Dear colleagues,

The Population Research Centre has been working steadily, chalking up new achievements and making ongoing improvements to our education and research. With the bright and sunny days ahead, we have some notable achievements to share. Among our latest news is that Fanny Janssen received the prestigious VIDI Grant last month. We are very proud to receive this grant – which Hinke Haisma received a year ago – again, with the opportunity it provides to work on new and exciting research topics. In addition, our faculty’s educational and research programmes have been reviewed, and we are doing well!

In this newsletter, Louise Meijering reports on her current research topic as well as recent developments in her field. Louise is one of our assistant professors and is researching healthy ageing (in place). Her research with stroke patients examines how people experience their life following a stroke.

We introduce HAPS, a collaboration between different departments of the University of Groningen, including Demography. Many of our researchers are involved in this collaboration which is interdisciplinary in nature and focuses on Healthy Ageing.

Our ‘Message from the Field’ comes from one of our PhD candidates, Acul Wadji, who attended one of the courses in Demography run by the Max Planke Institute in Germany. He reports on his experience of the course and the institute. In this newsletter’s ‘Alumni Interview’, two graduates of the Master’s in Population Studies, currently residing in Germany, share their experiences of the programme. This is a special interview, because their Master’s study here led to one of the few Demography weddings!

We close, as usual, with our latest publications and the news from our department.

For more news, please follow us on our website http://www.rug.nl/research/ursi/prc/ or Facebook: Population Research Centre Groningen.

We wish you all a very happy summer!

Kind regards,

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

Sanne Visser
Research Line: Life at home after a Stroke
Louise Meijering

My name is Louise Meijering, and I have been working as an assistant professor at the PRC since early 2009. I am trained as a cultural geographer. Since the fall of 2010, I have been involved in a research project on stroke survivors and their experiences in different places, in collaboration with the Centre for Rehabilitation at the University Medical Centre Groningen (UMCG). The project falls under the PRC research theme of ‘Healthy Ageing in Society’. It started as a small ‘hobby project’ alongside my main research, but it has gradually expanded to become one of my main areas of research, as I’ve become fascinated by the complex problems that stroke survivors experience.

Stroke survivors form a significant and increasing group in today’s ageing society. According to Statistics Netherlands (2012), one in twenty adults in this country aged 50 years and over (305,899) experiences a stroke and survives. With such figures, stroke is the leading cause of disability.

A stroke is an illness with a sudden onset, and is often experienced as life shattering. Stroke survivors suffer from impairments such as paralysis, loss of sight, fatigue, and loss of concentration. They have to deal with unanticipated changes in their identity and life course; they feel that their post-stroke body does not match their previous identity, and struggle to develop a ‘new’ identity. Consequently, many stroke survivors experience depression, social isolation, and reduced well-being.

Despite the fact that a substantial proportion of the population is affected by stroke, little is known about the (inter)actions of stroke survivors in their own living environments. In this research project, therefore, we aim to gain insight into the frictions and successes in the everyday lives of stroke survivors. The project is a collaboration with the rehabilitation scientists Dr Ant Lettinga, Dr Christa Nanninga, Prof. Klaas Postema and Dr Marleen Schonherr at the Centre for Rehabilitation. Two student researchers, Linden Douma and Jelle Straatsma, have also been working on the project.

So far, we have carried out in-depth interviews with 33 stroke survivors in the presence of their significant other. We asked our participants to reflect on their experiences in the rehabilitation clinic, the discharge period and their current lives at home and in the community. An overarching theme of ‘longing for’ emerged from the empirical material. We found that our participants longed for different things, which were linked to three phases of the rehabilitation process: 1) rehabilitation phase, 2) post-discharge phase, and 3) reintegration phase.

In the rehabilitation phase, our participants felt abruptly disconnected from their bodies, homes, and community. Most accepted and appreciated the safe and temporarily restricted environment of the rehabilitation clinic, but longed for their familiar, independent and able body, situated in its own home and community. In the second phase, after being discharged home, most participants needed all their energy to come to terms with permanent bodily changes and to recreate a sense of belonging in their own homes. Although our participants longed to take up pre-stroke activities and roles, they began to realize that their lives would never be the same again. In the reintegration phase, most participants found that their body, home and living spaces became smaller in both a social and geographical sense. Often this was caused by a lack of understanding or recognition of their changed selves by other people, such as family members, friends, colleagues and professionals, and in some cases by the participants themselves. They continued to long for recognition and a new sense of belonging, but found this hard to achieve.

Partly as a result of the outcomes of this project, the Centre for Rehabilitation has started a pilot project in which specially trained coaches, who can assess the complex nature of the problems that may arise after a stroke, assist stroke survivors in their daily lives. This intervention aims to further improve rehabilitation practice.
We are currently deepening our analyses of home-making, and exploring the concepts of mobility and complexity. We also intend to do further data collection to increase our understanding of the mobility of stroke survivors, and to translate this into interventions to improve the well-being of stroke survivors and their families.

The results presented here are drawn from two papers, one of which is currently under review:


If you would like to know more about the project, please contact me at l.b.meijering@rug.nl.

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**Collaboration HAPS:**

**Healthy Ageing, Population and Society**

In late 2010, the Departments of Demography, Epidemiology and Sociology of the University of Groningen joined forces to set up an interdisciplinary research initiative. It is part of the University research priority area “Healthy Aging”. It was made possible by a grant from the University, and is co-financed by the three Departments. In the course of 2011, preparatory steps were taken by the HAPS core group, consisting of several senior researchers in each of the three Departments. In September 2011, six new PhD students and three postdoctoral researchers joined the program. The mission of HAPS is to enhance healthy ageing in society by studying the societal aspects of the process of healthy ageing over the life course, focusing on the interactions between the three societal levels: macro, meso, and micro. HAPS is multidisciplinary in nature and combines the individual approach of epidemiology with the macro-population and socio-cultural approaches of (social) demography and the institutional and network approaches of sociology.

Research within HAPS focuses on the following themes:

- Studying healthy ageing at both macro (population, groups in society) and micro (individuals) levels
- Situating healthy ageing in the socio-cultural context (macro and meso level) in which people live
- Combining research approaches and theories from the social sciences and medicine
- Combining quantitative research methods (life table analysis, longitudinal data analysis, multi-level analysis) with qualitative research methods (social network analysis, interviews, focus group discussions and observations)
- Linking research to interventions and policymaking

On the 18th of June a seminar entitled ‘The social context of healthy ageing’ is organized by HAPS. All the PhD students and post-docs involved in the collaboration will provide an update on their work. More information can be found at www.rug.nl/haps.
Interview with an Alumnus

Karina Hoekstra Wibowo and Dyon Hoekstra, Alumni master Population Studies 2008-2009

In this edition of ‘Interview with an Alumnus’, two alumni jointly tell us about their experiences during and after the Master of Population Studies. Karina and Dyon met during the master’s programme and just got married!

What made you decide to do the Master of Population Studies/Demography in Groningen?

Karina: During my undergraduate programme in Public Health, I decided to specialize in Demography, and therefore looked for graduate programmes in this field. The master’s programme in Groningen was focused on international students, which was a very important consideration for me. Furthermore, my thesis and internship supervisors both recommended that I study Demography at the PRC.

Dyon: During my undergraduate studies in Human Geography and Planning, I decided to do a minor specialization in Demography. I really liked the focus on "studying the people behind the numbers" and I wanted to go more in the direction of Health. I really enjoyed combining quantitative and qualitative research and using a participatory approach. This made me decide to do a Master’s in Population Studies and to continue working with the PRC later when I switched to the Research Master’s.

Can you tell us something about your experiences during your studies?

We really enjoyed working with students from all around the world and with different backgrounds. This diversity was the key to fruitful discussions in and outside the classroom. Working with different researchers – from anthropologists, like Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey, to epidemiologists like Fanny Janssen and economic demographers like Leo van Wissen – brought the most benefits and was the best exposure to interdisciplinary research employing different methods. Those who did not study with us can never understand how despite having followed the same programme, we ended up with very different skills. Karina concentrated more on quantitative methods, mortality and migration in Germany and the Netherlands, while Dyon concentrated on qualitative methods, community-based participatory approaches, reproductive health and developing countries. However, besides the irreplaceable education we received at PRC, we also found our partner for life: we got married last December! :-)

What did you do after your Master’s/PhD?

Karina: Right after my master’s I started a PhD in Economics at the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences, which is part of the University of Bremen and Jacobs University Bremen. My thesis title is ‘Racism and Ageism in Health Care: A Comparison between Germany, the Netherlands and Indonesia’. I will be finishing my PhD studies in June.

Dyon: After my master’s studies I started working as a Research Associate at Maritime Logistics at Jacobs University Bremen. Unfortunately it is not related to Demography, but now after 2 1/2 years of project management and teaching, I am looking for an opportunity to go back to the field of Population and Health.

Do you still use the knowledge that you acquired in Groningen?

Karina: Yes; besides using the theories and methods I learnt during my master’s studies in my PhD project, I started teaching two elective courses on Demography at the University of Bremen and Jacobs University Bremen. The courses were very popular since the subject has not been offered before. The maximum number of students for elective courses is usually 20; for my first course, 120 students applied to participate. Out of these, more than 80 students were interested in the master’s studies in Demography (unfortunately only in German...).

Dyon: Although I do not work in the field of Demography, I still use the research methods and skills for the projects I am working on. Moreover, I am still trying to keep the human aspects central in my work.
Message from the Field

Acul Wajdi, November 2013 - January 2014

In November 2013, I was lucky to be selected as one of the visiting scholars at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPI-DR) in Rostock, Germany. There I followed an advanced research training programme, which is set up for doctoral students and post-docs, called International Advanced Studies in Demography (IDEM). IDEM is designed to provide structured learning opportunities for young researchers, combining coursework and research.

The programme provides advanced and structured training for graduate students in Demography and related disciplines, and is aimed principally at enhancing doctoral research.

I initially applied for only one course, Spatial Demography, since my research is related to spatial demography. My research is on inter-regional migration in Indonesia in the context of regional population redistribution.

There were so many ‘first-time’ experiences during my stay in Germany. It was my first trip to Germany, and the most interesting part was my first snow experience! When I arrived there, I met another visiting scholar named Hun, from Korea, who then became my flatmate. He also introduced me to a brand new – at least to me – research method called Agent Based Modelling and Simulations (ABMS). So my third first-time experience was getting familiar with ABMS. After having several discussions with Hun and other students, I decided to take the ABMS course, and luckily for me, Prof. Willekens, who was the course coordinator, accepted me.

The Spatial Demography course, taught by Dr. Sebastian Klüsener, included concepts, spatial statistics, GIS and cartographic techniques. The course started on 5 November 2013 and finished on 31 January 2014. In this course we learned how to analyse spatial data and geographical maps, which facilitates better understanding of the data. We also learned about the significance tests that are crucial for analysis and which ensure that one does not jump to conclusions. The other important part was modelling geographical data and understanding the spatial processes. This course drove home the fact that space does matter and showed how space can affect the estimation results, which in turn affect the conclusions of a study. Using improper methodology and neglecting spatial factors may lead to incorrect research interpretation. At the end of this course, each student was required to submit a mini-project. Mine was entitled ‘Commuting Distance of Indonesian Workers’.

The other course I took, ABMS, described how populations evolve, patterns (e.g. social networks) emerge, and collective features (e.g. norms) are established as outcomes of actions and interactions at the micro level. The ABM approach is an extension of micro-simulation. It adds behaviour (in terms of decision rules) to micro-simulation, while maintaining the strengths of micro-simulation. The presence of interaction is often seen as a distinguishing feature of ABM, but some micro-simulation models also incorporate interactions (e.g. marriage and kinship models). An interesting part of this course was the implementation of NetLogo (http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/) as the main software platform for the simulation. The use of NetLogo, which is free, is more fun than work, because you can play a game and at the same time do your simulation. You can play around with the turtles and create your own world while starting your simulation.

In short, I had great experience during my course. I would say that it is worth a try!

References
http://www.demogr.mpg.de/en/education_career/international_advanced_studies_in_demography_3279/courses_3280/spatial_demography_3288/default.htm
Recent publications


Eva Kibele’s guest post in Demotrends: 'Changing patterns: Regional mortality differences and the East-West divide in Germany.'


Presentations


Liesbeth S de Wit. Older adult’s needs and perceptions regarding health literacy components: participatory focus group discussions in three European countries (Oral presentation). 2nd European Health Literacy Conference, Aarhus (Denmark), 10-11 April.


Visitors
From February till April Katrin Schwanitz returned to the PRC to work with Clara Mulder on the second paper of her PhD research entitled Family living arrangements from a cross-national comparative perspective.

Seminar/workshops
Together with researchers from the University Medical Center, Eva Kibele is organizing the Summer School Healthy Ageing. The main goal of this Summer School is to introduce students into the various aspects of healthy ageing with focus on the limitations and complications we are facing today and foster interdisciplinary colaboration. Clara Mulder will tell more about her research during this Summer school. More information: http://www.rug.nl/research/gradschool-medical-sciences/summer-schools/healthy-ageing/

Ajay Bailey and Shirish Darak provided qualitative research workshops at MS Ramaiah Insitute of Medical Sciences, Bangalore and at the Manipal University, Manipal

As part of the NWO-ESRC-ICSSR project: Ageing in a Globalizing world a seminar was held at NIDI, Den Haag, where partners from Bangalroe, Trivandrum, Southampton and Groningen were present. The seminar provided an update on the ongoing joint publications and research activities and planned for the forthcoming events in India and Southampton.
Education
As of this academic year, the PRC offers a two-year international double degree Master programme in Social Demography jointly with the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) (Barcelona, Spain). For more information, please see http://goo.gl/zRFJGi and http://goo.gl/qmOZFO

External activities
November/December: Ajay Bailey joined the delegation headed by the Prof. S. Poppema, President of the University of Groningen, to India. They visited universities and research institutes in Delhi, Bangalore and Manipal. A key outcome for PRC Groningen was the signing of the MOU between Institute for Social and Economic Change and the University of Groningen.

January: Eva Kibele organized & chaired the NVD-HAPS-NIDI study afternoon Living environment and health

February: Fanny Janssen presented a paper on sex differences in life expectancy in the Netherlands from a historical perspective with Frans van Poppel (NIDI) at a workshop in Stuttgart entitled The drifting apart of gender-specific life expectancy in Central and Northwestern Europe 1850/1900-2000/10. A comparison and organised by the Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung

March: Fanny Janssen was interviewed by "Libelle" (a popular Dutch glossy magazine) on the likelihood that babies born today will reach the age of 100.

May: Hinke Haisma was external examiner for a viva of Kenda Cunningham to obtain the degree of DrPH from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The title of the thesis was "Maternal empowerment, childcare practices, and child nutrition in rural Nepal: examining the pathways"

PRC News
Thanks to structural financial support of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the University of Groningen, top-quality interdisciplinary research into population issues will continue in the Netherlands. The NIDI is an institute that conducts research on demographic issues. There are many links between the activities of the NIDI and the University of Groningen with relation to research and teaching. The two institutions are planning to collaborate closely on two of the three research focuses of the University of Groningen (sustainable society and healthy ageing). The three parties have signed a collaboration. The new episode of Unifocus features an item about the continuation of NIDI. Leo van Wissen is one of the people in the video. You can watch it at the Unifocus website: http://www.unifocus.nl/site/pagina.php?id_item=390&tab=journaals

Fanny Janssen obtained a prestigious Dutch research fellowship (VIDI) from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research which amounts 800,000 euros to conduct research on future mortality in Europe in the coming five years. The full title of her research proposal is "Smoking, alcohol and obesity - ingredients for improved and robust mortality projections”.

Together with her colleagues Michael Wagner from the University of Cologne, and Hill Kulu from the University of Liverpool, Clara Mulder won a grant for the research programme ‘Partner relationships, residential relocations and housing in the life course’. This programme aims to study the connections between partner relationships (including both living-apart-together and co-residential partnerships), residential relocations and housing in the Netherlands, the U.K. and Germany, using large survey datasets and applying methods of longitudinal data analysis. It is funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research NWO, the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council and the German Research Foundation DFG under the ORA Plus scheme. The programme is to start on July 1 2014 and will last for three years.

Zaina Mchome joined the PRC as PhD researcher. Under supervision of Hinke Haisma and Sepideh Yousefzadeh. She will work on an ethnography of child indicators of healthy growth.

Mark van Duijn joined PRC as Assistant Professor Housing and Real Estate Markets for the departments of Economic Geography as well as Demography.

Announcements
Several of the PRC members are collaborating in the Research on Ageing and Wellbeing Network from the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. The network consists of a group of international researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds as well as practitioners with an interest in Ageing and Wellbeing. In the Faculty, the network facilitates meetings for researchers who address ageing and wellbeing in their research at different spatial scales and from different perspectives,. More information and their newsletters (in Dutch) can be found on http://www.rug.nl/research/ursi/collaboration/ageingwellbeing/