

Editorial

Reflections on CPoS: A Journey Across Five Decades*

Michaela Kreyenfeld

Abstract: In this editorial, Michaela Kreyenfeld, former board member, author and reviewer, reflects on her own experiences with and the evolution and significance of *Comparative Population Studies* (CPoS), formerly *Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft* (ZfB), highlighting its role as a dedicated, rigorous platform for demographic and population research. CPoS embraces core demographic topics as well as interdisciplinary approaches, exemplified for example by seminal works on fertility, demographic transitions, and sociological theory. Valued for fairness, accessibility, and intellectual integrity, CPoS offers a respected venue for both emerging and established scholars.

Keywords: Demographic and population research • Interdisciplinary approaches • CPoS • ZfB

1 A personal journey with CPoS/ZfB

CPoS or its predecessor ZfB was one of the first journals I ever published in. Back in 2002, I had just completed my PhD and was incredibly proud to see my work in print. The article I published was a spin-off from a methodological background analysis of my PhD thesis. It was a technical demographic study on parity-specific fertility in Germany. Frankly, I doubt I could have published it elsewhere, but CPoS/ZfB offered a welcoming and intellectually rigorous home. Roughly ten years later, I returned to the same topic and again published in CPoS – this time, it became one of the journal's most frequently downloaded publication (Kreyenfeld *et al.* 2011). In both cases, the work focused on a core demographic topic – somewhat technical and data-driven – and CPoS was uniquely suited to recognize its value and provide a platform for its dissemination.

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

2 Core demography and interdisciplinary approaches

CPoS has long offered a valuable niche: a journal dedicated to specialized demographic topics while embracing the full breadth of demographic and population research. It informs readers about important and timely demographic trends (see, e.g., zur *Nieden/Sommer* 2016) and engages with complex issues surrounding demographic indicators such as the wicked issue of tempo effects in period indicators (e.g., *Luy/Pötzsch* 2011; *Feeney* 2011). But CPoS does more than cover the core of demography; it also approaches demographic questions through the lenses of adjacent disciplines such as sociology, geography, political science and in some cases economics, human geography and public health. A notable example is the sociological work by *Brehm* and *Schneider* (2019), which provides a deeply theoretical conceptualization of fertility behaviour. A paper that must also be mentioned in respect to theoretical significance is certainly *Ron Lesthaeghe's* seminal 1992 article "Der zweite demographische Übergang in den westlichen Ländern: Eine Deutung," published when CPoS was still known as ZfB. This article introduced the foundational theoretical concept of the "Second Demographic Transition" (SDT) to a German-speaking audience. Engagement with this theoretical framework continues at CPoS, most recently through Sergei Zakharov's work on the SDT in Russia (*Zakharov* 2024). Here, it is heartening to see that CPoS transcends political borders and conflicts through its scholarship.

3 Major transitions: from print to digital and German to English

Two major shifts have shaped the evolution of CPoS: the move from print to digital publishing, and the transition to English-only publications. The digital transition was inevitable and a "no-brainer." The shift to English was more difficult, undertaken with a heavier heart. For a short period, the journal experimented with bilingual publications. I published during this phase and remember it vividly – writing the same article in both German and English felt like writing two distinct papers. Had translation tools using Artificial Intelligence (AI) been as advanced as they are now, CPoS might have continued a bilingual approach. But maintaining dual-language publishing became unsustainable back then. With that change, CPoS inevitably lost part of its "German-only" readership – probably in particular those working in local statistical offices, who are more concerned with issues of regional demography and planning. It may also be that some demographic topics more specific to Germany are no longer submitted. This was a bit of a "grain of salt" in the overall reasonable decision which opened the door to a broader international audience and to the opportunity of becoming an internationally recognized academic journal. The renaming of the journal from *Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft* to *Comparative Population Studies* symbolized this shift. The word "comparative" in the title signaled a commitment to international perspectives and though international submissions were slow at first, they have grown steadily. However, other comparative perspectives are also very welcome such as comparisons across time, across countries, across the

life course, across social and demographic groups (see *Willekens et al.* 2023). Today, CPoS is well-recognized among the established international demographic journals.

4 Expanding perspectives

With initiatives such as *Demographic Trends Around the Globe*, CPoS has opened a new chapter – actively seeking to include (descriptive) studies from countries of the Global South and to attract scholars from these regions. While the ambition is clear, the realization has proven more challenging. Many of the initial publications under this new initiative have still been authored by European scholars or have focused on European topics. However, the journal is gradually evolving, with increasing contributions from scholars in Asia (see, e.g., *Kye* 2023) and Africa (*Musizvingoza et al.* 2023). Progress toward becoming a truly global platform has been incremental, but the intent is evident. CPoS is well-positioned to fill a crucial niche that many other “Western” demographic journals have yet to fully address. The future holds promise for exciting new publications that reflect the manifold demographic realities of the world and the insights of great demographic minds across all continents.

5 So, why publish in CPoS?

CPoS is a down-to-earth journal – accessible, fair, and committed to quality. It does not select papers based on the reputation of the author, nor their institution, but on the merit of the work. Junior scholars are given the same opportunity as senior researchers, provided they deliver rigorous, thoughtful contributions. In this way, CPoS truly upholds values of honesty, fairness, and intellectual integrity, resisting the commercial pressures that shape much of academic publishing today. There are no publication fees, no open access charges – an important stance in an era where predatory journals are on the rise. CPoS maintains the highest standards of peer review and editorial quality. Its global initiative, *Demographic Trends Around the Globe*, is not just a slogan but a genuine effort to expand representation and inclusion in demographic scholarship. Of course, there are more prestigious demographic journals internationally that enable authors to gain greater recognition among their peers and accumulate more points in their institution’s tenure track evaluation systems. But CPoS is on an upward trajectory, steadily positioning itself among the leading demographic journals. Currently, CPoS ranks among the Q2 demographic journals (according to Clarivate’s journal impact ranking). It stands out for its integrity, its inclusiveness, and its commitment to the core values of scholarship. For demographic scholars who care about substance, fairness, and global engagement, it offers a respected platform. Publishing in CPoS means contributing to a 50-year tradition of committed and solid demographic scholarship – and to a journal that remains agile and responsive to a changing academic environment. Happy birthday, CPoS!

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