Dear colleagues,

It is Spring 2011, and major changes are taking place at PRC Groningen. Claartje has joined us on 1 March, and Inge has been appointed Dean of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences as of 1 May, leaving PRC Groningen in the capable hands of Claartje with effect from 1 September. We are proud to announce that Frans has recently been made Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau.

In this Newsletter, we become acquainted with Claartje. The ceremony for Frans, which took place on 4 March in the presence of staff from PRC Groningen and NIDI The Hague and other guests in the chapel of the Martinikerk, is briefly described. In addition, Eva Kibele, post-doc researcher in HAPS (Healthy Ageing: Population and Society) tells us more about herself. Alumnus Bart de Bruijn shares his experiences about his work which has brought him to many places on the globe. Is it demography or sociology?

With regard to research, besides the existing research projects in Africa (Malawi, Uganda, and Ghana), we recently started a new project with Ifakara Health Institute (IHI) in Tanzania, in collaboration with the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. The project is funded by NICHE (NUFFIC) and focuses on capacity building. Two PhD researchers from Tanzania will soon join PRC Groningen.

Where courses are concerned, some changes have been made in the Minor in Population Studies. Courses on Population Dynamics and Migration will constitute the core courses for Human Geography and Planning Bachelor’s students. Population and Development will be taught in collaboration with the new Globalization Studies Groningen (GSG, the former Centre for Development Studies), and will also be a part of the Minor in Development Studies.

For more information about the PRC, please visit our website www.rug.nl/prc.

We wish you all a very happy Spring and Summer 2011, with lots of sun and fun,

Kind regards,

Inge Hutter (Head of department)

Anu Kõu and Marieke van der Pers (Editors)
Clara Mulder: New Professor at PRC

In March this year, Clara Mulder was appointed Professor of Demography and Space at PRC. Before joining PRC, she was Professor of Demography at Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) at the University of Amsterdam.

I joined PRC and the Department of Demography as a professor on March 1, 2011 after moving to Groningen from Amsterdam a few days earlier. My background is in human geography (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and University of Amsterdam) and demography (PDOD, a postdoctoral programme in demography that was conducted in the Netherlands from 1989 to the early 1990s). I received my PhD degree in 1993 from the University of Amsterdam, worked at Utrecht University in 1993-2001 and became a professor of Demography at the University of Amsterdam in 2001.

I have already given several lectures in the Master’s in Population Studies programme and from next year I will also teach several Bachelor’s courses such as Population Dynamics and Migration. I will also co-ordinate the Bachelor’s Minor in Population Studies. Thus far, my research interests have included: residential choice, residential mobility and (internal) migration; housing and homeownership; couple formation and dissolution (cohabitation and marriage, separation and divorce); leaving the parental home; the connections between housing and demographic behaviour; and family relations and inter-generational relations. I plan to extend my research to topics related to healthy ageing and population decline. Much of my research employs quantitative methods but I have also been involved in qualitative projects using in-depth interviews.

My first impressions after having worked at PRC for just over a month have been very positive. Its working environment strikes me as warm, co-operative and dynamic, one in which I feel very welcome. I am confident PRC will continue to thrive in the coming years.

Post-Doc Eva Kibele

In January this year, Eva Kibele started as a post-doc researcher at the PRC. Eva recently obtained her PhD from the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) at the University of Rostock. Her PhD research examines regional mortality differences in Germany.

Being at the interface of disciplines and constituting a link between them, demography has attracted and maintained my scientific interest for many years now. My research focus has been on the study of mortality and its determinants. In the course of my PhD research, I analyzed regional mortality differences in Germany. Most strikingly, mortality risk is not only influenced by individual- and regional-level factors. The mortality of those with a low socioeconomic status is disproportionately higher if they live in a more deprived area.

At the PRC, my research on ageing, will be conducted within the parameters of the project Healthy Ageing, Population and Society (HAPS), with special attention on morbidity determinants and trends. What attracted my interest in the project was not only the collaboration with the disciplines of sociology and epidemiology, but also the explicit focus on the life course perspective and the multilevel setting in which healthy ageing is embedded.

My current research can be considered a continuation of previous research. Earlier results are in fact the starting point for my post-doc research: how do individuals' risk factors exert differential impacts on health depending on their environment? At which regional levels is such an effect visible? The study which employs Dutch register data as well as the cohort study LifeLines allows one to follow people over their life courses and to study the contextual factorsto which they are exposed. Knowledge about the health effects at different levels and their interplay is thereby crucial in designing public health intervention programmes and in promoting healthy ageing.

Last but not least, I am pleased to note that the relevance of demographic topics has been recognised and picked up by politicians and the media over the last decade and is now part of the daily political debate. However, demographers should seize the opportunity presented by heightened public interest and make sure that scientific results are adequately communicated in order to avoid misinterpretation of sensitive issues.
Alumnus PRC: Bart de Bruijn

When people ask me what I am by profession and I answer that I am a demographer, I often sense either a feeling of awe or pity. Perhaps it is because of the understandable, albeit incorrect, belief that demographers know everything about ‘us’ or are just freaks dealing with incomprehensible statistics. Usually, I quickly add that I am also a sociologist, which to the first group of believers tends to give the impression that I at least struggle with ‘knowing everything’ and to the second group that I may not be a completely lost soul after all.

I like to see similar paradoxes as an underlying theme at the Population Research Centre: trying to find the balance in demographic research between knowing, quantification and understanding. As such, I clearly feel like an offspring of the Groningen school. My years as PhD student remain more than memorable: an overwhelming research topic (‘demographic theory’), an infant PRC with Frans Willekens as inspiring and accessible as you could ever wish for (which student cycles long past midnight with his professor riding pillion on his bike, after beers and cognacs and fierce debates about the future of demography in infamous Groningen pubs?), and being part of the first cohort of the then Netherlands Graduate School of Research in Demography, among whom included Inge Hutter and Claartje Mulder, exposed to an incredible curriculum offering state-of-the-art demography, as well as to the scientific whims of the then leading demographers in the Netherlands.

When I completed my thesis, I had already joined NIDI. In fact, the very last sentences were written in the Solomon Islands, where I was appointed to organise the population census. At one moment I would be struggling with theoretical concepts such as ‘procedural rationality’ and ‘institutionalised behaviour’ while at the next I was sorting out practical issues such as shipments of bags of rice and rolls of toilet paper to training centres on remote islands in the South Pacific – paradoxes?

Since then, my activities at NIDI and later as a consultant on population and development issues have sent me from the Solomon Islands to Tajikistan and from Eritrea to Mongolia. Topics ranged from censuses and surveys to profiling of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The most challenging, but definitely the most satisfying, have been those assignments to develop and implement methodologies to identify the needs of refugees and IDPs that allow organisations such as UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP to step in to provide live-saving support in crisis situations.

In between, I cherish conducting training sessions and lectures as moments of reflection for myself and as opportunities to challenge students to travel between theories and statistics on the one side and reality on the other, that is, embracing the paradox that abstraction is about everyday life. And that is fascinating.

Bart de Bruijn, Pristina, Kosovo, 11 April 2011

PopFest 2011

PopFest is an annual Population Studies conference for postgraduate students organised by fellow postgraduates. PRC is honoured to host the event this year on June 27-29. PRC is also one of the sponsors of PopFest 2011. PopFest provides a supportive environment for young researchers engaged in population studies in various disciplines to present and discuss their works-in-progress or finalised papers. This year, Prof. Dirk van de Kaa will deliver the keynote speech and Panel Members will address a topic central to PRC’s research, healthy ageing. For more information, visit www.rug.nl/prc/popfest2011.

Dutch Demography Day

On November 9, the Netherlands Demographic Society (NVD) will host the 4th Dutch Demography Day. Demographers and researchers from demography-related disciplines will have the opportunity to present their current research. Abstracts in Dutch or English should be submitted by June 1. Students are encouraged to present their recently completed Master’s theses. Theses are eligible for the NIDI student award in the amount of €500. For more information and registration, visit www.nvdemografie.nl.

Royal Decoration

Professor Frans Willekens was honoured with a ribbon from the Queen on March 4. He received the decoration from Mayor Peter Rehwinkel. Frans Willekens is now an Officier in de Orde van Oranje Nassau. The ceremony took place in the Martinikerk during a farewell symposium in honour of his retirement. Willekens has been Professor of Population Studies in the Department of Demography of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen since 1991.
Recent publications


For more publications, see www.rug.nl/prc.

Short courses

November-January, two external participants (Stanzia Moyo, Zimbabwe; Komal Dulal, Nepal) successfully completed the short course *Demographic Methods and Analysis*.

March 23 and 24, Ajay Bailey taught ‘Introduction to Qualitative Methods’ at the EDSD in Lund, Sweden.

April 18-20, Hinke Haisma conducted a *Nutrition Course* for the International Course on Health Development (Master’s in Public Health) at the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam.

External activities

November 11, Billie de Haas held a presentation titled ‘Adolescents’ perceptions on having relationships and sexual behaviours in Uganda’ at *Sharenet* at KIT, Amsterdam.

December 10-11, Billie de Haas ran two workshops, ‘Role of teacher in comprehensive sexuality education at schools’ and ‘Positive and negative media influences on sexual development’, at the conference ‘Sexuality under 18’ organised by Rutgers WPF in Amersfoort.

December 15-16, Anu Kōu presented a paper on the life course approach to highly skilled migration at the seminar ‘Tapping the brains: Skilled mobilities and development’ held at the University of Utrecht.

January 20-22, Anu Kōu held a poster presentation on parallel careers of highly skilled Indian migrants in the Netherlands at the international conference ‘Institutional and Life-Course Perspectives on Migration’ organised by the University of Bremen.

January 2011, Ajay, Inge and Stiny visited India.

January 27-February 2, Anu Kōu participated in the intensive course *Biographic-Narrative Interview Method* in London.

February 15-16, Ajay Bailey was invited by the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, to present a paper entitled ‘Culture in and of HIV/AIDS Risk Management’ in India at the international conference ‘Risk Management in India’.

February 21-25, Hinke Haisma visited Ifakara Health Institute in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to discuss research priorities for the NICHE project and synthesis possibilities in relation to PhD positions. In April, Inge visited the institute to recruit four PhD researchers for the project.

February 22, Ajay Bailey participated in the workshop ‘Reading the city’ organised by the Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics.

End of February, Christine Fenenga and Inge Hutter visited Ghana to start the NWO/WOTRO project ‘Towards a client-oriented health (insurance) system in Ghana’. The project focuses on how inclusion of the clients’ perspectives on quality of care can improve the health care system, and it examines — apart from the perspectives of clients — the perspectives of health care providers and national health insurers.

March 21, Ajay Bailey gave a presentation on ‘Global migration: current trends and current issues’ at the international conference ‘Migration and Law’ held at the University of Groningen.

March 31-April 2, Billie de Haas and Marieke van der Pers presented their work (‘Adolescents’ sexual health in Uganda: abstinence-only and perceived autonomy’ and ‘The geographic dimension of intergenerational proximity in the Netherlands’, respectively) at the *Annual Conference of the PAA* in Washington, DC.

PRC News

January 13, Cathelijne Busser gave birth to a son, Pepijn.

March 1, Hans Elshof embarked on his PhD research on population decline and healthy ageing, a project in collaboration with NIDI. His supervisor is Leo van Wissen.

March 4, PRC organised a joint symposium with NIDI in honour of Frans Willekens’s retirement.

July 4, Erka Çaro will defend her PhD thesis on internal migration in Albania.

We have two openings for PhD research within the HAPS (Healthy Ageing, Population and Society) project. See http://www.rug.nl/frw/vacatures/vacaturesfrw.