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Low Fertility, Neo-Malthusian Dilemmas, and Social Diversity

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In many respects the so-called ‘demographic transition’ – the decline in fertility rates, the improvement in mortality rates and the corresponding ageing of the population – has been at the core of social change in the late twentieth century, especially in East Asia. All developed societies are now characterized by dramatically low (that is often sub-optimal) fertility rates, increasing life expectancy and ageing of the population. In retrospect it is now clear that declining total fertility rates (TFRs) have been the most important cause of the social transformations of the family and the status of women in the twentieth century and have been critical in improving women’s social participation as active citizens, not only in

the formal economy, but in civil society.[1] In turn these changes in the family, reproduction and women's status have important and direct consequences for citizenship in the twenty-first century. The causes of declining fertility rates are well known: the rise in female education, urban living, the decline of agricultural employment, family planning and contraception (Caldwell and Caldwell, 2005). These demographic developments are especially important in East Asian societies (Caldwell and Caldwell, 2005; Caldwell, Caldwell and McDonald, 2002). In this brief overview, I argue that the relationship between demographic change and citizenship has all too often been neglected in citizenship studies (Turner, 2012). Fortunately, as I will show shortly, these connections between family structure, marriage patterns, labour force participation, labour migration, contributory rights and citizenship are clearly recognized and researched by the editor and authors of this volume.

A replacement fertility of the population in the developed world is roughly 2.1 births per woman and globally it is approximately 2.33. The TFR for the United States in 2011 was 2.01 or below replacement, but its population continues to grow because of legal and illegal inward migration. In South Central Asia the TFR is 3.3, in Southeast Asia 2.7 and in East Asia 1.7. Some four decades ago the average TFR in East Asia was 6. In short, the replacement rate in East Asia is defined as sub-optimal. According to the CIA's *The World Factbook*, in 2012 the TFRs for East Asia are as follows: Singapore 0.78; Hong Kong 1.09; Taiwan 1.1; Japan 1.39; and China 1.55. South Korea offers a parallel example of these developments. As a result of rapid economic development and urbanization, women were drawn into formal employment and out of the agricultural economy. By 2003, the TFR was down to 1.1. Social change has consequently been dramatic, especially in terms of urbanization. Almost half of the South Korean population now live in Seoul and its metropolitan vicinities and, with the traditional respect for education and the changing hierarchy of occupational status, there has been growing household expenditure on education (see Chapter 2 by Michael Seth on 'Education zeal, state control, and citizenship'). As a result, the costs of large families cannot be easily sustained (Kwon, 1993).

[1] The TFR is defined by reference to a hypothetical or imaginary woman who has completed her reproductive life cycle (15-49 years of age). It is the average number of children that would be born to such a woman assuming she would experience the exact current age-specific fertility rate in her life time and assuming that she survived through her complete reproductive life. The replacement fertility rate for any given society is above 2 on the assumption that there is some inevitable mortality of young children. Many developed societies, without inward migration, are below the replacement rate and hence their replacement is 'sub-optimal'.

It is well known that Japan's demographic transition has been especially profound and its consequences are highly problematic. Japan has a rapidly ageing population and the 'burden of dependency' is extreme. The Japanese population over the age of 65 in 1988 was 11.0% but this is predicted to rise to 23.6% by 2021. The average life expectancy of Japanese women in 2008 was 85 years, but it is predicted that it will rise to 97 years by 2050. Other Asian countries are also experiencing an ageing problem. For example China's economic 'miracle' has been associated with its so-called 'demographic dividend' but Chinese policy makers are worried by the decline in the working age population which shrank in 2012 by around 3.4 million persons. As the Chinese middle class has grown so has its TFR declined, but China's one-child family policy of the 1970s has been a major factor in its fertility decline. Efforts to increase fertility in the region, for example in Singapore, through policy initiatives have not been successful (Thang, 2011). A report in 2013 from the National Population and Talent Division in Singapore provides a range of policy options designed to increase fertility such as faster access to housing to support young couples and providing affordable child care options. Why are these demographic changes consequential and how do they relate to questions about citizenship in Asia?

The demographic transition in East Asia is playing a significant part in the more general features of social change. These changes include the changing status and nature of masculinity, the rising status of women in the civil sphere, the growing dependence on foreign workers, the growth in international marriages, the development of international brides, the erosion of filial piety and so forth. In this volume, many of the chapters address these issues (mainly in the South Korean context) and connect them with the changing nature of citizenship. (On migrant women and changing family structures, see Chapter 9 by Kim Hyun Mee on 'The State and migrant women'; for gender issues, see Chapter 4 by Seungsook Moon on 'Local meanings and lived experiences of citizenship'). How exactly do these demographic developments relate to questions about entitlements and duties within the framework of social citizenship? More specifically, how do they relate to the issue of 'contributory rights'? (On theses rights, see Chapter 10 by Chang Kyung-Sup on 'Transformative modernity and citizenship politics'.)

I argue that there is an intriguing paradox between individual rights (such as individual rights to freedom of movement, namely mobility in search of employment and a better life), low fertility and social cohesion. We might call this paradox a neo-Malthusian conundrum. Persistent low fertility rates present democratic governments with difficult choices. In the absence of adequate population

replacement through optimal fertility, democratic governments and their economies are faced with an ageing work-force and rising health care and pension costs. Assuming policy interventions cannot rapidly improve fertility rates, there are various but limited policy options: abandon enforced retirement, cut or privatize pension benefits, encourage more women to enter the formal labour force, and relocate the elderly to foreign societies that have lower living costs. These options have in addition been underpinned by neoliberal economic policies which have globally sought to undermine existing publicly funded pension schemes (Blackburn, 2010). These options are often, for good reason, unpopular with the general public, when workers may be anticipating early retirement on adequate pensions. As we have seen with the 'austerity packages' in European societies in response to the economic and fiscal crisis of 2008, any reduction to existing social benefits is often the occasion of significant social opposition and protest. Democratic governments can expect to be punished in the ballot box for any reduction in the 'contributory rights' of their citizens. In more extreme circumstances, we can expect violent reactions to the negative effects of policies promoting economic austerity. In Greece, a number of bombs exploded in January 21, 2013 outside the homes and offices of various journalists who had publicly supported the austerity measures that had been imposed by the European Union. The erosion of social rights and rapid economic decline raise important questions about 'governmentality' (see Chapter 6 by Chulwoo Lee on 'How can you say you're Korean?')

The main alternatives to a decline in the working population are to promote technological improvements to increase labour efficiency, to depend on immigrant labour to supplement the declining indigenous population of young workers, or to outsource production. Japan, which has had restrictive policies on migration and naturalization, will have to depend on continuous technological innovation to sustain its economic position. It has had relatively modest inputs of fresh labour from China and South Korea (mostly in disguised forms such as student and tourist) and has also imported Brazilians of Japanese descent, but in my view this has not meant that Japan has become a multicultural society. Most developed societies will opt for a combination of these strategies, namely technological innovation to improve productivity and promotion of inward labour migration. Unfortunately these strategies also have unintended consequences. The promotion of technological change often has the consequence of lowering the demand for labour in skilled areas. In general, computerization in production processes tends to reduce the demand for labour (Braverman, 1974). If these technological improvements lower the demand for skilled labour, it is often the middle classes that suffer from rapid technological change. Outsourcing

also reduces the costs of production but also reduces the demand for local unskilled labour. Migrant labour often finds employment in these low-skilled, labour intensive areas of the economy such as domestic service. The majority of developed societies depend on migrants to fill gaps in the labour market.

Where the demand for cheap labour is high, there will be almost inevitably a significant increase in illegal migration. This issue has become a significant political problem in the United States, where there are now millions of illegal, mainly Hispanic, migrants. However there is a much more general problem associated with 'paperless' migrants. Kamal Sadiq (2009) in *Paper Citizens: How Illegal Immigrants Acquire Citizenship in Developing Countries* provides a study of how illegal migration in India, Pakistan and Malaysia often leads incrementally through residential status to actual citizenship. He criticizes the conventional assumption of studies of citizenship that receiving societies always have carefully documented host populations. As a result, uncritical understanding of formal citizenship typically fails to grasp the crucial role of documents in the informal pathway to citizenship. The complex relationship between visitors, legal and illegal migrants, citizens and denizens results in 'blurred membership'. Generally speaking, illegal flows of migration can cause significant social and political disruption in receiving societies.

Citizenship developed with the rise of the modern nation state, and documentation was required to define individuals who could legitimately claim welfare benefits. In achieving administrative control over a national territory, it was also necessary to guard against impersonation. The process of bureaucratic consolidation, typically involving taxation and conscription, has produced top-down, state-driven citizenship. By contrast, the contemporary growth of paper citizenship with economic globalization is a bottom-up process. It is 'an informal device, a back channel, to many of the benefits associated with the narrower and more difficult path to legal citizenship' (Sadiq, 2009: 109). Under pressure from illegal migration, states often begin with a clear and exclusive constitutional definition of formal and legal citizenship, but over time they may acquire migrant workers that manage to accumulate documents resulting in the acquisition of citizenship that as a result dilutes constitutional commitments to exclusive national citizenship. Societies are therefore faced with an important question of balancing national labour needs with international labour flows.

The paradox of these options is that the demand for labour to satisfy the economic needs of a society often conflicts with domestic politics. International labour migration through the globalization of economies inevitably results in increasing social diversity as mobile labour movements create diasporic, ethnically diverse communities. States have therefore to attend to the problems associated with multiculturalism. In societies which have been historically relatively coherent in ethnic and religious terms (such as northern Europe), increasing social diversity often produces opposition. To take an obvious example, opposition to Muslim communities in many European societies has led to Islamophobia and in some cases to serious social conflict (Helbling, 2012). The most violent reaction to Islam took place in Norway in 2012, but negative reaction has also been a characteristic political response in France, Germany and Britain. In so-called white-settler societies such as the old Commonwealth countries (Canada, New Zealand and Australia), there has been a more open acceptance of diversity, but even these societies have experienced significant opposition to migration. The United States has also seen powerful political movements against both Hispanic migration (especially illegal migration) and Muslim communities and culture. In short, the economic demand for 'fresh' labour from overseas inevitably creates social diversity which in turn requires effective policies, broadly multiculturalism, to promote assimilation and integration. But growing social diversity often results in 'enclave societies' (Turner, 2007) producing a strong backlash that asserts the need for cultural coherence and national identity. In secular societies based on the separation of church and state, we have seen that the state has to intervene in the 'management of religions' (Barbalet, Possamai and Turner, 2011) to prevent social conflict erupting around religious differences.

These developments have important consequences for conventional patterns of citizenship which have typically presupposed a relatively coherent and integrated society. The model of citizenship that was developed around the theories of T.H. Marshall (1950) took national cultural coherence for granted. In Marshall's post-war context, he could take for granted Britain's relative ethnic and cultural homogeneity. However by 2012, the 'white British' population of London was down to 45%. It is widely recognized that the European models of citizenship of the twentieth century were exclusive institutions in which work, family formation and public service were rewarded by entitlements. The ageing of populations, dependence on migrant labour and growing social diversity have required significant rethinking of such assumptions giving rise to new concepts about 'flexible citizenship', 'semi-citizenship' and so forth.

My argument is that all modern societies are confronted by a fundamental dilemma - how to sustain a youthful and employable population while at the same time managing diversity as a consequence of the need to import fresh labour in response to low fertility rates. In Europe the growth of right-wing movements and general xenophobia has created problems for democratic governments. While claims that immigrants increase social problems (through criminality) may be factually incorrect, electorates may find a scapegoat in migrant communities for economic decline. The notion that immigrants are ‘stealing’ the jobs of the local working class has an appeal for young, unemployed males. As yet there has been little evidence of inter-generational conflict, but this may be a social issue in the future. While we might argue that every advanced society with low fertility rates and an ageing problem will face this problem, each society will have specific issues in relation to its labour force, cultural composition, and political borders. Drawing on the contributions to this volume, what are the specificities of the South Korean example?

In a recent letter to *The Financial Times,* Aidan Foster-Carter (2013) proposed that one solution to South Korea’s labour shortages was to be found ‘on its doorstep’ namely the 14 million work force in North Korea that is largely idle for lack of inward investment. Foster-Carter argued that the joint venture Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) has provided a model of how those joint ventures might evolve. Of course the political realities suggest that agreements between North and South Korea are a good deal more complex and complicated. The flight of North Koreans into South Korea has resulted in diverse social difficulties. (See, for example, Chapter 7 by Minkyu Sung on ‘The psychiatric power of neoliberal citizenship’, and Chapter 8 by Seol Dong-Hoon on ‘The citizenship of foreign workers’.)

What then are the problems facing citizens and citizenship participation in the coming decades? From a social science perspective, it is difficult to be optimistic about the future. However, Chang Kyung-Sup in Chapters 3 and 10 offers a more positive view of the possibilities of cosmopolitanism as a future-oriented vision of a global civil society and in general reviews the prospects for Asian societies, and especially South Korea, as post-transformative societies. In the past, Asian governments, driven by powerful business elites, have enthusiastically embraced developmentalism, often without due regard to the quality of lives of their citizens. Can we move beyond the obsession with economic growth to consider not only the mundane needs of individuals for satisfying and meaningful lives but also the

necessity of environmental protection for future generations? Green citizenship or environmental citizenship must become a major issue for government policies towards a safe living environment. In writing this overview in early 2013, it was difficult to neglect environmental issues when Beijing on January 12th had just recorded its worst day of toxic pollution from factory and automobile emissions. With smog engulfing much of north-east China, visibility was down to 200 meters in Beijing, enterprises were closed, and there was a significant increase in the rate of heart attacks and other health conditions. Of course South Korea also suffered from China's pollution. The commitment to rapid economic growth in Asia – in China's case a commitment to an annual growth rate of 8% - does not bring any immediate or necessary benefits to its people without a corresponding growth in social rights, legal protection and security. Indeed, as Chang Kyung-Sup (2013) shows, economic developmentalism often means that social rights are neglected if not postponed. Throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century under the influence of neoliberal strategies, income inequality increased. This experience of growing inequality is true not only of the transformative and developmental economies of Asia but of the United States (Reich, 2012).

In the past, the benefits and entitlements of citizenship, at least from the perspective of contributory rights, depended heavily on life-long employment, the nuclear family and the gender division of labour. In the traditional model of citizenship, employment was not only the basis by which citizens contributed taxes in support of welfare benefits through the life cycle, it was also fundamental to their sense of personal worth. However, we are now in global term moving into a radically transformed global environment, both natural and social. To date, no developed society has solved the problems that are produce by the demographic transition – how to fund pensions, how to resolve issues about voluntary retirement, how to create meaningful employment for the young, how to secure affordable housing, how to provide adequate medical care without destroying the economy, how to sustain care for the elderly in the absence of familial support, and generally how to create meaningful lives for younger generations? In order to begin to address these problems, we will need to undertake a radical rethinking of citizenship. This volume of essays on citizenship is an important step in that direction.

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