New Department of Demography at the University of Vienna offers doctorate and MSc in "Global Demography"

In 2019, the University of Vienna established the Department of Demography in its Faculty of Social Sciences. The Department serves as the university-based pillar of the Wittgenstein Centre (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna).

The Department of Demography addresses demography in all its dimensions with a special focus on multi-dimensional demography and the relevance of demographic change for sustainable development. This involves studying the multiple structures of human populations by age, sex, place of residence, level of educational attainment, labor force participation, and other relevant demographic characteristics of individuals. The focus lies on the determinants of such changes—in particular, fertility, mortality, and migration—and the aggregate-level consequences of past, current, and future population changes on society, the economy, and the environment.

In addition to its research, the Department of Demography offers a specialization in Demography within the Vienna Doctoral School of Social Sciences (ViDSS) and the English language Master’s Program in Global Demography which will welcome its first cohort in October 2021.

The inaugural cohort of doctoral students consists of 12 young demographers from around the world. The two-year Master’s Program, Global Demography, will enroll around 30 new students each year.
Restructuring at IIASA

In 2021, as part of the implementation of the new IIASA strategy 2021-2030, IIASA established six new research programs to pursue the institute’s strategy, particularly in the development and application of systems science to support transformations to sustainability. Two of the six programs are led by Wittgenstein Centre colleagues: Raya Muttarak as Population and Just Societies (POPJUS) Program Director and Michael Kuhn as Economic Frontiers (EF) Program Director.

**Population and Just Societies (POPJUS) Program**

Raya Muttarak, Program Director

POPJUS builds on research activities formerly conducted within the IIASA World Population and Risk and Resilience programs. With its core focus on sustainable human wellbeing, POPJUS draws upon existing strengths and expertise in the following areas: population and human capital modeling; qualitative and quantitative research methods; and social organization and governance. It also continues to invest in advancing empirical methods, approaches, and data, as well as in developing an analytical framework related to equity and justice.

The aim of POPJUS is to develop and apply innovative approaches and perspectives to the study of population phenomena. These include: population aging, human wellbeing, human capital formation, and migration drivers and patterns. POPJUS has a particular emphasis on the question of sustainable human wellbeing. It explicitly integrates the concept of equity and justice into the empirical identification of inequality of opportunity and process in achieving sustainable development for all. As a result, demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic heterogeneity are rigorously integrated into the program’s conceptual framework and empirical analyses.

POPJUS has four research groups that support the program’s research plan:

- Multidimensional Demographic Modeling (MDM). Research Group Leader, Samir KC
- Migration and Sustainable Development (MIG). Acting Research Group Leader, Raya Muttarak
- Equity and Justice (EQU). Acting Research Group Leader, Thomas Shinko

**Economic Frontiers (EF) Program**

Michael Kuhn, Program Director

Economic systems and behaviors are at the heart of unsustainable, unfair, and non-resilient production and consumption patterns. They need to be urgently reformed for the world to achieve a sustainable and fair future.

A starting point for those reforms is the recognition that any economic activity should have the overarching objective of creating inclusive and sustainable wellbeing under i) the fundamental constraints imposed by natural and human systems, and ii) exposure to compound and systemic risks (many of them preventable). This means that any reform, to be successful, must embrace economic, social, and natural systems at the same time. That is why systems thinking has to be at the heart of such reforms.

EF aspires to provide a comprehensive and rigorous framework that will enable an understanding to be gained of i) the behavioral changes required to achieve social and environmental transformations, and ii) the policies and institutional reforms needed to incentivize and bring about change.

Explicit consideration will be given to:

1. the governance of transitional change
2. the provision of equal life chances
3. the capacity within the economic system to deal with (prevent and adjust to) disruptive changes
4. the concept of economic development and wellbeing in a finite and interlinked world.

The program’s research is closely integrated with the natural, environmental, population, and systems science frameworks in which IIASA plays a leading role. It thus provides the multi-disciplinary approach needed to understand how best to transition to sustainable, fair, and resilient economies. The program aims to act as an international hub for expertise from both high-level external economic individuals and entities and from the sciences relevant in this field (e.g., sociology, psychology, environmental and natural sciences, and mathematics). Based on this, the program will engage in capacity-building—establishing links with leading international research and policy institutions to leverage internal resources.
A quick look at Covid-19 related research at the Wittgenstein Centre

Baby boom or baby bust? Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for fertility trends

Will the coronavirus pandemic lead to a baby boom as couples and families spend more time together? Or will it lead to a baby bust due to economic uncertainty, fear of infection, and stress associated with lockdowns, closed schools, and restrictions to mobility and social life?

To gauge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across countries and over time, Tomáš Sobotka and Kryštof Zeman from the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna), together with scholars from the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, have developed a Short-Term Fertility Fluctuations (STFF) data series and incorporated it into the Human Fertility Database. The STFF focuses on monthly birth trends (see a detailed report here) and will also incorporate monthly estimates of period Total Fertility Rates. The data series currently covers 35 countries, with the latest data available for April 2021. The embedded STFF Visualization Toolkit allows users to design their own graphs of birth trends over time.

The birth trends in 12 European Union countries with high-quality data on monthly births illustrate that most countries experienced a brief baby bust between November 2020 and February 2021, associated with avoided pregnancies during the first wave of the pandemic in spring 2020.


Figure: Births by month (January 2020–February 2021) and relative change in the number of births compared to the same period in the preceding year

Note: Data for the following countries are included: Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. The graph is based on the total sum of births by month in these countries.

Demographics of COVID-19 Deaths

In collaboration with an international network of researchers, the French Institut national d’études démographiques (INED) set up a database on the Demographics of COVID-19 Deaths which provides the number of deaths related to COVID-19 by age and sex for 20 countries. Markus Sauerberg of the Vienna Institute of Demography compiled the section for Austria.

The aim of the project is twofold. First, the database enables researchers to obtain the officially reported COVID-19 death statistics in a harmonized format. Second, it provides information about methodological differences among countries used for collecting the COVID-19 death statistics. This information is provided by a country-specific datasheet which should be considered before analyzing the data.

As an example, the French public health agency counts deaths in hospitals and in care homes, but not in private homes, which may result in an underestimation of the COVID-19 death count. Countries also differ in terms of their COVID-19 death classification. While most countries, including Austria, report the number of people with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 who have died, the COVID-19 death statistics in England and Wales refer to deceased individuals with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 mentioned anywhere on the death certificate.

Relying exclusively on laboratory-confirmed cases makes the reported number of COVID-19 deaths sensitive to the testing capacity in a given country or point in time. The approach of classifying COVID-19 deaths based on the professional judgment of the attending physician, on the other hand, can be affected by misclassification (e.g., the physician did not receive adequate training in death certification practices or lacks important information about the patient). The database is thus unique in terms of documentation, but raises awareness of the often-overlooked pitfalls in reporting COVID-19 death statistics.
An indirect method to monitor the fraction of people ever infected with COVID-19: An application to the United States

A new technique, developed by the Wittgenstein Centre, has been applied to the United States to estimate the fraction of people ever infected by COVID-19 as well as the fraction of people detected among those who have ever been infected by COVID-19.

Knowing the number of COVID-19 infections is key for accurately monitoring the pandemic. However, due to differential testing policies, asymptomatic individuals, and limited large-scale testing availability, it is challenging to detect all cases. Seroprevalence studies aim to address this gap by retrospectively assessing the number of infections, but these can be expensive and time-intensive, limiting their use to specific population subgroups.

A group of Wittgenstein Centre researchers—Miguel Sánchez-Romero, Vanessa Di Lego, and Alexia Fürnkranz-Prskawetz, together with Bernardo L. Queiroz—have proposed a complementary approach. This combines i) estimated infection fatality rates (IFR) using a Bayesian melding SEIR model with ii) reported case-fatality rates (CFR) to indirectly estimate the fraction of people (of the total population) ever-infected and detected (from the ever-infected).

The researchers applied the technique to the US due to the country’s remarkable regional diversity and because almost a quarter of all global confirmed cases and deaths have taken place there. The researchers found that as of 8 September 2020, the IFR varies from 1.25% (0.39–2.16%, 90% CI) in Florida, the most aged population, to 0.69% in Utah (0.21–1.30%, 90% CI), the youngest population.

These results indicate with a probability of 90% that the fraction of detected people among the ever-infected since the beginning of the epidemic was less than 50% in 15 of the 20 states analyzed. This approach can be a valuable tool in terms of complementing seroprevalence studies and indicates how efficient testing policies have been since the beginning of the outbreak.

Figure: Share of the infected population among the total population (in blue) and share of the detected population among the infected population (in red) for selected US states.


Note: The latest research and resources from the Wittgenstein Centre related to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found here: http://www.wittgensteincentre.org/en/covid-19-related-research-wic.htm
New ERC projects at the Wittgenstein Centre

Wittgenstein Centre scientists have already received a total of 12 ERC grants. The most recent additions are presented below: PenAgeing (PI: Sergei Scherbov, IIASA); BIC.LATE (PI: Éva Beaujouan, University of Vienna), and POPCLIMA (PI: Raya Muttarak, IIASA).

**PenAgeing — Fair Pensions and Population Ageing**

*Sergei Scherbov*, Principal Investigator

Sergei Scherbov continues his research in the field of population aging with a Proof of Concept (PoC) grant awarded by the European Research Council (ERC). His team proposes new measures of population aging that not only account for changes in population characteristics but also provide policymakers with information that allows them to set fair normal pension ages.

This latest PoC grant will further develop the ground-breaking research conducted as part of the ERC RE-AGEING project which produced new measures of population aging appropriate for 21st century conditions.

PenAgeing focuses on two tasks. The first deals with the pension age. Public pension policies need to consider demographic changes. In the ERC RE-AGEING project, an intergenerationally equitable normal pension age was introduced. This pension age considers the changing characteristics of populations and is based on the characteristics approach to the measurement of population aging and the principles of equity. Based on case studies from Austria and Russia, the project will endeavour to customize its measure taking into account for demographic conditions and the specificity of a particular pension system.

Another task of the PenAgeing project is to develop the World Ageing Data Explorer, an easy-to-use tool that will allow users to evaluate new indicators of aging developed within the ERC RE-AGEING project. The plan is to focus on the following new measures of aging: 1. Prospective old-age threshold (POAT). 2. The proportion of the population above POAT. 3. The Prospective Old-Age Dependency Ratio. 4. Inequality-adjusted life expectancy. All calculations will be based on official United Nations population estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The team will thus be able to produce measures for all countries of the world for which the UN produces population projections. These measures could be used by scientists, policymakers, and other groups of people dealing with the issues of population aging.

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 957509).
**BIC.LATE — Biological, Individual, and Contextual factors of fertility recovery**

**Éva Beaujouan**, Principal Investigator

Éva Beaujouan and her team will be funded by an ERC Consolidator grant to work on the BIC.LATE project, starting for five years in September. The age at which people have their children has increased tremendously since the 1970s in Europe, the English-speaking non-European countries, and East Asia.

The reasons for delayed reproduction have been explored extensively, but very little attention has been given to the factors that facilitate and constrain fertility at later ages (from age 30). Yet, the desire and ability of those who did not have children in their 20s to have them later (“fertility recuperation”) are decisive for future fertility levels and for life satisfaction among those who wish to have children. BIC.LATE will fill this gap by studying the biological, individual, and contextual factors of later reproduction in the low-fertility countries, and the possible catch-up behavior of those who did not have a child earlier.

In this new perspective, the team will lead a series of studies that explore these three essential aspects of fertility recuperation among women and men, using survey and panel data, data from fertility clinics, and aggregate cohort fertility trends. First, they will measure the effect of biological limits on fertility levels, accounting for changes in Assisted Reproductive Technologies. Second, the team will identify the individual socio-demographic factors of fertility that are particularly relevant at later ages. Third, in a comparative perspective, the research will explore the extent to which the structural and cultural context of a country have a bearing on fertility recuperation. To summarize these aspects in an articulated framework, the team will draw meta-scenarios of cohort fertility change that will inform policymakers about the major drivers of future fertility across countries.

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**POPCLIMA — Population Dynamics under Global Climate Change**

**Raya Muttarak**, Principal Investigator

The Population Dynamics under Global Climate Change (POPCLIMA) project, funded under an ERC Consolidator Grant, is planned to start on 1 January 2022. It will run for five years and will be led by Raya Muttarak.

This project aims to assess and forecast how climate change affects and will affect population trends. This is the first time that the impacts of climate change on population dynamics will be comprehensively and systematically analyzed.

Extreme weather and climate events make headline news almost every day. The recent forest fires in California and heat extremes in the UK and France last summer, for instance, are said to be due to climate change. The impacts of climate change on health, wellbeing, and livelihoods are already being felt. It is thus reasonable to assume that climate change can influence demographic processes—fertility, mortality, and migration—the three key demographic outcomes driving population change.

Until now, however, global population projections have not considered the possible effects of climate change on population trends. Existing studies have mainly focused on the influence of population growth on global warming or on the identification of populations at risk from climatic hazards such as extreme heat, floods, or droughts.

The new project will address this gap by using a variety of innovative methodologies and datasets to undertake a comprehensive analysis of climate impacts on fertility, mortality, and migration. The team will utilize and combine georeferenced climate, demographic, and socioeconomic data from different data sources (e.g., surveys, censuses, and administrative- and social media data) at the individual, regional, and country level. Structural equation models are being employed to identify the causal pathways through which climate change influences demographic behavior, and machine learning methods will be used to handle large-scale data.

The results will inform population projections under different future climate change scenarios. This will provide insights into the socioeconomic costs of climate change and provide more realistic population projections that take rapid climate change into account. This, in turn, will help to design policies that protect vulnerable subgroups of the population.

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**Information on further projects carried out at the Wittgenstein Centre can be found here:**

**United States Aging Data Sheet 2019**

The US Aging Data Sheet, which is based on the United States Mortality Database, presents traditional and new measures of aging. It shows the effects on population aging across states of the Affordable Care Act (passed by the US Government in March 2010) and deaths from opioid overdose.

The new measures of aging take the changing characteristics of groups of people into account and produce more consistent measures than, for instance, the old-age dependency ratio and the median age that may overestimate the speed of aging. The Datasheet provides new policy-relevant measures with respect to pension policies as well as policies to combat the opioid epidemic.

The work on the data sheet was led by Sergei Scherbov and developed in the framework of the Reassessing Aging from a Population Perspective (RE-AGEING) project at IIASA.


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**European Demographic Data Sheet 2020**

The bi-annual European Demographic Data Sheet reviews, explores, and visualizes recent population trends in Europe. The Data Sheet presents key indicators of population trends, fertility, mortality, migration, and population projections in 45 European countries, Japan, and the United States. It also serves as a unique source of comparative data on selected indicators studied by the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital, including tempo- and parity-adjusted total fertility and childlessness. The Data Sheet provides a snapshot of the current research of the Wittgenstein Centre and collaborating researchers, including the key results of population projection scenarios until 2060. The online version provides an expanded selection of maps and ranking tables, as well as theme-focused texts and figures.

The work on the 2020 issue was coordinated by Tomáš Sobotka and Kryštof Zeman. It puts the spotlight on health and wellbeing, including the indicators measuring years of life spent in good health. It also looks at the recent stagnation of life expectancy in selected countries in Europe and in the United States, the measurement of internal migration, fertility trends across European regions, and adjusted estimates of schooling.


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**Aging Demographic Data Sheet 2020**

The Aging Demographic Datasheet 2020 presents new measures of aging that take into account people’s changing characteristics and capabilities, both geographically and across population subgroups.

As the remaining life expectancy at a certain age changes over time, Sergei Scherbov and his team define the old age threshold as the age when the remaining life expectancy decreases to 15 years leading to a dynamic old-age threshold.

Compared to traditional and unadjusted measures of aging, these new measures of aging result in different proportions of the “old” population, a decline in the proportion of adult life spent in old age, and a reduction in the speed of aging.

The Aging Demographic Datasheet 2020 offers figures, rankings, and graphs, as well as a detailed glossary. Some of these new measures of population aging have been included in the UN reports on aging since 2017 and are also available for virtually all countries of the world through the UN.

The work on the data sheet was led by Sergei Scherbov. It was developed in the framework of the Ageing Trajectories of Health: Longitudinal Opportunities and Synergies (ATHLOS) project at IIASA.

Selected publications in high-impact interdisciplinary and high ranking disciplinary journals

The Wittgenstein Centre’s research activities remained vigorous throughout 2020 despite disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. The center continues to produce demography-related work that is of societal and policy relevance, including work related to COVID-19.


A full list of Publications by Wittgenstein Centre team members is available here: www.wittgensteincentre.org/en/publications
Vienna Yearbook of Population Research (VYPR)

The Vienna Yearbook of Population Research (VYPR) has a new editor-in-chief, Tomáš Sobotka. In the next three years, he will work closely with the journal’s managing editor, Maria Winkler-Dworak, the newly established international editorial board, and the journal’s publishing house in further developing the Yearbook. Visit the VYPR’s website (https://www.viennayearbook.org) or follow Twitter/@ViennaYearbook for the latest news.

The latest issue of the journal, Fertility Across Time and Space (2020, Volume 18) brings together a variety of perspectives on the past, present, and future of fertility with a broad geographical coverage. The issue features a debate on “What is the most important factor likely to influence future fertility trends and why?” It is available online and in print.

The articles in the Vienna Yearbook are now published in continuous publication mode as soon as they are accepted. The current issue focuses on Demographic Aspects of Human Wellbeing (2021, Volume 19). Online-first articles can be accessed and downloaded here. The upcoming issue will cover Demographic Aspects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Consequences (2022, Volume 20).

DACH - D (Germany) A (Austria) CH (Switzerland) Conference

The 19th DACH meeting of demographic experts in the German-speaking area was hosted by the Vienna Institute of Demography (OeAW) from 23 to 25 October 2019 and organized by Isabella Buber-Ennser and Richard Gisser.

More than 60 experts discussed the overall demographic situation and shed light on the fields of fertility and family, migration and diversity, aging and the intergenerational contract, as well as health and mortality. More technical aspects in terms of projections, concepts, methods, and data were also examined.

During an evening reception, Richard Gisser’s 80th birthday was celebrated. His dedication to population science was shared with many new and former colleagues.

Further information (in German) is available on the conference website.

Heterogeneous Dynamic Models of Economic and Population Systems 2019

This was the topic of the 7th Viennese Vintage Workshop, which took place from 5–6 December 2019. It was jointly organized by Alexia Fürnkranz-Prskawetz, Vladimir Veliov (TU Wien), and Stefan Wrzaczek and supported by the Vienna University of Technology and the Vienna Institute of Demography (OeAW).

The aim of the workshop was to bring together specialists in the theory and applications of heterogenous dynamical systems—“heterogenous” referring to space, age, size, or other individual traits. The topics of the workshop included economic, demographic, and epidemiologic applications.

Wittgenstein Centre events


The scientific literature addressing human wellbeing is rapidly expanding in economics, psychology, sociology, and the health sciences, and is also becoming increasingly important in interdisciplinary studies of sustainable development. The aim of the conference was to give demographic greater prominence as a discipline that has much to contribute to the scientific study of human wellbeing, both in terms of its measurement and the analysis of its determinants.

Highlights during the two conference days were the keynote speeches of Richard E. Lucas, Professor of Psychology (Michigan State University), Carol Jagger, AXA Professor of Epidemiology of Ageing (Newcastle University, UK), and Paul Frijters, Professor in Wellbeing Economics (London School of Economics).

For the first time in history of the Wittgenstein Centre Conference series, three poster award winners were nominated. Most talks, slides, and posters can be reviewed on the conference website.

Cyberseminar: Population, Climate Change, and Food Security

From 18–25 May 2020, Raya Muttarak organized the cyber seminar on Population, Climate Change and Food Security in the context of the Population and Environment Networks (PERN), which she chaired between 2018 and 2020.

Population dynamics influence climate change as well as demand for food. On the other hand, climate change impacts human wellbeing, livelihoods, and food security differentially by population subgroups. Population dynamics and characteristics are thus key for determining...
population impacts on climate change and food security and for identifying who is vulnerable.

Demographic perspectives on climate change and food security can thus provide insights for policy planning. The seminar focused on the application of methodological tools and concepts from different disciplinary communities. It also explored empirical work and future scenarios, which are relevant for analyzing the population–climate change–food security nexus.

Wittgenstein Centre Conference 2020
“Demographic aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences” (30 November–1 December 2020)
In March 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic starting to spread worldwide, the Wittgenstein Centre spontaneously changed the topic of its annual conference and launched a Call for Papers on “Demographic Aspects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Consequences”. Although the Wittgenstein Centre regretted not being able to meet people in person, the change to a full online format was a big success and enabled the highest number of participants in the history of Wittgenstein Centre Conferences, with 456 participants from 54 nations during the two conference days. Keynote speeches were given by Niki Popper, Simulation Researcher (TU Wien), Joshua Goldstein, Professor of Demography (University of California, Berkeley), and Karl Ulrich Mayer, Professor of Sociology (Max Planck Institute for Human Development).

Posters, talks, and slides are accessible on the conference website. A Special Issue of the Vienna Yearbook of Population Research related to the 2020 conference topic is currently under review. Guest editors are Paola Di Giulio, Joshua Goldstein (University of California, Berkeley), Anne Goujon, and Guillaume Marois.

Webinar: “What Demographers Tell Us about the COVID-19 pandemic”
On 13 January 2021, the Asian Demographic Research Institute (ADRI) (Shanghai University) hosted the webinar “What Demographers Tell Us about the COVID-19 Pandemic”. It was organized by Guillaume Marois. The aim was to discuss demographic aspects of COVID-19 and to highlight the role demographers can play in understanding the COVID-19 pandemic. The first speaker was Jennifer Beam Dowd (Oxford University), who highlighted demographic insights into COVID ranging from the intersection of population age structure and mortality to estimates of excess mortality. Tomáš Sobotka then analyzed changing age and sex profiles in reported cases of COVID-19 in seven European countries. Enrique Acosta (Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research) introduced the database COVerAGE, which provides harmonized demographic data on COVID-19. Finally, Samir KC presented an index of vulnerability to COVID-19 applied to India. The webinar attracted more than 65 attendees from all over the world.

UPCOMING EVENTS:
Wittgenstein Centre Conference 2021 “The causes and consequences of depopulation” (29 November–1 December 2021, online)
Although the global population is still growing, an increasing number of regions and countries are experiencing a decline in population size, and the COVID-19 pandemic may have further accelerated this process. Depopulation undoubtedly poses many challenges from the economic, social, political, and strategic perspectives. In the public and policy discourse, the detrimental effects of population decline are often emphasized, but could population decline also open up opportunities?

The upcoming conference aims to bring together researchers from around the world working on population decline and its consequences from the demographic, economic, sociological, political, environmental, and geographical points of view. Confirmed invited speakers are Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission for Democracy and Demography; Anne Goujon, Demographer (European Commission Joint Research Centre, Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography); David Bloom, Professor of Economics and Demography (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health); and Joshua Goldstein, Professor of Demography (University of California, Berkeley).

A special issue of the Vienna Yearbook of Population Research will focus on the conference theme of “Depopulation”.

Detailed information can be found on the conference website. We are looking forward to welcoming you at the conference!

WIC Colloquium
The WIC Colloquium is a regular event organized by the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, OeAW, University of Vienna) where renowned demographers and researchers from connected fields present their research and discuss it with a diverse transdisciplinary audience. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, all colloquia are currently being held online.

If you wish to receive updates on the WIC Colloquium, please register here for our mailing list. If you would like to present your research or if you have any questions regarding the colloquium, please do not hesitate to contact our organizers Claudia Reiter (claudia.reiter@univie.ac.at) and Patrick Lazarevic (Patrick.Lazarevic@oeaw.ac.at). Please have a look at previous colloquia here and watch recorded events on our YouTube channel.

If you find any errors or have suggestions for improvements, please feel free to contact us.
SPECIAL EVENTS:

Who is telling the truth about their health? The Wittgenstein Centre at the European Researchers’ Night, 2020

When researchers or policymakers ask health-related questions—which they do a lot—they often have to rely on self-reported rather than tested health data. Depending on the country or age of the individuals interviewed, this self-reported data could be highly biased. Sonja Spitzer, together with Daniela Weber and Mujaheed Shaikh, analyzed the reliability of health survey data and the relationship between health perception, health reporting, and healthcare utilization.

Sonja Spitzer presented and discussed this research at the European Researchers’ Night, an event that takes place each year throughout Europe to give everyone who wishes the opportunity to participate in science.

Gaidar Forum, 14–15 January 2021

Sergei Scherbov organized and chaired a session on the second day (15 January 2021) of the 2021 Gaidar Forum: “COVID-19 Pandemic in Russia and in the World: Demographic Features and International Experience”. The Forum, traditionally convened at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, is a platform for discussions on key social, economic, and political trends and is attended by international experts, government representatives, business leaders, and public and political figures. This year the Gaidar Forum focused on the theme “Russia and the World after the Pandemic.”

Simone Ghislandi and Raya Muttarak participated in the discussion on the demographic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and presented their work based on the experience of countries in Europe.

The research of Simone Ghislandi calculates the loss in life expectancy due to COVID-19 from a historical perspective based on the case study of Italy. Raya Muttarak presented her ongoing work on gender differentials in terms of vulnerability to COVID-19 based on evidence from seven European countries. Sergei Scherbov concluded by highlighting that with more data becoming available in future years, demographers will be able to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on demographic outcomes including fertility, mortality, and migration in a more comprehensive manner.

Wittgenstein Centre scientists at the virtual Population Association of America (PAA) Annual Meeting 2021

Researchers of all seniority levels—from pre-docs to directors—represented the Wittgenstein Centre at roughly 20 Population Association of America (PAA) oral presentations, poster sessions, and invited panels. A common characteristic was the collaborative, cross-disciplinary approach applied to the topics and methodologies used. The overwhelmingly positive feedback highlighted the strength of these ongoing collaborations—both within the Wittgenstein Centre and with external partners.

Topics presented included healthy life expectancy, women’s education, and the climate change–population nexus, while many presentations demonstrated new approaches to small-scale spatial analyses concerning health, fertility, natural hazard risk, and emerging global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, we wish to congratulate our colleague, Ross Barker, who was part of the poster-winning team behind “From the Stork to Fertility Apps”, which used data from smartphone fertility tracker apps to explore the feasibility of incorporating digital trace data into demographic research.
Prizes and awards

Isabella Buber-Ennser and Bernhard Rengs received the Kurt-Rothschild-Award 2019 for their research project “Displaced Persons in Austria Survey (DiPAS): Education, Qualifications and Moral Concepts of Refugees in Austria” in collaboration with Judith Kohlenberger of the Vienna University of Economics and Business.

Jesús Crespo Cuaresma, together with his co-authors Doris A. Oberdabernig and Stefan Humer won the award Best Paper of the Year 2019 for their publication “Democracy, Geography and Model Uncertainty,” in the Scottish Journal of Political Economy (SJPE).

Wolfgang Lutz was elected to member of Academia Europaea in London, UK, in 2019.

Mr. Moradhvaj, together with his co-authors Wolfgang Lutz, Nandita Saikia, Erich Striessnig, and Samir KC, received the best paper award at the Second Asian Population Forum in Shanghai in 2019 for their paper “Education or economic status? Comparing their relative effect on prime age adult death in India using longitudinal survey data.”

In 2019, Sergei Scherbov was honored in recognition of his outstanding contribution to academic research and expertise in Population Studies by the Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, with an Honorary Doctoral Degree in Liberal Arts.

Sonja Spitzer, together with her co-authors Angela Greulich and Bernhard Hammer, received the Population Association of America Annual Meeting 2019 Poster Award for their poster “The Subjective Cost of Young Children: A European Comparison.”

Daniela Weber obtained the APART-GSK fellowship 2019 — a funding programme for excellent junior scholars in the humanities and the social and cultural sciences awarded by OeAW — for her project on “Aging Health Capital: Evolution of physical and cognitive health over the life course from an international perspective”.

Éva Beaujouan received the WU City of Vienna Best Paper Award 2020 from the Vienna University of Economics and Business for her paper published in the journal Demography “Is the Family Size of Parents and Children Still Related? Revisiting the Cross-Generational Relationship Over the Last Century”, co-authored by Anne Solaz.

Jesús Crespo Cuaresma and his co-authors Gernot Doppelhofer, Martin Feldkircher and Florian Huber received the 2020 Vladas Jurgutis Award of the Bank of Lithuania for their collective work on “Spillovers from US monetary policy: evidence from a time varying parameter global vector auto-regressive model”

In 2020, Wolfgang Lutz was honored in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the progress of human society and academic research by the Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, with an Honorary Doctoral Degree in Liberal Arts.

Raya Muttarak was honored with the Best Alumni Award 2020 of Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Sonja Spitzer was one of the 2021 Emerging Scholar Award recipients for the conference of the Aging & Social Change Research Network.

PhD defences

The following PhD theses were successfully defended at the Vienna University of Economics and Business in 2020.

Anna Dimitrova: “From drought to deluge: impacts of rainfall variability on child undernutrition in Ethiopia and India” – September.


Anna Renner: “Waiting time, avoidable hospitalisations and patient mobility: The economics of healthcare accessibility” – May.


Sonja Spitzer: “Health measures and healthcare utilisation in ageing populations: demographic and economic perspectives” – March.
Call for Papers: Population, Food and the Environment

Special Issue of Population and Environment
Guest Editors: Raya Muttarak and Anna Dimitrova

Deadline: 10 December 2021

The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events induced by climate change adversely impact agricultural production and can consequently directly and indirectly affect livelihoods and food security. The potential impact of environmental change on food production, distribution, and access can have multiple "knock-on" effects in other areas of human life, including health, urbanization, and overall socioeconomic development. This, in turn, can also influence population dynamics: fertility (e.g., by affecting maternal and fetal health), mortality (e.g., through increasing health risks), and migration (e.g., through disruption of livelihoods or conflict). Given nations’ unequal vulnerability and capacity to respond and adapt to climate change, the impacts mentioned above will vary across geographies and population subgroups.

This Special Issue seeks a range of empirical, theoretical, and review papers from multiple social science disciplines. Topics may explore the complex interactions between environmental change, food security, and a wide range of population outcomes. Papers may also offer projections of food security and related impacts under future population and climate change scenarios. We are also interested in papers that approach the topic from a different angle, including the role of population dynamics and food production systems as drivers of environmental change in the present and in the future. We will consider contributions at any geographic scale and locations.

For further information please contact:
Raya Muttarak (muttarak@iiasa.ac.at) or Anna Dimitrova (adimitrova@ucsd.edu).

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