The PRC logo: humans developing in a changing, multidimensional context.

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Editorial

Dear colleagues,

The first half year of 2008 witnessed some major changes and festivities.

First of all, we moved to a new building at Landleven 1 on the Zernike Campus of the University of Groningen. PRC is located on the first floor. The collage of photos on this page presents some impressions of our new building.

In view of the upcoming introduction of the major/minor structure at the University of Groningen, we have reformulated the Minor in Population Studies. In this issue you find a summary of this new minor.

On June 12, Ajay Bailey successfully defended his PhD thesis on culture, risk and HIV/AIDS among migrant and mobile men in Goa, India. A summary of his thesis is included on page 3.

Also we are happy to welcome three new PhD students: Sujata Anishettar, Rizwan Ul Haq and Shirish Darak. More PRC news can be found at the end of this newsletter.

We are proud to present a new column in our newsletter which features interviews with alumni to commemorate the setting up of the “Professor Keuning Association for the Alumni of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences” at the end of last year.

Wishing you a good start to the new academic year!

Kind regards,

Fanny Janssen (Chief Editor)
Minor in Population Studies

Capacity building at PRC focuses on the training of (i) PhD researchers, (ii) students in the MSc in Population Studies, iii) mid-career professionals in short courses, and (iv) Bachelor students in the Minor Population Studies. In view of the upcoming major/minor structure of the Bachelor's degree at the University of Groningen, this minor was recently reformulated.

Objective

Increasingly, the subject of population has become more visible in our society. Almost every day the media report on population-related issues such as population growth as related to rising world food prices; the deficit of girls in South Asia due to preference for boys and sex selective abortion; population ageing and its consequences for the labour market, pensions and health care provisions; increasing worldwide migration flows and consequences for societies and multi-cultural identities of individuals; the HIV/AIDS epidemic and consequences for the population structure in Africa and survival strategies of families; population decline in the Netherlands and consequences for housing and regional economy; increasing obesity worldwide and its health consequences; increasing childlessness in the Netherlands and how this is viewed by society.

The Minor in Population Studies aims to provide students with an academic insight into this wide spectrum of population issues from the broad discipline of demography.

Upon completing the Minor in Population Studies, students will know about demographic trends and processes (fertility, mortality / health, migration), their socio-cultural background and their consequences for society, in the Netherlands, Europe, and countries in the South. They will also know about the major demographic measures and demographic data sources.

Contents

The minor consists of four core courses (20 ECTS) (see later) and two restrictive elective courses (10 ECTS).

Within the core courses, guest lectures are provided by researchers from different research institutes such as the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), The Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research (RPB), and the Netherlands Institute for health services research (NIVEL).

Through the elective courses, students can explore the interdisciplinary nature of demography by focusing on either development studies or geography, or a combination of both.

Population and Development

Why are fertility levels higher in Malawi than in India? Why is maternal mortality so high in countries in the South and what can be done about it? What are the cultural reasons for the imbalance in the sex ratio in India and what are consequences for the position of women? How do families in South Africa deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic? These are some of the questions addressed in this course.

The course gives an overview of world-wide differences in fertility, mortality and migration, and the relationship with economic and socio-cultural development. Urbanisation is a central theme. Explanations for demographic processes are sought through various theories.

Population dynamics in the Netherlands and Europe

Why is the mean age of childbearing in the Netherlands much higher than in other European countries? Why did the life expectancy in the Netherlands lose ground in comparison to other European countries? Why do currently more people migrate from the Netherlands than to the Netherlands? How should policy-makers react to population ageing and population decline?

This course introduces students to recent demographic developments in the Netherlands and Europe, their backgrounds and their consequences. In addition, different types of demographic data collection, demographic measures, and the techniques behind demographic forecasts are taught.

Migration

Why do people migrate from rural to urban areas? Does migration enhance labour market participation? What is the role of culture in migration and adjustment? Do we need migrants in an ageing society?

This course provides an introduction to the different theoretical and empirical aspects of migration. Besides the main trends and developments in both internal and international migration, economic theories and models, behavioural theories, and the life course approach are discussed. In addition, focus is on various non-economic forms of migration such as refugee migration, undocumented migration, and transnationalism.

Health geography

The two main questions that are addressed in health geography are: ‘How does place influence health?’ and ‘How does health influence place?’

The course focuses on the spatial dimensions of disease, health and mortality and their underlying processes. It expounds the clear relationship between geography, planning and demography in the field of health. It uses concepts and models from epidemiology, demography, medical sociology and medical anthropology.
Interview with an alumnus

Joop Garssen
Non-Western Demography
Year of graduation: 1980

Why did you study demography?

Unlike human geography, demography has its own elaborate toolkit. Choosing the appropriate method and applying it to poor quality data, felt a bit like solving a puzzle. At the time, these skills were in demand at several UN agencies and were like a ticket to a posting in some exotic country.

How did your work career turn out?

My first job, a United Nations posting to Samoa, entailed pure demography. It involved carrying out a population census and a first analysis of results. After that, in Cameroon, I also got involved in health surveys. The experience accumulated enabled me to become a consultant in medical statistics to the Zanzibar Ministry of Health. This job lasted six years, followed by a number of shorter assignments in Tanzania, the Seychelles and the Philippines. I formally acquired the skills of epidemiology in the early nineties, when I did a Master’s in London.

Today, at Statistics Netherlands, I divide my time between the analysis of Dutch demographic data and editorship of Bevolkingstrends (Population Trends), the journal on Dutch demography.

Although in my current job I very rarely apply the so-called non-Western techniques, what I learnt during my studies have stood me in good stead.

What is the main difference between working abroad and a job in the Netherlands?

Abroad, you have to do a lot more yourself. Collecting data, for example, in Zanzibar meant organising the funding, designing the questionnaire, recruiting and training surveyors, writing data entry and tabulation programs, and of course analysis and reporting of the results. At Statistics Netherlands, my present employer, these areas are covered by different people. The availability and quality of Dutch data are highly commendable, probably among the best in the world. To researchers it is like a gold mine, a large part of it still unexplored.

Recent PhD thesis

Ajay Bailey

Culture, risk and HIV/AIDS among migrant and mobile men in Goa, India

Promotor: Prof. dr. Inge Hutter

In his PhD research, Ajay Bailey studies how HIV risk assessment and protection behaviour (i.e. the use of condoms) among migrant and mobile (truckers and fishermen) men from Karnataka in Goa are culturally grounded. The study combines different theoretical insights such as the Health Belief Model, and theories on cultural schemas, cultural heuristics, the cultural production of place and othering.

The research was conducted in collaboration with local NGOs and a local research team. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used in the data collection. Different qualitative methods were applied, ranging from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, analysis of media reports, observation, walk through the spaces, to visual materials. In a locally informed survey, results of the qualitative research were quantified and validated.

To migrant and mobile men in Goa, the economic consequences of being infected with the HIV virus are more severe than the social and health consequences. Men apply cultural heuristics of gender roles, vigilance and trust and use visual cues as guides to risk assessment and decision making when they have partial or uncertain information about their sexual partner. Hence prevention efforts from NGOs should focus on risky sexual behaviour and not on risky partners per se. Knowledge on HIV and AIDS is locally produced and shared through cultural narratives. This local knowledge when incorporated into a behaviour change program will lead to change to be perceived as something that comes from within a particular culture and not from the outside.

In the continuing process of translating research into action, later this year Ajay will present the results from his research to the NGOs in Goa. He will discuss with them the ways and means to incorporate the results into a small intervention program for the migrant and mobile men.
Visitors to the PRC

- Prof. C.G. Hussain Khan of Karnataka University (Dharwad, India) visited the PRC and presented a seminar on the Medicalization of Reproductive Health on June 11.

Recent publications


Short courses

- Ajay Bailey visited the INED in Paris as part of the teaching program for the European Doctoral School in Demography (EDSD) to teach the application of qualitative research, May 14-15.
- On June 16-20, Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey organized the CC6-course on qualitative methods for NETHUR in Groningen for the first time.
- In April 2008, Inge Hutter, together with Jacques Zeelen from the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences, provided a one-week full-time workshop on ‘Research methodology: qualitative approaches’ to senior and PhD researchers of Mzumbe University in Tanzania. The workshop is part of a RuG NPT programme funded by NUFFIC.

External activities

- Aagje Papineau Salm chaired a session on Migration and Demography during a congress of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the occasion of the launching of the evaluation report on 10 years of Development Cooperation in Africa.
- In April/May Leo van Wissen acted as advisor for the municipality of Groningen on their population forecast.
- In March, Inge Hutter visited India with a delegation of the Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU), on behalf of the Board of the University of Groningen. Aim of the visit was to introduce the the VSNU to university organizations, universities, and research institutes in Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai, and to extent the India-Netherlands collaboration.
- In April, Marieke van der Pers participated in the course 'Public Health in Humanitarian Assistance’ at the International Mother and Child Health Institute, University of Uppsala, Sweden. End of April, Inge Hutter and Renee Bakker (NOHA, RuG) visited Uppsala to further discuss the collaboration.
- In March, Aagje Papineau Salm visited the College of Medicine (COM), University of Malawi, for the exploration of conducting her PhD fieldwork and the establishment of closer relationships between COM and PRC. In June, Inge Hutter visited COM as well for a feasibility study regarding collaboration within the Community Based Reproductive Health Project in Mangochi (funded by Cordaid in The Hague).
- On June 23-25, many members of PRC visited Southampton for the biennial meeting with members of the School of Social Sciences, University of Southampton and its new Centre for Global Health, Population, Poverty and Policy.

PRC News

- In May, Rizwan ul Haq started his PhD research on subjective well-being of the elderly in Pakistan. His PhD is funded by the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan. His supervisor is Leo van Wissen.
- In May, Sujata Anishettar started her PhD on the provision and utilization of maternal health services in Dharwad, India. Inge Hutter, Professor Khan (Karnatak University, Dharwad) and Jyoti Hallad (IER Dharwad) are her supervisors.
- We have an opening for a PhD student on “Regional mortality forecasting using extensions of the Lee-Carter model”. See http://www.rug.nl/gradschoolspat/
- In June, we were shocked to hear about the sudden demise of our former student Wina Wydianti. We got to know Wina as a very sincere and dedicated student, loved and appreciated by her fellow students. After finishing her Master’s degree, she returned to her research work in Indonesia, having plans to conduct a PhD research with us in future. We extend our deepest condolence and wish her family much strength in coping with their loss.