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This section includes substantive articles reporting the results of comparative longitudinal studies that are demographic and historical in nature, and that are based on micro-data from large historical databases.

Historical Life Course Studies is a no-fee double-blind, peer-reviewed open-access journal supported by the European Science Foundation (ESF, [http://www.esf.org](http://www.esf.org)), the Scientific Research Network of Historical Demography (FWO Flanders, [http://www.historicaldemography.be](http://www.historicaldemography.be)) and the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (IISH, [http://socialhistory.org/](http://socialhistory.org/)). Manuscripts are reviewed by the editors, members of the editorial and scientific boards, and by external reviewers. All journal content is freely available on the internet at [https://openjournals.nl/index.php/hlcs](https://openjournals.nl/index.php/hlcs).

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HISTORICAL LIFE COURSE STUDIES
VOLUME 10, SPECIAL ISSUE 3 (2021), 01-04, published 31-03-2021

Not Like Everybody Else
Essays in Honor of Kees Mandemakers

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ABSTRACT

This collection of essays pays tribute to Kees Mandemaker’s great contribution to the data infrastructure of social science history, in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Several essays discuss (the future of) historical databases. Yet other provide examples of research on topics covering important life course transitions. All demonstrate the scale, scope and variation of research based on well-constructed databases.

Keywords: Historical databases, Social science history, Record linkage, Retirement, Life course

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This open-access work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, reproduction & distribution in any medium for non-commercial purposes, provided the original author(s) and source are given credit. See http://creativecommons.org/licenses/.
A lifelong devotee of The Kinks, Kees Mandemakers is undoubtedly familiar with their song 'I'm not like everybody else' (1967). The rebellious spirit of the song must have resonated with Kees' own early revolt against the strictures of religion, as he fondly recounts his discussions with the church minister trying to teach him catechism. Although he can be quite headstrong, Kees is not the type to protest for the sake of protest, in fact, he turned out to be a 'rebel with a cause'. He devoted his career to the cause of supporting social history in its broadest sense with state-of-the-art databases. This required rebelliousness but most of all perseverance. For the past thirty-odd years, Kees soldiered on in the face of a growing disdain for quantitative history. He weathered periods with, at best, lukewarm institutional support for his enterprises and limited financial sponsoring. In other periods, he resisted exaggerated faith in innovate techniques in database construction.

The focus of Kees' professional attention was the reconstruction of Dutch life courses and families in order to create an infrastructure for social science history. First and foremost, this entailed building the Historical Sample of the Netherlands, which is flanked by dozens of side-projects. Since 1989, Kees devoted all his time and energy to create, disseminate, enrich and expand the HSN, which by 2020 had resulted in no less than 412 scientific publications and 802 lectures and presentations (Annual Report 2019).

HSN is not completed. Actually, it is not even intended to be completed and then stored away in some data archive. The more than 80,000 individual life courses in HSN will be enriched with further data on networks, income, education, as well as with the life courses of offspring, which will allow for audacious explorations in social science history. But even more ambitious than HSN is the LINKS project that Kees embarked on some fifteen years ago. This project implies the complete reconstitution of all Dutch families in the 19th and early 20th century by linking all public civil records. For several provinces, the task is already completed.

From the start, Kees has put his Dutch databases squarely in an international network of similar initiatives. These initiatives inspired him and, conversely, his experiences found their way in the form of advice and papers on 'best practices' to database builders abroad. A crucial step in strengthening international collaboration was the Intermediate Data Structure, an identical output format for all historical databases. To construct and promote this format, Kees and others founded the European Historical Population Samples Network as well as the open access journal Historical Life Course Studies.

We cannot do full justice here to Kees' advice and support for many projects in several countries, his own research activities, his professorship at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and so on. But our appreciation for his work, support and friendship is profound. We hope to express our appreciation in this collection of short essays, that all have a direct bearing on Kees' professional mission.

Obviously, the creation of research infrastructures plays a large role in this special issue. New quality standards and future prospects of historical databases in general are discussed in the essays by Lionel Keszenbaum, Kris Inwood and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, Lex Heerma van Voss and Jan Kok. Peter Doorn argues that, despite the attention for Big Data, we should not forget the richness of small datasets. Several essays argue for the extension of HSN, e.g. through linking with criminal records (Sanne Muurling and Evelien Walhout), by adding causes of death (Tim Riswick) or by linking with the military records of the Dutch East Indies (Ulbe Bosma). The latter also describes the efforts to create a Netherlands Indies counterpart of HSN. An 'HSN' of Suriname is already under construction and Hendrikus van Galen, Björn Quanjer, Matthias Rosenbaum-Feldbrügge and Matthijs Kralj report on the first explorations of this database. Gerrit Bloothoofd demonstrates nominal record linkage techniques using the surname 'Mandemakers'. New ways of database creation are explored by Margrét Thorvaldsen who shows the prospects of automated source transcription. Angélique Janssens shows the advances in the creation of an international coding system for historical causes of death. Finally, the progress and prospects of the Intermediate Data Structure are the topic of three contributions, respectively by George Alter, Luciana Quaranta, and Sam Jenkinson, Hideko Matsuo and Koen Matthijs.

The other essays have a more empirical character. We can introduce them here by the stages of the life course they deal with. Theo Engelen analyzes the seasonality of conception in the Netherlands and Taiwan. Lumiţa Dumănescu and Ioan Bolovan describe the changing position of midwives in 19th-century Transylvania. Hilde Sommerseth reports on how stillbirths were defined in Norway. Peter Ekamper and Frans van Poppel compare mothers who had multiple births with mothers who had singletons only. Fertility is also the subject of the essay by Hilde Bras. She analyzes reconstituted families in Zeeland using LINKS and argues...
that even a ‘high fertility’ region had couples very different demographic profiles. Niels van den Berg, Ingrid van Dijk and Rick Mourits demonstrate that fertility of daughters of older mothers is reduced.

Work and education are important domains of the life course, and have always had Kees Mandemakers warmest interest. Else van Nederveen Meerkerk discusses schooling in the Netherlands and Java between 1800 and 1940, reflecting Kees’ own interest in education. Björn Quanjer and Kristina Thompson take an unusual approach as they explore the shifting relation between education and obesity with conscript records. Corinne Boter uses the marriage certificates of LINKS and shows how regional differences in industrialization rather than social norms affect women's labour force participation.

Migration trajectories are explored in the essay by Myron Gutmann who puts the famous Dust Bowl migration to California in perspective by tracing the provenance of migrants 1935–1940. Matthias Rosenbaum-Feldbrügge and Paul Puschmann warn users of LINKS not to mistake place of marriage with the place of residence as this would overestimate male migration.


Three essays may have some bearing on Kees Mandemakers’s own history and life course. Stemming from an Orthodox Protestant family more or less on the frontier between ‘Rome and Reformation’, he will enjoy Hans Knippenberg’s essay on the rise of Pillarization (‘Verzuiling’). Ineke Maas, Marco van Leeuwen and Antonie Knigge look at the recruitment of university professors in the past and note the closed character of this occupation. For Kees, we can safely say that he reached this position on his own merits. Finally, Anders Brändström and Glenn Sandström study recent developments in retirement.

Kees Mandemakers may have stopped ‘running round’ and appears to have ‘settled down’ comfortably in Utrecht city. But we hope that, intellectually, he will never settle down but will keep on giving advice, writing history, and exploring new venues. Like every individual, Kees’ life course is part and parcel of general societal processes, which translate to the micro-level in class-, gender-, age- and cohort-specific ways. But we are more than the sum of the variables determining our life course trajectories. With regard to Kees: his steadfast devotion, energy, relentless enthusiasm, and singular capacities make him, at least to us, truly unique, or in other words: Not Like Everybody Else.

WORKS INCLUDED IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE


