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Population Policies: An Integrated Approach (Preface to the 2009 Quetelet Symposium on Population Policies)

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Background

In November 2009 the Research Center on Demography and Societies (Centre de Recherche en Démographie et Societies, Louvain-la-Neuve) organized its 35th Quetelet seminar. The main theme was “Population Policies in Europe and North America.”

It is in the tradition of Chaire Quetelet seminars to address emerging topics in demography. Of course, the theme of population policies is not new, but it seemed to us and to the colleagues of the Research Center in Louvain that a reformulation of the topic was in progress, and that reflections and propositions were needed.

The main theme of the seminar was split into four sub-themes, which were explored and developed over the course of the three-day seminar: 1) the evolution and definition of population policies, 2) migration policies and policies for the integration of migrants, 3) family policies and policies that support fertility, and 4) policies for ageing.

Many participants attempted to answer the following critical questions: What are the aims of population policies? How do population policies differ from social policies? Is the efficacy of these policies supported by empirical results? What is the theoretical and ethical background behind these policies? In this paper we summarize and discuss some of the best contributions presented at the 35th Quetelet seminar and stress their contribution to answering the above-mentioned questions.

The papers that are summarized below are now part of a special collection¹ of papers published in *Population Review*.

Population policies: definitions and ethics

When trying to define population policies, one possible “preliminary” definition could be the following: population policies are those policies that affect demographic phenomena such as fertility, migration and ageing or that attempt to adapt societies to their consequences. This definition implies that policies can be active or adaptive. Active population policies can be direct or indirect. In the

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¹ See: http://www.populationreview.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=27&Itemid=42

concluding paper of the special collection, Nico van Nimwegen speaks about how the focus of population policies has shifted over time and argues that population policies in the past that *directly* attempted to change the course of demographic phenomena, are now, in essence, *population-related* policies that have socio-economic aims. The new focus becomes particularly evident when referring to the implementation of population policies in the past. At the Chaire Quetelet seminar two contributions, now presented in the special collection, went in this direction: Arianna Caporali and Antonio Golini's paper "Births and Fertility in Interwar Italy: Trends, Images, Policies and Perception" and Frédéric Sandron's study "Réunion in the 1960s and 1970s: A Population Policy Against the Current?"

Caporali and Golini point out that the Italian interwar period population policy was part of Mussolini's nationalist objectives and that it took several forms, from financial incentives to penalties for bachelors and emigration. But Mussolini's attempts failed and fertility continued to decline. We could compare the Italian case with France, a well known historical example of pronatalist policies. In France, a persuasive approach was used to convince people that high natality improves the wealth of the nation. This contrasted with the authoritarian approach of the Italian fascist regime presented in Caporali and Golini's paper. In addition, while in Italy population policies were associated with misogyny and racial discrimination, in France the pronatalist argument was combined with a social one: by compensating the cost of children, the policymakers tried to prevent family poverty (Chesnais, 2006). Today, because of the relatively high fertility rate in France, which in 2006 reached two children per woman, France is recognized as an a country that has implemented successful pronatalist policies.

The second paper of the special collection, Frédéric Sandron's, "Réunion in the 1960s and 1970s: A Population Policy Against the Current?", also involves direct population policies. Réunion Island's population policy is a peculiar case. Réunion is part of France's territory, but, contrary to metropolitan France, an anti-natalist policy was implemented there. The author explains how debates and charismatic figures led to the conclusion that demographic control was necessary for the socio-economic development of Réunion. Fertility policies were coupled with controversial migration policies, where young people were encouraged to migrate to metropolitan France. On these latter measures the debate is still ongoing. However, as was the case for natalist policies in metropolitan France, population policies were implemented along with other socio-economic measures.

Both papers, because of their reference to contexts where compulsory measures were applied, raise ethical issues and explain why direct population policies could be hardly accepted in modern societies. An exemplar illustration of the modern attitude can be found in the Green paper of the European Commission (2005). The document states that the aim of family policies is to help couples to have the number of children they desire given that in developed countries a gap exists between desired and actual couples' fertility. Issues related to the public interest of family policies, i.e. supporting fertility and counterbalancing the ageing process, are very cautiously mentioned in the EC document.

Despite the orientation in public opinion to consider reproductive behavior as a private domain, should the government maintain a regulatory role over demographic processes? Certainly, population is not a variable as any other structural variable targeted by policies. This awareness makes policymakers cautious about proposing explicit natalist policies that might pose an ethical challenge. Nevertheless, we believe that a better acceptance of natalist policies by the public opinion would be possible if policy makers will give more attention to ethical issues. Some interesting proposals were made in this direction by Simon Veil in her 1977 speech at the IUSSP conference (International Union for Scientific Studies of Population). According to Veil, family policies should be a *moral contract* between the state and the family. "When the state decides to modify the regulations of the contract, it must be careful not to be unjust to the family. For while the state can alter the conditions under which certain benefits are allocated, a family cannot change the number of children it already has". In other words, consistency of measures of family policy and their stability during the time are the signal for the families that they will be supported in their reproductive choices for all the time children are growing up. Simon Veil also pleaded for *caution* when implementing population policies, as natalist

policies, because of weak evidence of their efficacy in supporting fertility (see also Nico van Nimwegen in the conclusion section of this special collection).

The ethical issues compel us to revise our preliminary definition of population policies by putting the priority on individuals and adding some elements of caution. Population policies are those policies that, directly or indirectly, *attempt* to affect demographic phenomena such as fertility and migration and that attempt to adapt societies to the consequences of demographic processes. By affecting demographic behaviors, population policies *affect individuals' and families' biographies*.

Another issue raised by these two first papers of this special collection concerns the fact that population policies address population as a whole and thus refer to multiple demographic processes—the same processes addressed by the three day conference. Is there any interest in approaching demographic phenomena as a whole? Or does the holistic approach to population belong to the authoritarian population policies of the past? We return to this issue in the final part of this paper.

Immigration and migrants' integration policies

The second part of the conference was devoted to policies related to migrations. Policies regulating immigration have generated intense debates in countries in both North America and Western Europe, but the former countries have traditionally been more prone to accept, and even to promote, permanent settlement of foreign populations. During the last decade, at least among policymakers and scientists, a more positive view about immigration and its impacts has surfaced in European countries, at least concerning particular types of immigrants, such as highly skilled migrants (e.g. OECD–SOPEMI, 2008). The aim of countering population ageing has been one of motivations that are supporting policy changes. Economic motives, in particular the pressure to meet labor demand in specific occupations, are generally presented as the main rationale for accepting immigrants (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010). These topics were debated in several of the papers presented at the Chaire Quetelet conference. Marc Termote, in one paper that was selected for the special collection, maintains that only humanitarian policies (i.e. family reunification and providing a shelter to refugees) should be promoted. To reach this conclusion, Termote explores how effective immigration and integration policies are in different contexts. It is relevant for policymakers to identify those policies that indeed achieve their aims, and at the same time it is crucial for researchers to further specify theories on integration and its decisive mechanisms. Based on a review of literature, the author claims that the controls on the level and the structure of immigration flows are rather ineffective to promote economic objectives and to counter population ageing. For instance, the author asks “what should the per capita income of the receiving population be without immigration?” to answer that “whatever the method and the type of data used, whatever the period covered, whatever the country considered, results all lead to the same conclusion : immigration has only a marginal impact on the evolution of per capita income and on the unemployment rate”. Furthermore, most of the empirical research reviewed provides evidence of a limited quantitative and qualitative impact of selection of immigrants, as most immigrants come through family reunification. However, one could argue that family members are not a random sample of the origin country's population, but highly select and thus, previous selection of independent migrants should have effects on the characteristics of family members that are admitted, albeit some of them may be admitted many years later. Marc Termote concludes his article with a plea for a change in paradigm—a global and in-depth revision with respect to objectives and means of the political philosophy that forms the basis of our immigration and integration policies.

A related issue to the efficiency of policies is the fact that large numbers of immigrants enter illegally, and therefore are not administratively selected. Illegal migration, of course, implies a failure of policies to control flows. Furthermore, as these flows are “spontaneous” (i.e. not administratively regulated), the number and characteristics of migrants are determined by such factors as the labor market demand, the existence of jobs in the underground economy, family reunification, or by the migrant's ability or resources to overcome controls. An important issue in migration policy is which factors determine illegal entries, and the relative failure of admission controls. In fact, much of the debate in the USA and many countries in southern Europe center on ways of effectively avoiding

illegal immigration and the efficacy of such measures as amnesties and other ways to legalize migrants that already live in the country.

In the paper “An outstanding positioning of migrants and nationals: the case of Luxembourg”, Fofa Amétépé and Claudia Hartmann-Hirsch provide a detailed empirical examination of the economic performance of foreigners in a country where most recent immigration is highly qualified and where immigrants frequently occupy a better economic position than nationals. Luxembourg did not stop the admission of migrants in the 1970s, as several other West European countries, but pursued a policy of selectively attracting highly skilled migrants, as well as a smaller share of less skilled migrants. Furthermore, Luxembourg’s immigration policy can be considered a logical extension of its economic policy, which established the country as one of main centers of the European banking sector.

First, the authors present an analysis of the fiscal contribution/burden that foreigners represent in comparison to total population and comparable nationals. Second, the authors develop a multivariate analysis of the wage performance of foreigners in comparison to nationals. They find that the majority of foreigners form an economic elite, while a fraction of foreigners, especially non-EU foreigners, find themselves in a disadvantaged position. The authors interpret this exceptional situation of foreigners using the analytical lenses of H. Esser’s concept of “social integration”, and conclude that the privileged economic position of these foreigners may imply “a reversal of the traditional assimilation model: transnationals and not nationals provide perhaps *the* reference model for assimilation”.

The paper “Naturalization policies in France and the USA and their impact on migrants’ characteristics and strategies”, by Jean Louis Rallu, makes a detailed exploration of the differences in the naturalization policies between the USA and France, in the context of their respective migration policies, and analyzes their effects on the characteristics of those who choose to become naturalized in each of the countries. This paper places policies in both countries in a comparative perspective, and carries out an interesting parallel multivariate analysis. The author is wise to point out at the outset the intersection between micro (selection) and macro (state policy) processes that result in immigrant flows and subsequent naturalization experiences. Naturalization trends are not only directly affected by policy changes, including anticipation effects, but also by structural effects like the size and composition of migrant cohorts as regards origin and type of entry visa (including regularization in the USA). Selective migration policy in the USA enables more migrants to meet the requirements for naturalization on an individual basis than in France where a third of naturalizations are related to marriage. The US-France difference in the role of marriage in migration-settlement-naturalization is a particularly interesting and consequential feature of the paper.

Moreover, the author points out the variation in naturalization rates by country of origin. These differences persist in the face of multivariate controls. As such, they help point indirectly to both policy levers and behavioral mechanisms that may operate in producing variation in naturalization. The conclusion of the paper points to some very interesting differences between the composition of immigration flows in the US and France, especially given some of the nominal similarities in their citizenship policies. The differing position of human capital and marriage is particularly noteworthy. Beyond the various selections operated by policies, the analyses show that access to citizenship is important for migrants, as it increases their integration on the labor market in both countries.

Family policies and policies that support fertility

The third section on family policies shows a panoply of policy measures, data used and aims. Papers in this section of the collection focus on parental leave, paternity leave, care leave, full-time or part-time formal child care. Data are longitudinal, comparative, censal or qualitative. The aims that policies try to achieve are diverse: higher fertility, gender equity or work-family balance. Valarino and Bernardi’s paper (“Fertility Discourse in Parental Leave Policies’ Media Coverage: A Frame Analysis of French-speaking Swiss Press Articles from 1999 to 2009”) illustrates that family policies can also have an economic aim. Their analysis of Swiss cultural context analyzed through journal articles shows a primacy of the economic argument in favor of paternal and paternity leave as leave after parenthood would increase loyalty of employees. This multiplicity of aims

confirms the shift produced during the time in demography from direct population policies to population related policies, specifically, the shift from natalist policies to family policies.

Several papers in this collection present gender equity as one of the key objectives of family policies. This comes as no surprise that population researchers study gender equity, as several empirical works have illustrated the positive effect on fertility of the egalitarian division of domestic labor between partners. In Helen Eriksson's paper ("The Gendering Effects of Sweden's Gender-neutral Care Leave Policy") the efficacy of the care leave policy is tested with reference to an outcome of equal distribution of care leaves between partners. In other words, the gender equity criterion is adopted to determine if the change in the policy measure is efficient. The gender issue is implicitly a concern also in Nora Reich's paper on "Predictors of Fathers' Use of Parental Leave in Germany". Cavalli and Rosina's paper, "An Analysis of Reproductive Intentions of Italian Couples", illustrates that the equity issue is especially critical for working women in Italy: compared to non working women, they more often do not intend to have another child, while their male partners do. Evidently, the work-family balance is a greater concern for female partners than for male partners.

As to efficacy of policies, the time at which the effect is measured is a main issue in Eriksson's paper. She finds no effect of the increase of the cap of care leave on gender equity probably because the measure, after only one year, had not enough time to be known by couples as to its characteristics and consequences. The same result has been emphasized by McDonald (2006), stating that family policies show a largest effect on fertility in more recent studies compared to '90s because policies after two decades implementation had the time to produce their effect. The lagged effect of family policies, especially in their support of fertility choices, can be better understood when considering Veil's speech mentioned above. When in 1977 Simon Veil affirmed that a family policy is a "moral contract" between the State and the family, she implicitly stressed that the long term is the right perspective to evaluate any policy effect as families have to perceive the policy measure as durable in order to base their reproductive decisions on it.

Another way to look at efficacy of policies is to ascertain what individual factors and household characteristics are associated to their utilization and to see if this corresponds to our goals. In the special collection, Mamolo, Coppola and Di Cesare ("Formal Childcare Use and Household Socio-economic Profile in France, Italy, Spain and UK") report results emerging from the comparison of France, Italy, Spain and UK on use of formal child care. For most of countries, full-time child care is especially used by educated women or, as in UK, it depends on both partners earnings. Thus, a positive selection seems to exist in users according to social status. The consequence could be a lower probability of working or a more fragmented work career for women with a lower education. We could ask if it is an intended goal of formal childcare.

If the efficacy of a policy measures is the golden rule for their implementation, social theories can also support them. For example, new theories elaborated in social sciences can produce hypotheses about causal factors related to fertility and suggest innovative paths in empirical research and social policies. This is the case with Giuseppe Micheli's paper of our collection ("Does a Hidden Padlock Keep the Door of Fertility Shut in the Mediterranean Region?") that puts the focus on the category of "moods" as factors contributing to fertility decisions. In particular, crisis moods can engender a feeling of insecurity and make non-reversible reproductive choices more difficult. One of the causes of crisis moods could be the absence of coherent and long term policies, in other terms, the absence of a societal project. Micheli gives some suggestions on societal projects that should be implemented, especially in Southern Europe's lowest low fertility area: move toward a higher gender equality, increase the time shared between parents and children, and favor the change from romantic view on maternity to multiple caregivers.

Reich's paper underlines another crucial aspect that should be taken into account when rethinking our society, that is, the characteristics of the labor environment. Working in the public sector or with a permanent contract or sharing the work environment with more female colleagues favorably affects fatherhood, with fathers deciding to take the parental leave. The implicit conclusion is that adverse conditions in the work environment negatively affect the exercise of parenthood. These conditions

could be precariousness and high competitiveness, which, in turn, are associated with demand of total devotion and unconditional time availability. Recently, it has been proposed to reorganize the life-span engagement in labor market. Vaupel (2006) states that, if the part-time work becomes more common between 50s and 60s, younger people would be also able to work part-time during a crucial phase of life devoted to childrearing. Micheli and Vaupel's propositions concerning the use of time are attractive and would represent real turning points, but scientists and policymakers need to address their efforts to understand how to carry them out. This emphasis on life-course leads us to the fourth part of the special collection.

Ageing and policies related to ageing

In developed countries, the consequences of population ageing on their pension and health systems have been thoroughly examined in recent times and have lead governments to consider various measures that could partly compensate for the growth of expenses in the functioning of the social security system in welfare societies. Among these measures, raising the employment rate among the 55-64 year old has been the subject of increasing interest from international organizations such as the OECD and the European Union, and also from national governments. These measures comprise the focus of the fourth part of the special collection. Many member countries of the European Union have experienced a rapid decline in the employment rate of the 55+ (Guillemard, 2003), and starting from the nineties the perspective of a labor shortage and the growing costs of retirement have lead many governments to switch from policies promoting early retirement to policies promoting staying at work (Maltby *et al.*, 2004).

During the 35th Quetelet seminar, two papers published in the present special collection considered this problem. Analyzing the case of Belgium, where measures have been taken since the years 2000 in order to encourage people aged 55+ to remain in the labour market, Nathalie Burnay ("Ageing at Work: Between Changing Social Policy Patterns and Reorganization of Working Times") shows on the basis of surveys among employed persons, that these policies can be contrary to personal aspirations. In the second paper, Moulaert, Fusulier and Tremblay ("Management of Working Time for Career Extension in Belgium and Quebec") compare, in a macro-sociological perspective, the evolution of employment policies concerning the end-of-career in Belgium and in Quebec. Applying social transformation analysis to the measures aimed in order to promote active ageing in employment, they study the interactions between the different actors involved in the debate and underline the increasing accountability of the individual in the management of her/his working time.

These two papers clearly show that the decline in the employment rate of the 55-64 year old is the consequence of multiple factors situated at the individual level (personal- or family projects), at the level of the firm (absence of social recognition, lack of in-service training), or at the level of employment policies (measures favoring early retirement during the seventies and eighties). Reversing this trend implies willpower at the national level and a long-term action plan addressed both to firms and to the people employed in order to bring to an end the culture of early retirement. It also implies improving the access to life-long learning, more flexible working hours, the tutoring of the younger workers by experienced senior workers, and the awareness by firms of the potential of senior workers (e.g. recognition of their experience and of their competencies).

Increasing the employment rate of the 55-64 group is one of the axes considered by governments for attenuating the impact of population ageing on the social security system. Other measures are also discussed or already undertaken by governments. If reducing pensions and increasing social security contributions is poorly accepted by the public, the promotion of funded pension plans and the increase in retirement age are already part of the policies implemented in order to take demographic trends into account.

Of course, in the field of ageing, in addition to the policies that can be implemented in order to retain older workers on the labour market and to attenuate the growing costs of ageing, other challenges are at stake. In particular, the increase in life expectancy, due among others to the mortality decline at

more and more advanced ages, raises the issue of the quality of life at these ages, functional and cognitive impairments increasing with age. Two specific aspects of morbidity at advanced ages have to be taken into account: chronic diseases of long duration and dementias. These two disease categories lead to specific needs that require reorganization or an adjustment of the health care system. The increase in the number of dependent persons due to this type of morbidity, on the one hand, and the objective of health policies to keep these persons at home as long as possible, on the other hand, raises the question of the coverage of dependency by the social security system both in terms of the establishment of a specific system of dependency insurance and by the recognition of the status of family caregivers permitting the increased valuation and economic support of this type of care.

Conclusions: instruction for use of the special collection

The special collection is not a systematic comparison of population policies typologies, even if papers presented are a good representation of main issues in population policies domain. In addition, the collection is not a systematic presentation of policies and evaluation methods. In our view, the collection stands out because of its holistic approach—an approach that brings together a wide range of population policies that examine different demographic phenomena such as fertility, migration and ageing.

Actually, we put together different population policies, while continuing to analyze them separately. In fact, we have no tools yet to conceive and evaluate integrated population policies. We could have tried for example to study the effect of encouraging people to remain on the labor market after 55 (or later) on grand parenting practices, or we could conceive policies integrating the care of older people with migration policies, as care providers increasingly are immigrants.

Nevertheless, our (light) integrated approach has its advantages. (1) The first is to sensitize scientists and policymakers to a more integrated approach, where multiple objectives are addressed simultaneously by population policies. On this respect, some authors propose to create a *Ministry of Demography* (Dixon and Margo 2006) or a *Ministry of Population*. There would be several advantages to doing this. It would, for example, be a symbolic step to clearly communicate the role of demography in people's lives and clearly communicate government's intentions to take demography as a policy issue. A Ministry of Demography could better coordinate policies on population dynamics, leading to a coherent and holistic strategy. Last but not least, a Ministry of Demography could promote the discussion on the ethics of a specific policy measure. The importance of relating ethics to population policy implementation is in accordance with the belief that population policies must be guided by a project of society. (2) The second advantage is to put emphasis on population studies as a scientific discipline. Demographers or population scientists will be the natural referents for the Ministry of Demography, because of their expertise on demographic phenomena and interrelations between them.

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