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Editorial

Dear colleagues,

This PRC Newsletter is a special issue devoted to the topic of migration, with attention on our education programme as well as research on migration.

Our involvement with migration, however, goes beyond these domains, and it is manifested in various ways. Many foreign students migrate temporarily to the Netherlands to pursue a Master’s degree in Population Studies or attend our Short Course on Demographic Measures and Methods. Some of these temporary migration movements are prolonged, when a Master’s student continues in Groningen as a PhD student. An example is Anu Kou, from Estonia, who started her PhD at PRC on December 1, 2008.

Also, many of the Master’s students, PhD students, and staff members temporarily move abroad for fieldwork. Even within the Netherlands, PRC members participate in internal migration and movement from the west to the north of the country.

With effect from February 1, 2009, Louise Meijering, who obtained her PhD from the Faculty of Spatial Sciences and who had emigrated to Sweden, took up the post of Assistant Professor within Demography focusing on Methodology.

There has been a change in the editorial board of our Newsletter: Marieke van der Pers has joined the team as co-editor, having taken over Stiny Tiggelaar’s tasks.

Enjoy reading this Newsletter!

Kind regards,
Fanny Janssen (Chief Editor)
Migration as part of our education programme

Migration as a course is offered to Bachelor’s students at our faculty. The course is one of the six courses in our Minor in Population Studies in the Bachelor programme of Social Geography and Planning.

We highlight both the deterministic and the humanistic approaches to migration. In the core classes we examine the relationship between migration and the labour market, the life course, culture and social engineering. We ensure a balance between more theoretical approaches and migration practices. Pressing international issues related to migration such as refugee undocumented migration are also discussed.

To stimulate students’ interest, ongoing research on migration at PRC is presented. Moreover, migration and mobility experts from outside PRC are invited, dwelling on topics such as ‘Graduate mobility in the Netherlands’ (Venhorst, Department of Economic Geography) and on return migration of Moroccans from Netherlands (Fokkema, NIDI).

Videos such as on the resettlement of Tibetan refugees in India are shown.

Students work on a group project and submit a paper. Some examples of these papers in the recent course are ‘Linkage to and consequences of environmental change to forced migration’ and ‘Immigration and integration of Somali migrants in Sweden’.

Both at Master’s and Research Master’s level many of our students opt for migration as a theme for their Master’s thesis.

Some examples of upcoming work are: sense of place among Indian students in Groningen (Research Master’s by Nienke Hornstra), migration behaviour among Bulgarians in the Netherlands (Hans Elshof) and reasons why Dutch migrate to Canada (Mark ter Veer).

Recently completed Master’s theses are:

- ‘The consequences of independence in 1919 and joining the European Union on international migration in Slovenia’, 2009, by Meta Leban Buschenhenke

Interview with an alumnus

 Liesbeth Heering
Non-Western Demography
Year of graduation: 1988

Why did you study demography?

I liked the concreteness of the subject matter. Demographers like to talk, discuss and philosophize – like other social scientists – but in addition they also express things in numbers.

Where did you work after you graduated?

I started as a junior lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague. I was part of an international academic staff in a UNFPA-funded project on the interrelationships between population and development. After six rewarding years teaching a number of training courses at ISS, I had the opportunity to switch from education to research when I joined NIDI (Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute – partner institute of ISS in the population and development program).

What is your main field of interest?

My field of interest actually changed from population and health issues to migration issues. Originally, I had wanted to become a medical doctor. Within demography my interest in medical and health issues remained and for my Master’s thesis I did fieldwork on the relationship between health inputs, behavior, and health outcomes. I also worked on population and health issues at ISS. At NIDI, I started to work in the exciting field of migration, first as a coordinator of an international survey project on migration. More and more, I started combining the coordination of international projects with the actual research on the topics to be studied. In the future I would like to enhance my research skills and apply them to the study of migration and to other demographic topics. What I really enjoy about research is that it is about finding out the unknown, which always makes it new and exciting. Through collaborating with international scholars I hope to teach and learn more.

Research at PRC: combining migration and health

During the past years, migration has become an important research topic at PRC. A number of PhD projects deal directly or indirectly with migration.

Erka Çaro, who graduated with an MSc in Population Studies in Groningen in 2005, is carrying out a study on rural-urban migration in Albania. After decades of totalitarian communist rule, which was much more extreme than in other Eastern European countries, suddenly in December 1990 the Albanian communist regime ceased to exist. Migration flows exploded following the collapse, both to the capital city of Tirana and abroad. Erka wants to obtain more insight into the issue of adjustment processes of migrants from the rural and mountainous north to the urban environment of the Tirana metropolitan area, in the new migrant town of Kamza. In the fall of 2008, she did a first series of interviews with migrants in Kamza.
Research at PRC: combining migration and health (continued)

Anu Kou has just finished her Master’s in Population Studies in December 2008, and she is working on her PhD in the project Skilled migration from South Asia to the Netherlands and the UK. Highly skilled migrants are a relatively small but important subgroup of migrants. Brain gain and brain drain are sensitive topics. Highly skilled migrants have more opportunities for work and are more mobile, and countries compete to attract the most talented people. However, the highly skilled migrants also have to adjust to their new environment. We know relatively little about these processes. How do these migrants cope with the new environment? To what extent is success in these coping mechanisms related to onward or return migration intentions?

Migration is also present, indirectly, in the PhD research of Karen Haandrikman. Karen plans to finish her research on spatial homogamy in the second half of 2009. Spatial homogamy is the tendency to choose a partner with the same geographical background, and the study of spatial homogamy entails the analysis of moving behaviour of both partners prior to marriage or cohabitation.

Population health is another major research topic at PRC. A combination of migration and health research is visible in our new research theme ‘Migration and Health’.

Ajay Bailey defended his PhD thesis in 2008 on HIV/AIDS research among migrants and mobile men in Goa, India. He analysed the perceptions among migrant men about the risks of HIV infections, indicating how migrants might be more vulnerable to certain diseases than non-migrants. This theme is further developed in a PhD research conducted by Marieke van der Pers. Marieke, who finished the Research Master’s programme in Groningen in 2006, part of which was spent in a one-year programme offered by the European Doctoral School of Demography (EDSD), is studying reproductive health issues of displaced persons.

Health status may also influence migration behaviour. Health issues are often a trigger for migration at older ages. At the same time, healthy people are also more mobile. Currently, PRC has an opening for a PhD position to study this phenomenon among the elderly in the Netherlands.

Two book publications on migration with contributions from PRC


This book provides a fresh look at migration and human capital in a changing world, by focusing on recent models and methods for analysis and forecasting of migration, as well as on basic trends, driving factors and institutional settings behind migration processes – with specific reference to Europe and North America.

The book is intended for researchers and policy makers in the fields of internal and international migration. It also provides up-to-date readings for advanced courses on migration and population change in a global context.

As one of the editors, Leo van Wissen, contributed to the introduction and overview titled ‘Migration in a globalised world: a new paradigm’. Together with Nicole van der Gaag, Phil Rees and John Stillwell, he co-wrote another chapter entitled ‘In search of a modelling strategy for projecting internal migration in European countries’.


At present, migration data across countries are far from consistent and reliable, due to different data sources employing different definitions and different collection methods. This book is the first to draw together modern statistical approaches to migration estimation and migration modelling, allowing a consistent and dependable set of migration flows to be developed.

The vital concepts such as missing data and collection methods (and their possible harmonisation) are discussed in depth, and there are whole chapters dedicated to both modelling asylum flows and forecasts about the future of international migration.

Leo van Wissen contributed a chapter, co-authored with Roel Jennissen, entitled “A simple method for inferring substitution and generation from gross flows: Asylum seekers in Europe”. Beata Nowok wrote a chapter “Evolution of international migration statistics in selected Central European countries” and co-authored another chapter with Dorota Kupiszewska titled “Comparability of statistics on international migration flows in the European Union”.
Visitors to the PRC

- Prof Hussain Khan, Karnataka University, Dharwad, visited our Faculty in November on the occasion of the farewell seminar on internationalization in honour of our Dean Gerard Linden.
- Mary Sibande from the College of Medicine of the University of Malawi visited in October. She participated in a workshop on qualitative research and met with experts from the Groningen Safe Motherhood programme and the Participatory Research Group of the Centre for Development Studies (CDS). Mary coordinates the community-based reproductive health project in Mangochi, Malawi, to which PRC provides research capacity building, with funding from Cordaid.

Recent publications


Short courses

- Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey run a Training-of-Trainers course for teachers/researchers of the Hanzehogeschool in Groningen (Transparent Health Care and Education). They train them in conducting qualitative research on health-related issues and in teaching qualitative research methods to their students at Hanzehogeschool. A future goal is to conduct research jointly on health-related issues in Northern Netherlands.

External activities

- From 9 to 12 July, many of us participated in the European Population Conference in Barcelona. Karen Haandrikman discussed her spatial micro model of partner choice. Ajay Bailey presented his findings on the spatial-cultural configuration of sex work in Goa, India. Biswamitra Sahu gave a talk about her work on religious minority status. Beata Nowok dealt with a probabilistic perspective towards harmonisation of migration statistics. Marieke van der Pers presented her proposal on reproductive health in displaced situations. Erka Caro held a poster presentation on internal migration in Albania after the 1990s. Both Ajay Bailey and Inge Hutter chaired a session.
- Leo van Wissen was one of the organizers of the annual conference of the Netherlands Demographic Society (NVD) on October 9. He gave as well a keynote presentation on population decline in Northern Netherlands.
- On October 28, Aagje Papineau-Salm chaired the formal launching of the New Sharenet in Utrecht.
- On November 12, Inge Hutter chaired, on behalf of the World Population Foundation, a session on the release of the UNFPA State of the World Population 2008, at Nieuwspoort, The Hague. The report was presented by UNFPA's Deputy Executive, Purnima Mane, to the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation Bert Koenders.
- On November 29 and 30, a workshop organized by Ajay Bailey was held to share research findings with NGOs in Goa, India.

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- September 1, Shirish Darak started his PhD research ‘Reproductive career of couples with HIV in India: proximate determinants, decision-making and meaning of parenthood’. His supervisors are Inge Hutter, Fanny Janssen, Sanjeevani Kulkarni (Prayas, Pune) and Siddhivinayak Hirve (KEM hospital Pune).
- December 1, Anu Kou commenced her PhD research “Brain gain: migrant biographies of highly skilled South Asians in the Netherlands and United Kingdom”. Her supervisors are Ajay Bailey, Leo van Wissen and Jouke van Dijk (Dept of Economic Geography). She is a recipient of the Ubbo Emmius fellowship from the University of Groningen.
- September 11, the TV series “Adams Appel” produced by TV Noord aired a programme which discussed Biswamittra Sahu's PhD research as well as PRC's current research agenda.
- November 20, Fanny Janssen's insights into findings by Statistics Netherlands on the differences in healthy life expectancy between the higher and lower educated in the Netherlands were published in the newspaper of the University of Groningen.
- January 29, KC Samir successfully defended his PhD thesis on lung health in rural Nepal – Multi-state modeling of health status and economic evaluation of integrated respiratory care guidelines. His promotors were Frans Willekens and Louis Niessen (Erasmus MC Rotterdam).
- We have an opening for a PhD student to conduct research on migration and health among the elderly. See http://www.rug.nl/gradschoolspat/.