



*Vilnius University Gender Studies Centre
Invites to public lecture
10 May 5 p.m.
Vilnius University Library B3 seminar room*

"Family systems and extramarital births: variation across time and space in Europe 1900 - 2000"

Dr. Jan Kok

Understanding regional variation in the past is important if we want to understand to what extent the European Union is “converging” in demographic terms. In order to chart and explain the regional variation of demographic phenomena, scholars often make use of typologies of ‘family systems’. Family systems have been evoked to explain intra-European differences in ages at marriage, celibacy rates, household size and composition, inheritance patterns et cetera. However, the variation in extramarital births (‘illegitimacy’) is rarely discussed or placed within these typologies. Is this because the phenomenon is more related to acute social problems and cultural changes than to the *longue durée* of family structures? Does illegitimacy form the limit of what family systems can explain? Or should we adjust our thinking on family systems to include ‘illegitimacy’?

In this lecture, regional variation in extra-marital births in Europe around 1900 is explored from the family system perspective. The question is also addressed to what extent the current variation can be seen as a continuation of past patterns. Cases to be studied in detail include Netherlands, Romania, and where possible, the Balkans.

Jan Kok studied social and economic history at the Free University of Amsterdam. At the International Institute of Social History he has worked on the construction of a database with 80.000 historical life courses. He has published widely on life courses, extramarital births, fertility, migration, and social mobility, also in comparative perspective. Currently, he is visiting professor at the faculty of Social sciences at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), senior researcher at the Virtual Knowledge Studio (Amsterdam, Netherlands) and co-editor-in-chief of The History of the Family. An International Quarterly.