Dear colleagues,

After the release of the first introductory issue of the PRC Newsletter we received some nice reactions from you, which stimulated us to continue “People in Transition”.

Our regular topics include information and news about both our teaching and research activities, and an overview of new publications, visitors to the PRC, conferences that were attended, and PRC news.

Related to the teaching activities of PRC we would like to inform you in this issue about our one-year international Master in Population Studies and its key features.

This issue, furthermore, summarizes the objectives, data and methods, results, conclusions and recommendations of two PhD theses that were recently defended.

We hope you will enjoy reading this second issue of “People in Transition” and wish you all the very best for 2006!

Kind regards,
Nadja Jacobowski, Stiny Tiggelaar, and Fanny Janssen (the editorial board)

Note that as of January 1, 2006, we moved to a new building for two to three years. Our visiting address changed to Dierenriemstraat 100. You can find PRC on the second floor. The phone number of the editorial board changed to +31 (0)50 363 4421.

Contents:

Our Master in Population Studies

Contraceptive histories of women in Bangladesh

Nutritional status and adolescents’ reproductive health in Bangladesh

Visitors, recent publications, conferences, PRC news
Main objective of the one-year international MSc in Population Studies is to train students to become a researcher in the field of demography and reproductive health. Below, you can find the scheduled courses and read about the key features of our Master programme. More information can be obtained through our website www.rug.nl/prc.

**Structured progress through the research process**

To enable master students to conduct their own research project, our Master programme is set up in a way that each subsequent course represents a subsequent step in the research process, i.e., from theory to data collection, to data analysis, to the interpretation of the results, and to the actual writing of the master thesis. In the first weeks, in the course *Research Process*, students learn to write their research proposal based on their topic of interest. Ideally, master students take with them a research topic relevant to their own country and home institute.

**Theory-based**

The Master programme is strongly theory-based. In the first eight weeks students get acquainted with the different theories in the field of demography and reproductive health. The students also learn about the interdisciplinary process-context approach to demographic behaviour, as it has been developed and formulated at PRC Groningen. In this approach, demographic behaviour is seen as the outcome of a process involving a series of individual decisions and actions, which take place in a certain context.

**Quantitative and qualitative research methods**

Adoption of the process-context approach implies application of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Therefore, one of the objectives of the master programme is that the students learn to apply both quantitative and qualitative research methods to different demographic issues.

**Focus on the analysis of Demographic and Health Surveys**

Master students and PhD students expressed the wish to work more with Demographic Health Surveys (DHS). As the DHS encompass a wealth of information related to demography and (reproductive) health in countries all over the world, the master focuses more and more on the analysis of DHS in different countries. Each year, a workshop on DHS analysis is organized, this year in collaboration with the University of Southampton, on February 2 and 3, at PRC Groningen.

**Translating research into policy or action**

Within PRC, we do not only conduct fundamental research, and build upon the existing body of scientific knowledge, but also focus on translating research into either policy making or interventions. In the Master programme this emphasis comes to the fore in the course *Population Debate*, in which the students learn to identify and indicate how scientific research can be translated into policy and action.

**Emphasis on short modules and workshops**

As a result of an increased interest from students and professionals from disciplines other than demography for elements of our master courses, we are currently offering part of our courses in short two-week modules or one-week workshops. These modules and workshops are open to all those who are interested.

One example is the one-week workshop on *Qualitative Research Methods*. In this workshop, participants get a detailed understanding of qualitative methods, their theoretical foundations, their practical application, and analysis.

In separate two-week modules, students learn the different analytical techniques that can be applied to demographic data: i.e. ‘The life table and its applications at the macro level’, ‘Micro life table methods: Introduction to survival analysis’, ‘Demographic measures and methods’, and ‘Population projections’.

### Structure of our MSc in Population Studies

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Two recent PhD theses

In 2005, we had two PhD theses defenses. Both encompassed the study of demographic issues in Bangladesh, applied a life-course perspective and analysed longitudinal data.

Mohsina Khatun
Contraceptive Use Dynamics – Application to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (promotor: Prof. Frans Willekens)

Mohsina Khatun studied the contraceptive histories, i.e. the sequence of adoption, switching, and discontinuation of contraceptive methods, of women in Bangladesh. For this purpose, longitudinal data derived from the ‘contraceptive use calendars’ of close to 10000 ever-married women were reconstructed from three subsequent rounds (1993-1994, 1996-1997, 1999-2000) of the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey. To these data innovative analytical methods were applied. To assess life-course indicators of unmet need and consequences of contraceptive failure, multistate life table techniques were used. Market segmentation techniques were used to identify groups of women with similar histories of contraceptive choice and use behavior. The technique accounts for unobserved characteristics of women.

Contraceptive use increases with age, is higher among women with a higher education and among women in urban areas. Over one third of women switch to another contraceptive method. 11% of Bangladeshi women opt for sterilization. Contraceptive failure is widespread in Bangladesh and has increased over time. Age, education and previous contraceptive use proved important determinants of contraceptive failure. Improving contraceptive methods and their use can reduce the TFR from 3.33 to 2.14.

Unmet need varies during the reproductive career, and is highest at age 30. After age 30, unmet need for postponing children changed to unmet need for limiting family size occurs. In relatively older and wealthier women, years of schooling, family composition, and fertility intention are more important determinants of contraceptive failure method choice, whereas in younger women and women from rural areas, family planning program factors and couples’ attitudes towards family planning prove more important.

It is recommended that intervention programs take into account the differences in contraceptive choice and use behavior between couples and between phases of reproductive life, and target specific segments of the population according to their reproductive demand and use.

Alinda Bosch
Adolescents’ reproductive health in rural Bangladesh – the impact of early childhood nutritional anthropometry (promotores: Prof. Inge Hutter, Prof. Frans Willekens and Prof. Jeroen van Ginneken)

In her PhD research, Alinda Bosch examined both the influence of contemporary and early childhood nutritional status on the timing of menarche (the first menstruation) and the knowledge and perceptions about reproductive health among adolescent girls and boys in Matlab, a rural area in Bangladesh. In doing so a life course approach was adopted and longitudinal data were obtained from a baseline (secondary) survey among 707 under-five children in 1988-1989 by Dr. Baqui (ICDDR,B) and a follow-up (primary) survey in 2001 among the same children aged 12—16 year. In addition, anthropometric measurements were taken and in-depth interviews were conducted among some of the adolescents, their parents, and key-respondents. The longitudinal data have been analysed with descriptive statistical methods, binary logistic regression models, lifetable techniques, and Cox-regression.

Half of the girls can expect to reach menarche after their 15th birthday. In combination with early marriage and childbirth this late onset of menarche may increase reproductive health risks. The age of menarche seems largely related to a relatively high prevalence of stunting (being short for age) in adolescence, which resonates from a high degree of stunting in early childhood. Moreover, a relatively high proportion of the adolescent girls and boys are not prepared for the main reproductive events in adolescence and lack substantial knowledge about reproductive health. All in all, the reproductive health status of adolescent boys and girls from a mental-emotional perspective seems low.

Monitoring nutritional status from birth to menarche (and preferably thereafter as well) could aid the targeting of nutritional intervention programs for those girls that run the highest risk of reaching their menarche late. In addition, Information Education and Communication (IEC) activities aimed at improving adolescent reproductive health status could benefit from the eagerness that boys and girls displayed in this study towards gathering knowledge on reproductive health matters.
Visitors to the PRC

- From August – December 2005 Hana Haškova from the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic visited PRC as RTN research fellow.

Recent publications

- Hutter, I. (2005), Cultuur als perspectief in demografie en reproductieve gezondheid. [Culture as perspective in demography and reproductive health]. Inaugural lecture, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen.

Conferences/Workshops

- Leo van Wissen visited the workshop Microsimulation of businesses and employment, of the Land Use Transportation Modelling Group, at University College London, 2 July 2005, where he presented the microsimulation model SIMFIRMS.
- At the 45th Congres of the European Regional Science Association ERSA, 23-27 August 2005 in Amsterdam, Leo van Wissen was, together with Jacques Poot and Brigitte Waldorf, convenor of the session Migration of firms and households.
- 29-31 August 2005, Nadja Jacobowski participated in the pre-project workshop Growing old with AIDS – Targeting older people for a change, which is part of a collaborative project within SANPAD with the School of Development Studies, KwaZulu-Natal University, Durban, South Africa.
- In the First Workshop on the Anthropological Demography of Europe, Rostock, 30 September and 1 October 2005, Inge Hutter & Ajay Bailey presented a paper on reliability in the analysis of qualitative research, Nadja Jacobowski & Ajay Bailey presented their paper “Gender performativity”, and Michaela Potančková presented a paper on the need of biographical research in Demography.
- Karen Haandrikman and Elda Pardede were part of the organizing committee for the first Dutch Demography Day on 6 October 2005, Utrecht, a cooperation between the Netherlands Inter-disciplinary Demographic Institute and PRC Groningen. PRC researchers were actively involved in presenting papers and chairing sessions. Leo van Wissen was keynote speaker; his keynote address was entitled: “It’s demography, stupid!”
- On 26 October 2005, a workshop was organized at Statistics Netherlands for the master students in Population Studies at PRC.
- Inge Hutter conducted in November a fact-finding mission for UNFPA Kosovo in Pristina who requested to conduct a study on Abortion among Kosovar women. The fact finding mission was conducted in collaboration with drs. Mimoza Dushi, former student of the MSc in Population Studies.
- On 30 November 2005, Hana Haškova & Nadja Jacobowski participated in the RTN training seminar in Vienna and presented their recent research work.
- The VID-Bocconi-IIASA seminar on Postponement of Childbearing in Europe in Vienna, 1-3 December 2005, was attended by Hana Haškova & Nadja Jacobowski.
- In December, Inge Hutter visited Dharwad (India) and stayed with IDPAD research counterpart Institute of Economic Research (IER). Also, classes at Karnatak University were given and field visits within the intervention Spandana (collaboration with IER and FPAI) were conducted.

PRC News

- In 2005-2006 we welcomed four new master students, one from the Netherlands, and the remaining three from Africa (Malawi, Rwanda, and Zambia).
- Since September 1 2005, Inge Hutter is Vice Dean (Research) of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences.
- Mirjam Klaassens started the research project work with Dr. Melinda Mills (VU / RuG) in the NKPS (Netherlands Kinshop Panel Study) MINIPANEL on Non-standard Work Schedules and Partnership Quality and Stability, in the Netherlands.
- February 23, Sarbani Banerjee defends her dissertation. Promotores: Prof.dr. I. Hutter and Prof.dr.ir. F.J. Willekens.