

50 Years of Communicating Demographic and Population Research in Germany*

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Abstract: In his editorial, former CPoS editor Johannes Huinink reflects on his personal experiences with the journal as author, advisory board member and editor. He emphasizes the importance of scholarly debates, efforts to include contributions from the Global South, and shares his perspectives for the journal's continued development and success. He focuses on both the ZfB and CPoS years. The ZfB played a key role in re-establishing demography as a scientific discipline in Germany. Since its relaunch in 2010 as CPoS, the journal has become an internationally recognized, English-language open-access platform with a strong focus on thematic Special Issues.

Keywords: Demographic and population research • Publishing strategies • CPoS • ZfB

1 Introduction

Congratulations to CPoS/ZfB and its publisher, the Federal Institute for Population Research (*Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung*, BiB), on the journal's 50th anniversary. In the first decades of its existence, the *Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft* (ZfB) made a significant contribution to the re-establishment of demography as a scientific discipline in Germany. Today, *Comparative Population Studies* (CPoS) is an internationally recognized venue for demographic and population research. As someone who has personally benefited from the journal for over 40 years and who has been involved as an author, guest editor, advisory board member, and reviewer, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the conception, development, and production of the journal over all these years.

* This article belongs to a series celebrating the journal's 50th anniversary.

2 The ZfB Years (1975-2009)

From 1975 onwards, the ZfB, the predecessor of CPoS, made important contributions to German demography. It helped the discipline regain a serious scientific reputation in our country after it had fallen into long-term disrepute due to its significant involvement in inhuman eugenic research and the racist and criminal politics in Germany until the end of World War II.

As a sociologist by training, I was lucky enough to get a position as a researcher at the Institute for Population Research and Social Policy (*Institut für Bevölkerungsforschung und Sozialpolitik*, IBS) at the University of Bielefeld in 1982. Needing to improve my demographic expertise, I benefited from articles published in the ZfB. In the years that followed, the ZfB remained an important companion to my demographic research activities. In the 1980s and 1990s, I particularly appreciated the reports on recent demographic trends in Germany which were published on a regular basis. In these years, I was also able to place several articles in ZfB that marked major achievements of my demographic work on cohort and life-course analysis.

One episode in particular is worth mentioning. I had left Bielefeld for Berlin to work at the Max-Planck-Institute of Human Development, where I conducted research on fertility and family formation over the life course in East and West Germany. Using data from various waves of the German Life Course Study, my colleague Peter Blossfeld and I were able to develop and test a new approach to analyzing the effects of women's education and employment on starting a family. We published the first results of our study in the ZfB in 1989 (Blossfeld/Huinink 1989), whereupon two of our colleagues, Josef Brüderl and Thomas Klein (1991), proposed a different approach and criticized our model considerably. We responded with an article in 1991 and were able to successfully demonstrate the validity of our model, which became the standard approach in this field of research (Blossfeld et al. 1991). This admittedly would not have been possible if we had not had the opportunity to publish one version in the *American Journal of Sociology* (Blossfeld/Huinink 1991). "Battles" regarding models was far too rare in the German publishing landscape back then and remain uncommon today. And so, the ZfB offered a venue for the sort of ultimately productive dispute that would also benefit today's research landscape.

3 The CPoS Years (2009-)

On the initiative of Norbert F. Schneider, the director of the BiB at the time, the journal was thoroughly reorganized in 2009/10, and ZfB turned into CPoS. Initially published as a bilingual journal, CPoS is today an open-access English-language journal solely run by the BiB. The successful relaunch has been supported considerably by an active advisory board. Among others, the members significantly supported the publication of at least one Special Issue (SI) per year by suggesting relevant research topics and guest editors who work on these themes.

Not least due to the successful acquisition of thematically focused articles in Special Issues, CPoS was quickly integrated into the developments in German demographic research at the time. Two brief examples illustrate this direction. A 2011 Special Issue on "Fertility Dynamics in Austria, Germany and Switzerland" (Vol. 36, 2-3; guest editors: Tomas Frejka, Alexia Prskawetz) gathered contributions by members of an interdisciplinary working group which was installed under the leadership of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the German National Academy of Sciences (Leopoldina) to prepare a "state of the art" report on "A Future with Children – Fertility and Social Development in Germany, Austria and Switzerland" (Frejka/Prskawetz 2011). CPoS also offered the opportunity to publish a Special Issue with articles introducing initial findings from the first waves of the long-term German Family Panel (pairfam), which I initiated with colleagues from sociology and psychology. This SI was published in 2012 (Vol. 37, 3-4; guest-edited by me) (Huinink 2012).

In 2019, I was asked if I could imagine working as an external editor for CPoS. Although I was now retired, wanted to change my field of activity and enter the fine arts, I accepted. Therefore, CPoS is part of the reason why I still am in the scientific business. The year and a half (2020/2021) that I spent in this position was full of stimulating experiences. I very much enjoyed working with the competent colleagues in the editorial team and I have gained insights into the specifics of editing the journal. There are two observations which I would like to share.

First, I would like to emphasize continuing to successfully and regularly publish Special Issues as a key strategic element for the future development of the journal. Today, CPoS is included in the *Emerging Sources Citation Index* (ESCI) and – quite wrongly – does not yet belong to the "premier league" of social science journals. This could come with a certain disadvantage in terms of perceived attractiveness in our impact factor-prone publication landscape. Special Issues provide a good way to enrich the annual volumes with contributions by renowned colleagues and further improve the visibility of the journal as an already well-established international demographic venue. Besides their editorial work alongside the staff at the BiB, the external managing editors are also expected to support organizing Special Issues or edit them themselves. Together with Josef Brüderl, who was one of my Co-PIs in the German Family Panel during my time as CPoS editor, I edited an SI in 2021 dealing with the question of how the availability of longitudinal studies improved the "causal explanation" of demographic processes in empirical studies (Vol. 46) (Huinink/Brüderl 2021).

The second observation from my external editorship is that many articles were submitted that were thematically and informatively interesting, but could not be published as research articles according to the journal's standards because of methodological, formal, or substantive issues. Quite a few were written by colleagues from countries of the so-called "Global South." Instead of a desk rejection, we returned sufficiently promising papers to the authors with recommendations on how to get them into a shape that allowed us to start the review process. This was an effortful procedure and/or often still did not end in successful publications with CPoS. One idea, then, was to introduce a new category for articles of a more

descriptive nature which provide interesting information on “Demographic Trends Around the Globe.” The proposal was approved by the journal’s advisory board and we started the new category in 2021 with an initial invited paper (*Nitsche et al.* 2021). Today, two or three papers per volume are published in this category – so it seems to be working, even though the number of publications could be a bit higher and in my perception, the Global South could be more strongly represented. In general, it would be desirable to attract more papers from these parts of the world, which in my opinion find their way into the established demographic journals too rarely.

4 Concluding remarks

I conclude by expressing my conviction that CPoS – already a very productive part of the international demographic journal landscape – will continue its successful development. I wish everyone involved in its conception and publication every success in the years to come.

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