

or at least a 'derivative' of a census is a (much) needed instrument for demographic and socio-economic analysis (and planning). The connotation 'derivative' is used to attract the attention to the fact that, although it would be preferable, there is no strict need for exhaustiveness as one of the basic characteristics of a census in historical terms (cf. supra). Indeed, it needs to be recognised that the main attractiveness of a census for demographic analysis is not so much its exhaustiveness, but rather the fact that a census corresponds to a (very) 'large sample exercise'. With the latter is meant not a representative sample of a couple of thousand respondents, but a sample that corresponds to a (quite) large proportion of the entire population. The sample fraction that will actually be needed (and that ultimately will determine the number of available observations) will depend on the population size of the smallest administrative/geographical unit at which level one wants to be able to perform a demographic analysis.

Looked at it somewhat differently, future 'censuses' could (and should) be organised as part of large-scale data collection exercises. As such, the population census should be regarded as being complementary to more thematic surveys that are based on representative samples. The main characteristic (and attractiveness) of the census component would be its large numbers (impossible to obtain through sample surveys), whereas the main characteristic (and attractiveness) of the survey component would be the detailed information (impossible to collect during a census exercise).

In case census and surveys are organised as different components of the same (large) data collection exercise there could be the additional advantage of being able to link the information that is collected in each component at the individual level.

Let us illustrate these ideas with some examples derived from earlier work.

Figures 1 to 4 stem from a Census Monograph with as subject 'fertility' based on the 1991 Belgian Census<sup>10</sup>.

As is known, one general (and increasing) concern of European policy makers are the persistent low levels of fertility (below replacement level) accompanied by (or as the result of) the postponement of first birth. At national and international level, the phenomenon is regarded as a clear indication for the incompatibility between work (of especially women) and family life. Another point of debate among policy makers is whether more migration might be a solution for the ageing of the European populations, more particularly for the increased shortage of labour.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: SCHOENMAECKERS, R.C., E. LODEWIJKX, S. GADEYNE: "Vruchtbaarheid (Fertility)", Deel B van Monografie (Monograph) no. 5 'Nuptialiteit en vruchtbaarheid op basis van de Algemene Volks- en Woningtelling 1 maart 1991. Brussel: Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek, Ministerie van Economische Zaken en de Federale Diensten voor Wetenschappelijke, Technische en Culturele Aangelegenheden.