

Hartmann, Heinrich; Unger, Corinna R. (Hrsg.): *A World of Populations. Transnational Perspectives on Demography in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Berghahn Books 2014. ISBN: 978-1-78238-427-4; 264 S.

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The edited volume by Hartmann and Unger is an important step in writing global or transnational histories of demographic ideas and discourses. In addition to the recent volume by Bashford¹, published also in 2014, „A World of Populations“ presents a whole range of population policies and discourses focusing on transnational exchanges between the 1940s and 1970s. The volume offers insights into global and local interactions, covers major aspects of global family planning programmes and „overpopulation“ debates, as well as contains case studies on the United States, Poland, Chile, South Korea, Turkey, Kenya, and Melanesia.

Nowadays, histories of population, population discourses, and demography as science are being rewritten from a global point of view and with renewed methodologies. For the field of global population change and family formation, we see the end of a period when Malthusian interpretations governed the debates. Since fertility behaviour in the last 60 years, according to research appears to have converged and fertility appears to have declined, today there is less focus, for example, on fertility and fertility differentials, which characterized the Malthusian era.² It is likely that demographers and population scientists will not return to investigating and elaborating the East-West dividing lines in family and household formation (including the famous Hajnal line), the control of Malthusian positive checks on a macro level, and a uniform behavioural adaptation to periods of crisis.³ Explanations based on supposedly unique and superior European family patterns and the disregard for social differences in demographic behaviour and adaptation have been proven wrong. In turn, the need has been clearly acknowledged for new, globally valid, less simplistic, and less hierar-

chical interpretative frameworks.

This turn is important as Heinrich Hartmann and Corinna Unger's book includes the heyday of neo-Malthusianism in the 1950s and 1960s. As of yet, little has been studied on this period concerning the transnational mechanisms that maintained population control regimes although they often went along with brutal interventions into the lives and reproductive organs of people, such as the surgical sterilization of „uneducated masses“. Also, inhumane campaigns in the name of Malthusian ideals, like the one analysed by Olszynko-Gryn in the volume, are less known or discussed.

After the very intense biopolitical fights of the 1920s and 1930s as well as World War II, there was a new type of global Malthusian interventionist turn that moved away from the modernization ideas appearing before and during the war. Notestein (one of the fathers of demographic transition theories) made this very clear when he claimed that as a rule social forces change demographic behaviour, and that „in the East“ the advanced „West“ could not wait until social modernization would reduce fertility.⁴ Corinna Unger describes this Malthusian consensus in the following way: „Hence, one had to find ways of changing individual and collective reproductive behaviour prior to and during the transition.“ (p. 59) This was realized in irra-

¹ Alison Bashford, *Global Population. History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth*, New York 2014.

² See for the trends: Chris Wilson, *On the Scale of Global Demographic Convergence 1950–2000*, in: *Population and Development Review* 27 (2001) 1, pp. 155–171.

³ Among other attempts in this anti-Malthusian turn the following book series has been very convincing: Christer Lundh / Satomi Kurosu (et al.), *Similarity in Difference. Marriage in Europe and Asia, 1700–1900*, Cambridge, MA 2014; Noriko Tsuya / O. Wang Feng / George Alter / James Z. Lee (eds.), *Prudence and Pressure. Reproduction and Human Agency in Europe and Asia, 1700–1900*, Cambridge, MA 2010; Robert C. Allen / Tommy Bengtsson / Martin Dribe (eds.), *Living standards in the past. New perspectives on well-being in Asia and Europe* Oxford 2005; Attila Melegh, *Biopolitics, regions and demography*, in: Diana Mishkova / Balázs Trencsényi (eds.), *European Regions and Boundaries A Conceptual History* (forthcoming).

⁴ Attila Melegh, *On the East/West Slope. Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe*, New York 2006, pp. 50f.

tional ways, such as in Kenya where, following independence from Britain and the exceptionally brutal repression of people during the Mau Mau rebellion⁵, the Population Council and government officials, regardless of not having any reliable data, pushed for a „vigorous“ intervention „to reduce the rate of population growth“, resulting in population policies that only changed somewhat in the early 1980s (see the article by Maria Dörnemann).

These histories of population control cannot be seen as „international“ versus „internal“ developments in thinking but as the outcome of the interplay of various factors. First, as Bashford put it very clearly with her analysis of global population control, there were „multiple strands of political and scientific thought that produced an apparently singular phenomenon, the ‘world population problem’“. ⁶ This not only meant that various disciplines were involved in these policies and discourses but also that certain scientific methods and perspectives gained momentum like system analysis, rational choice, and behaviourism (see the contribution by Corinna Unger). This did not mean, as argued by Unger, that these were exclusively biopolitical discourses because certain scientific ideals had a clear influence on the „specific techniques“ of intervention. Nevertheless, we need more than just a complex analysis of discourses and its knowledge background.

In addition to avoiding physical national and ideological comparisons, we also need to write a transnational history of demographic thinking that utilizes adequate methods and interpretative frameworks. Hartmann and Unger’s volume promotes such an approach. As they put it, they want to put together the history of „transnational demographics“ and they argue that we need to take into account the constant politicization of demographic discourses because they were used „to define and enact new forms of population policies“. In these constantly transnational processes, we need to link local, national, and the global dimensions of demographic discourses and to see how often global demographic knowledge came into contact with local practices in analysing and regulating local populations. Such perspective invites us to systematically and comparatively analyse

demographic thinking in terms of producing, transferring, and discussing knowledge within the context of discursively constructed global and local hierarchies.⁷ Unger and Hartmann also state the need to understand which populations were constructed and the article by Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney on Chile and Peru confirms that „demographic discourses are shaped by global and national political competitions, and an apolitical history of family planning, or demographic discourses in a political vacuum, are simply non-existent“ (p. 98). Demographic policies were framed and organized within global hierarchies of nations (there is no explicit mentioning of the hierarchies in the book), which created a competitive frame to make efforts to „revitalize“ the nation, making it „healthy“ and „normal“ or more similar to the greater powers and/or „civilized“ nations. Reading the various case studies within and outside Europe, it seems that although there is a shared concern about the advancement of the nation through demographic revival, there is also an important difference between those who see social support and related social changes as real aims of helping demographic development, while others want to use social support as a means of improving the status of the nation and disciplining the local social groups to their behaviour.

Thus the shared population concerns can be divided according to the different dynamics at the interface of local and global hierarchies. This also means that the key issue concerns Janus-faced demographic nationalisms, which can work in different ways depending on whether „backwardness“ is handled by social and population policies aiming at changing or reforming some social relationships, or simply aiming at freezing social structures or increasing the level of exclusion for disciplinary purposes, which can be a key characteristic of very oppressive regimes.

⁵ See the recent revelations of concentration camps and related political violence, for example in: Caroline Elkin, *Imperial Reckoning. The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya*. New York 2005.

⁶ Bashford op. cit p. 5.

⁷ Among others, Bashford op. cit; Attila Melegh, *Between global and local hierarchies. Population management in the first half of the twentieth century in: Demográfia English Edition* 53 (2010) 5, pp. 51–77.

The example of Turkey in the volume demonstrates the need of following the interplay between „global“ knowledge as well as local political concerns at various points and the shifts between „social reforms“ and the „mechanic handling of ‘population imbalances’“. Following the seminal work of Arland Thornton⁸, who described the spread of hierarchically understood demographic development across the globe, Serap Kavas argues that Western family values and norms were promoted by the Turkish government in the early years of the republic and that it attempted to implement population policies as part of an overall agenda.⁹

This policy continued and in the early 1960s later developed a paradoxical relationship with US agents of a global family planning industry as shown by Heinrich Hartmann. As part of a Cold War manoeuvring exercise, Turkey played an important role in the family planning movement for a specific time. International expertise was utilized to analyse fertility intentions and to develop social policies helping to reduce fertility, which was seen in the West as a threat that might even lead to political changes. This straightforward interchange at the beginning, however, soon turned into controversies over national sovereignty and while US experts pushed toward family planning interventions, it was partially rejected in Turkey where local experts and government officials advocated national control while trying to reframe the incoming ideas into an idea of promoting healthcare and health services. In the end, Turkey did not become a Malthusian role model for the all the Third World countries as was originally planned.

According to the analysis by Maria Dörne- mann, a similar development occurred in Kenya. After liberation from a brutally repressive colonial regime, which originally imported Indian labour to cultivate some inner areas of the country and to build railways, the country was considered to be going through a demographic explosion. Owing to the hegemony of the demographic transition theory, population growth was believed to be too high. However, this original post-colonial consensus on „overpopulation“ was later dissolved and deconstructed after the Popula-

tion Studies and Research Institute was established in Kenya. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that international organizations like the World Bank kept on pushing toward integrating family planning into a policy of „restructuring“ in the early 1980s in the country. A similar „renationalization“ and shift from mechanical Malthusian family planning is presented for Chile and Peru, where the process was applauded both by the radical left and right, although with different motives.

A local selection process in the context of global patterns is also demonstrated by Morgane Labbé in her look at interwar Poland. Through the continuous interaction between local and international agencies on fertility and interestingly migration, the Polish Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Population was founded. In contrast to other East and Southeast European states, Polish demographic thinking in this period centred on „overpopulation“ and agrarian consequences, issues that were present in international debates. Even more interesting is that this concern of a too fast growth was not understood in terms of a Malthusian „supply side“ theory but more as opposing „demand side“ theory, showing the effect of social mechanisms on demographic behaviour and not the other way round.¹⁰

While the volume shows that global structural positions and transnational exchange of knowledge had local rooting, future research will have to explore material, non-discursive factors (demographic processes and especially economic backgrounds), and how specific mechanisms of interaction locally and globally led to a twist in trajectories of population policies and debates.

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⁸ Arland Thornton, *Reading History Sideways. The Fallacy and Enduring Impact of the Developmental Paradigm on Family Life*, Chicago 2005.

⁹ Serap Kavas, *Population policies in Turkey*, forthcoming.

¹⁰ Amartya Sen, *Population, Delusion and Reality*, in: *New York Review of Books*, 22 September 1994.