Dear colleagues,

The start of the academic year 2007-2008 was quite exciting.

We welcomed a big group of new students within the Master in Population Studies. The group consists of Dutch students from our own faculty, from both Human Geography & Planning and Environmental and Infrastructure Planning, students from other faculties, including Sociology, and also a fair share of students from abroad (Estonia, Slovenia, Kenya, India).

September 3, the Review Committee Research visited our faculty, reviewing research efforts in the period 2000-2006. The research programme of demography has been evaluated very positive. On a range of 1-5, we scored 4.5 for Quality, 4.4 for Productivity, 4.2 for Relevance, and 4.8 for Viability. We are very happy with this good score. A week later, the Review Committee Education visited the faculty and evaluated all its teaching programmes. The results of this Review Committee were positive too.

In this issue, we give an outline of one of the first courses within the Master in Population Studies, that is “Theories of Demographic Behaviour”. Aagje Papineau Salm summarizes her PhD proposal on Health Workers in Interaction with Clients.

Wishing you a very happy 2008!

Kind regards,
Fanny Janssen (Chief Editor)
Theories of Demographic Behaviour

One of the first courses that students follow in the one year MSc Population Studies is the course on Theories of Demographic Behaviour.

The course reflects, as we believe, the special attention paid in the Groningen programme to theory as a guiding principle for demographic research, i.e. to understand and explain observed demographic behaviour.

In the last few years, the focus of the course shifted somehow. This shift in focus represents a more general change in the theoretical approach at the PRC.

The course was developed in the early 1990s. During Willekens’ inaugural lecture, he expressed the need for better theoretical research in the field of demography, with a focus on understanding individuals in their context. The PhD research by Bart de Bruijn responded to this need. Based on the work by Willekens and De Bruijn, the process-context approach was formulated. In the process-context approach people’s demographic behaviour (fertility, marriage, migration, health) is seen as the outcome of a process (decision-making, biological, chance) that takes place within the context (economic, social, cultural, political) in which people live. Moreover, demographic behaviour is seen as the outcome of processes of decision making over the life course.

The course, as a result, focused then on why we need theories in the discipline of demography; the social theory of Coleman, distinguishing the macro and micro level and reasoning why we should go down to the individual level (methodological individualism by Smith); the model of man underlying theories (rational choice, bounded rationality); decision making theories as known in psychology; and an overview of fertility theories as formulated within the disciplines of economics (rational choice, Becker, e.g.), psychology (value of children) and anthropology (Greenhalgh, Caldwells).

In addition, the theoretical emphasis became more focused and specialized. The process-context approach remaining the broad framework, we now discuss more specific decision-making theories and models, such as the Health Belief Model, or specific concepts such as self-efficacy (Bandura) and empowerment. As a result of the inaugural lecture of Inge Hutter, cultural theories have become more pronounced, such as the cognitive anthropology of D’Andrade, or the interpretative approach of Geertz, and lately culture and space, identity and gender. These concepts and theories are encouraged to be applied to either fertility, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, migration or health seeking behaviour.

In Memoriam: Prof. Zwart

With sorrow and grief, we heard of the demise of Prof. F.H.A.G. (Hans) Zwart, Professor Emeritus non-western Demography, at the age of 84, on October 20, 2007.

Hans Zwart introduced the demography of developing countries at the University of Groningen in 1970, and until the late 1980s trained students in the field of non-western Demography. His students currently work all over the world and will remember his prominent personality. Even after his retirement, Prof. Zwart remained genuinely interested in all that happened in the Population Research Centre.

At his funeral, the role of Hans Zwart in (non-western) demography in the Netherlands (since the 1950s) was commemorated by Prof. Dick van der Kaa, while Prof. Frans Willekens commemorated his importance for demography in Groningen.
Many factors contribute to this: slow economic growth, longstanding conflicts, HIV/AIDS and low quality of health services.

The functioning of health services is determined by three M’s: Management, Money and Manpower. Only recently the last M got more attention, while human resources are the glue of the health systems as stated in the report of the Joint Learning Initiative ‘Overcoming the Crisis’ (2004).

Health policy makers and experts approach the issue of human resources in health mostly from a macro-level and policy-making perspective, concentrating on numbers and external factors like salaries and carrier structure. The more personal or individual factors such as motivation, attitude and socio-cultural circumstances are not addressed, while they clearly determine the behaviour of health workers during their interaction with clients.

Formal health systems in Sub-Sahara Africa are based on the western bio-medical paradigm, both concerning the concepts about causes of illness, disease and treatment, as well as concerning the organisational structure of the system. It is a modernistic way of approaching health and disease based on the explanatory models and principles of bio-medical sciences. Health systems however function in societies with a different cultural background, with their own concepts about health and disease and cultural meaning giving systems.

Health workers generally belong to two worlds, the professional world of the hospital or clinic and the personal world of the society to which they belong.

Through this research I hope to get more insight in the personal and cultural factors that influence the behaviour of health workers.

Based on literature study so far I have formulated four research questions:

1) What is the behaviour of health workers during the interaction with clients?
2) What is the influence of professional and personal characteristics on the behaviour?
3) How is the behaviour embedded in the working situation, the ‘community of practice’?
4) What is the influence of bio-medical explanatory models and cultural schemas on the behaviour?

I hope to do my fieldwork in Kenya, if the political circumstances allow so, in the form of case-studies. Proposed methods will be participatory observation, interviews and focus-group discussions. Participatory observation by me as outsider might be difficult, so other methods like the use of mystery clients can be useful.
Visitors to the PRC

- From August till November, **Sujata Anishettar** (Family Planning Association of India, Dharwad) joined the Population Research Centre to follow lectures and work on her PhD proposal.

Recent publications


Short courses

- November 2007 till January 2008, **Masore Mwerya Masogo** (Temeke Municipal Council, Tanzania) and **Manuela Hausmann** (Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt, Austria) participated in our Short Course in Demographic Methods and Analysis.

Conferences/Workshops

- End of August, Inge Hutter and Fanny Janssen visited NGO **PRAYAS** in Pune and **Population Research Centre, Family Planning Association of India**, and **SDM college** in Dharwad in India to further discuss a joint proposal on health seeking, health care provision and health outcomes in India.
- Leo van Wissen presented the findings of his work with Viktor Venhorst on “Demographic trends and the development of quantitative and qualitative housing demand” in the Dutch northern provinces” in Niekerk, Groningen, and Assen.
- Karen Haandrikman presented her paper “Explaining spatial homogamy. Spatial, socio-economic and cultural aspects of the partner market in the Netherlands” (co-authors: Leo van Wissen, Carel Harmsen) at the Nethur session of the EUGEO 2007 conference, Amsterdam, and as invited speaker in the workshop ‘The family and residential choice’ at the University of Amsterdam (UvA).
- The Dutch Demography Day (9 October, Utrecht) was well represented by PRC. Besides **Karen Haandrikman** about “The role of meeting places in rttner choice”, **Leo van Wissen** presented his work with Roel Jenissen (WODC-Ministry of Justice) about “Determinants of the distribution of asylum-seekers over Northern and Western European countries”. **Viktor Venhorst** presented the results of his master thesis, as did **Marike van der Pers**. **Mieke Reuser** presented on “the effect of obesity on mortality” for which she received media attention and was interviewed for the radio (VARA ontbijtraadio).
- Inge Hutter attended, as member of the Board of the World Population Foundation (WPF), a symposium at Paleis Noordeinde. It was organized by the “Stichting Paleis op de Dam” who organizes twice a year meetings on relevant or interesting topics which are also attended by the Royal Family. The symposium was provided by Dr. Nafis Sadik, former Director of UNFPA and member of the WPF Board.
- Frans Willekens and Inge Hutter participated in the first meeting of the Platform Global Health Policy and Health Systems Research. The Platform, in which Frans represents PRC/NIDI, aims at enhancement of structural interaction between Dutch knowledge institutions, ministeries and NGOs to strengthen health systems worldwide.
- Aagje Papineau Salm chaired in Amsterdam a seminar organised by **Stop Aids Now** and the **AidsFonds**, about integration of HIV/AIDS programmes in basic health services. She also chaired a workshop during the World Aids Day conference on Aids and Tuberculosis in prisons in the former Soviet Union.
- Aagje Papineau Salm attended the 5th African Population Conference in Arusha, Tanzania

PRC News

- **Biswamitra Sahu** finished her PhD fieldwork in India, and currently conducts her fieldwork at ICDDR,B in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- January 1, 2008 **Marike van der Pers** started her PhD research on Reproductive health of internally displaced persons. The PhD project is a collaboration with NOHA-RUG (Humanitarian Action) and Child Health of the University of Uppsala in Sweden.
- January 1, 2008 **Ajay Bailey** continued as post-doc researcher at PRC, focusing mainly on anthropolowgy within demography, migration and health, India, and qualitative research.