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SPECIFICS OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS IN UKRAINE AFTER THE COUNTRY GAINED INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract

Demographic transition processes in Ukraine following the country gaining independence correspond neither to the demographic transition model nor the second demographic transition model. Unsuccessful political, social and economic reforms at the time in Ukraine and pressure exerted by Russia are deemed to be the cause of the situation. This means that demographic transition in Ukraine (both in terms of mortality and births) is far more detrimental than the premises of both models.

Key words

demographic transition model, second demographic transition model, demography, Ukraine.

1. Introduction

In reality all European post communist countries are experiencing a population drop in recent years. Studying the underlying factors two can be identified. The first one is related to the process of transitions from archaic type balance (high mortality and birth rate) to contemporary type of balance (low mortality and birth rates). It is called a demographic transition model (DTM) (compare Caldwell, 1976; Kirk, 1996; Szreter, 1993). Initially it was a three phase process but in the process of consecutive studies the present five phase model emerged comprising the following phases:

- The first phase features high birth and mortality rate with slight population growth. This model phase is connected with short average life span.
- The second phase features a decreasing number of deaths and a continually high birth rate and consequently increasing population growth. Average life time clearly increases.
- The third phase shows a falling but fading tendency of mortality rate. It is accompanied by a clear drop in birth rate and initially population growth that later fades. Longer life time slowly appears.
- The fourth phase features both a low mortality and birth rate. Population growth remains at a minimum level and the average life span is longer.

- In the fifth we note (a temporary or permanent) higher mortality than birth rate. In consequence we observe a negative population growth rate.

Observing the mechanisms governing demographic changes described in the model we should note the significant impact of social and economic development on changes in human reproduction.

In the meantime the second demographic transition (SDT) model appeared (compare Lesthaeghe, 1995; Kotowska, 1999). The key difference of this model lies in the interpretation of falling fertility. The first model explains the low fertility as adapting the fertility rate to the falling mortality rate and is interpreted in terms of care for the family, particularly the number of children that can be fed and raised. Dropping fertility according to the second model (at a very low mortality rate) is deemed to originate from growing individualism of potential parents, and their will to assure self-realisation potential.

The direct objective of this study is to compare demographic transitions in Ukraine to both models referred to above. The study covers the years 1991–2014 from the moment of gaining independence to the year for which the latest data is available.

The study relies on data made available by the STATE STATISTICS SERVICE OF UKRAINE. The autoregressive model was applied in time analysis (the following functions were taken into consideration: linear function, power function, logarithmic function, exponential function, quadratic function; with a regression function with the highest value of the coefficient of determination selected; if for all the

tested function R^2 was below 0.70, the analysis was abandoned).

2. A brief characteristic of the demographic process conditions

Irrespective of the model applied to explain the present demographic situation in Ukraine, whether the first or the second demographic transition model, we come across substantial problems. They result from the deterioration of the social and economic conditions following independence that can be illustrated by the changes in GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$) (Fig. 1.). Statistics indicate that theoretically the level of wealth increased not earlier than in 2006. It must be noted that the economic development rate (rather low in Ukraine (Rapacki (ed.), 2009), has an impact not only on economic security reflected in procreation attitudes and capacity for own healthcare but also on “fairness” in distribution of income among population groups (relatively disadvantageous (Холод, 2009)

The deteriorating situation results from many both internal and external factors. The major internal factors include the lack of elites originating from democratic oppositions (which could have taken over power following independence and start actual reforms), lack of social acceptance and a drive for reform, strong Russian influence and sovietisation, no realistic direct democracy mechanisms, strong cultural and economic diversity of Ukraine. External

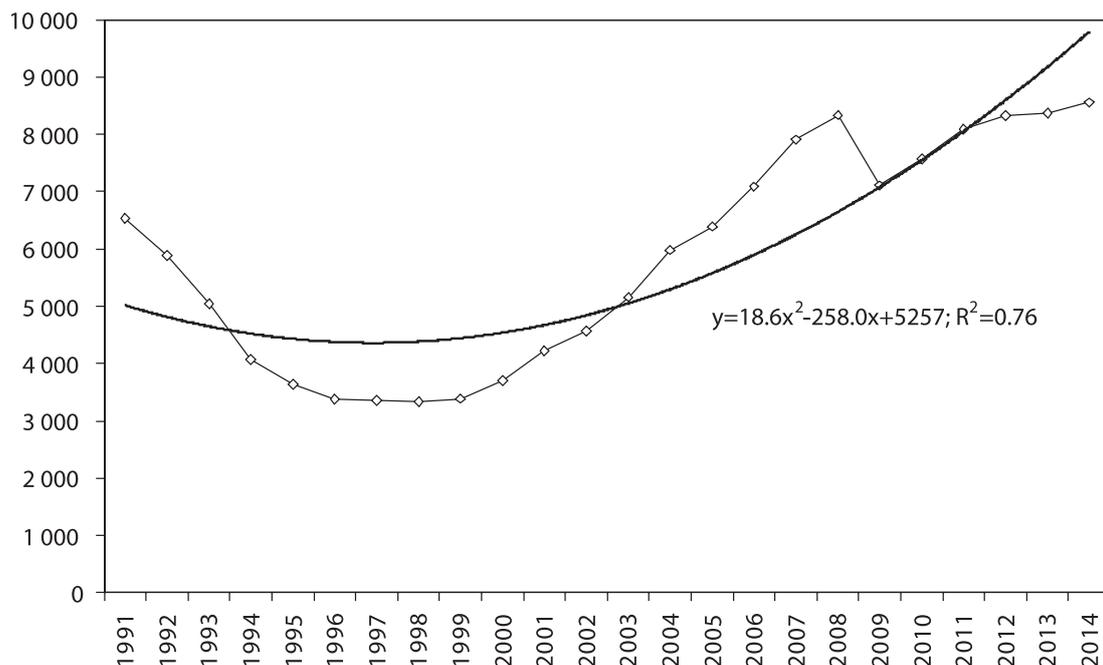


Fig. 1. Changes in GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$) in Ukraine in the years 1991–2014

Source: own study based on: Word Bank Open Data.

factors include predominantly the destructive policy of the Russian Federation towards the Ukrainian state (compare Конончук, 2006; Kuczabski, Michalski, 2014; Радченко, 2008).

The consequences of these adverse processes are the chronic malfunctioning of the state health-care system (Lekhan et al., 2010; Tymkovich, 2005) additionally subject to omnipresent corruption (compare Karklins, 2005).

3. Analysis of main demographic changes

Demographic changes in Ukraine society may be no doubt classified to the fifth phase of demographic transition. However, the assignment of demographic transition in Ukraine to the fifth DTM phase is questionable as the model assumes the decreasing birth rate “adapting” to the decreasing mortality rate. The situation in Ukraine is just the opposite – the drop in birth rate is accompanied by a growing mortality rate (Fig. 2.).

In the case of the second model of demographic transitions the falling fertility rate is justified by the growing individualism of potential parents. In the case of Ukraine this factor is applicable to a lesser degree than assumed by the authors of the model. The difficult economic situation in Ukraine (see Fig. 1) limits substantially the self realisation drive of young people replacing it by a “struggle” for survival. We should also bear in mind the homo sovieticus (Tischner, 2005; Zinoviev, 1985) specifics and its adverse impact on the population health condition.

The rising incidence of certain illnesses among Ukrainian youth, particularly STDs, conducive widespread alcoholism, drug addiction and risky sexual behaviour is of significance (compare Barnett et al., 2000; Ivanov, 1999; Levchuk, 2009; Mavrov, Bondarenko, 2002; Richens, Mircea, 2009), having no doubt an adverse impact on procreation potential of young Ukrainians.

The diversified demographic situation in Ukraine is quite interesting in the spatial perspective. We can note a positive or oscillating around zero population growth in western Ukraine and in Kiev and negative in other parts of the country (Fig. 3.).

The reasons underlying such spatial diversification of the demographic situation originate unquestionably from cultural diversity, which in Ukraine is considerable. The fall of the communist system in Central and Eastern Europe revived national movements (Vojtěch, 2010) partially stimulated by Russian operations, such as the “Russkij Mir” (Bondar, 2014; Jilge, 2014; Moskwa, 2013). Contemporary history of the post Stalin period also affected western Ukraine (together with the three Baltic republics), which was believed to be a mecca of alternative lifestyle in the soviet Union” (Kuzio, 2015). On the other hand we should not overestimate the role of national and ethnic diversity, as, e.g. V. Sokolnikv (2012a) states that the mortality rate of Russians and Ukrainians inhabiting Ukraine barely differs. The demographic specifics of Kiev in terms of central Ukraine indicate that it is an attractive place for settlement due to, among others, the inflow of foreign investments (Chuzhykov, 2014).

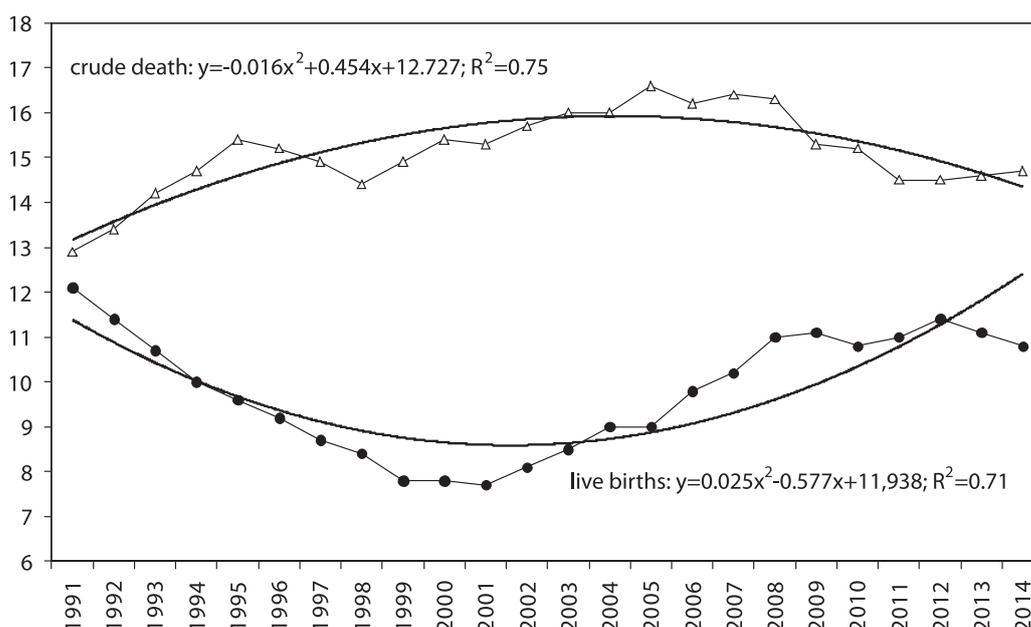


Fig. 2. Changes in natural increase/decrease [in %] in Ukraine in the years 1991–2014

Source: own study based on: НАСЕЛЕННЯ УКРАЇНИ..., 2015.

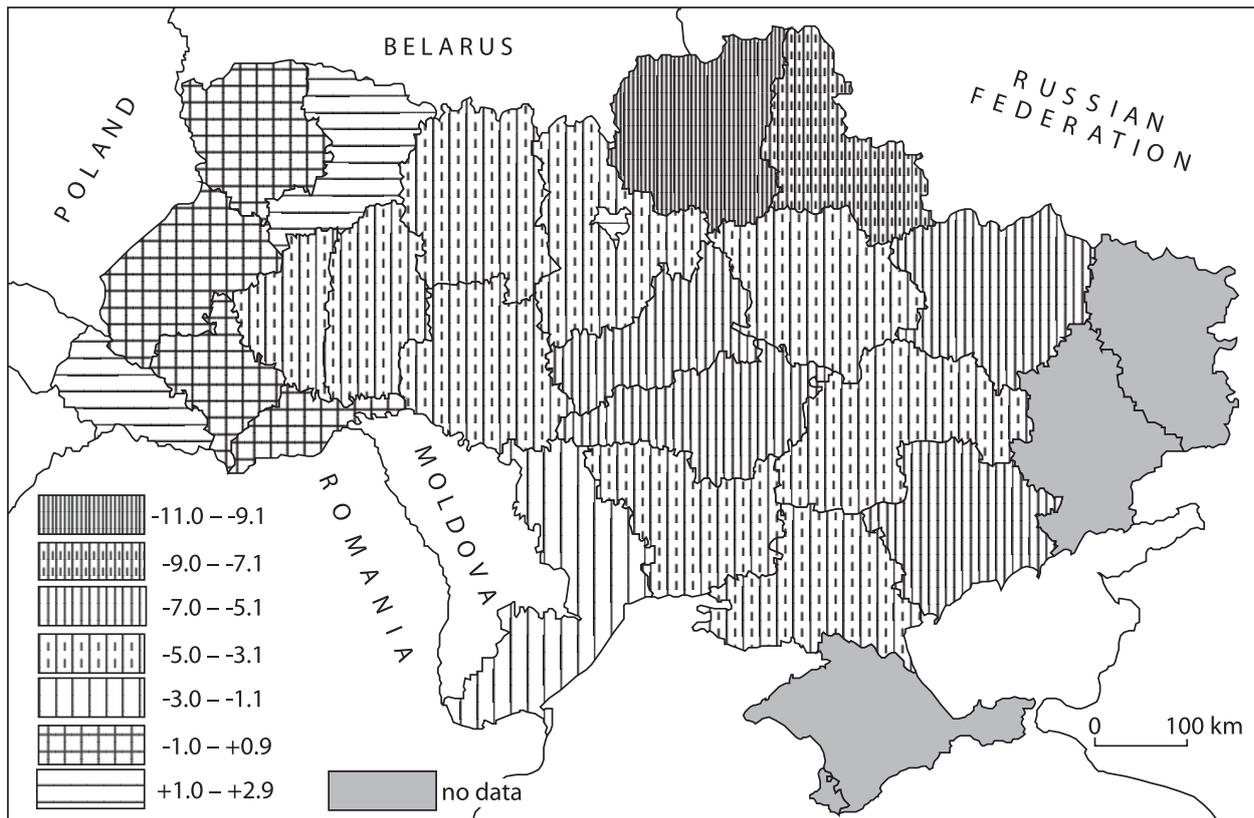


Fig. 3. Diversified spatial population growth [in %] in Ukraine in 2014

Source: own study based on: НАСЕЛЕННЯ УКРАЇНИ..., 2015.

A specific factor affecting the contemporary diversified demographic situation in the country includes the consequences of traumatic events related to Holodomor in the interwar period, World War II and later Stalin repressions (compare Костя (ed.), 2012; Sokolnikv, 2012b; Vallin et al., 2012a, 2012b).

4. Summary

We should agree with the opinion expressed by T. Sobotka (2008) that the presented demographic models referring to transitions in European post communist countries should be treated more as a framework concept than as operational models.

This opinion seems to fit well to Ukraine where the difficult social and economic conditions as well as military and political aspects strongly disarray factors identified as shaping demographic transitions in contemporary European societies. Furthermore, we can note a clear impact of the past on the present spatial diversification of the demographic situation in Ukraine.

The present demographic situation in Ukraine, apart from the possibility or its lack of attributing it to a demographic theoretical framework, is a threat for the future development of the country due to drop-

ping human potential (compare Adomanis, 2015; Стефанишин, 2006; Заствний, 2006) with overall indications that the situation will become worse. For example, according to G. Safarov et al. (2008) the population in Ukraine will fall to 40.63 million by 2025 and to 32.75 mil by 2050. We should also note the forecast comes from the period before seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and the war in eastern Ukraine.

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