources and methods

The Dutch empire existed for about 350 years and included numerous territorial acquisitions, from the Americas to Africa and Asia. Early modern colonial trade and influence had mainly been practised by chartered companies, such as the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West Indies Company (WIC) (Bosma 2014, 153–154). Despite the VOC’s bankruptcy in the late eighteenth century, and the loss of many colonies to the British, the Dutch empire was still the second largest in terms of land area and population around 1830. By then, its most important overseas colonies were the East Indies (now: Indonesia) and Suriname in the West Indies, whereas the Cape Colony in current South Africa had transferred to Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. Large parts of the archipelago of Indonesia had been under VOC influence, with several outposts such as Batavia (now: Jakarta) established around 1600, but after the VOC vanished in 1799, the Dutch implemented direct rule over the colony. Following a British interregnum (1811-1816), the Dutch tightened their grip particularly on Java, the most populous of the islands, until decolonization in 1945. Suriname was a Dutch colony between 1667 and 1954, and until its final independence in 1975, it was a separate country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Lastly, South Africa had been a Dutch colony between 1652 and 1795, and after that it was taken over by the British until 1910. All three colonies witnessed, to a greater or smaller extent, incoming white settlers establishing farms and plantations, and all used various forms of coerced labour by indigenous and/or captured men and women (Bosma 2013; Stipriaan 1993; Green 2014). As noted above, slavery existed in all three regions for most of the colonial period, and there are also interesting interconnections between migrant coerced labourers in the different colonies, to be further explored from a gender perspective.

The study period is from circa **1750 to the present**. During this period, the formal abolition of the slave trade and the use of enslaved persons occurred, but in all three contexts under investigation, a system of indentured labour was put in place, with notable consequences for gender relations (Termorshuizen 2008; Sitaram 2017). The project is designed in such a way that three postdoc projects will concern the colonial period (mid-eighteenth to early twentieth centuries) in the distinctive colonial contexts, while the PI will investigate developments in the twentieth century in all three former colonies, as well as the Netherlands. Following Anne McClintock, the project presumes that “[c]olonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance” (McClintock 1995, 11), implying for this project that present-day forms of migrant domestic and caregiving work have intimate ties to histories of imperialism and coercion.

Central to the methodology of the project are **connective comparisons**. This entails a comparison over time, between regions, but also how specific connections and transfers occurred within the context of the Dutch empire, as well as beyond, in the postcolonial period. To this end, mixed methods will be applied, using both qualitative archival and interview material and statistical analysis of information on households that is analysed in a quantitative manner. Sources for this project include Slave registers (Suriname and South Africa); judicial and police records (all cases), big parts of which are currently digitalized; placards (Suriname, see e.g. Velde [2024]); plantation archives (Suriname and Indonesia); population and tax registers (all cases); diaries and other self-narratives (all cases, see Greyerz 2010). Previous research on other contexts has shown that when analysed quantitatively, archives such as court testimonies offer important insights on *daily life practices*, such as time allocation, including domestic tasks (e.g. Voth 2000; Ågren 2018), and power relations between household members (e.g. Whittle 2014), that are otherwise missed from the historical record. Finally, for the postcolonial era surveys and interviews will be conducted for this more recent period, in addition to the use of the abovementioned records. For more detailed information on the sources and methods the project members will use, see the description of the sub-projects under **2a2**.

Summary: relevance and innovations of the proposed project

<u>Theoretical:</u>	Addressing the shortcomings of neoclassical, Marxist and Feminist theories by applying an intersectional political economy perspective;
<u>Methodological:</u>	Systematic comparative approach on the household level, both temporally and geographically, but moving beyond comparative and connective history, also analysing webs of empire;
<u>Empirical:</u>	Highlighting the understudied topic of households and coerced labour in relation to domestic and caregiving work by bringing together a wide array of sources and data .

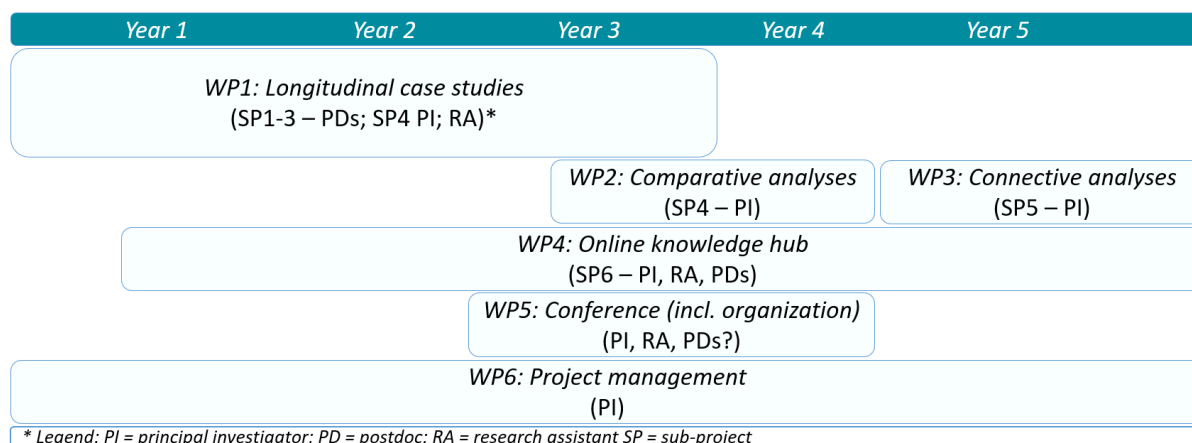
2a2. Research plan

Overall research design of the project (narrative work plan)

This project is structured along six work packages (WP), some of which logically follow up on each other, while others will run parallel (Figure 3). The **longitudinal case studies** (WP1) will be carried out in the first 3.5 years of the project by all project members, and are divided over different sub-projects, which are more elaborately described below. The postdocs will each focus on one region (Suriname, Indonesia, or South Africa) and will analyse how and why household labour relations changed in the period circa 1750–1950. They will particularly focus on how patriarchal and racial relations entailed more or less overt forms of coercion, and how this impacted on the division of paid, unpaid and caring tasks within the household. In all cases, highly impactful socioeconomic as well as political changes occurred, such as change of colonizer, independence and the formal abolition of slavery, making the period highly suitable for investigating such longitudinal changes. Meanwhile, as PI I will analyse developments in these three former territories of the Dutch Empire *after decolonization*, including the twentieth-century Netherlands. How did gender, class and race/ethnicity intersect in these regions when it came to the division of domestic and caregiving tasks in the household? To what extent were forms of coercion playing out on the household level in these societies where slavery was now explicitly outlawed?

In the course of the third year, I will start with a **geographical comparative analysis** (WP2) of the respective case studies that the four researchers will by then have collected data on. If they desire to, these comparative papers can be co-authored with one or more postdocs, in addition to the output that they produce as single author. This will enhance their CVs and strengthen the synergies between the project members. In year 4 and 5, the PI will write a synthesis of the project, not only highlighting the comparisons, but also **establishing the connections** (WP3) between the different regions, that were in many ways linked by national, international and imperial relations (“webs of empire”; Ballantyne 2014).

Figure 3 – Research design with six work packages and six sub-projects as planned over the project period



WPs 4 and 5 focus on **interactions with wider audiences**. WP4 concerns the creation of a knowledge hub in cooperation with societal partners, ranging from associations to individual experts, including a more general public. For more detailed information, see the description of the sub-projects below, as well as section **2b**. WP5 is a conference, to be held in Suriname, at the National Library in Paramaribo, where one of the project’s Academic Board members, Tanya Sitaram, is located. This conference will take place at the end of year 4 of the project, when all postdocs have more or less finished their research. The conference is intended to be a hybrid venue, where academics and broader audiences with representatives from heritage institutions, NGOs and citizens come together to discuss the results and design a concrete action plan for sustaining the work of the project, including the knowledge hub, for years to come. Finally, WP 6 constitutes the project management, carried out by the PI and sustained (in HR and financial matters) by supporting staff at UU. Project management will concern: hiring staff, organizing regular team meetings, daily supervision, annual P&D talks, and project administration and reporting.

The rationale behind choosing postdocs instead of PhD students is twofold. First, the aims of the project are ambitious, with a great diversity of source material that requires relatively experienced scholars who are capable of independent research. Second, in the Dutch context, the number of PhD students is relatively large, compared to follow-up academic positions in the labour market. In this way, I can create opportunities for PhD graduates who wish to continue their research career. The UU offers the option for those postdocs who wish to do so, to supplement their 0.8 fte research position with 0.2 fte teaching, which is also helpful for their CVs.

Time investment by the PI will be 0.6 fte paid for by the Vici budget, supplemented with 0.2 fte of my own UU research time. Given my full-time contract, I can thus devote 80% of my time as PI to the proposed project. UU has a minimum requirement of 20% teaching time for all staff members, which is also something I desire to do. I find interacting with students energizing, meaningful and instructive. Moreover, UU offers many opportunities (in the RMA as well as

MA and BA programmes) for research-led and community-engaged teaching to connect the proposed project with the PI's teaching activities (see section **2b. Societal Impact**).

Description of the individual sub-projects

SP 1: Colonial Suriname, c. 1750-1950 (postdoc 1)

Sub-project 1 looks at coerced labour and its consequences for divisions of work within households in the Dutch colony of Suriname in the West Indies. Around 1830, Suriname's population counted about 70,000 people, over three-quarters of whom were enslaved (Hest 2019, 29). In the period under investigation, slavery was abolished (1863), but a system of indentured labour, also involving highly coercive conditions, met the continued need for workers in the 1870s (Bhagwanbali 1996, 26-32). There were hundreds of European plantations in Suriname, cultivating lucrative cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, sugar and tobacco. Most of these were highly labour-intensive crops, requiring a large army of workers (Kom [1934] 2023, 25; Stipriaan 1993). For both pre- and post-Abolition periods, an increasing number of studies has emerged that uncover the daily life experiences of enslaved, free, and indentured women in Suriname on, but also outside these plantations (e.g. Fokken 2018; Fatah-Black 2018; Hoefte 1987; Sitaram 2017; Velde [2024]).

Even though the migration of white women to Suriname was relatively contained, recent research shows that there is ample evidence that gender relations within plantation households are worthwhile investigating; Dutch women appear to have displayed similarly violent behaviour towards the enslaved as Dutch men, and reinforced the system of slavery just as fervently, despite their inferior position vis-à-vis their husbands (Kom [1934] 2023, 26-29; Jumnoodoo [2023] [2024]). In 1761, for instance, a runaway enslaved person who was caught, explained in court why he deserted: "The mistress [...] was very evil towards the housemaids, torments and teases them continually, and overall acted very harsh and strict." (Velde [2024]). Although a range of studies make references to women's position in the household, or describe their work activities, there is no integrative work which brings together gender, race and class to study how coercion affected the allocation of work and care by different members in the household. Also, most researchers either study the period of slave plantations, or of indentured labour, whereas this sub-project proposes a longer-term perspective to deal with the question of how and why changes occurred over time, in the context of changing labour institutions. There are indications that the period after Abolition, with new groups of indentured labourers entering Suriname, changing dynamics of gender and racial/ethnic relations, seriously impacted labour relations (Paton & Scully 2005, 8; Sitaram 2017).

The sub-project will focus on sub-questions 1-3 (see p.5 above) for colonial Suriname. Various plantation archives will be used as sources for this research, which often stretch the entire research period (National Archives in The Hague and Paramaribo), as well as legal and policing documents (a.o. Old Suriname Archives, Police Council, see also Canfijn e.a. 2022; Velde [2024]). Furthermore, the Slave Registers and population registers of Suriname have been digitized and can be used for this research (Galen 2016; Galen & Hassankhan 2018). For the post-Abolition period, court records, testimonies, shipping records, photographs, maps and autobiographies are available (see e.g. Fokken 2018). When analysed quantitatively, archives such as court testimonies offer important insights on *daily practices*, such as time use, including domestic tasks and power relations between household members (e.g. Voth 2000; Whittle 2014; Ågren 2018).

SP2: Colonial Java, c. 1750-1940 (postdoc 2)

Sub-project 2 investigates household labour relations, including the position of domestic personnel, in the Dutch East Indies between the 1750s and the 1940s. Recent research has shown that European colonialism not only impacted the well-known Atlantic slave trade, but also greatly induced slavery in many parts of Asia (Rossum 2022b). In 1859, the use of enslaved people was abolished in Indonesia, but even after Abolition, many other forms of coerced labour remained in existence (Bosma 2013). As most Europeans settled in Java, this will be the focus of SP2. Javanese society was highly stratified, with many indigenous elites employing male and female villagers as servants, sometimes in debt bondage. Dutch settlers easily adapted to this lifestyle, many of them having a servant staff including houseboys and -maids, a nanny (*babu*) and gardener, showing that racial relations impacted gendered divisions of work. On average, Europeans in Java in the late colonial period would have four to six servants, while even poor white families would employ one (Locher-Scholten 1998, 134-135). At this stage, they would pay their domestics, but underwhelmingly little, whereas young girls would work for free for them as "trainees" (*genduks*) (Stoler 2002, 191).

Whereas many of the former white residents of colonial Java had fond memories of their servants and nannies, the recollections of Indonesian staff after independence were generally less nostalgic. They usually saw their – sometimes very long – service for the Dutch as work at best, and often remembered their treatment as "inferior" members of the household. One former domestic worker, Ibu Kilah, noted in her recollections about the colonial period: "Under the Dutch, all Javanese were servants" (Stoler 2002, 179). This sub-project aims to place these dynamics of disbalanced intimacies within colonial households in a longer-term history of power inequities based on race and gender. It will investigate various forms of coercion, ranging from domestic slavery in the eighteenth century, to more subtle forms of economic exploitation leading to the necessity of working for colonial households, as well as forms of emotional coercion. However, the project also aims to take into account forms of agency that indigenous people asserted while living and working in Dutch settler household (Watson Andaya 1998; Stoler 2002, 196).

The sub-project will focus on sub-questions 1-3 (see p.5 above) for colonial Indonesia. The sources this sub-project employs are various, and include the judicial archives of Batavia, which are currently being digitized in the GLOBALISE-project, population registrations, reports and inquiries, diaries, letters, colonial newspapers (available via Delpher), and photographs (e.g. collections Wereldmuseum and KITLV). As in the other two postdoc-projects, these varying materials offer opportunities for both more generalizing quantitative analysis, including text-mining (e.g. with the court records and newspapers) and reconstructing fine-grained qualitative narratives.

SP3: Colonial South-Africa, c. 1750-1900 (postdoc 3)

Sub-project 3 looks at South Africa, which was colonized first by the Dutch and then by the British. The country reached independence in the early twentieth century, but under extremely racialized conditions. From the very first colonist, Jan van Riebeeck, enslaved women were heavily involved in domestic and caregiving tasks, and coercion and intimacy went hand in hand (Ally 2015). In contrast to the Atlantic slave trade, in which the majority of enslaved people were male, South Africa was closely connected to the Indian Ocean trade, where women and children made up the majority of the exchanged enslaved people (Scully & Ward 2017, 566). But also long after the abolition of formal slavery, in part due to the strict racial segregation, both in the colonial period and under Apartheid, most domestic labour was performed under exploitative and often coerced-based conditions, as the opening quote to this section illustrates. Not only race, but also ethnicity played a role in coercive household relations. In the ongoing wars between the Dutch and the Xhosa, for example, the Dutch often kidnapped Xhosa children to work as domestic servants. In turn, both the Dutch and the Xhosa forcefully fetched San women and children to serve in their households (Cock 1980, 175).

How did coercion affect the allocation of work and care by different members in the household, taking into account gender, racial and ethnic, as well as class relations? Before and after slavery, South African domestic workers, usually – though not always – black, played a crucial role in reproductive and caregiving labour. This encompassed not only the physical maintenance of white households, such as preparing meals and laundering clothes, but also *ideological* maintenance. Domestic workers contributed significantly to socialization within the dominant ideological order. For many white people, interactions with domestic workers represented their primary interracial contact, a relationship characterized by extreme asymmetry (Ally 2015). Although these close relationships may have led some white people to consider their servants as “part of the family”, like in the Indonesian case, it is highly doubtful whether the domestic workers themselves felt the same way (Cock 1980, 87; Ally 2009).

The sub-project will focus on sub-questions 1-3 (see p.5 above) for colonial South-Africa. Sources for this research will involve records from the Dutch East India Company (VOC), Slave Registers, which were created in 1816 by the British, Court records for the 18th and 19th centuries, and petitions for the 19th century (see e.g. Ekama 2017; Rossum e.a. 2020). As Nigel Worden has pointed out for the Cape Colony, the court cases (Dutch: “Raad van Justitie”) are a window onto everyday life, with many references to brutal coercion and violence (Worden 1985, 108-116). While these sorts of details around work are not exceptional, the cases are, and the details of work are not always present in witness statements and interrogations. For the nineteenth century, the British Guardian’s records also seem promising for investigating the intimacies of everyday family life in South Africa. In the context of the Uncharted People project, many of these sources have been digitized and are online accessible (Ekama e.a. 2021).

Intended output SP1-3: 1 international journal article published/accepted for publication at the end of the project, 1 working paper openly accessible on the project website, 1 chapter for the online textbook.

SP4: Postcolonial household relations (PI)

Sub-project 4 concerns the scrutiny of household domestic and caregiving labour relations in the postcolonial period. It aims to cover four case studies: Suriname, Indonesia, South-Africa and the Netherlands, in the period circa 1950 to the present. The literature and fieldwork of this project will be done in the first two years of the project.

Apart from researching archival sources (which will largely address sub-question 2), the PI will conduct surveys as well as interviews with both domestic workers and employers in all countries, to ask them about their relations and experiences, thus oriented on sub-question 1 for the postcolonial period. Online surveys will set the stage for further refined in-depth interview questions and a sub-set of interviewees. Following this stage, semi-structured interviews will be conducted in order to be comparable. All surveys and interviews will be well-prepared in consultation with the Ethical Review Committee of Utrecht University. Via the members of the Academic Advisory Board (see below) and their networks, the applicant will establish connections with potential interviewees, paying attention to representativeness. Furthermore, while conducting the interviews, I will show explicit awareness that I am a relatively well-to-do, white, female researcher from the Global North. Therefore, the interviewees will be approached as experts, and the interview will be a site that challenges “conventional notions of authority”, in order to reach shared authority for the end product (Wong 2009, 239; Frisch 1990).

The interview material will not only be used for the academic analyses in WPs 2 and 3, but also as (anonymized) source material for the online knowledge hub, provided that the interviewees give their permission to do so. It goes without saying that any privacy-related issue will be resolved before publishing this information. See **2d. Data Management** for more details.

Intended output SP4: 1 international journal article and an anonymized dataset from the surveys.

SP5: Connections and comparisons (PI)

In the final three years of the project, a synthesis will be produced in which comparisons, connections, as well as inter-imperial transfers (e.g. interactions between the Dutch and the British) will be analysed for the four regions under scrutiny in this project. The PI will systematically compare and connect developments on the household level in the four regions under study. I will cross the temporal boundaries between the colonial and the postcolonial period to assess to what extent the different colonial contexts feed into postcolonial continuities and changes. This will ultimately result in a monograph, but also two or three articles, if possible co-authored with some of the postdocs.

Intended output SP5: 2 international journal articles and an Open Access monograph.

SP6: Online knowledge hub (PI, postdocs, research assistance)

Over the entire duration of the project, the PI, in consultation with societal partners, will set up and extend an online knowledge hub on the history of coerced labour and caregiving. The hub will be supported by a research assistant, and, as far as their time and interests allow it, the postdocs. The academic knowledge gained in the project will be translated to an online textbook that can be used by teachers for primary and secondary education on colonialism and slavery. Furthermore, the website will serve as a hub for source material (visual, audio and written texts), which will be created for, and partly with the help of, citizens of the former colonies and postcolonial migrants to the Netherlands (for more, see **2b. Societal Impact**).

Intended output SP6: online knowledge hub with OA online textbook for primary and secondary education.

Table 1 – Practical timetable over the grant period

Staff member	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
PI	output: 3 articles; online knowledge hub with textbook; synthesizing monograph																			
Project Management																				
Hiring staff																				
Data collection	NL	NL		SUR		IND		S-A												
Analysis/writing																				
Conference organization																				
Comparisons/connections																				
Online knowledge hub																				
PD1: Suriname	output: 1 article, 1 working paper, 1 chapter textbook (optional: co-editing textbook/conference organization)																			
Data collection																				
Temporal comparison																				
Writing								Paper 1		Chapter textbook		Paper 2								
Conference visits																				
PD2: Indonesia	output: 1 article, 1 working paper, 1 chapter textbook (optional: co-editing textbook/conference organization)																			
Data collection																				
Temporal comparison																				
Writing								Paper 1		Chapter textbook		Paper 2								
Conference visits																				
PD3: S-Africa	output: 1 article, 1 working paper, 1 chapter textbook (optional: co-editing textbook/conference organization)																			
Data collection																				
Temporal comparison																				
Writing								Paper 1		Chapter textbook		Paper 2								
Conference visits																				
Research assistant																				
Data collection																				
Assistance conference																				
Assistance hub/textbook																				
Legend	Mild time investment (<10% of project member's appointment time)																			
	Moderate time investment (10-50% of project member's appointment time)																			
	Major time investment (>60% of project member's appointment time)																			

Local, national and international academic collaboration*Local*

Apart from collaborations with people of my own chair group of economic and social history (see **2a3** below), several scholars at Utrecht University have already indicated their interest in the project. Prof. dr James Kennedy (Dean Community Engaged Learning), also member of the project's Advisory Board, will help me implement Community Engaged Learning initiatives for the project, in which students co-create academically informed projects together with societal partners (see section **2b**). With dr Rachel Gillett (Cultural History and PI of NWA-project *RePresenting Europe*) the project will share networks for societal engagement, as well as exchange research results. Dr Hanneke Tuijthof (coordinator Research History Education) will be an invaluable collaborator to reach out to secondary school teachers, profiting from her experience, expertise and networks.

National

In recent years, the scholarly as well as societal attention for the history of slavery and its effect on the Netherlands and its colonies has increased spectacularly. Collaborations with many of these scholars will be forged both at the academic and the societal level (see section **2b**). At the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, of which I am affiliated as honorary fellow, there will be collaboration with prof. dr Matthias van Rossum (project leader GLOBALISE and endowed professor of Global Histories of Labour and Colonialism), who is currently digitizing a wealth of VOC source material, part of which can be used for the proposed Vici-project. At Radboud University Nijmegen, collaborations with dr Coen van Galen (project leader Slave Register Database of Suriname and Curaçao) and his data-collecting and research team have been established. The slave registers database will be utilised for the project; At Leiden University, there is collaboration with prof. dr Ariadne Schmidt (endowed professor of Leiden history), and her project team "Leiden and its colonial and slavery heritage"; Finally, collaboration with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, in the person of prof. dr Pepijn Brandon (Professor of Global Economic and Social History), who is an expert involved in historical as well as heritage studies of slavery. The project will regularly organize informal (e.g. exchange of ideas or papers) and formal (e.g. workshop organization or public lectures) gatherings with these scholars.

International

The project has international collaborations across the world. With prof. dr Swapna Banerjee, CUNY New York, and prof. dr Victoria Haskins, University of Newcastle, Australia, I plan to sustain a network of scholars on colonialism, care and domesticities, organizing a series of workshops and sessions, e.g. in Cambridge 2024, and at the next American Historical Association meeting (New York, January 2025). With dr Stéphanie Soubrier, University of Geneva, expert on the history of domesticity in the French colonial Empire, results will be discussed within a broader imperial framework in the spring of 2025. Also, there are collaborations planned with the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, Germany (prof. dr Stephan Conermann and dr Eva Lehner). Several colleagues from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, a.o. dr Kate Ekama and prof. dr Johan Fourie who have already indicated their interest in academic exchange. Collaboration with international scholars will focus on academic co-creation, although some of its members (notably profs. Fourie and Haskins) have wide experience and networks for communicating scholarly work to larger audiences through popular publications, blogs and podcasts.

International Advisory Board

The members of the Advisory Board of the project were asked for their expertise on specific regions (with a geographical spread over the project's case studies), for being an expert on the topic of gender and (forced) domestic labour and/or on community engagement. Apart from inviting the Advisory Board to the project's conference (WP5), the team will organize an annual (online) board meeting and the postdocs are invited to have on-to-one meetings with Advisory Board members on their specific region of expertise. Furthermore, with selected members of the Advisory Board more intensive collaboration is foreseen (e.g. the network on colonial domesticities, see previous section).

Prof. dr Swapna Banerjee (City University New York, United States)

Prof. dr Kathleen M. Brown (Penn State University, Philadelphia, United States)

Prof. dr Johan Fourie (Stellenbosch University, South Africa)

Prof. dr Victoria Haskins (Newcastle University, Australia)

Prof. dr James Kennedy (Utrecht University, Netherlands)

Dr Sabrina Marchetti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy)

Prof. dr Samita Sen (Cambridge University, United Kingdom)

Prof. dr Valika Smeulders (Head Curator History, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam/University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Drs Tanya Sitaram (Anton de Kom University/National Library, Suriname)

2a3. Alignment between research proposal and expertise of the applicant

My research encompasses three interconnected strands. First, the history of female labour participation. According to the popular *and* academic discourse, Dutch women's low labour force participation already emerged in the seventeenth century. Instead, my PhD-research (2002–2007) showed that women participated widely until the 1850s, signifying that no “typically Dutch cult of domesticity” existed, but that socioeconomic factors in the nineteenth century determined this change (Nederveen Meerkerk 2007; Schmidt & Nederveen Meerkerk 2012). My consecutive VIDI research project (2012–2017) showed how the enormous profits drained from the colonies allowed Dutch men's real wages to rise quicker than elsewhere in Europe, resulting in wives massively withdrawing from paid labour after 1850 (Nederveen Meerkerk 2019). This offers **novel explanations** for Dutch women's comparatively fragile financial independence, still visible today (CBS 2022). Simultaneously, colonized Javanese women's work in textile production greatly increased, significantly contributing to households' income. By exposing this hidden female labour as an unintended by-effect of colonialism, I challenged economists' dominant paradigm on colonial Indonesia's de-industrialization (Nederveen Meerkerk 2017).

My second research line expands beyond the Dutch empire to analyse changing labour divisions *on a global scale* over the past 400 years. During my PhD-trajectory I was invited to co-organize interdisciplinary collaborative research projects on child labour and textile workers (Heerma van Voss, Hiemstra-Kuperus & Nederveen Meerkerk 2010; Lieten & Nederveen Meerkerk 2011). Consequently, I initiated cooperative projects on domestic workers (Hoerder, Neunsigier & Nederveen Meerkerk 2015) and sex workers (Rodríguez García, Heerma van Voss & Nederveen Meerkerk, 2017). These long-term comparative studies show **how gender, race/ethnicity and global capitalism have affected labour relations across the globe**. To expand this research line, I conducted an ERC-Consolidator research project (2018–2024) on the effect of household production *and* consumption choices on global relocations of the cotton industry (1780–1970). Together with my postdocs and PhD student, I showed that colonized households, ranging from sub-Saharan Africa to India, considerably increased the resilience of local textile production (Dixit & Nederveen Meerkerk 2022; Frederick & Nederveen Meerkerk 2023; Nederveen Meerkerk e.a. 2023).

In my third and newest research strand I have started exploring the fascinating relationship between households, work and coercion. As highlighted above, scholars of forced labour have paid relatively little attention to the household, a lacuna this Vici-research aims to fill. My recent work focuses on such forms of unfree labour in the household in singular case studies: rural-urban migration in colonial Central Africa (Frederick & Nederveen Meerkerk 2022) and forced labour in Javanese agriculture (Nederveen Meerkerk 2023). This proposal pushes the knowledge frontier by taking a *systematic* comparative scope to explain how different forms of coercion have led to varying outcomes. Looking at this diversity historically also informs present-day variations in the division of care and paid work between men and women, and on working conditions of caregivers across societies (“modern slavery”). I presented first ideas during workshops in Amsterdam (November 2023) and Cambridge (May, 2024) and have been invited to speak at a conference on Imperial Domesticities in Geneva (June, 2025). Finally, in March 2024 I was invited to be **keynote speaker for the tri-annual World Economic History Congress** (Lund, August 2025), *the* global venue for economic historians. These invitations show that my research lines have gained significant visibility and recognition among the international scholarly community.

My academic leadership is characterized by my ambition and actions **to stimulate young scholars in their careers**. I have so far supervised 15 PhD-candidates (9 graduated, 6 ongoing) and 7 postdocs. Eleven currently work in academia, 9 of whom on permanent contracts. Early-on in their PhD- and postdoc-trajectories, I offer strategic advice, introduce them to my extensive national and international networks, and establish co-authorships with them.

2a4. Motivation for the choice of host institution

The **Economic and Social History group** at Utrecht University that I chair since 2019 has an outstanding tradition of studying inequality in a long-term global perspective (Bavel, Curtis & Soens 2018; Rijpmans 2014; Zanden e.a. 2014). Additionally, many of its current members are experts in labour, gender, and family history – sub-disciplines to which this research is closely related (e.g. Boter 2020; Carmichael 2011; De Moor & Zanden 2010; Dilli 2024; Zanden, 2011). Over the past decade, the group has consistently broadened its scope from Dutch history to Global Economic History (Frederick 2020; Nath 2023; Prak 2018). The proposed Vici-project thus connects several of the fields and methods that my colleagues work with. Furthermore, the project aims to strengthen the societal impact of the Economic and Social History group. The group already has firm connections with societal partners to showcase how long-term analysis of economic and social developments, including gender relations, impact inequality today (Bavel 2015; Philips e.a. 2021). Over the past few years, I have established connections and concrete collaborations with scholars from other fields within the university (psychology: Belle Derks, Naomi Ellemers; sociology: Tanja van der Lippe), to undertake interdisciplinary projects on the role of women and gender in the labour market (Derks & Ellemers 2015; Lippe, Hek & Breeschoten 2018). The UU strategic theme “**Institutions for Open societies**”, in which I take active role, provides additional opportunities for interdisciplinary research exchanges as well as interaction with societal partners such as Social-Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP, Wil Portegijs) and the Central Planning Bureau (CPB, Janneke Pieters). Finally, the UU prioritizes **Community Engaged Learning** (CEL), and with this project I intend to collaborate with the UU Dean of CEL, prof. James Kennedy, to communicate my research results beyond the walls of academia and find bottom-up channels for knowledge exchange (see section 2b).

Combined total number of pages 2a1, 2a2, 2a3 and 2a4: **12 pages**

2b. Scientific and/or societal impact of the proposed research (max. 2 pages)

Scientific and societal impact are of comparable focus

The choice for both types of impact is motivated by the opportunities that the topic of care and coercion holds for academic innovation in the fields of history and gender studies, and because the topic is highly relevant in contemporary societal debates. I will further highlight both types of impact by stressing the ambitions of the project on science and society, amounting to a total of **seven milestones**, as well as the strategies designed to achieve these ambitions.

Scientific Impact

Ambitions for scientific impact

Within the field of Global Labour History and the New History of Slavery, this research project aims to **integrate households and gender as central analytical categories**. It intends to broaden the missing knowledge on how coercive relations in society are constructed and constituted at the level of the household (milestone 1). Within the field of Gender History, it aims to **bring new knowledge on the European colonial context**, and how intimate relations between care and coercion were constituted here (milestone 2). Currently, our understanding of this subject is largely informed by histories of the Anglo-Saxon context. Notwithstanding the important work on domestic relations in the Dutch empire (Clancy-Smith and Gouda 1998; Locher-Scholten 1998; Stoler 2002), this project wants to move *beyond* the relatively well-studied case of the East Indies, compare it to other parts of the empire, and **establish colonial connections** between the various parts, including the colonial and postcolonial metropole (milestone 3). With regard to the wider scientific community, we aim to introduce to gender studies and other social sciences (e.g. sociologists and household economists) the crucial importance of historically investigating degrees of coercion in decision-making processes, thus providing additional **historical depth to contemporary findings** (milestone 4).

Strategy for achieving scientific impact

In order to achieve the abovementioned milestones of scientific impact, each team member will present their developing research at least once a year at an international conference. As a team, we will decide strategically whether to present as a group or individually, and select upcoming venues in our field that speak to audiences in the fields of Global Labour History/New History of Slavery as well as Gender History (milestones 1&2). We will organize at least one session together, at the European Social Science History Conference in 2027 (milestones 1&2). From the second year onwards, we will organize regular exchanges with the proponents of the New History of Slavery at IISH and the Bonn Center of Dependency and Slavery Studies, as well as Vienna University to share our research results and collaborate on a publication (milestone 1). In order to come to satisfying comparisons and, eventually, connections, we aim to regularly discuss our work and write papers and articles together (milestone 3). Moreover, for the entire project duration, both individually and as a team, we will stay in close contact with the members of our International Advisory Board. By doing so, we aim to sustain a future network of excellence on colonialism, care, and the household, by means of co-publication, co-organizing workshops or sessions at conferences and highlighting comparisons and connections between empires (milestone 3). Finally, via the interdisciplinary research networks the PI has established (e.g. Institutions for Open Societies at UU and SOCION, a national collaborative interdisciplinary project on social cohesion), we will interact with scholars in the social sciences to connect our historical findings with present-day research (milestone 4).

Societal Impact

Ambitions for societal impact

Despite recent attention for the “decolonization” of the history curriculum (e.g. Jong 2022; Kokx [2020]), primary and secondary school teachers often still lack the expertise and the time to devote much attention to Dutch colonial and postcolonial history, especially in relation to gender and households. Nevertheless, most children grow up in a household, experiencing power imbalances and perhaps even forms of coercion. Also, there are many differences in present-day society in how households function according to class and ethnicity. In order to make better sense of such differences and how these may have longstanding histories, it is important that school teachers at all levels **communicate historical knowledge of forms of care and coercion in the household to the next generation** (milestone 5). More generally, it is important to raise awareness among a broader public in Dutch society of **the deep colonial roots of inequalities** within and between households, and how these differentially impact people according to gender, colour and class (milestone 6). Finally, the project also hopes to achieve the **engagement of wider audiences in the creation of knowledge on our colonial and postcolonial histories** (milestone 7). It aims to activate university students, groups of high school and primary school pupils, but also adult volunteers to contribute to the formation of the online knowledge hub (see next sub-section). After all, there are forms of knowledge, such as lived experiences, or family narratives, that the historical scholar can only engage with by interacting with a broader public.

Strategy for achieving societal impact

Milestones 5-7 will be achieved by the creation of an **online knowledge hub on the colonial and postcolonial history of care and coercion**. This knowledge hub is an online environment, hosted by Utrecht University, with multiple applications. First of all, for the realization of milestone 5, an open access **online textbook** will be provided, edited by myself, and with contributions from all team members, as well as experts in the field of the history of Dutch colonialism who will be asked to contribute by addressing my national and international network (see above, **2a2**), and via the N.W. Posthumus research school. In order to find out what is needed for the online textbook, collaboration with Hanneke Tuithof, coordinator of the MA history education and trainer of professionals, and Pauline de Zwart, history teacher at a high school in Amersfoort, will be established to find out what the wishes and lacunas are in the daily practice of teaching colonial and postcolonial history to children and teenagers. Working with the research assistant, I will set up and conduct a survey among teachers to research these needs. We will also investigate which types of additional historical sources and data, used in the project, would be useful for primary and secondary education and the ways in which they can be made accessible for teachers.

The knowledge hub will also provide ways to raise public awareness about this understudied topic (milestone 6). Inspired by the online exhibition on British domestic and caregiving workers travelling throughout the empire by Swapna Banerjee, Claire Lowrie and Victoria Haskins (see Leong-Salobir 2023), a similar initiative could be set up for the Dutch empire. As members of the Advisory Board, profs. Banerjee and Haskins can advise the team on how to translate their historical research into such an exhibition. Secondly, the team members will write regular blogs and the set up a podcast, helped by the research assistant, all to be added to the online knowledge hub.

Finally, to achieve milestone 7, the engagement of wider audiences, the strategy will be twofold. First, through my networks in UU Community Engaged Learning, MA students Politics & Society will be encouraged to think about solving present-day problems of forced labour, and how our historical knowledge can contribute to contemporary issues in this domain, and conversely, how the expertise of NGOs and citizens active in the field can help enrich our academic knowledge. Contacts have been established with Fair Work (Amsterdam), an NGO that explicitly aims to contribute to alleviate forms of (non-sexual) forced labour, by performing research and giving policy advice. The students will be matched to this and other organizations in order to offer their expertise. Also, the PI, with the help of the research assistant, will establish and maintain a network where members of the general public can contribute their own family's stories, photographs and diaries as historical sources. These will become part of the website hosting the knowledge hub, providing materials to be used by historians of the future, by archives, museums and other heritage institutions. The strategy will be to start relatively small and early on in the project, asking users for feedback on the relevance and usability of the material put online and hence make improvements to the website, making it an ongoing creative process between users and host. The PI has confirmation of Kirsten van Kempen, the curator of the Online Limburg Museum, which has recently launched a similar citizen-engaged forum on regional history, to receive regular advice on how to manage this creative process. Moreover, Advisory Board member Valika Smeulders has agreed to think along given her extensive experience with curating the 2020 slavery exhibition at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

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2d. Data management

See notes for more information on the Data Management section

1. Will this project involve re-using existing research data?

- ☒ Yes: Are there any constraints on its re-use? **No**
☐ No: Have you considered re-using existing data but discarded the possibility? Why?

Except for SP4, all data used in this research project, consists of source material managed by third parties, like archives and libraries. This material is public and will, considering the period covered, not contain personal data, as those involved will have been deceased.

In SP4 new data will be created through surveys and as interviews with domestic workers and employers in all countries. Given the research topic, this material will contain personal data in its raw form, some of which can probably be considered to be sensitive categories of personal data. Most of the countries involved are not part of the European Economic Space. Before the start of these particular studies the faculty's Privacy Officers, Data Manager and Ethical Committee will be involved to warrant the best protection of the rights of the data subjects, the most FAIR storage solution for the research sources and to assess the study design from an ethical perspective.

2. Will data be collected or generated that are suitable for reuse?

- ☒ Yes: Please answer questions 3 and 4.
☐ No: Please explain why the research will not result in reusable data or in data that cannot be stored or data that for other reasons are not relevant for reuse.

3. After the project has been completed, how will the data be stored for the long-term and made available for the use by third parties? Are there possible restrictions to data sharing or embargo reasons? Please state these here.

Most of the sources used are managed by third parties and will remain under their care. Reference to the sources and their holding locations will be realised through a proper reference apparatus.

With regard to the newly created data, some of it will be structured. From these structured data it might prove to be easy to create anonymized/pseudonymized derivatives, e.g. by dropping some columns containing identifying attributes, or through aggregating observations. These derivatives will be offered in an Open Access data package. The interview data might very well contain sensitive personal data which to some extent are the object of analysis and hence cannot be anonymized/pseudonymized without losing value from a scientific perspective. Hence these data sources will be stored as either Closed Access or Restricted Access (criteria: only available for reuse within a scientific context) data.

4. Will any costs (financial and time) related to data management and sharing/preservation be incurred?

- ☒ Yes: Then please be sure to specify the associated expenses in the budget table of this proposal.
☐ No: All the necessary resources (financial and time) to store and prepare data for sharing/preservation are or will be available at no extra cost.

The infrastructure for both short and long term research-data storage are available for free at Utrecht University (costs covered by the faculty), as well as software used for analyses of the data sets. Time for data management has been budgeted in this plan as part of SP5.

3. Budget

3a. Budget table

The maximum amount of a Vici grant is € 1,500,000 to be spent over a maximum period of five years. If the proposed research is of shorter duration, the maximum grant amount will be reduced accordingly. See notes for all information.

	Description			
Staff		FTE**	Months	Amount
WP*	<i>Applicant</i>	0.6	60	613,000
	<i>Postdoc 1</i>	0.8	36	237,000
	<i>Postdoc 2</i>	0.8	36	237,000
	<i>Postdoc 3</i>	0.8	36	237,000
NWP*	<i>Research assistant</i>	0.2	36	36,000
Total Staff				1,360,000
Consumables	Archival visits, travel and stay in Indonesia (PI: 1x1 month → travel 1,500 + stay 2,000; PD2: 2x3 months → travel 3,000 + stay 6,000)			12,500
	Archival visits, travel and stay in Suriname (PI: 1x1 month → travel 1,500 + stay 2,000; PD1: 2x3 months → travel 3,000 + stay 6,000)			12,500
	Archival visits, travel and stay in South-Africa (PI: 1x1 month → travel 1,500 + stay 2,000 PD3: 2x3 months → travel 3,000 + stay 6,000)			12,500
Travel	Conference visits: 2,000 per year p.p. (total: 14x)			28,000
	1 trans-Atlantic conference visit p.p. (=4x2,000)			8,000
Other	Knowledge hub (website, network activities,			37,000
	Conference organization			15,000
	Open access publishing monograph			14,000
Total Materials				139,500
Grand total				1,499,500

3b. Co-funding

Contributing party	Description	Value in euros	Contribution in kind/in cash
n.a.	n.a.

3c. Contribution by the university

Contributing party	Description	Value in euros	Contribution in kind/in cash
n.a.	n.a.

3d. Totals

Please calculate the total budget and the total amount requested from NWO. These amounts follow from 3a, 3b, and 3c.

Grand total	1,499,500 (=3a)
Requested budget	1,499,500 (=3a minus 3b and 3c)

3e. Additional (applications for) funding for overlapping project(s)

Have you applied for and/or obtained any additional funding for this project either from NWO or from any other institution, and/or has the same idea been submitted elsewhere?

- ☒ No
☐ Yes (please provide details)

4. Administrative details

4a. Personal information

Title(s), initial(s), surname(s):

Prof. dr. E.J.V. van Nederveen Meerkerk

Statements by the applicant

Ethical aspects

Check the relevant fields by adding an X. Note that ethical approval may also be required for research in non-medical contexts

	Not applicable	Not yet applied for	Applied for	Received
Approval from a recognised (medical) ethics review committee	x			
Approval from an animal experiments committee	x			
Permission for research with the population screening Act	x			

If your grant application is successful, all applicable ethical approval documents will need to be sent to NWO before the start of your Vici project.

By submitting this form, I declare that:

By submitting this form, I declare that I have completed this form truthfully, and that I satisfy the nationally and internationally accepted standards for scientific conduct as stated in the Netherlands code of conduct for research integrity 2018. I endorse the code of conduct for laboratory animals and the code of conduct for biosecurity/possibility for dual use of the expected results and will act accordingly, if applicable.

☒ I declare that my contact details in ISAAC profile are up to date (i.e. postal address at host institute for full duration of the round, phone number).

☐ If applicable: I have included a declaration co-funding.

☐ If applicable: I have included a statement exceeding maximum funding.

Name (initials and last name):

E.J.V. van Nederveen Meerkerk

Place:

Utrecht

Date:

5-9-2024