

Social-Educational Challenges in the Face of Demographic Transition

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Abstract

Demographic transition is one of the frequently used keywords in the discourse in science, business, politics and in general public as well. These discourses are also constitutive for social work as a profession. In the following, demographic transition is first described in terms of its genesis and then embedded in the normative framework. The question itself is part of the research question; as a rule, research questions are developed without explicitly asking about the values, objectives and standards of the research question itself, despite the fact that it is precisely these that decisively intensify and guide the theoretical standpoint adopted and thus the research question, the data collected and the insights, findings and conclusions drawn from it, albeit in the background. This paper deals with precisely this background. The question of socio-educational challenges in the face of demographic transition is taken as an occasion for a discourse on the mediation of questions, facts, arguments, decisions, values and norms.

Keywords: Demographic transition, population growth, assumptions, decisions, norms.

Demografik Geçiş Sürecinde Sosyal-Eğitimsel Zorluklar

Öz

Demografik geçiş, bilim, iş dünyası, siyaset ve genel kamuoyu söylemindeki en çok dillendirilen anahtar kelimelerden biridir. Bu söylemler profesyonel uzmanlık alanı olarak sosyal hizmet için de temel oluşturmaktadır. Aşağıda, demografik geçiş öncelikle ortaya çıkışı bağlamında tanımlanmakta ve daha sonra normatif çerçeveye yerleştirilmektedir. Sorunun kendisi araştırma sorusunun bir parçasıdır; kural olarak, araştırma soruları araştırma sorusunun kendisi ile ilgili değerler, hedefler ve standartlar hakkında açıkça soru sorulmadan geliştirilir. Üstelik bunlar her ne kadar arka planda olsalar da benimsenen teorik bakış açısını ve dolayısıyla araştırma sorusunu, toplanan verileri ve bunlardan çıkarılan içgörülerini, bulguları ve sonuçları belirleyici bir şekilde yönlendiren en önemli etmen olmalarına rağmen. Bu makale tam da bu arka planı ele almaktadır. Demografik geçişle boy gösteren sosyo-eğitimsel zorluklardan hareketle, söz konusu araştırmada soruların, olguların, argümanların, kararların, değerlerin ve normların aracılığı üzerine bir söylem geliştirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demografik geçiş, nüfus artışı, varsayımlar, kararlar, değerler.

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1. Introduction

The historical background of the discourse about demography is the phase of the industrial revolution. With industrialisation, more and more people found themselves surrounded by steam engines, railways, firearms and factories. People's hands were replaced by machines. Most people were no longer farmers in the scattered villages but craftsmen in the factories of the densely populated cities. The toxic air from the pipes of the factories promised people the freedom that seemed to be within reach in the sense of mechanical solidarity among functional equals (Simmel, 1903; Durkheim, 1988). In the same process, the prestige of the landowners was replaced by the influence of the entrepreneurs. Insights based on faith increasingly gave way to scientific knowledge. Acting based on instrumental rationality increasingly meant a decline in the influence of the church on the habits of everyday people. Demystification and secularisation are the keywords here.

Colonisation, the expansion of European powers into parts of the world, also contributed to this rationalisation. Not only were rare resources from different parts of the world brought to Europe, but also people of blood and flesh and thus corresponding forms of narrative and interpretation, habits, lifestyles and rationalities. Conversely, a certain rationality of action also went with the European people into the colonies, into the foreign cultures (Brentjes, 1976; Appiah, 2005). During this period, such developments led to population expansion and population density in the industrialised cities, which, combined with a lack of knowledge about hygiene and poor sanitary facilities, led to famines such as the Great Famine in Ireland in 1845 and the Finish Famine of 1866-1868, to epidemic diseases and thus to higher mortality rates.

Population growth, particularly in European industrialised cities is also due to better medical care. Ground breaking interventions in human, animal and plant biology generate not only economic prosperity but also optimism, peace, technological development and cultural openness. Enlightenment und revolutions can be seen as the flipside of these developments. Enlightenment thinkers, social scientists, entrepreneurs, humanists, etc. set out in search of practical solutions and developed ideas on sanitation, poverty reduction, the welfare state, old-age and health insurance. The religious idea of a just world on the other side should now be read by the signs of success on this profane side of world (Weber, 1980, § V). Ideologies like Protestantism, Marxism and Liberalism put forward different conceptions of social justice. Representatives of all these movements believed in directed progress, in the possibility of incessant and incremental improving of living conditions for all.

2. Not a Simple History of Population Growth

The revolutions to date have not arisen from misery, but from the contradictions that made the misery unbearable. On the one hand, there is a high accumulation of prosperity and wealth in the upper classes, and on the other hand, there is an accumulation of stinking air, poverty, strained social relationships and dense social spaces in European cities. One of the actors of the time is the political economist Thomas Malthus (1766-1834). Based on positivism, he tried to find the social laws that functioned similar to Newton's law of gravity. He put the question forward, which natural laws exactly is behind the high mortality rate, famines and wars? What laws can explain the persistence of misery in the world? He observes that the population grows geometrically (2,4,8,16,32,64), but the food supply only increases arithmetically (2,4,6,8,10,12). He notes that the population tends to grow faster than the food supply (Malthus, 1798: 4). Higher food production leads to higher population growth. Over time, population growth exceeds the increase in agricultural production. These opposing laws result in an increasing deficit in food production. Malthus concluded of that observations that the power of population is infinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce enough food for all people. Malthus' theory also predicts that even if food production increases over time, the population will grow faster and thus exceed the resource production capacity, so that the resulting growth in population will be slowed down by famine, disease and war. Technological development, medicine, better agricultural techniques could push the population ceiling upwards and delay the time of

crisis. At the end of the day, population growth will inevitably exceed technologically driven food production and lead to collapse.

In contrast to the belief in incremental progress that existed at the time, Malthus developed the argument that hunger could not be defeated by improving the living conditions of the poor in the estates. According to Malthus, the urban poor, with their high birth rate, contribute to population expansion, the utilisation of the earth's resources and society, while the peasants are crucial for economic growth and the productive use of the earth's resources. Consequently, he proposes a "positive check", with which an increase in population in the "lowest orders of society" can be suppressed and prevented (1798: 23). In other words, the state should not help the poor in the cities so that they have better living conditions, i.e. so that they do not die of disease. Rather, the existing conditions should serve as a deterrent so that the poor in the cities do not bring children into a terrible world and boys in the villages do not dare to immigrate to the cities of misfortune. In positive terms, Malthus' idea is that the population must live within its resource base. Not only the resources of Mother Earth, but also the capacity of society to exploit resources effectively and efficiently is ultimately limited.

This very idea of Malthus was then adopted by liberal environmentalists in the 20th century to emphasise that the earth cannot cope with so many people and that resources will run out if population growth is not brought under control. This list of deterrent literature includes the book *Population Bomb* (1968) written by Paul Ehrlich and the book *Limits to Growth* (1972) published by the Club of Rome. Together, the authors of this literature predicted a catastrophe for mankind, as rapid population growth would outstrip the supply of resources. They proposed radical measures to limit overpopulation. Apparently, a better distributed and better educated population found other possibilities that were hardly in the sights of the authors of the doomsday predictions. This population not only has access to contraceptives, but can also use better mechanisation, fertilisers and pesticides in food production. The result was that the growth in food production exceeded the population growth rate thanks to fossil fuels, a cheap, readily available source of energy. In any case, the whole package enabled the largest increase in food production the world has ever seen (WHO_Web_1).

Malthus had not only argued according to mathematical models, but also emerged with his predictions as a political actor who put his hope not in the working classes gattered in the cities, but in the peasants in the villages and the feudal forces of the large landowners. These politically opposing forces can basically be seen everywhere. In the founding of the USA, the opposing forces were depicted in Federalists and Anti-Federalists. In Turkey, this opposition can be seen in the Democrat Party (DP) and Republican People's Party (CHP). According to the ideological affinities, the respective scientists were supported or the scientific investigations were emphasised. In both cases, the forces of the urban-industrial factory owners with wage labourers faced the feudal lords with the peasants. The former want a strong centralised state with maximum investment in infrastructure in the cities, while the latter want the weakest possible central state with minimal intervention in the taxation system. The former want as many workers as possible in the cities without investing in unemployment and old-age insurance, while the latter want as few farmers as possible in villages with as many machines as possible in the fields.

The others *Population Bomb* and *Limits to Growth* had also a scientific and political agenda. They too had a project of social engineering with corresponding proposals. But in retrospect the models developed, and the predictions of doomsday are at least empirically wrong; the predicted mass famine did not occur. Even today we do not know the exact reasons. We can only assume that demographic change is not a directed, linear development, as is often assumed. Indeed, according to the technologies and institutional setting of society available at the time, people affected find a way of dealing with it based on their best knowledge and skills and in accordance with the principle of hope (Bloch, 1974). Of course, and ultimately, a balance must be found between people and resources (Da Silva, José Graziano 2012, Swensson et al., 2021). But where exactly this equilibrium lies is not the subject of mathematics, but of society. The question

of such a balance can in no case be answered for all time and socially with an absolute, unchanging exactness.

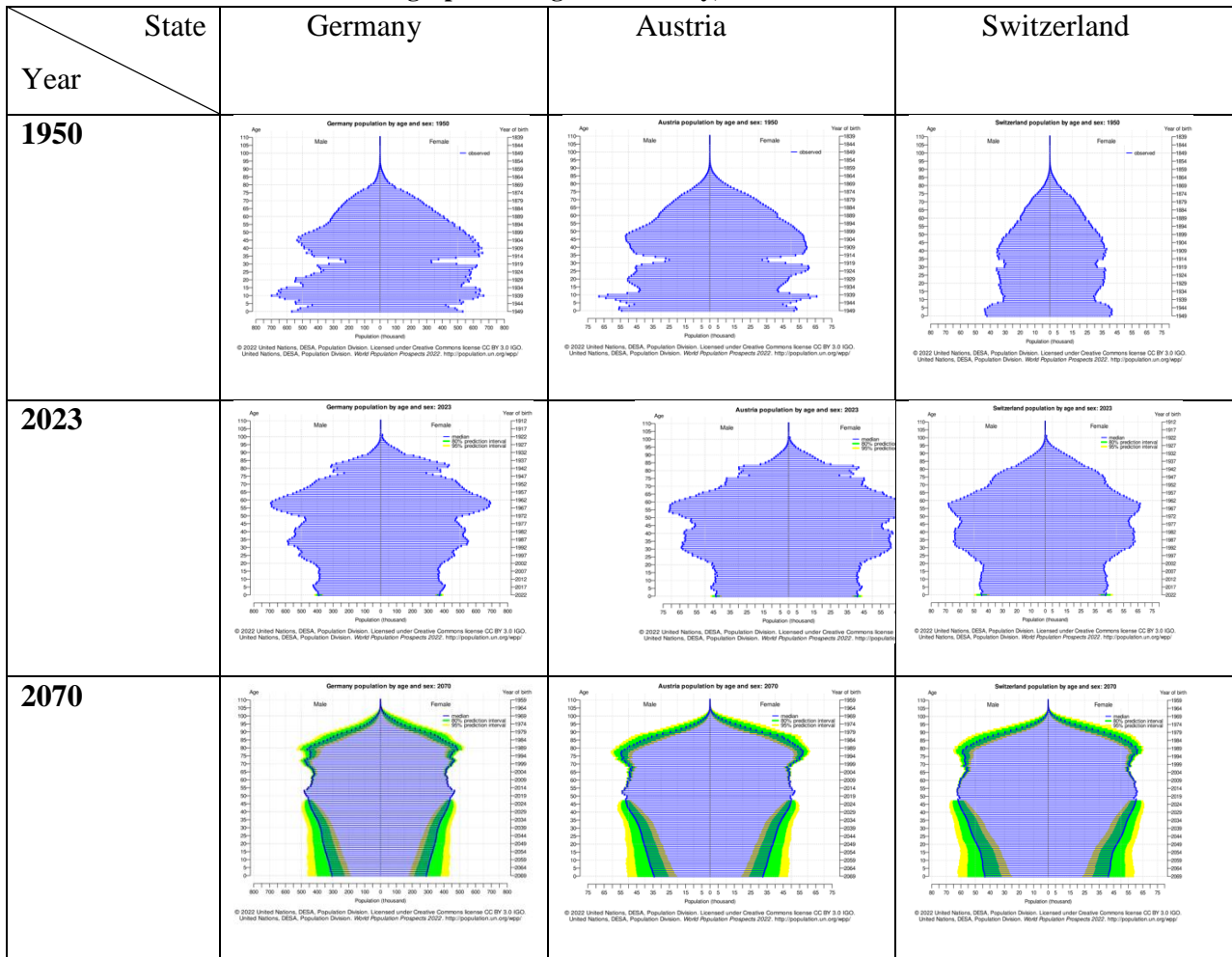
Given that there is now a debate about the balance between the number of people per square metre and the resources of the earth and society, it is worth discussing first about expectations put forward in the debate. One question is, how can we find this balance? On what benchmark should the question be approached and analysed? These questions are discussed today under the term demographic transition. This refers deep down to the shift in population development from a situation with high birth rates and high mortality during the pre-industrial age to a new reality with low birth rates and low mortality in the post-industrial age. For didactic reasons, however, this transition can be roughly divided into three phases.

The first phase with a pyramid shape is characterised by a high birth and death rate. In this phase, many children are born, many of them die and there are few people who live to a very old age. The reasons for this are the shortage of food and the poor health system. The (agricultural) economy does not produce enough food for everyone. And medical care for people is not good. Many people die of diseases as a result of poor hygiene and a lack of clean water. The result is a low and constant growth rate (=birth rate minus death rate). The population structure has the so-called pyramid shape. Ghana is representative of this (UN_Web_2). The second bell-shaped phase is characterised by a falling death and birth rate. In the second bell-shaped phase, technological developments in the (agricultural) economy enable better care. The discovery of penicillin and the improvement in the quality of medical and hygienic care also lead to a falling mortality rate. Although postponed in time, the birth rate soon falls too. The demand for equal rights in society means that women can actively pursue a career in the paid economy. At the same time, contraceptives and birth control pills come onto the market, which in turn promote a rationalisation of family planning. Turkey's current population structure is ideal for this phase (UN_Web_3). While the birth rate was 2.38 in 2001, this rate fell to 2.10 between 2003 and 2014, dropping to a dramatic 1.51 in 2023 (TUIK_Web_10). The third phase with an urn shape is characterised by a low death and birth rate. In this phase, technological developments no longer help to significantly reduce the mortality rate. At the same time, the birth rate is low. Population grows very slowly. It is a society with the lowest growth rate (WHO_Web_4). The population structure of England is representative of this phase (UN_Web_5). According to TUIK's calculations, if growth proceeds in a low scenario, the population of Turkey will decrease to 55 million in 2100 (TUIK_Web_10).

2.1. Current Population Structure and Challenges for Child and Youth Welfare

Of course, what the population structure looks like today is of interest by any public actors. Below are the data from Germany, Austria and Switzerland from the years 1950, 2023 and a forecast for the year 2070. The data is from <https://www.un.org/>. Assuming that we reach different conclusions depending on the data and perspective, it is significantly emphasised that the data used here comes from state-financed resources. These have the advantage that the methods and theories used here are widely recognised in science and politics. These are data that couldn't be overlooked by politicians. In this respect, the findings obtained here correspond to "generally recognised needs" of society (Hradil, 1987: 153). Keeping this consideration in mind, it can first of all be stated that there were major differences between these countries in 1950. But the ageing process is very similar in all three societies. In all three countries, the proportion of people in employment has *fallen* sharply. In all three countries, the proportion of people over 70 has *risen* sharply. The proportion of people aged between 50 and 70 is greater than the proportion of new-borns.

Table 1: Demographic change in Germany, Austria and Switzerland



If, for the sake of simplicity, we focus on the evaluation of this data in Germany, the question arises as to how this development is received from the perspective of child and youth welfare. This question can be answered with the 16th Children and Youth Report (CYR) from the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) (Web_6).

“The term ‘demographic transition’ is used to summarise various developments such as changes in the number of births and deaths and the change in the relative population share of people who differ in terms of age, origin, gender, education, occupation, place of residence and other characteristics. According to the Rostock Centre for the Study of Demographic Change, it can be stated that the average age of the population in Germany in 1910 was 23.6 years, in 2013 it was already 44.2 years, and the average age is expected to be over 47 years in 2030. The population and, in particular, the number of people of working age will fall significantly. This demographic development has far-reaching social and socio-economic consequences and will affect almost all policy areas (labour market, economic policy, education policy, family policy, intergenerational justice, care and healthcare policy, pensions, immigration). However, the various developments that are relevant to the keyword ‘demographic transition’ are not uniform within Germany but vary greatly at regional level (east-west, urban centres - rural areas) (see Berlin Institute for Population and Development 2019). What challenges do children and young people face here? A (regionally) shrinking and simultaneously ageing population has an impact on the maintenance of infrastructure, educational facilities such as schools and access to jobs close to home. An ageing society with a simultaneous decline in the working-age population has consequences for the financial viability of state security systems as well as for the level of pension contributions and the retirement age. There is also the question of the acceptance of further immigration to mitigate the effects of demographic change in the autochthonous population. For a shrinking younger generation, there is also the problem of whether

and in what way political decision-makers will recognise their interests in comparison to those of a predominantly older population. The results of a study by the Bertelsmann Foundation illustrate the mood in this regard: ‘Younger people are more likely than older people to fear that politicians will increasingly cater to the wishes and needs of the older generation: 39 per cent of those under 30, compared with only 21 per cent of people aged 60 and over’ (...) (Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research 2017, p. 17).” (BMFSFJ, CYR: 92)

As is only right, this report first defines what it is about. Then it backs up what has been written with the authority of a research centre by citing Rostock Centre for Demographic Research (Web_7). This is followed by a forecast on the decline in the labour force, warning of what lies ahead. This warning takes on added urgency when the areas affected by demographic change are listed. It seems that this development in demography leaves no sphere of life intact. Another research centre (Berlin Institute for Population and Development) is then used to substantiate its own credibility (Web_8). This is followed by the crucial question of the challenges for children and young people. As before, the answer lists consequences for almost all areas of life. Finally, reference is again made to a report from another research centre, namely Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach (Web_9).

Basically, this is not a study by the Bertelsmann Foundation as claimed, but a report by the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research, which was financed by the Bertelsmann Foundation. What is more significant in this long quote is the emphasis on the fact that everything in the population will change. Will everything stay the same, as Tomasi di Lampedusa would surmise in *Prince Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard)? It should be emphasised that the authors assume an “autochthonous population”. According to the *Duden* dictionary, the word *autochthonous* has two meanings. 1. native (of peoples or tribes), indigenous and 2. occurring (of animals, plants, rocks) at the place of discovery. The term *autochthonous* insofar refers to a population that ensures its continued existence without communication with other peoples. The question is whether such a society still exists on earth at all. Presumably not even the demenan tribe in the mountain of Dersim is an autochthonous population, let alone a German population as a society based on e-migration. Finally, this paragraph can be used to emphasise the risk of blurring particular and public interests. Not only do the interests of the Bertelsmann Stiftung certainly differ from the interests of a university research centre and the German government, but also its ideas on the constitution of the population.

2.2. Assumptions, Demands and Decisions

So far, the data and facts have been presented based on which the arguments and corresponding proposals for today’s society have been developed. The crucial question is what we (should) do with these facts not only for today’s society, but also for the society of the future. The question is posed as to “which development strategies and measures are necessary today” to create better opportunities for young people to grow up and participate successfully in a future society with fewer young people (KVJS: 2020, 9). Every question assumes and provides the basis for one’s own point of view, one’s own argument. The direction of the question reflects the social tendency of the person putting the question. In this last question, for example, children and young people are seen as the future of society and the argument is developed from a benefit-maximising logic that society should invest in child and youth work for rational reasons if for no other reason. The motto is that if society wants to ensure their future survival, it must act today in line with this goal. Children and young people are seen as a scarce commodity, and today’s society is required to take economic and socio-political measures to care for them (Web_9, KVJS: 29). If the scenarios are realistic, according to these reports, there will be a shortage of labour in the future society with a low birth rate, which will jeopardise the maintenance of a prosperous economy of a well-structured society. The conclusion is then drawn that investment in child and youth welfare is necessary, investment in child day-care, all-day schools, community services, youth work and school social work.

Logically, more should be invested in children and young people today as a scarce commodity, not only to attract them to the existing structures, but also to bind them to these structures in the future (Web_9, KVJS: 29). Based on the same logic, it is assumed that there will be a tension between people with different

ideologies. Materialist, meritocratic, utilitarian ideas will be in competition with idealist world views. Volunteers will find themselves among or against professionals. It is also assumed that there will be a struggle for the determination of will, welfare and rights of the children and young people. For this struggle for appropriate cooperation between institutions to be realised, the work with children and young people must become meaningful. For its part, meaningfulness, developing purpose rationality by current and future generation is associated with a higher income, better recognition and a better work-life balance, also in child and youth work (Web_9, KVJS: 44). These actors highlight the urgency that on view of expected dramatic shifts in the demographic structure, the interests of children and young people should already be better integrated into the decision-making process. This also requires investment and innovations for the acquisition of competences that are to be used for the inclusion and participation of the addressees, for example in community work. Places for the promotion of personal development and opportunities for self-determined encounters are needed, so the further argument (Web_9, KVJS: 60).

These demands assume that the more developed a country is in terms of capitalist working conditions, the lower the birth rate. In order to compensate for this, rational plans are needed with which this tendency can be counteracted. And empirically, this thesis and conclusion from it seems to have some plausibility. We can indeed assume that there is a logical, significant correlation, for example, between the birth rate and mortality, between population growth and economic growth in the sense of a country's level of technical and technological development. The question is then whether it is negative or positive and what can be deduced from it. If the birth rate is higher than the death rate, there is an increase in the population. This first of all a fact. This fact can now be interpreted in different ways; if the work-family balance is guaranteed, people will have children even if they live in finance capitalism and have an above-average level of education and income, and that regardless of whether they are materialistically or idealistically orientated. If the economy of such a society invests in the population, in the country's infrastructure, so that people can work and look to the future with hope, they would be encouraged to bring children into a world that is so beautiful. Thanks to the experienced moments of happiness with children, people become more creative, develop innovative technologies to tackle with challenges, difficulties and problems. Thanks to their high life satisfaction in their well-structured society, not only would the number of people suffering from burnout fall rapidly, but also the overall costs of the healthcare system. When people see that the benefits and/or the structures of the welfare state are in action in difficult times, they would not only be motivated to work, but also to have children in this humane world of people in solidarity.

On the other hand, it could be argued that the capitalist economy is profit-focussed. It is about the exploitation of resources under the criteria of effectiveness and efficiency. The capitalist economy is not about happiness, but about profit instrumental action, for which an effective and efficient way of working is necessary, which is highest among hedonistically minded men without the desire to have children. As people begin to see the meaning of life in the family thanks to economic growth, they will start to work less, lack motivation for (not good but necessary) work in society, with the result that the economy will shrink. In such a society with high economic growth but with many unintegrated young and older people fixed costs will increase. Investors would move abroad because they can find cheap labour and cheaper locations for their production. Highly specialised skilled workers also migrate with them. If people are unemployed, they do not have good prospects for the future and the lack of capital, work and good social relations discouraging them from having children. With these and similar arguments, it can be objectively established that population growth has a close, logical connection to technology (contraception, medicine, healthcare system), to forms of state, government, and to economic forms.

Secondly, it can also be objectively established that each fact can be assessed and underpinned with corresponding arguments differently depending on the point of view. Not only every society, every state and every company, but also every person has different abilities, goals, values and expectations. Consequently, especially in pluralistic societies, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to life, and therefore no one true, correct perspective for understanding and evaluating social phenomena. All knowledge is fallible, every

point of view is initially a suggestion. Consequently, it is not about this or that argument, about this or that knowledge, about this or that interest, but about how some common ground can be found, not despite but precisely because of assumed dissent, which is a good basis for consensus for every idea and interest.

Thirdly, a decision based on the maximisation of utility places every facts in the logic of utility or no utility, in profit or loss, in an either/or logic. This implicitly raises the question of whether the preservation of today's prosperity in the future society should be ensured by extending working lives or by increasing immigration. From an either/or logic, the question is whether we want to refeudalise or democratise the public sphere (Neckel, 2016). Do we want to communicate with or against each other in public? Should the media alone, with its concentrated interests, determine what is important and how important, or should civil society also have a say? Captured in this logic of polar juxtaposition a good question is whether there is a third possibility, a third option. The crucial question pointing to the third option is what kind of institutional structure is needed for an enlightened public.

On the way to answer that question, I like first to state that we must distinguish between facts, arguments and decisions (Popper, 1992, vol. 1: 77; Popper, 1995). As already highlighted; each fact can be received, understood and evaluated from different points of view. Depending on our point of view, we are receptive to one kind argument and inclined to reject another type of idea. Each person makes their judgements about whether something is plausible depending on own position in society. In this respect, this position determines who has which conflicts of interest or differences of opinion with whom, or which co-operations are entered into by whom based on which agreement. In the words of John Rawls, "If, for example, someone knows that he is rich, he might find it reasonable to argue in favour of the principle that certain taxes intended to serve welfare measures should be regarded as unjust; if he knows that he is poor, he would most likely argue in favour of the opposite principle." (Rawls, 1975: 36) In this respect, facts and arguments do not stand in an empty space, but in an already pre-constituted social world of being.

The question now is what the facts are and what decisions can we make with them. The first fact is that rural populations in Germany particularly are getting older and fewer. This leads to the conclusion that in the future society, fewer people will have to finance more people. We could, with Alexis de Tocqueville, warn of the danger of the tyranny of the majority of the old over the young. In fact, majority democracies are about the ability to form coalitions (alliances) to ensure that one's own interests are adequately recognised. These facts could then be communicated as follows from the perspective of today's young people: It hardly causes a shake of the head when, for example, higher pensions are demanded for older people. But if a young person must go into a care home, there is a debate as to whether the costs are justified. Increasing the number of children in day-care centres is discussed, but not cutting pensions. The conclusion can then be drawn from these arguments: Old-age poverty is financed by young people.

The actual question to be asked is whether and how we want to, can and should maintain the structures of labour and old-age insurance. Instead of this question, the interests of young people are set in the conclusion above against the interests of older people according to the either/or logic and democracy is reduced to an instrument of majority decision at the expense of the minority. This kind of antagonistic juxtaposition ignores the fact that the political system in German-speaking countries does not function according to majority logic of a pure majoritarian democracy (Mill, 2013, & 7). Germany, for example, has a constitutional protection jurisdiction that is in no other democracy as strongly developed. The federal states (federalism), proportional representation with a correspondingly large number of parties, the Federal Constitutional Court, the Bundestag and Bundesrat as well as an enlightened public with agile civil society forces prevent the tyranny of the majority. There is no question of tyranny of the majority of the old. This is just a slogan with no evidence in politics and society.

The second fact is that there is a connection between (bio)politics, the economy and population structure. Already Malthus stated that the population must live within its resource base. Mother Earth's resources are limited. Technological development can delay the time of crisis. But technologies are solutions

to problems of a certain phase. Today's technologies, social structures, norms and goals cannot be used to determine solutions for the problems of future generations and their society(ies). However, as this fact does not provide an answer to the question of *what should we do*, the path to a solution is also politicised, not just by talking without any practical solutions, but also by developing tangible policies, communicating them and preparing the population for the next steps in line with the respective ideas and interests. By thematising, for example, contraceptives, pills, medical interventions or the term *high costs of the healthcare system*, certain interest groups earn more the more they as loudly as possible communicate these topics and keywords. In other words, all politically important forces have an interest in population data to pursue their own biopolitics, in the words of Micheal Foucault (Foucault, 2003). Reasons are presented and, if necessary, invented as to why things (cannot) be different, as the suggest. By mixing questions of economics with questions of political science and putting in side some demands in line of facts, a space of ambiguity is created that generates uncertainty. And uncertainties, ambiguities and improbabilities have always strengthened the players who are already strong, powerful and politically and economically effective.

Thirdly, it is also part of the facts that a distribution and/or co-operation between social forces (generations) take place in the discourses by selecting the terms. Depending on the point of view, the pension system, for example, can be *re-financed, re-formed, sustained or affirmed*. These are different conceptions. By the same token, we could refer to a lack of innovation or a lack of skilled labour, which, in view of the low birth rate, is reflected as a fundamental uncertainty in life and fear of the future. According to this discourse, companies are not finding the people they are looking for (Guenduez, et al, 2023). Paradoxically, this shortage of skilled labour is taking place at the same time as the number of people in work is growing. This paradox is then resolved by the fact that women who used to raise children at home are now also participating in the labour market. This rationalisation is correct. What is also right but nevertheless being pushed into the background is the fact that there are now a large number of mini-jobs and part-time jobs from which a fulfilling life is not possible. In other words, it's not just about the shortage of skilled labour, but also about working conditions as well as about the work-family balance. If the birth rate is falling, this is also due to the fact that people do not want to have children in a society that prefers to invest in cheap labour and locations instead of building up welfare state benefits and thus better prospects for the future, even during unemployment, invalidity, illness and retirement. An economy based solely on the logic of *homo oeconomicus* requires the corresponding working methods, skills and morals, which are hardly compatible with having a family. The decision to be made is therefore whether an economic system can be created in which work is meaningful, which enables people to make new contacts, gain new perspectives, acquire new skills for life, new opportunities for participation in democracy and thus a child-friendly society.

2.3. Clarification of Mandate and Questions

If we commit ourselves to one of extreme positions, prognoses, interpretative approaches, theories, etc., there are several disadvantages for the profession and discipline of social work. These can be clearly illustrated by the concepts of clarifying the mandate and posing questions. Even while in study, e.g. in examinations, but above all in professional life, clarification of the mandate is one of the most important steps for responsibility in social work. Clarifying the mandate also embeds the actions of the professions in a meaningfully constructed social space. Clarifying the mandate makes it clear why something is done or not done. What in professional life is called clarification of the mandate can be found in science in the formulation of questions. There are normative and empirical questions referring to the methodological distinction between empirical social research and normative evaluation. Empirical social research is concerned with data collection and its correlations and regressions. On the other hand, normative evaluations are about legitimisation and its demand in social life. In the first case, it is about facts, assumptions and assertions that can be falsified. And in the second case, it is about the principles and their legitimisation by giving some terms, which by definition have no empirical content (Diekmann, 2008: 163, 688-704). No empirically verifiable, but at best logically true statements can be derived from them. Social work has elements of the profession, the social discipline and philosophy- this is particularly evident in the approach

of social work as a human rights profession, as a profession of justice, human dignity, etc. What distinguishes social work from other social science approaches is the fact that social work sees itself as both a profession and a discipline.

These distinctions and clarifications are of great significant consequences because, depending on the perspective, different questions must be asked, and different standards of judgement applied to the results, conclusions and recommendations presented. In the case of the profession, the question is what to do in view of the facts, whereas in the case of social work as social science discipline, the question is how to explain the correlation. The decisive difference between the perspective of the profession and the discipline lies in the fact that in the scientific logic of argumentation, the facts are analysed, described and explained without any immediate pressure to act, to be effective and efficient in a certain society. In contrast, the profession take a certain tendencies from its own ethic. Consequently it produces prescriptive sentences in the sense of *thou shalt not kill* or that every case should be treated according so social work ethic and not strictly formalistically rational rule in the sense of “‘regardless of the person’.” (Weber, 1985b: 477) No, in social work as profession is all about the person in regard. In the profession, the question *what should I do* generates a practically feasible proposal for certain type of individuals and in a certain type of society. In all these cases, the question determines the direction of the discussion, the direction in which things proceed.

Regarding socio-pedagogical challenges in the face of demographic transition, two types of questions can be generated from what has been written. The first question is, what are the socio-pedagogical challenges of child and youth work in the face of demographic transition, facing us? The second question is, what socio-pedagogical challenges of child and youth work will we encounter as a society in the face of demographic change? Both questions contain not only the corresponding assumptions and goals, but also risks. The first question harbours the risk of listing challenges. Instead of understanding and/or generating suitable solutions, we would end up with a list of unrelated challenges. This would put social work in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis politics and business, for example, as they can justify their own failures with the list they have received from social work. They could always claim that the list did and does not include such and such a thing. And because of the lack of that list, they would argue, they could not foresee this and that problem.

The second question harbours the risk of inviting to blind activism. As we in social work not only analyse existing challenges, but also motivate recipients to act, there will be professionals in social work who would dutifully anticipate possible accusations by motivating people to take actions that cannot be derived from the ethics of the social work profession. That would lead so statement like; *society is shrinking dramatically. To prevent this decaying decline, every welfare recipient should bring three children into the world.* This would not only result in the instrumentalization of the profession, but would also lead to de-professionalisation, for example by smuggling economic and/or political logic into the professional logic, i.e. corrupting it. Instead of social workers influencing politics, politics interferes in social work. This would make social work susceptible and vulnerable.

From the logic of social work as a discipline, neither of these are theoretically relevant questions. They are not about whether there is a connection at all, in general, between what is done in social work and what happens or will happen. Rather, they are comparative questions of a different type and are about what we must do in the time between now and the phase in which these predictions are a part of social reality. In this respect, these are practical questions in the sense of the profession. And this kind of questions of the profession are logically approached and answered from the logic of the profession itself. It is a decision. From a normative point of view, these are particular ideas and interests that are specific to the profession and lack the ability to be generalised.

Both questions put above refer to a hypothetical state in the future. From an actively observant perspective, the problem with the logic of these questions is that it is unclear in which state exactly the question of socio-educational challenges is being asked. What exactly is meant by *socio-pedagogical challenges*, and what exactly are they? Even if we knew exactly which state and which challenges are meant,

we would still have the problem of answering the question(s) satisfactorily for everyone, because it remains unclear from which values and goals the future state and challenges could or should have been analysed and assessed.

If the analysis above is correct, then we would be looking for possible solutions with these questions based on an *alien* framework of thought, which would lead us to false expectations, orientations, suggestions, findings and conclusions. The question is, therefore, what kind of question is necessary that does not lead us neither to enumeration, nor to activism but also not to logic that is foreign to the subject itself. One possible answer lies in the fact that social work is called upon not only to provide academic services in teaching, further education and research, but also to develop practical, applicable projects in the sense of service to society. In this sense, the question of appropriate action in a hypothetical state in the future can be approached from a mixture of social work as a profession and discipline by asking what social work would and must do, regardless of the assumption about the hypothetical state in the future. *What should social work do in general?* Or what does social work do in general? Keeping this question of reflection in mind, the question can be concretised as follows: *What types of socio-educational challenges of child and youth work are facing us in social work and in society in the face of demographic transition, presupposing awaiting us?*

In this question, the focus is not on problematisation and not at all on problematisation from one's own perspective alone, but on a search for cooperation, compromise and consensus, which is a goal of child and youth work as well as of society, politics, the law, etc. This question cannot be answered with one or the other argument in favour of or against one or the other position. This question forces the development of types of answers in the sense of Max Weber's ideal types (Weber, 1980: 10; Weber, 1985a: 191-214). Equally crucial is the fact that that question above cannot be answered in the absence of (one's own) values and goals. It forces to reflection on values and goals. Especially since social work is not presented here in an autochthonous society that exists on a remote island without any contact to the outside world, the attempt to generate an answer will lead the actors to possible co-operations, partners in action, who are also faced with these challenges and looking for solutions. This perspective would in turn increase the legitimisation of the profession of social work in the wider general public.

3. Conclusions

The term demographic change refers to the transition from a growth rate that was considered natural to a phase of purposeful rational pre-planning according to certain values and goals. In the first phase, there is high population growth in European industrial cities, which was attributed to technological innovations during industrialisation and the associated colonisation as well as better medical care based on the Enlightenment. Historically, it was about the transition from agriculture to industrialisation, in which steam engines, railways, firearms and factories, rather than farm animals, began to take centre stage in society. Farmers are transformed into urban workers. Soon, migrants from other countries and cultures are also entering these cities. These actors of internal and international emigration bring values and cognitive schemata into these cities that question the existing social order by their very presence. This questioning, combined with the fact that there was a concentration in the cities with poor sanitary facilities and working conditions, led some authors to predict a population explosion and thus also the end of mother earth's resources. However, the predicted catastrophe was prevented by the introduction of new technologies for food production on the one hand and the better, more rational distribution of resources on the other.

This discourse is being reignited today by a new one. This time it is not about the population explosion, but about the end of the population. If the birth rate remains at this historic low, according to the current thesis, then there will be a tyranny of the elderly over the young, with catastrophic consequences for society as a whole. In this thesis, the world is either facing extinction if nothing is done, or a singularity in which humans are freed from all long-wave labour. Based on this narrative, two questions are central; the first is whether the thesis that the more developed a country is in terms of capitalist labour conditions, the lower the birth rate, is true. The second question is what can be deduced from this? Every answer is based on

certain assumptions, values, goals, decisions and facts, which in turn can be interpreted differently depending on the objectives and values.

No ought to follow from being. Facts are simply facts. Just as a chair is a chair, a stone is simply a stone, so the fact that there are more 85-year-olds than 20-year-olds is also simply a fact. Facts in and of themselves tell us nothing. We cannot draw true conclusions from facts. They can be good and/or bad, but not wrong or right conclusions. We see trends in them, according to our values and goals, which can't be not right or wrong, but only good and/or bad depending on standpoint. We can only draw right or wrong conclusions from them *if* AND this is a big *IF* we have some values and goals established already. The question is therefore, according to which value, which goal should we interpret these facts? We can also rephrase this question as follows; from which point of view should we interpret these facts? For example, we could interpret these facts from the point of view of child and youth work. Then, based on child and youth work, we could demand the right of our clients to welfare state benefits, investments in day-care centres, day schools, youth community work and so on. We could demand investment in childcare and youth work, investment in staff in the child and youth sector, investment in improving the living conditions of foreign young people. In a second step, we could, for example, decide in favour of more investment in civic education, in the conditions for growing up in society and politics in the sense of personal development and personal fulfilment. But also in these case, two aspects should be emphasised here.

Firstly, it is part of the logic of every demand and decision that all these demands and decisions are made in one way or another. We may justify all these decisions in terms of optimising distribution, John Rawls' principle of optimality (Rawls, 1975: 86). But optimising distribution is also a decision that can be made in one way or another. Every additional investment in one area means a reduction in investment in another area. We can take from out of the older generation to invest in the younger generation. But here, too, the question arises as to where exactly, in the day-care centres, in the youth associations or in school social work should we invest.

Secondly, the standpoint of child and youth work is not the standpoint of *all those possibly affected*, as Habermas would say it (1991: 124). This remark is central because it refers us to our professional standpoint and thus makes us realise that this is a particular standpoint that is fraught with conflict. Because my point of view, my values and my goals differ from the point of view of those who do not share my values and goals. This view of the profession is not only in tension with the view of those who may be affected, but also with the view of social work as a profession for empowerment (Solomon, 1976: 19), as a profession of human rights (Staub-Bernasconi, 1998), as a profession of needs (Obrecht, 1999), as a profession for the preservation of the living environment (Grundwald and Thiersch, 2004: 175-196) and as a profession of the welfare state (Stichweh, 2013: 6). Social work not only wants to consider the interests of its clients, but also those of its employers. To withstand these structural tensions without becoming powerless and powerless to act, social work must focus its decisions on the more general interests, goals, ideas, values and norms. Norms that are in the category of human rights, justice, democracy, participation, etc. From this perspective, one question is: will more investment in day-care centres, open youth work, education, in socio-educational areas, also contribute to the society, culture and personality?

Regardless of the direction in which the decision is made, in every case one important area is the deliberation and participation not only of children and young people in general, but also of young women with a migration biography. Deliberation corresponds to the idea or demand for the involvement of the individuals and organisations of children and young people (CYR: 12, 83, 363, 505, 570). Deliberation means the rational search for socially relevant issues through a public use of reason. The question is how discourses can be initiated in which the conditions for the participation of women with a migration background are addressed. It has to be highlights that the demand for deliberation and participation of young women with a migration biography is not about optimising their participation in socially important goods, but rather about weakening their exclusion from the economy, politics and society. They are disadvantaged in terms of gender, structure and culture. And this disadvantage has a negative impact on our values and

goals, both as a society and as a profession and discipline. A democratic society with a universalist conception of citizenship and human rights cannot afford to exclude its next generation. A profession of justice cannot stop demanding the deliberation and participation of structurally disadvantaged members of society as long as this fact exists.

Ethics Declaration

In this study, there is no conflict of interest and no situation requiring ethics committee approval.

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