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## News from RSA Working Group

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### 'Regions and Demographic Change' Session strand in 'One Earth, Many Worlds'

**15-20 August 2004 – IGU, Glasgow**

At the recent Glasgow meeting of the IGU the RSA Demographic Ageing Working Group organised two sponsored sessions, which attracted over 50 delegates. Papers in the two sessions explored regions and demographic change.

#### **Productive activities in later life**

*Professor M.J. van der Meer, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

In many cultures employment is seen as the most important form of productivity. Further, being productive is often associated with being 'functional' for society. Following this reasoning holds the risk that those who have retired are seen as no longer productive and therefore less 'functional'. Stressing the productivity of one's life in relation to labour participation raises questions like 'what do older people have to offer?' However, there are other *non*-paid activities, which produce services in which retired persons can be involved. This research applies a broad definition of work. Productive activities are specified as: paid work, voluntary work, giving assistance to other people, and home maintenance and housekeeping.

In general, older adults will show a decreasing involvement in these types of activities, as they grow older. However, to understand the degree of involvement and the variation in activities better, it is important to recognise the heterogeneity of the older population. Productive activities are obviously gender related, especially within the older generation. However, also contextual differences can play a role in the involvement of the older adult, and so in her presentation M van der Meer places both older men and older women within the context of their living environment. The living environment is defined in two ways, with a distinction made between urban and rural areas. It is expected that the stronger community life in villages will be reflected in the involvement in activities, however to greater extent for women than for men. In the second way, relatively poor neighbourhoods were compared to rich neighbourhoods. It is generally expected that the older adults, and especially the men, are less active in the relatively poor neighbourhoods, because of personal and contextual constraints.

In her presentation the author drew on data that are

part of the European Study on Adult Well-Being (ESAW), a European Union funded research project, which aims to develop a European Model of adult well-being. As part of the project individual interviews were undertaken in 2002-2003 by means of a structured questionnaire with 1,939 older adults of 50-90 year old living in the Netherlands.

#### **Urban/rural differences in daily activities in late adulthood in Europe: a comparison**

*Professor J Droogleever Fortuijn and Professor Dr M. van der Meer, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

Two contrasting theories describe the changes in daily activities in late adulthood. According to the disengagement theory people become less active at advancing age. As a result of decreasing mental and physical abilities people disengage gradually from a variety of activities; daily life shows less variation and becomes more and more restricted to a limited range of activities. The continuity theory, however, presupposes a continuation of active life in late adulthood. Engagement in paid work and the raising of children makes place for engagement in a variety of other productive and leisure activities.

These theories refer to life activities in late adulthood in modern, high-developed countries in general. Older adults, however, do not form a homogeneous category. Daily activities vary between older adults with different personal characteristics and older adults in different contexts. This presentation focuses on contextual differences on two levels: on differences between countries within the European Union and between urban and rural areas within countries. Differences between countries reflect cultural differences (family systems for example) and institutional differences (pension and social security systems for example). Urban/rural differences refer to differences in availability and accessibility of activity opportunities and in social structure.

As part of their paper the authors presented an analysis of the activity patterns of older adults in urban and rural areas in six European countries: Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden. The data are part of the European Study on Adult Well-being (ESAW), a European Union funded research project. A principle component analysis was

carried out in order to identify the main dimensions in the activity patterns of urban and rural older adults in each of the six countries. The activity patterns were interpreted in terms of cultural and institutional differences between the countries and functional and social differences between urban and rural areas.

### **Third age and enterprise in the UK: issues and policy response**

*Professor M. Hart and Professor R Blackburn, Kingston University, England and Mrs M. O'Reilly and Dr M. Anyadike-Danes, Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland, N Ireland*

In a paper presented by Mark Hart, which generated national press coverage, the experiences and potential for business formation and ownership amongst individuals between the ages of 45 and 74 – those in the Third Age was examined. The significance of the paper related to developments in demography, the treatment of older workers in the contemporary work place and enterprise growth in the future.

Europe's ageing population has already received considerable attention from policy makers and researchers because of its impact on individuals, families, labour markets and economies and society as a whole. Further, the implications of ageing for the development of entrepreneurship and the SME sector, particularly small enterprises, is seen as a crucial area for investigation in the broader context of economic development and employment. For example, the sharp fall in the employment rates of men aged over 48 years, set alongside the issue of an ageing population, has intensified an interest in 'older workers'. There is a concern within Government that increased numbers of inactive older workers will put increased strains on the welfare state.

All these considerations offer a challenge to policy. 600,000 more persons would be working in the UK today if employment rates of men between 55 and 65 were the same as they were in 1979. The authors presented baseline information on business ownership among the Third Age population using the Census of Population and the English and Northern Ireland Household Survey of Entrepreneurship along with the findings of a study for the DTI/Natwest on Third Age Enterprise which analyses the experiences of those starting up and running a business together with the perceptions of business ownership amongst those seeking work or as employees. They highlighted the opportunities and barriers to entrepreneurship amongst this growing cohort of the population.

### **Demographic change and the changing labour market in Scotland**

*Dr R Brown, Scottish Enterprise and Professor M. Danson, University of Paisley, Scotland*

In their paper Ross Brown and Mike Danson outlined the nature of demographic change in Scotland and how this will affect the labour market in the future. Importantly

for Scottish policy-makers, demographic change will be more marked in Scotland than other parts of the UK. The demographic changes facing Scotland at the beginning of the 21st Century are very different from those facing the country 50 years ago. Although the overall population is very similar, at just over five million, this apparent stability masks big changes in the age structure and geographical distribution of the population within Scotland. The population is now considerably older than fifty years ago, with half the population aged over 38 years in 2001 and ten percent aged over 71 years compared with 31 years and 64 years respectively in 1951. This raises a number of important issues relating to the labour market for older workers.

They began with a brief outline of the main demographic changes in Scotland, followed by an examination of the labour market situation of older workers in the Scottish labour market. They then explored the main barriers to employment facing older workers, along with an examination of the productivity of older workers and the estimated costs of age discrimination. They also touched on attitudes towards age diversity in Scotland as well as policy issues which face Scotland as a result of this changing demographic profile.

### **Welfare packages of dependent older people in a Dutch urban context**

*Professor B. da Roit, University of Milano Bicocca, Italy and Professor J. Droogleever Fortuijn, Professor M. van der Meer and Professor F. Thissen, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

One of the results of demographic ageing is that a growing number of people need long term care. The available care and the actual care people get are dependent on national welfare systems. However, national welfare systems are practiced in local contexts and condition the way people acquire resources from different spheres and according to different principles. The three spheres that can be distinguished – market exchange, redistribution (mainly through public policy) and reciprocity (within informal networks) – are combined in 'welfare packages' for older people in a specific local context as the local available resources for older people and the actual resources acquired by local older people. Older people in a Dutch urban context, e.g. the Amsterdam urban area, are faced with important changes in the organisation of care; one of them is the changing combination of care and housing. This is an important challenge for the local dimension of the welfare state in The Netherlands.

In their paper the authors combined evidence of two perspectives: first from an institutional perspective evidence is presented about welfare packaging in Amsterdam for dependent older people, describing welfare packaging on a macro and a micro level. Second from an individual perspective evidence is presented from a survey of older people above a certain age living in rich and poor neighbourhoods of the Amsterdam urban region.

The authors drew on evidence about the Amsterdam urban region of two comparative research projects, one regarding a comparison between Amsterdam and Milano, and one using data of the European Study on Adult Well-Being (ESAW), a European Union funded research project. This project aims to develop a European Model of adult well-being. Coordinator of the project is Prof. Dr. Clare Wenger, University of Wales, Bangor. The ESAW project was designed as part of the Global Ageing Initiative, initiated by the Indiana University Center on Aging and the Aged, under the directorship of Dr. Barbara Hawkins.

### **The local social integration of older people in rural Europe: Lessons from comparative research**

*Professor F. Thissen, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

Local social integration is seen as an important condition for the well-being of older people. With respect to the local social integration of older people in rural areas a lack of evidence exists and because of that stereotypical and sometimes contradictory images concerning the local social integration of rural older people. For instance, apart from an image of older people embedded in the village where they are born and grown up, an

image exists of rural older people without any contact with family members and dependent on a poorly developed service structure.

The diversity in local social integration of rural older people within Europe at an individual level reflects different patterns of rural ageing and important national differences in demography, cultural geography and political and social policy systems. In his paper Professor Thissen focused on a description and interpretation of local social integration of older people living in a rural context in six European countries: Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden. He drew on theory about the nature of older people's ties to their community and earlier research experience; four types of local social integration are discerned: institutional integration, social activity, the integration in informal social relationships and emotional ties to the local community. The data are based on individual interviews held in 2002-2003 of 3627 men and women of 50-90 year living in a rural context in the six countries mentioned. The data are part of the European Study on Adult Well-Being (ESAW), a European Union funded research project.

*Mike Danson and Irene Hardill*

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### **Call for papers and invitation to workshop: 'Innovation and the regional productivity agenda'** **Aston University, Birmingham – 20 October 2004**

We are writing to invite you to attend a one-day workshop on innovation and the regional productivity agenda at Aston University, Birmingham on 20 October 2004. The workshop is being organised by the Regional Productivity Working Group, part of the Regional Studies Association.

We are actively seeking papers on spatial aspects of innovation and innovation policy and its contribution – or potential contribution – to improving regional productivity and performance. We are particularly keen to attract papers with significant policy implications and those with an international or comparative empirical base. Policy case studies and examples of innovative best practice will also be welcome. The aim of the workshop is to link best practice research and policy analysis and contributions from both researchers and policy makers are encouraged. The agenda for the day is 'open', however, and will largely be shaped by the papers which are offered.

This will be the third workshop in a series of four to run in 2004 and will follow successful workshops in such areas as clusters, employability, ageing and the labour market organised over the last two years. All have the aim of bringing together a wide-ranging group of people to consider policy issues and related applied research. It

is hoped that the workshops will be of interest to governments and departments across the UK and that the workshops will feed directly into policy discussions.

We would be very pleased if you could join us for the workshop on 20 October 2004 at Aston Business School. Aston is located in central Birmingham around 15 minutes walk from New Street Station and around 30 minutes by taxi from Birmingham airport. **There is no charge for attending the workshop and lunch will be provided.**

Abstracts of proposed papers (500 words approx.) should be sent to Stephen Roper (s.roper@aston.ac.uk) or Liz Blackford (e.blackford@aston.ac.uk). Attendance at the workshop is open to all, but places will be issued on a 'first come first served' basis. Please complete and return the reply form by fax, post or email to inform us if you would like to attend or present a paper.

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