Lamur, H.E.

Published in:
Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
The population of the world increased rapidly during the past centuries. According to recent estimates of the United Nations, the number of inhabitants on earth amounted to between 150 and 300 millions at the beginning of the Christian era, while the present world population is put at 4,000 millions. The increase (even) accelerated after the 1950's, mainly caused by the population growth in the Third World countries. While the population of Western Europe is presently rising at a mean annual rate of 1.0 per cent, the figure for the Third World is much higher and amounts to 2.5 per cent. The rapid increase of the population in the Third World countries has major social and economic consequences since the available means of support do not keep pace with the growth of population. The slower growth of the food supply results in a widening gap between the population size and the means of support. Although population growth alone is not responsible for the population/food imbalance, the demographic factor is central to it. Hence efforts to reduce the growth of the population already started in the 1940's. At that time the population policy for the underdeveloped countries was based on the assumption that the pattern of demographic development which had taken place in Western Europe from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century would also occur in the Third World countries after their incorporation in the world economy.

The trend in the demographic evolution in Western Europe since the seventeenth century can be divided into a number of phases. During the first phase the birth rate was only slightly higher than the death rate, amounting to about 3.0 and 2.5 per cent respectively. During that period there was a balance between the means of support and the size of the population which increased only gradually. In the second phase, which started around 1780, mortality declined while fertility remained high, resulting in a rapid increase of the population. The continuing decline in mortality was primarily caused by both the improvement in medical technology and the increased supply of food. These developments in turn were associated with the Industrial Revolution that began around 1750 (Coale, 1974 : 22, 23; UN, 1973 : 23-25). The eighteenth century mortality decline referred to above led to a substantial increase in both the population surplus and the family size. As a result, the means of support and the size of the population were no longer in balance. This growing discrepancy meant a (relative) decline in the quantity of food that was available for the ever increasing population in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Coale, 1974 : 22). In addition, the Industrial Revolution led to a transformation of the rural, pre-industrial communities in Western Europe into urban, modern, industrial societies which were based on a capitalistic mode of production. This transformation in its turn led to a decline in the importance of the family as a basic economic unit. Woman's position as wife underwent a change from productive work to reproduction of labour. Nor were sons any longer a form of social security in old age. The capitalist mode of production made large numbers of children economically disadvantageous to individual families. 'These conditions (too) discouraged couples from having large families' (Coale, 1974 : 25). The limitation of family size finally resulted in a fertility decline around 1850 that ushered in the third phase of the demographic transition in Western Europe (Coale, 1974 : 23, 25; Hofstee, 1954; 1958 : 58-60; Verduin, 1972 : 1, 2, 72-85, 103-104). Notestein (1945; 1953), one of the originators of the theory of Demographic Transition, considered the process of modernisa-
tion (industrialisation, urbanisation) as the major cause of the decline in fertility (compare Caldwell, 1982: 10).

As for the underdeveloped countries, the originators of the transition theory, Notestein and Thompson, predicted in the 1940's a similar pattern of demographic transition with the expansion of a capitalist mode of production to these societies (Notestein, 1945; 1955: 15-18; compare also Caldwell, 1982: 118 and Coale, 1973: 67-71). Nearly all demographers now agree that this forecast was incorrect. There is still no question of a substantial decline in population growth for most of the developing countries, in spite of the growing discrepancy between population size and food production. However, there is less agreement on the question of why the demographic transition, especially the slowdown of the population, did not occur in those countries. Of the many efforts to explain why the prediction turned out quite differently, two opposing views are of importance. The supporters of the original formulation of the theory of demographic transition claim that the capitalist mode of production and the adoption of family planning have not spread far enough into the Third World countries to induce a population decline. According to this view the process of incorporation of these countries into the capitalist system is not yet completed.

The original version of the theory of demographic transition is increasingly being challenged by social scientists. To show what comments have been made upon the original formulation of the theory, I choose to present Caldwell's view here since he is highly critical of the original version and because he recently provided a revised version. Caldwell (1982) rejects the notion that industrialisation and modernisation are the main causes of the process of demographic change. 'The major implication of this analysis is that fertility decline in the Third World is not dependent on the spread of industrialisation or even on the rate of economic development. It will of course be affected by such development in that modernisation produces more money for schools ... But fertility decline is more likely to precede industrialisation and to help bring it about than to follow it' (ibid. : 156). As principal cause of a possible fertility decline in Third World countries Caldwell mentions the process of nucleation, by which the traditional extended family is replaced by the Western nuclear family. Emotional nucleation (the concentration of time and emotion on one's spouse and children) precedes the process of economic nucleation of expenditure on one's spouse and children. The Western family pattern is introduced in the Third World countries by missionaries and through mass media and schools (ibid. : 153, 223). According to Caldwell's Wealth Flows Theory, a substantial decline in fertility in the Third World countries did not yet occur since the process of nucleation has not proceeded far enough.

Against the background of the discussions of the theory of demographic transition in Third World countries outlined above, I shall now consider the relevance of John D. Early's The Demographic Structure and Evolution of a Peasant System: the Guatemalan Population. This study is guided by two theoretical concepts, namely, demographic transition and peasant systems. The research was carried out in Guatemala in 1962 and during the second half of the 1960's. The book which appeared in 1982 contains five parts. After presenting an introduction, the author discusses the methodology of his research, dealing with both census enumeration and anthropological methods (part II). In part III he investigates three issues, namely, the changes in the structure of the Guatemalan population between 1950 and 1980; the effect of population pressure on the emergence of minifundia; and the peasants' reaction to the increasing population pressure. A discussion of the different phases of the process of demographic transition, mainly based on material from the Maya community of Santiago Atitlán, is presented in part IV. Different kinds of biases, which are introduced both in taking censuses in peasant societies and in interpreting the results, are examined in part V.

Early's effort to apply the theory of demographic transition in analysing the
The transition is not simply demographic but is part of a systematic evolution from one type of socio-cultural system to another, and much of the failure to develop a satisfactory theory of demographic transition is because the transition is not seen in this way' (Early, 1982 : 182). In the period before 1960 (phase I) both mortality and fertility in the peasant community of Atitlán were high. In trying to explain the high level of fertility, Early adopts a functionalist approach by claiming that fertility was high because it satisfied the needs of the members of the different extended families which together constitute the community. Consider how Early describes the functional character of the kinship system of the peasants in Atitlán:

'The web of functional relationships between fathers and sons and among siblings consists of labor exchange and assistance in kind or cash for participation in village ritual and administration, for kinship rituals, for household assistance of parents, and for agricultural help. For the sake of both parents and siblings, the structure of the extended family gives rise to a high fertility logic. There appears to be a desire for about seven or eight children; actual marital fertility is usually nine to ten children' (ibid. : 183).

Early also states that the kinship system also changed after the introduction of industrialisation in Atitlán, which ushered in the second phase of the process of demographic transition in 1960: 'Modern transportation, small-scale technology, and new structures of education, health and religion make their appearance in the rural areas' (ibid. : 184). As a consequence of these changes, Early holds, mortality declined while the expectation of life at birth rose. Birth rates, however, remained high since fertility 'is primarily determined by the functioning of the village kinship system. By this logic, the higher the fertility, the greater is the ability of the extended family to cope with its economic, ritual and community functions. Falling mortality and its increased survivorship rate are simply viewed as contributing to the strength of the extended family. Hence the continuation of high fertility in phase II is not due to a cultural lag of peasants failing to understand the implications of falling mortality' (ibid. : 140).

Regarding the third phase of the process of transition, Early states that fertility had not (yet) started to decline in Guatemala, except in Guatemala City, the capital. This implies that there was no sign of a decrease in fertility in Atitlán either.

The problem with the explanation given by Early for the demographic evolution in Atitlán, is his functionalist approach. This is not because of functionalism as such but merely because his conception of functionalism prevents the assessment of the role of internal factors. To show how he overemphasised the functional interpretation of the kinship system, consider for example the following paragraph:

'The web of functional relationships covers practically all aspects of the peasant's life. There are obligations of assistance in the family fields between fathers and sons and between sibling sons. Married sisters look to their brothers in disputes with their in-laws' (ibid. : 134; my italics).

Given Early's functionalist approach, it is understandable (but no less debatable) that he overstates the role of external factors — especially industry — in analysing the process of social change in Atitlán. But his explanation raises a number of questions. First, if the kinship system was so highly integrated as suggested by Early, how could it change so quickly under the pressure of industrialisation? A second question is, how could that system change without creating social and emotional tensions? Unfortunately, these questions are ignored by the author. But in spite of these limitations, Early's publication adds much to our understanding of the social aspects of the demographic structure of a peasant community in a Central American republic.
References

Caldwell, J.C.  
1982  

Coale, A.J.  
1974  
The History of Human Population. San Francisco.

Hofstee, E.W.  
1954  
Regionale verscheidenheid in de ontwikkeling van het aantal geboorten in Nederland in de 2de helft van de 19de eeuw. Akademiedagen, Deel VII.

1962  

Notestein, F.W.  
1945  

1953  

United Nations  
1973  

Verduin, J.A.  
1972  
Bevolking en bestaan in het oude Drenthe. Van Gorcum, Assen.

Humphrey E. Lamur*  
University of Amsterdam


El significado de la cooperación técnica entre los países occidentales y los países latinoamericanos es mayor que el volumen de los fondos financieros canalizados por los convenios bilaterales hace suponer. Son precisamente los centros de promoción, los instituciones de acción-investigación, los talleres de asistencia a los grupos más necesitados, todas ellas entidades vinculadas al movimiento popular, la iglesia progresista, la izquierda académica y a la izquierda política partidaria y no partidaria quienes han sido financiados en los años sesenta y setenta y siguen siendo financiados en los años ochenta por las entidades no gobernamentales de apoyo en los países europeos, Canada y los Estados Unidos. Se trata de un aporte entre 1500 y 2000 dólares anuales, otorgado por 1000 hasta 3000 agencias financieras, dependiendo de la definición que se quiera utilizar. Padron ha publicado un estudio muy necesario y valioso, primero como disertación en la Universidad de Leiden en 1982, después en una edición gemela con el mismo título tirada por DESCO en el mismo año. Es un estudio de sociología aplicada,

* I have benefitted from comments of Bob Scholte on an earlier version of this review.