Dear colleagues,

As summer moves into full swing, the PRC will face several changes, some of which are a cause for excitement, while others involve transition. The biggest change will be the departure of our former Head of Department, Inge Hutter, who will be appointed the new rector of ISS in the Hague. We will also initiate some changes in the Master’s in Population Studies, and refine our teaching programme. Lastly, a new editor will take charge of the next issue of the PRC Newsletter. In the coming months we will be dealing with some of these changes and challenges, and also welcome new colleagues and students.

In this Newsletter we announce the departure of Inge Hutter. We will miss her greatly, and wish her much success in her new undertaking. We hope to keep working together, since the research carried out by the PRC and ISS is complementary.

Femke Hitzert, a junior researcher in our department, writes about her work in Brazil, where she carried out fieldwork on growth indicators of a cohort of 14-year-olds, a cohort Hinke Haisma, an associate professor in our department, started studying more than 10 years ago.

Auke Vlonk, an alumni of the Master’s in Population Studies, shares his experiences of his student days at our department and talks about the route he took after graduating from the master’s programme.

In the last few pages of the newsletter, you will find, as usual, details about our publications, presentations and other activities as well as short news items. For more news, please visit our website http://www.rug.nl/research/ursi/prc/ or follow us on Facebook: Population Research Centre Groningen.

Have a great summer.
Kind regards,

Also on behalf of Clara Mulder (Head of the PRC)

Sanne Visser
Departure of Inge Hutter

Starting in August, Professor Inge Hutter, the former head of our department and current dean of our faculty, will be appointed the new rector of the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague. Founded in 1952, ISS focuses on policy-oriented critical social sciences and it is part of the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

Inge was the Dean and Professor of Demography at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences in Groningen, where she has been working since 1990. As dean she is also the director of the faculty’s URSI – Urban and Regional Studies Institute – which conducts research in demography, planning and geography. Inge studied anthropology and demography in Utrecht and Groningen. She obtained her PhD from Groningen University, and her research was on South Indian rural women’s diet during pregnancy and the welfare of their children. Much of Inge’s demographic research which she has conducted and supervised concerns action-oriented research projects. A strong focus in her research work is on the cultural aspects of reproductive health. Working together with local NGOs, research institutes and universities in India and Bangladesh, Inge has conducted and initiated many research projects as well as a health educational campaign based on research results. Inge has done research in India, Cameroon and Malawi and supervised PhD researchers from Ghana, India, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Netherlands. She is also involved in HAPS – Healthy Ageing, Population & Society – a joint project of Groningen University’s Faculty of Spatial Sciences, Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences and the University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG). We are grateful to Inge for her contribution to our faculty and we wish her all the best in her new position.

Message from the Field

Femke Hitzert, Brazil, February—June 2015

For the past three months I have been carrying out fieldwork in Pelotas, a city in the south of Brazil, collecting data for a research project on adolescents’ body composition. It is a continuation of the research Hinke Haisma did for her PhD, which involved collecting data on the body composition of infants aged 8 months.

The current research aims to study whether body composition during childhood (at 8 months and 4.5 years) predicts later life body composition (at age 14). In other words, does being fat as a child matter and are there implications for obesity at a later age? If there is no relation between being fat in early childhood and later in life, the commotion around childhood obesity should be reconsidered, and children could happily stay fat.

I arrived in Pelotas on 27 February. It was the day that the carnival began – a nice first encounter with Brazilian culture! After that, I started to work at the epidemiological research centre to prepare for my fieldwork. Equipment and materials had to be bought, and I had to be trained to carry out anthropometric measurements. I spent some days in the lab as well preparing deuterium solutions; something I never imagined I would be doing as a demographer! This preparation time gave me time to adjust to the Brazilian way of life, and more importantly, to work on my Portuguese. I was surprised by the fact that even at a university research institute, only a few people spoke English. Fortunately, everyone was very helpful and several PhD students organized Portuguese lessons for me. In the meantime, my Brazilian co-worker went into the field in search of the participants whom Hinke
visited 10 years ago. It was quite a challenge to locate the same children a decade later. After some weeks details were finalized and the actual fieldwork began. We visited 57 children in their homes to collect saliva, to administer a dose of deuterium mixed with water and to obtain measurements pertaining to their weight, height, and waist and upper arm circumference. We also asked simple questions from a questionnaire about their eating habits and physical exercise patterns. Four hours after the first visit, my co-worker returned to collect another saliva sample. It was great to experience Brazilian hospitality: no matter how small the house (sometimes there was only one room), we were always offered a seat and coffee or fresh juice. The enormous socio-economic disparity between families became clear to me during the fieldwork. I remember one morning when I visited a big house with a pool in the garden, and one hour later I was visiting a child in a wooden, self-built house where the floor was so uneven that I could not find a level surface to place the balance. I always felt a little uneasy visiting these poor families: I was dependent on their goodwill to take part in the research, but had to leave them in the same situation in which I found them. We could only give the children a small present, and seeing their happy faces cheered me up a little. Doing research with 14-year-olds was a challenge as well. We had quite a strict schedule for saliva collection because of the deuterium, but sometimes the children were not at the place they were supposed to be (for example, school), or they had eaten in the hour before the collection, which compromised the saliva sample. However, despite these ‘problems’ I really liked being in the field and getting acquainted with my participants and their family. I am looking forward to analysing the results in the coming months!

Dutch Demography Day 2015—Call for abstracts

On Wednesday 25 November 2015, the Netherlands Demographic Society (NVD) is organizing the 8th Dutch Demography Day in the Academy Building of Utrecht University. At the Demography Day 2015 the most recent findings in the broad and interdisciplinary field of population studies will be presented. The scientific program comprises a Keynote Address and several rounds of both English and Dutch language parallel sessions as well as a poster session.

Call for Abstracts
Abstracts (maximum of 200 words) can be submitted until 14 August 2015 through the website www.nvdemografie.nl. As usual, the Dutch Demography Day addresses the full range of the interdisciplinary field of population studies. Participants will be informed by mid-September at the latest if their abstract has been accepted for presentation in one of the parallel sessions or in the poster session. The decision of the organizing committee is final. Participants may choose to present a poster.

NIDI-NVD Master Thesis Award 2015
To promote the study of population and to especially encourage young researchers in the field, the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute NIDI and the Netherlands Demographic Society NVD yearly bestow the NIDI-NVD Master Thesis Award for the best master thesis in the field of the interdisciplinary study of population/demography. The NIDI-NVD Master Thesis Award carries a Euro 500 cash benefit and a certificate. The consolation for participation can be found under ‘downloads - Conditions Master thesis Awards). Master theses can be submitted until Wednesday 30 September 2015 at demografiedag@gmail.com.

NVD Poster Award 2015
This year the NVD introduces the NVD Poster Award. This Award will be presented to the poster which best presents and visualizes the results of population research at the Dutch Demography Day 2015. The NVD sponsors this award with a €100 prize. Posters will be judged at the Dutch Demography Day.
Interview with an Alumnus


During my study Environmental & Infrastructure Planning (EIP), I minored in demography. It turned out to be very interesting since numbers have always been ‘my thing’. After graduating with a master’s in EIP, it was a good choice to enrol in the Master’s in Population Studies programme, which equipped me with a relatively uncommon combination of skills and knowledge. It turned out to be one of the best decisions in my life. My course mates were very committed and the atmosphere was very good: excellent conditions for obtaining knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods, getting good grades and having fun at the same time. At the beginning of my master’s, I mentioned to Inge Hutter that I was interested in an internship combined with my master’s thesis. Thanks to her effort, I could start at the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency. After completing 5 months of internship, I carried on working there for almost 2.5 years, doing research on perception of infrastructure vicinities, urbanization and the Millennium Development Goals. And … I met my fiancée there.

I found another opportunity in the Jan van Es Institute, a knowledge institute for integrated primary care. Although I knew almost nothing about primary care, I got the job: mainly because I had experience with population forecasts. Thank you Population Studies! My work entailed performing analyses of different types of research, but mainly on population and demand for (primary) health care. Health care centres now have a platform which makes available maps and data on current and future expected demand for care (based on population and indicators) and actual demand for care (based on their patients’ data). The platform provides health care centres access to information concerning the distribution of patients, target groups, and so on.

After three years at the Jan van Es Institute, I began working for AimTrack (September 2014), together with the owner of the platform and the owner of a health and care innovation database. The scope of the platform has been extended from primary care to an integral perspective which covers costs, health, primary care, secondary care and medication. We have also created a model for long-term care. The platform provides insight into current and future situations (and problems), for example, data on older adults who have to live longer in their own home; centres where health care facilities are sufficient; and centres where health care could be organized differently. An example of such a platform is available at http://wijkscan.com/maastricht. The innovation database provides solutions for problems as well as various portfolios (eHealth, home automation, robotics, and so on).

The Master of Population Studies degree has equipped me with a large backpack of methodological and theoretical knowledge which I use in my daily work and which also combines policy interventions and daily life practices. And as a member of the Board of the Dutch Demographic Society I also try to combine theory, policy and practice in seminars with an integral perspective, for example on population forecasts. More importantly, if I had not done the Master’s in Population Studies programme, I would not have had the kind of opportunities (personal and career) I have now.

Contact: https://nl.linkedin.com/in/aukevlonk
Recent publications


Workshops

Louise Meijering, Zaina Mchome and Shirish Darak are on a research visit at the Manipal University in India. Louise is conducting a systematic review about psychosocial interventions aiming to increase mobility-related outcomes of stroke survivors, and Zaina is working on a protocol for a systematic review about multi-dimensional indicators of child growth and development. Shirish is involved as a co-author.

Louise Meijering will also visit the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore to prepare a workshop on participatory approach, together with prof K.S. James.

Inge Hutter, Ajay Bailey, Louise Meijering, Myriam Hemsteede and Mirjam Klaassens organized and gave a Workshop on Participatory approaches to research in the field of Ageing at the TISS institute in Mumbai, India.
Presentations


Education

Our MSc Population Studies is the best Master in the category ‘Geography and Planning’ of the Higher Education Guide 2015 in the Netherlands. It has also been marked as ‘top-programme’.

As of the new academic year, a new module will be introduced in the Master Population Studies, entitled “Contemporary Population Issues”. The module will comprise of different research seminars related to contemporary population issues, such as population ageing, integration of migrants, health, nutrition and poverty. Both examples of scientific research and applied research will be provided. The contemporary population issues will be drawn from different geographical contexts. Coordinator will be Eva Kibele.

Two proposals for the Centrale Beleidsruimte; financial space to support ideas on development of the faculty of Spatial Sciences, in research and teaching, have been accepted:

- Knowledge Centre Participatory Approach (idea of Louise Meijering, Christine Fenenga, Hinke Haisma, Ajay Bailey, Myriam Hemsteede, Mirjam Klaassens in collaboration with other departments)
- Combining GIS/GPS and qualitative methods in teaching and research (Louise Meijering, Gerd Weitkamp and Bettina van Hoven)

External activities

Fanny Janssen. gave an invited lecture on during the 29 Jan 2015 gave a short presentation about “The smoking epidemic” during the University of Groningen Lecturer of the year election: http://www.rug.nl/news-and-events/events/lecturer-of-the-year/2014/janssen

First half of 2015 Fanny Janssen is jury member of the NWO Innovative Research Scheme, for the VENI grant proposals within the Social Sciences.

April 10 2015: Fanny Janssen was expert discussant at the second seminar of the basic training program of the N.W. Posthumus Institute.

In January Myriam Hemsteede attended the course ‘Facilitating Interactive Processes of Change’ at Wageningen University, The Netherlands.

Visitors

From mid-April to end of May Angelina M. Lutambi – senior researcher at the Ifakara Health Institute in Tanzania – visited PRC to work with Fanny Janssen and Leo van Wissen on spatial modelling of HIV in Tanzania. Her stay is part of the NICHE project (see PRC newsletter issue 20).

Selim Jahangir from University of Delhi is visiting the PRC for two months (June-August) as part of NWO-ESRC-ICSSR grant on Ageing in Globalizing World. He will write papers based on his PhD dissertation ‘Gender, Space and Ageing: Care Geographies of Elderly Men in Delhi and Kolkata’ and his supervisors are Ajay Bailey and Anindita Datta (University of Delhi).

PRC News

Dec: Femke Hitzert, research assistant at the PRC, won the NIDI Master Thesis Award 2014. The title of her thesis is ‘Breast milk transfer across the globe: the influence of maternal body composition, socioeconomic status and smoking’ and she was supervised by Hinke Haisma.

Jan: Christine Fenenga defended her PhD dissertation ‘A matter of trust - Clients’ perspective on healthcare and health insurance services in Ghana’. Her supervisors are prof.dr. Inge Hutter and dr. Daniel Arhinfu.

As of April 1, 2015 Fanny Janssen has been promoted to Associate Professor.

Prof Clara Mulder has become the editor of Population, Space and Place, jointly with prof Allan Findlay.

Maties Reus Pons is currently on a research stay at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel for 7 months.

New colleague: Elda Pardede joined the PRC as a PhD researcher earlier this month.
Announcements


Summer School Healthy Ageing 6-10 July, 2015: Programme available

Ageing is related to problems both at societal as well as at individual level. Healthy ageing is part of the solution, and various disciplines are engaging in healthy ageing research, including social sciences, demography, biomedical sciences, and public health. The main goal of the Healthy Ageing Summer School is that students gain insight into the healthy ageing obtained by these different disciplines, ranging from cell to society. The School strives for scientific co-operation and pre- and post-graduate education at an international level, trying to attract students already interested in research. The intentions are to stimulate students interest in research from an early stage on, to allow master students the opportunity to get an overview of and explore the possibilities of healthy ageing research in Groningen and to encourage contact between students and research project leaders. The school also aids in recruiting young potentials, i.e. enthusiastic and talented students who are attracted by interdisciplinary approaches to scientific research.

Preliminary programme:

The 3rd European Health Literacy Conference, in Brussels, Belgium from 17-19 November 2015. The theme for the 3rd European Health Literacy Conference highlights the development of health literacy during the life course. Pre-conferences on specific themes will be organized; for example, the IROHLA Consortium will present its Health Literacy Guideline for Policy and Practice in one of the pre-conferences.