

## THE CENTRE POPULATION ET DÉVELOPPEMENT

**This bulletin presents an overview of the new CEPED research centre, which opened in 2008. It provides details of its new organization, presents its research orientation, the activities of the three research teams and of its research support service, and outlines CEPED's training policy. In contrast with its predecessor (GIS-CEPED), the major distinguishing feature is a central focus on research using an innovative theoretical framework.**

## ORGANIZATION

CEPED includes lecturers and professors, research fellows, and senior technical research staff from the *Institut national d'études démographiques* (INED) and the *Institut de recherche pour le développement* (IRD). All members are affiliated research staff at the Université Paris Descartes.

CEPED currently includes 25 members (9 lecturers and professors, 13 research fellows, 3 senior research staff) divided into three research groups, each focusing on a specific set of issues :

- Health, gender, mortality
- International migration and social dynamics
- Family and solidarity

A Research support service (*Bureau d'Appui à la Recherche*), including 4 administrative staff, provides assistance to international research groups and publicizes the promotion initiatives of CEPED research members and partner institutions. It also acts as a bridge between researchers and other development agents in various countries. An *international advisory committee* aims to strengthen links between research and training centres in North and the South.

## CEPED RESEARCH PROGRAM

The decision to create a new research centre in population and development rather than demography was a crucial orientation. The use of a range of human resources and skills helps to foster a fruitful interdisciplinary approach to population and development issues. CEPED aims to encourage an original theoretical approach to relations between population and development issues, using conceptual, analytical and methodological resources that depart radically from the traditional paradigm of demographic transition. Because it is more suited to a specialised inquiry into the particular issues of developing countries, CEPED privileges the theory of change and response. Though demography remains the central disciplinary focus of our current research, the contributions of sociology, anthropology, geography and economics are also used to contextualise relevant demographic data.

*Demographic transition and its avatars*

Demographic transition theory is the central (if not unique) paradigm of demography. It describes phases based on long-term European statistical series. Even as it appeared to provide a general model of evolution that demographers might use to

classify every country, decades of research have tended to highlight such a wide variety of situations and counter-examples that the relevance of the theory may reasonably be questioned.

Following the pioneering work of Notestein, demographers began to explore a new research field that aimed to provide an account of demographic changes based on the socio-cultural or socio-economic changes that subtend them. Examples of this new trend include the so-called theory of modernization and the diffusionist theory developed by John Cleland and Chris Wilson. The criticisms levelled at these new theories are again based on two arguments. The first is the evolutionist assumption concerning the behaviours exhibited in western countries construed as the models that need to be emulated. As for the structural evolutions that are assumed to accompany decreasing levels of fertility and mortality, the absence of economic progress in a wide range of developing countries, especially in Africa, remains undeniable.

*The theory of change and response*

The theory of change and response was first articulated by Kingsley Davis in an article published in 1963. Demographic responses to socio-economic changes provided the exclusive focus of Davis's work: national and international migration, decrease or increase of singulate mean age at marriage, and decreasing level of fertility. CEPED aims to widen the original theory in two ways.

Rather than focusing solely on change, the issue of permanence also needs to be addressed. Development is never an entirely homogeneous phenomenon, and entire sections of a society may display degrees of structural inertia. In other words, an absence of change may be the result of blocking factors that constitute underdevelopment. Populations tend to display a wide range of responses to permanence and change. These may sometimes be purely demographic responses (such as decreasing intensity and postponed fertility timing, which are connected to several factors: increased use of contraception, rising number of abortions, ever later marriages, etc.). Combining cross-section and longitudinal analyses with a range of innovative methodologies, our analyses of these issues are designed to extend the research tradition initiated by the French school of demography.

Responses may also be mixed, i.e. simultaneously demographic and economic. For example, international migration provides households with savings that enable them to hold multiple jobs

and to limit the degree of uncertainty caused by agricultural risks, thereby reducing their vulnerability. Some responses may be even more remote from the realm of demography. Examples of such responses include the use of female or child labour in agriculture: from a theoretical point of view, it is strictly tautological to argue that this is a response to demand for labour in rural households. By way of providing a genuine account and in-depth analysis of the practical mechanisms that govern the use of family labour, we need to adopt a more heuristic approach that would start from the assumption that such mechanisms are governed primarily by a double logic of gender and seniority domination.

Current analyses of demographic behaviours in developing countries (fertility, nuptiality, migration) suffer from two weaknesses. First of all, there needs to be a fundamental reconception of the way in which the individual characteristics of interviewed subjects, presented as 'explanatory factors', are approached and studied. For instance, the 'status of women' tends to be defined on the basis of their educational level, their professional activity and their home environment. Yet since the socio-anthropological dimension of their status is not considered (a factor that is at least if not more decisive), these factors are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the determination of the status of women. Furthermore, religion tends to be defined as an explanatory individual characteristic and is construed largely in essentialist terms. In Africa, however, individuals are known to change their religious affiliation or to syncretize the value systems to which they are exposed. Individuals may also change their ethnic identity under the pressure of relations of domination. Secondly, analyses of individual behaviours generally presuppose a rationality of *homo oeconomicus* – an issue very seldom addressed from an epistemological perspective in demographic research – while other forms of rationality (such as social, cultural or political types of rationality) are almost never considered, although their importance is largely recognized in other fields of research.

The implicit hypotheses subtending population policies tend to be based on the assumption of popular adherence and support achieved as a result of a consensual social contract. Yet the reality of the issue is quite different, since the mechanisms determining the process tend to be governed instead by power relations. Exercising a degree of epistemological care may therefore help to provide more accurate definitions of the hypotheses that underlie research projects in the field and to offer analyses of the relevant data that are more appropriate for their original contexts. Finally, demographers may gain a better understanding of these issues by considering the history and evolution of theories and methods in the social sciences applied to African, Asiatic and Latin American cultures and societies. After all, conceptual ethnocentrism tends to generate categories of data collection and analysis that are liable to conflict with the conceptual categories of populations or that conceal the complexity of the issue of social organization. By virtue of their transdisciplinary focus, several of the research projects initiated by CEPED are designed to provide general overviews of a range of central concepts or issues in current population research, such as the notion of 'risk group' or the complexity of matrimonial processes.

#### ***Methodological implications***

The collection and analysis of quantitative data (especially the promotion of inquiries and censuses), which is a necessary process for a research centre that seeks to address the issue of development, constitutes a major strategic focus reflecting a strong national and international institutional demand. Yet our theoretical framework also implies a need to diversify the

analytical methods used to address current development issues. These include, among others: intensive territorialized interdisciplinary surveys, population observatories, cohort analysis, collection of life history and biographical data, and the spatial analysis of behaviours.

*How is this new theoretical focus applied and developed by CEPED's three internal research groups?*

#### **GROUP 1: HEALTH, GENDER, MORTALITY**

The model of epidemiological transition, which is often used to explain decreasing mortality rates, assumes that pre-transitional societies were marked by famine and infectious diseases. However, the recent increase of mortality in Africa, but also in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, suggests that the model of epidemiological transition fails to account for sanitary improvements or failures and that health depends not merely on medical techniques and/or the quality and availability of food, but also on closely interconnected socio-economic, cultural and political factors. Hence the more general theory of 'health transition': the improvement of health in a given population is only possible if advances in medical technologies are met with a positive response in the form of changes of individual behaviours in matters of health. This theory provides the chief conceptual focus adopted by CEPED to address the issue of change and response.

The improvement of health and sanitation within a given population requires both political will and economic resources to implement appropriate health care programmes, as well as a family and social environment that promotes the adoption of new behaviours at an individual level. Vaccinations and the prevention of mother-to-baby HIV transmission also show that the implementation and efficiency of health care programmes are not solely conditioned by the discovery of efficient or easily used medicine, since they also depend on the structural organization of health care services and on individual, conjugal, family and societal factors. Power relations within couples and families and the norms governing a society determine the range of possibilities that are available for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and family planning.

These questions provide the framework for our current research into health issues. The first question that needs to be addressed is the issue of changes in health care and sanitation. Though it had steadily decreased since the 1950s in African countries, mortality has stagnated or even increased in the last fifteen years as a result of a range of factors, including AIDS, the return of certain pathologies such as malaria, tuberculosis and cholera, and inadequate health care systems. Maternal mortality is still high, partly as a result of the continued practice of clandestine and dangerous abortions. The prevention of sexual risk also remains inadequate, especially among teenagers, and the need for improved standards of family planning has not yet been met. Our research focuses on the measurement of child and adult mortality and health care – issues that are at present deeply connected with AIDS, but also with maternal mortality, as well as with population ageing and the attendant health effects.

Attitudes towards issues of health care, sexuality and reproduction are governed for the most part by social gender relations. Child health is intimately connected with the level of education of mothers and their capacity for decision-making in matters of health care provision for their children. Conversely, demographic and sanitary changes have an impact on gender systems: for example, the condition of women has undergone significant changes as a result of the potential control of fertility using modern methods of contraception. Although the

social relations between sexes are one of the major issues addressed in current research into development, the question is still very seldom discussed from the specific perspective of health. This is why our team has placed the issue of social relations between men and women at the very heart of its research focus. Current research projects therefore address the conditions in which unequal gender relations are liable to give rise to sexual risk behaviours, unwanted pregnancies and abortion in risk situations. Another research issue currently addressed is the abuse inflicted on women in the domain of reproductive health, in particular the issue of female genital mutilations in West and East Africa and gender-based abortions in Asia.

The last focus of our research in this particular area is the analysis of the socio-demographic effects of prevention that target the epidemic and programmes promoting access to antiretroviral drugs, and more generally the health care policies developed and implemented by countries and international organisations. An inquiry into the responses to health issues exhibited in societies and individuals (especially AIDS), and the programmes developed by national and international authorities to combat them, helps to demonstrate how the interconnectedness of political, societal and individual responses in the face of diseases and health care demands serve to improve or deteriorate the health of a given population. There is in this respect a discrepancy in terms of sexual and procreation rights between international statements on the matter (Cairo, Beijing, MDG) and the actual situation in the countries affected by these issues. Likewise, there remains the issue of the relevance of large-scale vertical programmes (such as large-scale vaccination programmes or programmes designed to combat AIDS) for programmes of integrated health care, as recommended for instance by the 1978 Alma Ata conference and the Bamako initiative.

## **GROUP 2: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS**

Within the framework of the theory of change and response, migration is construed as a strategy of adaptation to newly emerging socio-cultural, economic, political and even ecological circumstances.

Recent research addressing the different types of mobility in developing countries still presents several deficiencies, including issues of measurement, disciplinary and geographic compartmentalization, the inadequacy of comparative studies, etc. There is a particular deficiency in studies of international migration, since there are still too few studies that seek to address the issue as a whole, from sending regions and countries to receiving countries, as well as transit countries. We argue that current research in the field – still largely influenced by push-pull interpretations such as the ‘attraction of towns and cities’ – needs to take a greater interest in the processes of ‘migratory circulation’. Furthermore, exclusively qualitative analyses fail to provide development indicators with precise answers to their questions about the factors determining migration and the impact of money transfers of migrants on local and regional development.

Besides the issues raised by current data and conceptual resources, the relations between migration and social dynamics need to be analysed in connection with land issues. Rural societies in Africa have tended to devise a simple and efficient response to cases where chronic poverty is intimately correlated with demographic pressure and land pressure. A section of the population – often the younger generations – moves away from the most heavily populated areas and settles again in empty or less populated areas. The expansion of

agricultural colonisation has been observed in many African countries, resulting in a double process of space *densification* and population *redistribution*. It appears therefore that mobility and migration need to be conceived more as a standard response to the fragility of agrarian systems. In some ways, and contrary to the still prevailing idea of immutable, rooted societies supposedly devoid of history, mobility and migration constitute an integral part of agrarian systems. These processes largely explain why the rate of urbanization in Africa remains significantly lower than on other continents. The final issue that needs to be addressed is the extension of the theory of change and response to include history and the analysis of socio-political contexts. Two examples should help to illustrate this point. In Mexico, the 1910 revolution, the implementation of agrarian reform and the so-called policy of municipalization were crucial determining factors in the race for land that followed the dissolution of the haciendas, while in Kenya the conflicts of the 1990s had a profound impact on internal migration.

The question of social dynamics evidently requires an inquiry into the profiles of different population groups involved in the dynamics of change and mobility. Do the individuals’ characteristics or those of their households predispose them to upward social mobility or do they make them instead more liable to increased vulnerability? The analysis of success factors should not be dissociated from the analysis of factors of pauperization. This is because, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, extreme poverty and extreme wealth tend to co-exist. Therefore, while the analysis of poverty remains a central research focus, our team also seeks to analyse the choices made by individuals and families in matters of human and economic investment that allow for a degree of integration and even in some cases a definite degree of socio-economic success. One highly relevant factor is the analysis of diasporas (in the broad sense of the term), which aims to clarify the types of relations that connect descendants of migrants to their country and family of origin, the investment strategies in the host society, and the dynamics of identity construction.

In short, the point is not to study *all* forms of mobility, but to address only those that pertain to change or, conversely, to permanence. An inquiry into the connections between forms of mobility and social dynamics clearly requires a degree of methodological pluralism, and calls for the use of heavy data and the development of demographic and economic indications, as well as sociological and anthropological interpretations of behaviours.

## **GROUP 3: FAMILY AND SOLIDARITIES**

The profound changes observed in the demographic structure of some developing countries are the result of a wide range of factors, including the rapid decrease of fertility, the brutal increase of general mortality related to the AIDS epidemic, the deterioration or, conversely, the improvement of health and sanitary conditions, and, finally, migratory flows. The result of this process has been the emergence of new demands and in some cases the rise of social tensions at the level of states or regions, since the speed of transitions, compounded by a lack of means and the instability of the political regimes in place, often prevent states from addressing structural changes. At the level of families, the size and structure of dwelling units are also undergoing significant changes, thereby generating a redefinition of individuals’ relationships with their relatives at different moments in their lives. The degree of sociability, support, social aid and exchange of services are difficult to quantify, and new approaches are currently being devised to apprehend the full range and complexity of relations.



The developments of multilevel theory in the social sciences have enabled the emergence of a broadly holistic approach to responses to demographic permanence and change. Although its practical application remains complex, this approach helps to consider individuals not merely in relation to their life history, but also in the light of their immediate social circle, the different social milieus and the norms governing these milieus, and the politico-economic contexts of the territories through which they transit. The effect of this theoretical advance is that, by privileging microsociological analyses and by recontextualising family dynamics within time and social space, the quantitative approach tends to adopt objectives that are comparable to the aims of anthropology. A comprehensive approach of this kind also helps to measure the intensity of the phenomena observed. The collection of biographical data and quantitative studies of social networks may be applied not only in southern countries and in urban and rural areas, but also in particularly wealthy countries.

*Intra* and *extra* family social relations are fostered and altered over time, and are shaped in particular by transfers of resources, as well as by formal and informal alliances. Throughout childhood, schooling represents a major financial pressure which parents are not always able to manage. Even child-minding may sometimes be an issue. At the moment of transition between childhood and adulthood, the conditions determining professional integration, the acquisition of property rights, marital union and the constitution of a family depend on different types of solidarity and support. Marriage therefore operates as an institution marked by a whole range of influences; the evolution of matrimonial behaviours is an indicator of social mutations. Several tendencies have emerged as a result of the schooling of young girls, of the mediatization of new conceptions of the family and couples, and of the increasing economic difficulties weakening the traditional system governing the management of social life. These include an increase of the age of entry into marital union, the emergence of new conditions governing the entry into marital union and choice of partner, changes in the nature and value of matrimonial compensation, etc. Elderly individuals are dependent on the solidarity of their relatives. The evolution of their social and economic status, associated with an increase in their demographic weight, calls for an emphasis not only on population ageing, but also on 'old age'. Using an anthropological perspective, we seek to analyse the cultural representations required to understand the situation of elderly individuals.

### **THE BUREAU D'APPUI A LA RECHERCHE**

The *Research support service* (RSS) connects CEPED researchers with other partner institutions, in the North and in the South, and with other development agents in the field. It pursues four objectives: the promotion of the work carried out by international research teams and the dissemination of research results; development of library resources; further professional training; consultancy and expertise.

#### ***International teams***

In dealing with emerging research issues, the RSS brings together researchers from the North and the South largely through thematic, geographic and methodological workshops.

The promotion of national demographic data is a priority for the RSS. In partnership with CEPED's library and information centre, it facilitates access to data and documents relating to demographic censuses and surveys.

In fostering collaborative work between researchers and professionals in the North and in the South, CEPED is able to provide work space for foreign scholars on short-term periods of study and research in Paris.

### ***CEPED publications***

Results of research appear in a range of publications:

- *Regards sur*: a research series that publishes academic volumes in French and in English.
- *Les Clefs pour...*: a series of textbooks on different issues in the field; each volume presents an overview of an applied method or concept.
- *Les Numériques du CEPED*: electronic resources, particularly in the form of CD-ROMs.
- *La Chronique*: a news bulletin on population issues.

### ***Professional training, consultancy and expertise***

CEPED offers in-country professional training.

It also encourages researchers affiliated with the various institutions in the North and in the South to meet the consultancy requirements of national and international authorities. Its duties include preparing and managing research contracts, carrying out mid-term and final assessments, and presenting the results of current research through seminars, publications and promotion.

### ***Monitoring current research***

The provision of bibliographic control and expertise is designed for the use of the academic community as a whole. *Popdevactu*, a webzine that monitors current research in the field, provides an overview of the most recent publications in the field, as well as listing conference announcements and relevant websites.

### **TRAINING POLICY**

CEPED is involved in the academic curricula of various French universities, especially the University Paris Descartes. A new Master's degree specialising in population and development research and expertise is due to open in September 2010 at the University Paris Descartes. The course will be taught by academics and research members affiliated with CEPED.

CEPED also offers training courses in Europe and in various countries throughout Francophone Africa through its international partnerships. These courses address the needs of universities, independent research centres and NGOs keen to strengthen their human resources in the field of population and development. CEPED responds in particular to the demands of universities engaged in restructuring their curricula in line with the standards of the new LMD system (*Licence – Masters – Doctorat*).

### **Yves CHARBIT**

Director of CEPED

Professor at the Université Paris-Descartes