

Editorial

The Past, Present and Future of CPoS

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Abstract: In this editorial note, we reflect on the trajectory of Comparative Population Studies (CPoS) over the last decades, highlight major milestones along the road, and sketch our hopes and ideas for its future development. In 1975, the predecessor journal of CPoS named ZfB was established as the scientific journal of the newly founded German Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB). As the Institute grew its international collaborations and the journal transitioned from German to English language, ZfB became CPoS. Today, we are pleased that the journal has grown in stature and attracts high-quality submissions from scholars around the globe. Looking ahead, we envision CPoS as a unique open-access journal in the field of population studies where innovation, scientific rigor and attention to quality work hand-in-hand to advance population studies and respond to societal challenges.

Keywords: ZfB · CPoS · Relaunch · Open-access policy · OJS

1 The roots of Comparative Population Studies

Over ten years ago, *Comparative Population Studies* (CPoS) was launched as the successor of the German-speaking journal *Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft* (ZfB). The ZfB was founded in 1975 by the BiB with a main focus on fertility, mortality and migration in the German-speaking countries. The ZfB became a well-established journal in the research communities of Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Articles were published in German with abstracts translated into English and French. To make papers accessible to a wider audience, and in reaction to the general push towards open-access publishing, the publisher and editor at the time decided to transform ZfB into the online open-access journal CPoS with an English name and stronger focus on the international research community. Instead of liaising with a publishing house, the editor opted for the open journal management system OJS to publish CPoS. Despite the challenges, it meant independence, freedom and

flexibility in managing the journal. Compared to ZfB, CPoS aims for a broader focus and a broader understanding of population studies. Now that CPoS has matured into a more widely known peer-reviewed open-access journal of population studies and demography, it is time for us to reflect on its past development and to envision its future.

2 What does Comparative Population Studies stand for today?

Having talked about the past, let us turn to the present. As a journal of population studies and demography, CPoS has a broad scope spanning from ageing and mortality to family and fertility and to topics related to health and wellbeing, migration and mobility, as well as population structure and its changes over time. This broad scope becomes clear when looking at our long list of special issues that have already been published. They are evidence of the diverse topics covered. Since 2015 CPoS has usually been publishing one special issue per volume.

As most visible in its name CPoS has a focus on comparative research. But what is comparative research and what does it mean in terms of submissions to the journal? Clearly, there are differing opinions on what is comparative research. The focus we chose to adopt should not be seen as a plea for restricting our attention to comparative research, but rather as the scope that we decided upon for the journal. First of all, the focus on comparative research does not mean that we only accept such papers. We also welcome submissions without a comparative focus, as long as they address a research question with high relevance for population studies. Nevertheless, we have a special interest in publishing comparative studies and comparative research methods. We believe the opportunity for comparative studies in the sense of cross-regional comparisons has never been greater, since harmonized data for comparisons become increasingly available (IPUMS, Gateway to Global Aging Data, DHS, GGS, Share, etc.). Yet at the same time comparisons can mean a lot: comparisons across time, across countries, across the life course, across social and demographic groups – just to name a few. We aim to promote all of these kinds of comparisons and explicitly want to encourage authors to strengthen the comparative features of their work in their submission to CPoS.

The interdisciplinary nature of the journal is a curse and a blessing at the same time. A curse because the genuine profile of CPoS is less clear. But also a blessing because the topics covered attract scholars from different disciplines from all over the world. Moreover, this interdisciplinary focus reflects the interdisciplinarity of the field of population research in itself.

A key feature of CPoS is fair reviewing for all authors irrespective of their background. What does that mean? CPoS has an inclusive approach meaning we are open to all researchers regardless of their career level and previous experience. The decisive criterion for a successful submission is the paper's contribution to our knowledge about population. Living up to this claim means that we, for example, pay special attention to papers from authors of less developed countries for whom it is less easy to publish in established journals, as well as to early career

scholars. We are dedicated to this policy and, for example, offer authors whose work does not meet the general research standards yet but is considered promising by the editorial team to revise the paper before it is sent to external reviewers. This approach requires time and resources but we believe it is worth the effort because the feedback that authors receive is an important part of a learning process and scientific career development. CPoS is fortunate to have a pool of dedicated reviewers. We cannot overstate the significance of the contributions of reviewers to the development that CPoS has taken, and we are extremely thankful for their willingness to dedicate their time and effort to the journal.

CPoS is a marvelous ecosystem of authors, reviewers, publisher and editorial staff (including language and technical editors) supporting the publication process from start to finish. Everyone with the capability to produce an innovative contribution to population science can be part of that ecosystem, at no cost. That is the strength of CPoS and our vision of what should make a journal successful. From our point of view, academic publishing nowadays is often focused too much on impact factors and other citation-based metrics, which are without question important but should not be overemphasized.

So far, topics covered in CPoS mainly focus on Europe but we would like to encourage scholars from all over the world to submit their work. At CPoS, we have a great interest to learn about population change and population structure and their challenges in other parts of the world and we are dedicated to make them known to a wide audience. This is also one of the reasons why we decided to establish a new category of papers besides traditional research articles: *Demographic Trends Around the Globe*. These are shorter papers presenting new descriptive findings. The manuscripts submitted to this category undergo a fast-track double blind peer review process.

This leads us to other important features of CPoS: platinum open access, turnaround time and costs. CPoS has a rolling publication model, meaning papers are published online continuously. We aim for a speedy review and publication process of less than a year from submission of a manuscript to its publication. Publications are platinum open-access and free to download without registration. CPoS offers professional language editing and professional layout support ensuring high quality standards at our journal. All these services are quite unique in the field of population studies and come at no extra costs for the authors, because CPoS is funded entirely by the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB). We are proud that publishing in CPoS is completely free of charge to authors and readers.

Another feature of CPoS is its external editor. Since 2018, the editorial team is complemented by an internationally renowned scholar from outside the BiB, who serves as editor to ensure scientific independence, transparency and scientific quality. The publisher and the BiB are extremely grateful to Phil Rees, Johannes Huinink and currently Frans Willekens for their valuable input and dedicated work as editors in recent years.

3 Looking into the future of Comparative Population Studies

This now leads us to CPoS' future development. As mentioned earlier, one of our goals is to open up the journal to a more international community and to invite authors to submit comparative research.

In the coming years, we want to further strengthen the core aim of CPoS, which is *to advance comparative research in population studies*. In doing so, we want to support research focussing on improving comparative methods and/or comparative data sources. We also aim to support papers that develop and refine comparative frameworks which allow for cross-country or cross-region comparisons. This includes establishing standardized definitions, indicators, and methodologies.

Besides promoting comparative population research, our challenge as a journal will be to keep up to date with developments in the academic publishing world, and the topics of replicability and open science.

Lastly, we consider to develop a platform for debate about innovation in population research. Given that innovative research that deviates from the mainstream does not always get the attention it deserves, a platform for discussion contributions could help addressing this gap and foster innovation in the study of population.

4 Current challenges at Comparative Population Studies

Having talked about CPoS' past, present and future, we also need to look at challenges and how we plan to meet them. Not being affiliated with an association or a publisher means freedom and flexibility but it also comes with disadvantages, for example in terms of visibility. The number of population journals is large and it is important to make a difference and to stand out. Advertising the journal at international conferences is one of the actions taken to make CPoS known to a wide audience. Our publications are advertised on X (Twitter) and in newsletters of major population associations and perhaps you can spread the word, too.

At CPoS, we look forward to continue serving the scientific community in the field of population studies and are enthusiastic about what the future will bring.

CPoS in a nutshell

- Our focus: comparative studies and comparative research methods
- No geographic focus
- Two categories of articles:
 - ✓ Research articles
 - ✓ Shorter descriptive articles on demographic trends around the globe
- One special issue per volume
- External editor complementing the editorial team at the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) in Wiesbaden, Germany
- How authors and their institutions benefit:
 - ✓ High-quality standards
 - ✓ Double blind peer review with at least two external reviewers for each article
 - ✓ Extensive feedback to authors as part of the publication process
 - ✓ Publications are platinum open-access and free to download without registration
 - ✓ Free professional language editing
 - ✓ Free professional layout
 - ✓ No Article Processing Charges (APC) or page charges

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