

# ADVANCED INTRODUCTION TO DEMOGRAPHY<sup>1)</sup>

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In the 1980s people in Central Europe were confused about the difference between demography and democracy, but today, demographic challenges are well known, mostly with negative connotations.

These are the first thoughts of professor Wolfgang Lutz in his recent book *Advanced Introduction to Demography* (2021), which is nearly a handbook. Lutz is a currently resigned director of the Vienna Institute of Demography at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, a professor at the Department of Demography at University of Vienna, a founding director of the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital, and a deputy director general for science at International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

The main aim of Lutz's book is to summarise and comment on the tremendous knowledge boom in the field of demography in recent decades. He focuses on describing and explaining the main trends and concepts using empirical data. One of the book's main contributions, however, is theoretical in character, where the author not only elaborates on a number of theoretical approaches but also sketches the way towards 'a unified demographic theory'.

In this review, I will go through the book's chapters and subchapters and note some implications in connection with Czech and Slovak demography, demonstrating the importance of Lutz's book for research in this region as well.

The first chapter briefly reviews the history of demography and this history of collecting demographic data. Although the earliest demographic events were already observed in the 17th century, demography itself has only existed since the first third of 20th century. In addition, there are

several approaches – broader, narrower, linguistic, or historical – to defining demography. The different subchapters discuss basic concepts and equations such as the demographic balancing equation, the period and cohort total fertility rate, and life tables. While demographers are already familiar with these terms and concepts, the information are useful for scholars from other disciplines. The next subchapter on data sources could be attractive for all readers. Lutz lists dozens of surveys, databases, and data explorers that can enrich the data sources usually used in this region, such as Eurostat and OECD Data.

I would venture to say that the book's biggest contribution is in its second chapter, where Lutz discusses the role of theory in demographic research and three main theoretical approaches. The flash point of the chapter is the proposal for a 'unified demographic theory'. It is grounded in an analysis of the theory of (1) demographic metabolism, (2) the demographic transition, and (3) the demographic dividend, each of which is characterised by a set of propositions that reveal the theories' similarities and singularities.

The first theory, according to the author, highlights how individually learned patterns of behaviour are copied during the life course, and how subpopulations with different characteristics can shape the characteristics of the whole of society over time.

The second theory, which is the well-known – or, as Lutz puts it, 'most prominent' – theory of the demographic transition, explains and predicts the irreversible process of fertility and mortality decline through the modernisation of societies (in which the spread of education plays a key role). This paradigm is more or less the basis for any others in demography.

Finally, the third theory, that of the demographic dividend, is the youngest and is closely connected to economics. It is concerned with explaining

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1) Lutz, W. 2021. *Advanced Introduction to Demography*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 200 pp. ISBN: 978-17-8990-146-7.

economic growth and wellbeing based on changes in the demographic structure. Examples of the process are represented by the Asian Tigers (listed by Lutz), and possibly also Czechia and Slovakia as post-socialist countries, which moved to a market economy after the Velvet Revolution, and both experienced a sharp fertility decline.

Like the field of demography, all these theories are interventional and perspective, but they each cover only a limited number of phenomena. The proposed 'unified demographic theory', by contrast, is more expansive. In a nutshell, it turns the attention to individuals, who form sub-populations going through different stages of transition (related to literacy levels), which consequently shape the demographic behaviour of society and the level of economic growth as well. These are yet only the basic contours of a new multidimensional approach to demography.

In the third chapter, the reader finds what is traditionally expected of a demographic book: Lutz elaborates on the drivers of the (continuing) decline of mortality and fertility. The added value here is the attempt to decompose the modernisation factor as a 'vague explanation' into concrete factors like household living standards, public health, and literacy. The author also notes several economic factors but concludes that cultural ones are becoming increasingly relevant, which has significant implications for population policies also in Central and Eastern European countries.

The fourth and final chapter sets out the future outlook for demography. The emphasis is placed on several different areas. First, Lutz describes forecasting methods, such as the cohort component method and the ways it can be improved, and the population projections that are made either by national statistical offices or international organisations. Second, the author objects specifically to factors like education, different scenarios for migration and the environment, and population policies, all of which could potentially play a significant role in future demography. Interestingly, the case of Ethiopia is elaborated here as an example of radical demographic changes and questionable future projections. Third, ageing and dependency ratios are included in the discourse on future demographic trends. This has much to do with labour and pension policies and represents a challenge for both policymakers and public policy scholars.

To conclude, Lutz's new book is a highly relevant piece of literature for both students and scholars in the fields of demography, public policy, sociology, and economics. It briefly summarises the basics of the history, conceptualisation, and mathematics of demography. At the same time, it advances the traditional theoretical approaches and introduces a new one. Lutz also contributes to the debate on concrete factors relating to mortality and fertility and future demographic trends by focusing on the behaviour of 'homo sapiens literata', where education appears to be the main driver of population changes.