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PREFACE

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Demographic processes and social issues in the contemporary world

Demographic processes in the contemporary world are characterized by a growing similarity between various continents and regions, as their basic demographic indicators converge. Although the speed at which these changes occur vary and occasional setbacks can be observed (for example due to military conflicts, natural disasters or epidemics), life expectancy keeps growing and illiteracy is on the decrease in most regions of the world. Female fertility also keeps falling which results in a shrinking size of households and, next to growing life expectancy, contributes to population ageing. A notable exception is Africa, especially the Sub-Saharan region, with its life expectancy still dropping (partly due to the still prevalent HIV/AIDS epidemics) and very high fertility. More than one out of five people living in Africa suffers hunger or malnutrition, and for a few months ebola has featured as yet another plague which the continent suffers.

Demographic convergence between various continents and countries of the world (except for the ones in Africa) has intensified over the past few decades. The result is blurring distinction between the countries of the global South and the global North. Various demographic processes there, however, are at a different stage of development, one example being population ageing. The most affected are affluent countries of the North, characterized, for some time already, by below-replacement fertility and faced with the prospect of depopulation. Poor countries of the South, some of which still strive against fast rate of growth of their populations, will also experience ageing, according to current population forecasts, but they still remain relatively young. Table 1 presents selected demographic indicators for various continents and world regions, based on the data and divisions from publications by the United Nations Population Division. The data testify to the demographic diversity of the world.

Tab. 1. Selected demographic statistics for the world UN regions, 2011

Major area	Total population (millions)	Median age (years)	Aged under 15 (%)	Aged 60 and over (%)	Annual rate of change * (%)	Living in urban areas (%)	Life expectancy**	Total fertility rate (per woman)**
World	6 974	29.4	27	11	1.45	52.1	67.9	2.52
MDR	1 240	39.9	17	22	0.44	77.7	76.9	1.66
LDR	5 734	27.2	29	9	1.71	46.5	65.9	2.67
Least DC	851	19.9	40	5	2.49	-	56.9	4.41
Other LDC	4 883	28.5	27	10	1.59	-	67.9	2.41
Africa	1 046	19.8	40	6	2.49	39.6	55.2	4.64
Asia	4 207	29.5	26	10	1.51	45.0	69.0	2.28
Europe	739	40.3	15	22	0.21	72.9	75.4	1.53
Latin Am. ***	597	27.9	27	10	1.61	79.1	73.4	2.30
North. Am.	348	37.3	20	19	1.01	82.2	78.2	2.03
Oceania	37	32.9	24	15	1.55	70.7	76.6	2.49

MDR = more developed regions, LDR = less developed regions, Least DC = least developed countries, Other LDC = other less developed countries

* 1980-2011

** Estimated for 2005-2010

*** Latin America and the Caribbean

Source: *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*. New York: United Nations; *World Urbanization Prospects. The 2011 Revision*. New York: United Nations.

Referring to the data in Table 1 one can also mention results of an Internet survey among demographers from various regions of the world, in which one of the questions concerned the most important demographic challenges of the next two decades (Dalen, Henkens 2012).¹ Responses varied depending on the interviewees' place of residence, reflecting differences between various world regions in terms of their demographic situation: European and North American demographers ranked ageing and migrations high, whereas demographers situating in other regions of the world had a far more diverse policy agenda: in Africa they prioritized HIV/AIDS, infant mortality and urbanization; in South America, similarly to Asia, ageing, infant mortality and urbanization.

The focus of this volume of "Studia Sociologica" is on population issues in European countries; only two articles discuss problems of other world regions. The issues raised in the papers of the volume reflect, at the same time, the importance attributed by scholars to population issues on the European continent: as many as five articles deal, in some way, with population ageing. The idea behind the call for papers for this volume was to demonstrate that familiarity with demographic processes leads to a better understanding of the problems of contemporary societies, and how it can contribute to solving thereof, based on the assumption that almost every salient social, economic or political issue has a demographic dimension to it.

In the opening article by Krystyna Kluzowa *Long-term home care over dependent elderly in ageing Europe* the author provides an incisive and comprehensive analysis of data signaling the direction of changes in the age composition of the population of Europe. The data reflect an ongoing process of the so-called "double" ageing of population, which consists in the growth of the share of very old seniors in the growing share of all the elderly in the population as a whole. The author discusses the resulting challenges, in particular, the need to organize and develop long-term care systems, especially care provided at home. She presents various aspects of the functioning of home care in the European Union countries, focusing in particular on Poland.

As Monika Adamczyk reminds us in her article: *The population ageing process as a chance to strengthen the voluntary activities and private intergenerational flows within Polish society*, population ageing may be perceived either as a threat, or as a challenge (the author refers to a core article by Piotr Szukalski from 2006, discussing these issues). The author highlights the fact that the elderly are rich in resources which are unused for the most part and which may be tapped to bring about both social, and economic profits. In particular, what is at stake is voluntary activity and intergenerational services provided for families and whole communities.

Population ageing represents a challenge for many social institutions, including the cultural ones. The latter are discussed in the article *Ageing and the future of museum* by Elżbieta Nieroba. The author points to the fact that due to demographic changes museums are faced with the necessity to adapt their activities to the elderly – a new group of audience. Based on empirical data, the author shows what is missing with respect to these adaptations and comes up with recommendations which

¹ The Internet survey was carried out in 2009 among 970 demographers, members of the IUSSP (*International Union for the Scientific Study of Population*). The response rate was 46% (Dalen, Henkens 2012; reference can be found in the last article of this volume).

could help museums in moving seniors out of their isolation and increasing their participation level.

The paper by Dorota Nowalska-Kapuścik *Demographic determinants of consumption patterns. Privileged or marginalized? Reflections on the situation of the 'third age' consumers in the globalized markets* contains some interesting theoretical reflections concerning the definition of the old age, as well as the position of the elderly in the consumer society.

A very interesting article is written by Anna Prokop and Natalia Ożegalska-Łukasik: *Social marketing and stigmatization of the elderly affected by dementia and depression in selected European countries*, based on an incisive analysis of empirical data, and carrying practical implications. The focus is on the social position of seniors with mental illnesses, i.e. dementia and depression. As the authors write, the double exclusion of this group results on the one hand from stereotypes and adverse attitudes towards elderly people, and on the other – towards individuals with mental disorders. An important role in breaking the taboo of discussing the mental illness of the elderly, plays social marketing. Using a content analysis method, the authors studied social campaigns referring to the mental health of seniors launched in five European countries. The results of the conducted analysis form basis for recommendations regarding the possibilities of promoting mental health among elderly people as well as promoting knowledge about the problems of seniors with dementia or depression and an openness towards them and their families.

Mental health is also the focus of the next paper in the volume, although this time in the context of international migrations. In her article: *A sociological analysis of mental disorders among migrants*, Marzena Kruk signals the need for preventive measures and access to treatment for migrants, who are a group at increased risk of morbidity due to the number of changes undergone and often-experienced negative effects of migration.

The article by Maria Abramova and Galina Goncharova: *Indigenous minority peoples of Russia: the dynamics of national policy, transformation of family and marriage relations* deals with issues of the demographic situation in Russia, relatively little-known in Poland, focusing on the problems of the indigenous minority peoples of Siberia, which “can be perceived as societies which are threatened the most by both spontaneous and politically-driven processes, subject to a large extent to depopulation, social degradation, amalgamation and, as a result, extinction”.² The authors take on a broad historical perspective, tracing the sources of the contemporary demographic problems in these communities in the population policy of the Russian state, starting with the tsarist, through the soviet and nowadays post-soviet one. The analysis of the paternalistic policy towards the indigenous minority peoples leads to disturbing conclusions concerning the impact thereof on the minority culture and traditions. As a result of the policy, minority members have been left incapacitated (by welfare provision, various forms of support etc.), while continuity in the socialization of children was interrupted abruptly, as children would be taken away from their parents. Negatively affected have also been family and marital relations, as reflected in various demographic indicators. This situation bears resemblance to the fate experienced by indigenous peoples also in other regions of the world (North

² From an anonymous review of the article.

America, Australia). Although the conclusions and recommendations drawn by the authors themselves are debatable, the paper presents an incisive analysis, based on numerous sources, including quantitative research carried out by the authors.

The article by Anton Lisnik and Katarína Greňova: *Elimination of social inequalities as a prerequisite for reducing the risk of infectious diseases* focuses on an important social issue in many contemporary countries, namely the links between social inequalities and population health. It is an obvious fact (as research carried out over the past few years demonstrates) that the latter depends not so much on biological factors, as on income, type of employment and educational level. A testimony to a particularly vulnerable and underprivileged position of certain societies and communities within them are infectious diseases, for the most part eradicated in the so-called more developed countries (to be replaced by the so-called lifestyle diseases, such as cardiovascular ones or cancer). The authors focus on the incidence of tuberculosis in Slovakia, widespread especially among the Roma community, particularly prone to infectious diseases (other groups at risk include migrants and the homeless). They point to the fact that social inequalities are at the heart of these diseases, and without elimination thereof there is little hope for a positive change in the state of population health.

The last article, by the volume's editor: *Demographic growth and the prospects of feeding the world population. An outline of the problem*, extends the analysis beyond the European region, focusing on the global challenge of feeding the world population. The aim is to highlight major issues underlying the debate on the prospects of feeding the population of the world, considering, in particular, the still prevalent phenomena of hunger and malnutrition. The focus is especially on the causes of the latter phenomenon which persists despite the fact that the Earth's resources are sufficient enough to sustain an even significantly larger number of people than there are today.