

On Jan M. Hoem's 65th Birthday

A few words of information and praise from James W. Vaupel

Preface

Before Jan Hoem, demography was deterministic. In good part because of Jan's research contributions and consistent insistence, good demographers now ground their research in the methods and concepts of probability and statistics. In particular, intensity regression and event-history analysis are now the preferred strategies for many kinds of demographic analysis. Jan deserves great credit for this.

Over the past four and a half years Jan has made another major contribution, as Director and now Executive Director of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research. "Nowhere in the world does the fire of demography burn brighter than in Rostock", this was the praise the Institute received at the meeting, in November last year, of our Scientific Advisory Council. The fire of demography burns bright in Rostock in large measure due to Jan's cordial, collegial, constructive, reasonable, egalitarian, Scandinavian-style leadership. In particular, he has developed an outstanding research team focused on contemporary European fertility and family dynamics and he has encouraged, guided and stimulated this team to produce important research.

I have known Jan for more than two decades and have gotten to know him very well since he moved to Rostock in 1999. He and I have cohabitated extraordinarily well together as co-Directors of the Institute. We do not always agree with each other immediately but we always reach agreement after reasoned discussion. I cannot think of anyone in the world whom I would rather have as a co-Director than Jan M. Hoem. And I cannot think of anyone in the world who would have been a better Director of our Institute at this time of our growth and development.

Jan was born in 1939 in Norway. He studied actuarial science and mathematical statistics and was awarded a Dr. Phil. in 1969. In his studies he also focused on demographic concepts and issues – in 1967 he published his book, in Norwegian, on "Basic Concepts of Formal Demography". Since then he has published a long series of

important demographic papers in outstanding international journals, including several articles in each of the key journals *Demography*, *Theoretical Population Biology*, *European Journal of Population*, and *Population Studies*, as well as articles in *International Statistical Review*, *Biometrics*, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, *Population and Development Review*, and elsewhere.

Jan worked at the University of Oslo and then, from 1970 to 1974 was Director of the Socio-Demographic Research Unit at the Central Bureau of Statistics in Norway. From 1974 to 1981 he was Professor at the Laboratory of Actuarial Mathematics at the University of Copenhagen. From 1981 to 1999 he was Professor of Demography at Stockholm University.

Jan is well known and highly respected in the demographic and statistical research communities. He is best known for his methodological work on event-history analysis and for his applied work on contemporary fertility in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. He is certainly among the top handful of European demographers in terms of research contribution and reputation and is one of the most highly-respected mathematical demographers in the world. His profound methodological contributions, especially to event-history analysis, are based on fundamental knowledge and thorough understanding of the relevant mathematics and statistics: Jan is an extremely thoughtful and meticulous methodologist. In addition, he has made substantial contributions to understanding patterns of contemporary European fertility – solid, lasting contributions based on careful attention to data, theory, and methods.

Jan has the stature, experience, leadership talents, and research abilities required of a Max Planck Director. Beyond this, he is particularly appropriate to serve as Director of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR), for several specific reasons:

- Almost all research at MPIDR is based on advanced analytical methods and most of the scientists here have strong mathematical and statistical backgrounds. Jan has great strength in mathematical and statistical methods in demography.
- The two biggest demographic research topics are mortality and fertility. My laboratory focuses on survival and longevity; Jan's laboratory focuses on contemporary European fertility and family dynamics.
- My short description of MPIDR is that "we are interested in births, deaths, and mathematics". Jan and I (and the others here) share a deep interest in mathematics and he and I complement each other on births and deaths.
- Demographic research rests on two fundamental strengths: powerful mathematical methods and extensive, reliable data. Jan is interested in data as well as methods. He is an expert on data from the Nordic countries, having

worked in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden and having close research ties with Finland. The Nordic countries have the most reliable and most complete demographic data in the world, both historically and today. Jan also has shown considerable interest in research on Central and Eastern Europe and new data collection efforts in this area.

- It is important that the Directors of an Institute can work well together. Jan Hoem and I have known each other for more than 20 years and have developed a firm friendship over these years. I have the highest respect for him as a scholar and great trust in his judgment, reliability, and leadership abilities. We have worked collaboratively and productively together.
- Both for the Max Planck Institute and for the field of demography more generally, education of the next generation of demographers is crucial. Jan has played a key role in developing the International Max Planck School for Demographic Research and has taught event-history analysis courses for it. In addition, Jan has played the central leadership role in developing the Institute's ties with the University of Rostock. He is Honorarprofessor at the University, has diligently served on many committees, and has started offering courses for University students.

For all these various reasons, I am very pleased that this special issue of *Demographic Research*, the journal that Jan edits, is devoted to a coherent set of papers on topics of interest to Jan and is dedicated to Jan on the occasion of his 65th birthday. The success and the high quality of *Demographic Research* are achievements that Jan can take deep pride in. Unlike many volumes dedicated to someone's birthday, this volume is appearing at his birthday, Saturday, April 17th. The team that produced the volume deserves great credit, and Jan deserves great credit for having created such a team and for forming such a good group of colleagues and friends.

Jan, Congratulations on your 65th birthday and for your many important contributions to research, education and institution building!