

region in the world, e.g. the growing flexibility and uncertainty on the labour market, are inconsistent with e.g. the family policies intending to reconcile employment and childbearing and may be the cause of further fertility decline. The third challenge is in the problem of immigration: 'Europe needs immigrants, but it doesn't want them' (p. 371).

The book is a very useful reading for all who are interested in demography or in Europe's present and future. It gives a good but not even survey of Europe's most important demographic problems, which is suitable for gathering general information or can be useful in university education too. This picture provided by the authors can be rather regarded as an optimistic view: in their opinion the challenges are considerable, the problems to be resolved are serious, but the European societies have the possibility of solving them at their disposal.

THORNTON, ARLAND: *Reading History Sideways: The Fallacy and Enduring Impact of the Developmental Paradigm on Family Life*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005. Series: (PD) Population and Development Series. 344 p.

By Attila Melegh

Arland Thornton has written a very important book, which should be a starting point for all students and scholars studying the history of demography and modern social sciences in general. The key advantage of his book is that as a true sociologist he combines three aspects, which are discussed generally in a separated manner. He provides the critical history of theories, he criticizes the Eurocentric assumptions built into the philosophy of history in the field of family life and demography and at the same time tries to understand actual global demographic change in this field by reflectively reconnecting scientific and non-scientific ideas on family change in the real world of ordinary people.

First of all this is a book on the transformation theories of demography, most importantly the demographic transition theories, the elements of which were already elaborated as early as in the late 18th century. The author very convincingly argues that this transformation/transition theory towards the "modern family" and "modern" demographic behaviour has been the guiding principle for a very large number of major scholars working on demographic changes including among others Malthus, Le Play, Westermarck, Engels, Morgan and Notestein. He presents these views from the critical perspective of several historians who rightly threw doubts on the "great transformation" theories by taking a closer look at sources and by asking some intriguing questions. Following some historical and geographical insights of John Hajnal on marriage and household formation, Peter Laslett, Richard M. Smith and very importantly the anthropologist-historian Alan Macfarlane convincingly rejected English family history in terms of a great transformation from large, patriarchal, family based "peasant type" households to a more egalitarian, nuclear family-household (e.g. Hajnal 1965; Wrigley 1981; Smith 1984; Wall 1983; Macfarlane 1978, 1986, 1987). According to these latter historians there was an English and/or North West European Individualism in two respects: the individual historical development of England and North Western Europe and

the lack of peasant type collectivism in this region as early as at least the 14th and 15th centuries. This was an important contribution, but it seems that some of the implications of this theorising is problematic or at least deserves special care in order to avoid Eurocentric fallacies and hierarchies. For instance we can just lump together more than ninety percent of the global population into a non-individualist, non-European group in terms of demographic and family history (Fragó 2003), but this would be extremely misleading. It also would be erroneous to argue that there has been strong geo-cultural dividing lines as for instance Hajnal suggested. But this is exactly where Thornton is very careful and eloquent.

Thus secondly Thornton fruitfully incorporates into his criticism that aspect of modernisation theories or better to say Eurocentric social theorising which for the last three hundred years have folded the present history of “non-European” or “non-Western” societies into the past of the “European” and “Western” societies. This hierarchy building arrogance and misleading research practice has come under enormous attacks mainly from scholars somehow affiliated with postcolonial criticism (e.g. Amin 1989; Böröcz 2003; Chakrabarty 2000; Said 1978; Comaroff 2002; Mignolo 2000; Wallerstein 1991, 1997). Some of these authors are cited in Thornton's book, but not all of them. This should not be seen as a problem, as the last thing Thornton wants is just to write a book on the development of ideas in demography and family history. He might miss some of the insights of these writers (for instance the concept of discourse, the issue of identities), but it is important to note that he aims at writing a book on family change and population change. And this is where he is most original and where he deserves particular attention.

Thus thirdly Thornton argues that the above mentioned transformation ideology (“developmental idealism” as he names it), with its special technique of reading history sideways (the past of the “West” is represented by the present of the “non-West”), has itself been a key engine of demographic changes. Thus it was not just a fallacy, but it had an enduring impact on history itself. The way in which this powerful “idealism” operates in concrete situations is not discussed in detail in the book. It is just handled as an extremely powerful set of ideas, which cannot be easily stopped due to the influence of the educated elites in different parts of the world, different government programs, the media and the Marxist groups as discussed in the last part of the book. The possibility of a contextual factor like inequality inherent in world capitalism is just hinted in the book, and it is never discussed in a detailed manner.

Also the different actors of dissemination are all handled as having a similar function in spreading the ideals of modern family and demographic behaviour regardless of the fact that there have been different sets of policies followed by the analysed actors. Marxist groups for instance had very different roles in Latin America and Eastern Europe in different periods of times. Sometimes they could support all kinds of pronatalisms in the 1950s and 1960s, while in other cases they could actually think of themselves as Western type modernizers in the arena of population policies like in Hungary in the late 1960s. Actually this is one of the things a reader might miss in Thornton's book as it just briefly refers to oppositions to these “Western” ideals regardless of the fact that the book contains a brilliant example on the controversy around polygamy in the United States.

The list on types of resistance related to this dominant hierarchical modernization ideal should be continued at least due to the fact that the reader's appetite is becoming

greater and greater when reading the book. It is fair to say at least that the book should be continued with the integration of ideals of resistance throughout the world during the last two hundred years regardless of the possibility that in the longer run developmental idealism might prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Just waiting for the result of developmental idealism might mean that we miss the story, the history, the common game of different players within the common era of modernity,

The hierarchical ideal of development (the West leading the world toward modern ideals) should be itself a motive for analysing resistance in a detailed way as most probably one of the strengths of developmental idealism is that it offers a simple set of tool via which not only the so called "West" can posit itself as a superior actor spreading familial ideals of modernity as a vanguard of history. But players on a "middle level" of the developmental hierarchy (half-modern) can also play the double game of being modernised and being a moderniser at the same time although in different directions within the geographically understood hierarchy. In other words among the many ways of manoeuvring within the set hierarchy there are always possibilities to behave like the West in the non-West. Hierarchical thinking can re-establish itself again and again in very different parts of the world. The reviewer can only say that the task taken by Thornton is just very complex.

But the author is not frightened and actually at the end of the book he proposes a project including surveys on the spread of developmental idealism throughout the world. With a group of colleagues, he is beginning the process of establishing this program of research. One can just admire how efficiently he has worked with a group of researchers to test the spread of the elements of developmental idealism throughout the world including, among other places, Argentina, Nepal, United States, Bulgaria, and Albania. It seems that we are observing a rare opportunity when someone not only writes a powerful analysis, offers deep insights into theories and social mechanisms of demographic change and its theories, but also takes the courage to check and refine his ideas on a global level. For the benefit of all of us.

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