

> Thursday, September 16th, 2021

12:00 - 13:30

IFLAME RESEARCH SEMINAR

**RESEARCH
SEMINAR**



EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY



ABSTRACT

ELITES VERSUS NON-ELITES – TOWARDS A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF MORTALITY PATTERNS IN FAMILY TREES

By Robert STELTER (University of Basel)

With the big data revolution genealogical data came up as a valuable source to study historical population dynamics. We investigate whether mortality dynamics of males in the family trees of families characterize the general male population or elites reputed to have lower mortality than the general population. Relying on data for the German Empire with a relatively low coverage and the Netherlands with a high coverage in families, we evidence that at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century: I. life expectancy and life disparity is closer to the knowledge elite than to the general population. II. the distance between mortality patterns in families and official life tables is higher in the German population with the lower coverage. III. similarities between the elite's and families' life expectancy already existed long before the nineteenth century. We conclude that elites with their potentially lower mortality are clearly over-represented in family trees. Emerging digital data have the potential to revolutionize our knowledge of historical demographic dynamics – once we learn to recognize their potential and limitations.



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