

The BBVA Foundation and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)
are pleased to invite you to the lecture:

A Life-Course Approach to Anthropometric History

Jan Kok

Professor of Economic, Social and Demographic History, Radboud University, The Netherlands

Summary:

Anthropometric history has become an integral part of the study of modernization processes – what are the interconnections between better diets, increased productivity, technology change and improved health of offspring? Changing bodies – mostly for the better – are concomitant with the agrarian and industrial revolutions. Understanding this “technophysio evolution” is one of the biggest challenges for social scientists and historians alike (see R. Floud, R. W. Fogel, B. Harris and S. C. Hong, *The Changing Body: Health, Nutrition, and Human Development in the Western World since 1700*, Cambridge University Press). Adult human height is the outcome of a protracted process of growth, which during the twentieth century was not completed until the early twenties. The process is influenced most of all by genetic potential, but is strongly affected as well by nutrition, disease, work and stress (e.g., caused by the bereavement of a parent). It is difficult to find data to connect (changing) early-life conditions to adult height, but this is needed if we are to fully understand the causes and effects of improved health. Increasingly, researchers use longitudinal data to study heights from a life-course perspective: How have intergenerational transfers, (dynamic) family settings, interactions with the (disease) environment, and period effects resulted in (delayed) growth? Furthermore, life courses make it possible to study outcomes of stature in terms of work capacity, chances in the marriage market, and longevity – controlling for early-life conditions. Eventually, we might find selection mechanisms that may explain why people become taller and taller over the generations. Professor Kok will demonstrate the research potential of using multi-generational life-course data enriched with anthropometric information.

Biography:

Jan Kok is Professor of Economic, Social and Demographic History at Radboud University, and director of the Radboud Group for Historical Demography and Family History. Also, he is coeditor-in-chief of *The History of the Family. An International Quarterly*. He studied social history at the Free University in Amsterdam, and in 1993 joined the International Institute of Social History, where he helped to develop the Historical Sample of the Netherlands, a large database with reconstructed life courses. Much of his research is based on this database and covers publications on leaving home and internal migration, on spacing and stopping, on marriage timing and celibacy, etc. Currently, he is exploring the research potential of Dutch colonial population administrations, such as the registers kept on the population of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Also, he is heading a research project titled Giants of the Modern World. A New History of Heights and Health in The Netherlands, 1811-1940. Using detailed information on individuals, their families and their environments, this projects aims to answer the question of why the Dutch have becomes the tallest people in the world.

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The lecture series also forms part of the Postgraduate Courses run by the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC).

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Monday, April 16 at 19:00
Fundación BBVA
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REQUEST ATTENDANCE

Please confirm attendance. Limited seating
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The lecture will be delivered in English without translation