

“The commodity chain of the household: from survey design to policy planning”

Data collection and analysis and policy formulation all require a social unit to be defined, generally called the household. Multidisciplinary evidence shows that households as defined by survey practitioners often bear little resemblance to lived socio-economic units. This study examines how a shared language, the 'household', can generate misunderstandings because different groups with distinctive understandings of the term 'household' are often unaware that others may be using 'household' differently. This study applies four different methods for the analysis: review of household survey documentation (1950s-present); ethnographic ground-truthing fieldwork; in-depth key informant interviews; and modelling.

Results show that whereas data collectors have a clear idea of what a `household` is, data users are often unaware of the nuances of the constraints imposed by data collection. This has implications for policy planning and practice. What interviewees consider when they think of their household can differ systematically from data collectors' definitions.

Outputs to date:

Randall, S., E. Coast & T. Leone (2008) Paper presented at “Vital Signs: researching real life”. University of Manchester. 9-11th September 2008

Coast, E., T. Leone & S. Randall (2008) “The Commodity Chain of the Household: From Survey Design to Policy Planning”. BSPS Conference, University of Manchester, 10-12 September 2008

Randall, S., Coast, E. & Leone, T. (2008) “Une culture disciplinaire et ses pièges : l'emploi du terme « ménage » en démographie » AIDELF : Colloque Démographie et Culture. Quebec, Canada. August 2008

Coast, E., Randall, S. & Leone, T. “The commodity chain of the household : from survey design to policy planning”. Poster presented at the European Association for Population Studies, Barcelona, 9th-12th July 2008.

Leone, T., Coast, E. & Randall, S. “The concept of the household” Paper presented at ESRC research methods festival, Oxford, 30th June-3rd July 2008

Coast, E., Randall, S., Leone, T. “The commodity chain of the household : from survey design to policy planning”. Paper presented at “Defining the household : implications of household definitions in surveys and censuses”. London. 15th May 2008

Coast, E., Randall, S. & Leone, T. “The commodity chain of the household : from survey design to policy planning”. Paper presented at UAPS (Union for African Population Studies) Conference, Tanzania, 10th-12th December 2007.