

# POPULATION AND PROCREATION

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In this chapter we shall review fertility changes in Russia over the last 50 years, provide a brief summary of theories explaining these changes and suggest an explanation for them based on the multiple modernities paradigm and institutional approach.

## Fertility changes in Russia over the last 50 years: the periodization

Fertility dynamics in Russia in the time span under analysis includes five periods: 1) 1962-1980; 2) 1981-1987; 3) 1988-1999; 4) 2000-2006; 5) from 2007 to present (Figure 1). During the first period fertility rates fell below the replacement level. The total fertility rate, 2.63 at the beginning of the period, fell to 1.87 at the end of it. The percentage of extramarital births among all births in 1968 reached its minimum (10.3%) and during the rest of the period totaled about 11%.

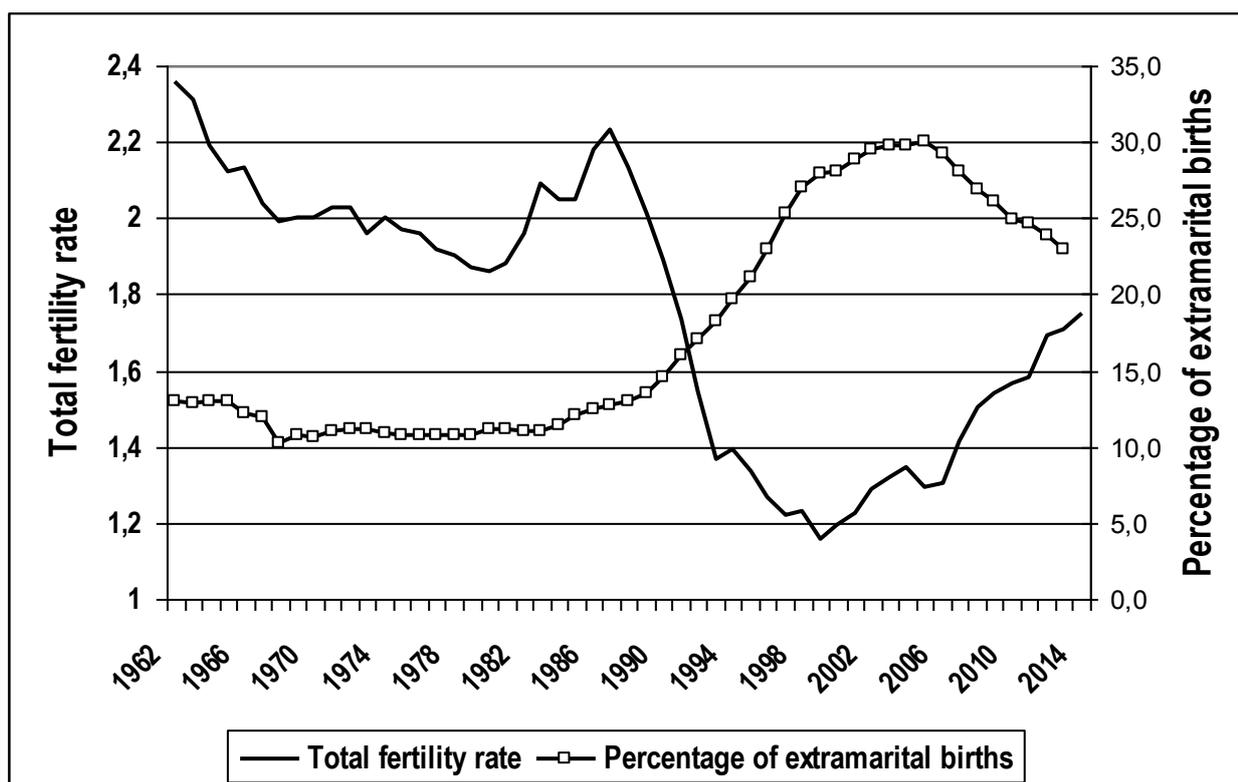


Figure 1. Total fertility rates and the percentage of extramarital births in Russia in 1962-2014.

Sources: (Demographic... 2012, pp. 91, 168); (Socio-economic... 2012); (Russian...2014, p.88); Demoscope-Weekly. An electronic publication  
<http://demoscope.ru/weekly/app/app4007.php>; <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/app/app4013.php>

The second period was initiated by embarking upon the Soviet demographic policy in 1981. This policy was intended to stimulate fertility; the most important among the measures was granting mothers one year of a partially paid parental leave for one year after birth. The pay was equal to approximately 30%-40% of a young specialist's salary. During the period under review, fertility rates in Russia again reached the replacement level, and at their peak rose even higher. The share of extramarital births began to grow slowly, but by the end of the period it was still small by the present-day yardstick – 12.7% of the total number of births.

The third period (1988-1999) coincided with the economic crisis in the USSR, which was followed by the breakup of the country, as well as the initial period of the market reforms in Russia and the attendant heavy economic recession. The total fertility rates during this period were nearly halved: 2.23 in 1987, by the end of the period they dropped to the half century low – 1.16. During the same period the percentage of extramarital births made an upward leap from 12.7% of the total number of births in 1987 to 27.9% in 1999.

In the fourth period (2000-2006), marked by economic growth, the total fertility rates began to grow slowly – from 1.16 in 1999 to 1.31 in 2006. The percentage of extramarital births in 2005 reached its half century maximum: 30%.

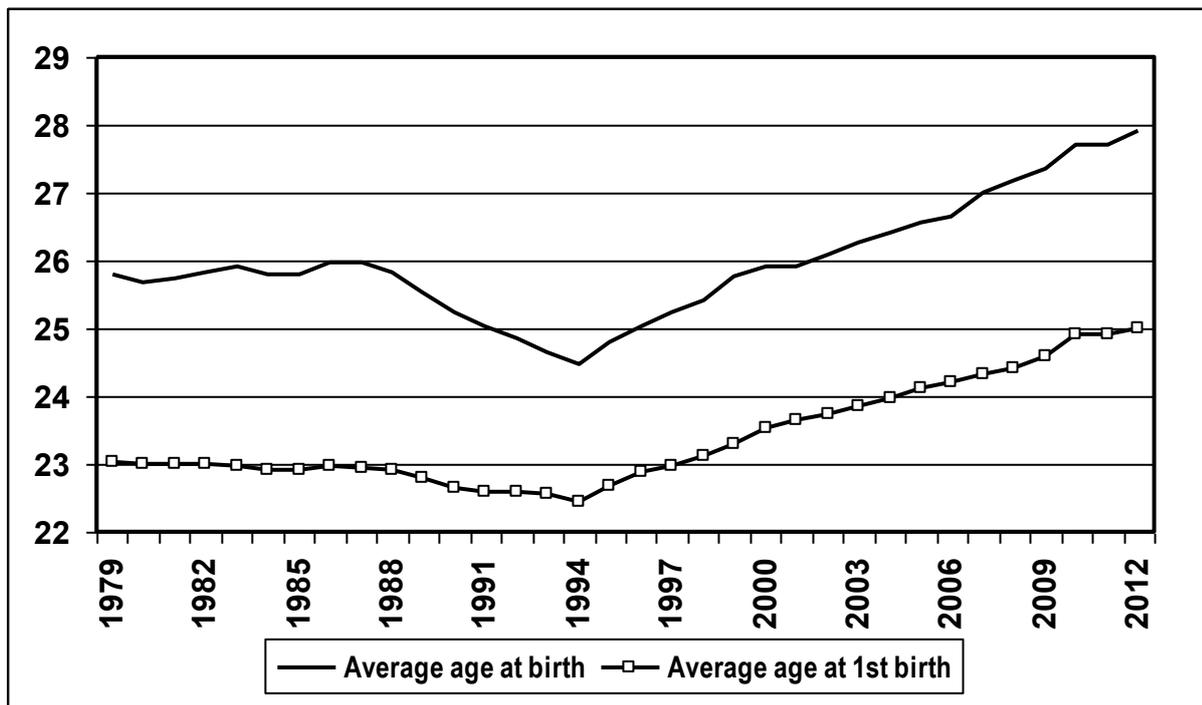
The fifth period (from 2007 to the present) has been initiated by the new measures of a demographic policy designed to stimulate fertility. The linchpin of the policy is so called the maternity capital, a lump sum paid to Russia's female citizens on the birth of their second (or subsequent) child, if the birth takes place in the period from 2007 through 2016<sup>1</sup>. This grant can be spent only on specific items, such as improving the housing conditions or paying for the child's education, or added to the mother's pension savings. The maternity grant, indexed annually against inflation, in 2013 totals about 409,000 roubles, or approximately 80,000 yuans. Beginning from 2007 the total fertility rates began to grow continuously, and by preliminary estimation went up to 1.75 in 2014. The total number of births in 2014 was by 60.3% larger than the number of births in 1999, and by 31.6% larger than the corresponding value for 2006. In 2007-2014 the share of extramarital births was steadily falling and in 2014 totaled 22.6% of the general number of births.

In Russia, women tend to become mothers earlier in life than women in Western Europe. Hajnal (1965) once wrote about the St.Petersburg-Trieste line, to the east of which people marry earlier, and to the west of which – later. These differences are persistent. In 2013 in Russia the average childbearing age stood at 28.0 years (Demographic..., 2014, table 4.8), in France (in 2012)

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<sup>1</sup> In special cases provided for by law, the maternity grant can also be given to several other categories of Russian citizens.

– at 30, in Spain – at 31.2<sup>2</sup>. Yet, since the mid-1990s there has been a clear tendency to the “ageing” of motherhood (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. The mother’s average age at the birth of a child and at the birth of a first child in Russia, 1979-2012**

Sources: (Demographic..., 2012, p. 166); (Population... 2011, p. 108); (Population ...2014, p.119) ; (Demographic..., 2013, table 4.8)

### **Two types of theories: the Russian disputes in the global context**

A distinctive tendency in Russia since the 1960s-1970s, the falling fertility rates required a theoretical explanation. This process, which began in the 1980s and continues to this day, is closely tied in with the global theoretical context worth a close look. As is generally known, a study of history has long been a battlefield for two competing schools of thought. One approaches the world’s history as a single process, regarding individual characteristics of different civilizations as something peripheral. Another school, to the contrary, emphasizes these characteristics, placing them at the forefront. Both paradigmes underlie a set of middle-range sociological and demographic theories which come into the world to provide answers to the burning issues of the day.

During the most part of the 1950-2000 period, ignoring civilizational differences was common both in sociological and demographic theorizing. It concerns, first of all, theories of modernization and westernization in sociology and the concepts of the first and second demographic transition in demography. However, by the end of the century it became obvious that

<sup>2</sup> <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/app/app40acb.php>

these concepts do not provide answers to many vital questions of modernity. The outcome was the emergence of several economic, sociological and interdisciplinary concepts mostly focused on civilizational differences.

D.North (1990) explored the reasons why similar steps in economic policies yield different results. According to North, these differences are caused by institutions, the formal and informal “rules of the game” by which different societies live.

The multiple modernities theory (Eisenstadt, 2000) challenged the views that the world has only one form of modernity – the Western one. The proponents of this theory posit that the today’s world has many forms of modernity, the Western one is being only one of them.

A “non-European conceptualization” of modernity (Mouzelis, 1997), too, presupposes a diversity of its forms. Starting off with Parsons’ AGIL paradigm and using the examples of modernization in China, Japan and the nations of south-east Asia, Mouzelis demonstrated different possible varieties of subordination of modernization’s elements and, in particular, of the domination of highly adaptive economy and traditions, which underpin the society’s unity, over liberal values and democratic representation.

Martinelli (2005) has a distinctive opinion, believing that the degree of convergence or rapprochement of the modernities is higher than believed by proponents of several modernities. At the same time, Martinelli argues, the developing countries continuously select, interpret and reformulate ideas borrowed from the modern Western civilization.

Kirdina in her works talks about two institutional matrixes – the X-matrix, predominant in Russia, Asia and Latin America, and the Y-matrix, predominant in the West. In the X-matrix a centralized management by agencies of the state and the redistributive economic institutions play a greater role than in the Y-matrix. Besides, the X-matrix prioritizes collective interests over individual ones, whereas at the core of the Y-matrix are “institutions of subsidiary ideology firmly prioritizing the ‘I’ over the ‘we’, the primacy of the individuality, his/her rights and freedoms in relation to the values of communities of a higher order” (Alexandrov, Kirdina, 2012, p. 9). At the same time, these researchers argue, caution should be exercised when complementing the basic institutions of one matrix with the basic institutions of another because an insufficient borrowing of “alien” institutions leads to stagnation and an excessive one – to social upheavals and revolutions (Alexandrov, Kirdina, 2013, p. 72).

A comparative analysis of the social policies (Esping-Andersen, 1990) has shown that even the Western world embraces different historical models of social policy. The welfare states in Northern and Western Europe are more generous than in Southern Europe and North America.

The theoretical frameworks in sociology and demography during the period under review were developing in an asymmetrical fashion. Unlike sociology, demography is still dominated by

the theory of demographic transition and the theory of the second demographic transition. The former theory describes a worldwide process of transition from high to low fertility and mortality rates and attempts an explanation of this process. The latter not only describes the changes in the values that are essential to the model of demographic behavior in Western and Northern Europe – an earlier sexual debut, the growing numbers of cohabitations and extramarital births – but also treats these changes as a model of future transformations for other regions of our planet.

According to Van de Kaa (1996, p.425), “Rising incomes and the economic and political security which demographic welfare states offer their populations have helped trigger ‘a silent revolution’; a shift in ‘Maslowian post-materialist’ direction where an individual’s are accepted for what they are and decisions on divorce, abortion, cohabitation, sterilization and voluntary childlessness are largely left on discretion of individuals and couples involved.” In the subsequent works (Surkin, Lesthaeghe, 2004; Lesthaeghe, 2010) the second demographic transition was approached as an ongoing process with an ever widening geographic presence. And its differences from the initial northern and western European model are interpreted as variations within the second demographic transition. The theories of the first and second demographic transitions, thus, approach the global demographic evolution as a unilinear process with the Western world in the vanguard and the rest of the Earth’s regions following in its footsteps with a smaller or bigger delay.

Unlike in sociology, in demography theories emphasizing distinctive characteristics of different regions’ evolution are less developed. One should point up, however, the McNicoll triad *legacy, policy, circumstances*, which allows to identify the role of path dependence, institutions, policies and external circumstances in fertility changes (McNicoll, 2009). Some researchers point to differences between the Southern European family type, with its strong intra-family ties, and the Northern and Western European family type, where such ties are weaker (Granoveter, 1973). Reher (2003, p.221) emphasizes stability of such differences, pointing out that “the forces making up the contemporary world, common for the most part in all societies, are not the only factors shaping these societies, because societies’ own historical trajectories, different in each case, will also contribute to the specific contours of the present and the future”. There are quite a lot of studies putting forward interesting theoretical explanations of the characteristics of fertility in individual regions of the world – for instance, in southern Europe (Dalla Zuana, 2001, Micheli, 2000).

Most Russian researchers also focused their attention on the general features of the fertility changes in Russia and the developed world. They, however, have tended to adopt one of the two radically different theoretical frameworks – the demographic transition theories, on the one hand, and the concept of declining need for children, on the other.

The former framework was rooted in the demographic transition theory, which by that time predominated in Western demography. Vishnevsky in his works explicated one of the ideas of this

theory – the concept of demographic homeostasis (Vishnevsky, 1982). According to Vishnevsky, attempts to raise fertility rates in any single nation – whether Russia or a Western nation – are pointless because they are at odds with global processes. Proponents of this view believe that falling birth rates, in any country, are part of self-regulation of planet Earth as the complex self-organizing system. . The way the self-regulation works is that all residents of the planet receive the same informational signals and react to them identically – by procreating less (Demographic... 2006, p. 547).

Zakharov (2002, 2006) somewhat differently inscribes Russia's falling fertility in the global demographic context. In his opinion, it is the second demographic transition that plays a pivotal role in fertility decline in Russia. The second demographic transition theory describes and explains changes in sexual behaviors, family life and procreation that began in the 1970s in Northern and Western Europe. An important element of these changes was a dramatic weakening of the state's control over this sphere – the lifting of restrictions on the trade in, and advertising of contraceptives, liberalization of abortion-related legislation, simplification of divorce procedures. Since the concept of the second demographic transition is a theoretical reflection of these changes, its proponents are highly sceptical about the state's demographic policy-making.

A draft of the family policy of USSR proposed by the proponents of the demographic transition concept shortly before disintegration of the Soviet Union and resuscitated by them a decade later, was a practical realization of this world-view. According to this draft, “the state... does not pursue either pro-natality or anti-natality policies” (The Population... 2000, p. 166). Official Conception of Russian Federation's Demographic Policy Until 2025 turned down this idea. In accordance with official Conception, the demographic policy of Russian Federation is aimed at increasing of fertility (Conception... 2007).

The theory of a declining need for children (Antonov, 1980, 2009; Borisov, 2009) is in many regards an alternative to the demographic transition theories. According to Antonov, Borisov and their proponents, a declining need for children is a process which is very dangerous for a society and leads to complete childlessness. This process, in turn, is conditioned by the diminishing role of family and family values in the life of the modern “society of consumption”. The advocates of this concept argue that “a society can slow down the crisis of the family and fertility so as to keep it at a level acceptable for itself (but artificially maintained!). And it is sure to achieve this sooner or later” (Antonov, 2009, p. 71). Known Russian demographer V.Borisov (1933-2005), in an article published on the web in 2005, not long before the revitalization of the Russian demographic policy, emphasized that “without a pronatalist policy Russia will never see its fertility rise” (2009, p.93).

Unlike proponents of the demographic transition theories, proponents of the theory of declining need for children speak out in favor of the state's pro-active demographic policy-making.

They believe that such policy should be centered around the goal of changing the system of values dominating in the modern society and generating a socio-psychological need for a third and a fourth child. Economic incentives, they believe, are useful but taken alone cannot reverse the downward trend of fertility because its causes are non-economic.

Despite the cardinal differences between theory of second demographic transition and theory of declining need for children, they share some characteristics as well. Firstly, both focus attention on global processes, presuming that the specifics of individual nations are not critically important. Secondly, they concentrate on evolution of the family, paying much less attention to the role of the state. Thirdly, both theories employ the division into periods of considerable length (50 years and more). Fourthly, they do not pay sufficient attention to distinctive features of demographic behavior of individual groups of population. And finally, fifthly, both theories, by virtue of the mentioned characteristics, do not pay any significant attention either to practical steps connected with economic stimulation of birth rates and development of childcare infrastructure or to the influence of short-term economic changes and demographic policy-making on fertility.

### **State, demographic policy and fertility in today's Russia**

Because of the mentioned theoretical disagreements, the Russian academic literature offers different accounts about how the demographic policy-making affected the changes in Russia's birth rates in the period under consideration. The differences in the interpretations come to light even in evaluations of the results of the Soviet demographic policy in the 1980s. Several researchers assume that "from the viewpoint of general increase of fertility" such policy produced an effect "slightly larger than zero" (Zakharov, 2006, p. 63), its main effect being that women began to give birth earlier in life. Hence, a conclusion is made that any efforts to raise fertility rates through state interventions have no chance to succeed.

Proponents of this viewpoint usually argue their case applying the cohort analysis and such indicator as the cohort total fertility rate. In my opinion, this approach has methodological shortcomings. The reproductive period in a woman's life lasts for about 25 years, if we do not take into account very early and very late births. The lengths of time between the crucial points in Russian political and economic history in the period under review were far shorter. Thus, the allowances granted, since 1981, to mothers who took the partially paid parental leave, by the end of the 1980s were largely devalued through inflation. The 1990s were a period of shock caused by the transformations, in 2000-2006 the economic situation was quickly improving but the demographic policy was mostly tokenistic, and only in 2007 the demographic policy-making was given new vigor. As a result, each cohort's reproductive period embraced both good and bad times, as well as periods of varied intensity of the demographic policies. Thereat, the total fertility rates in real

generations are the averages weighed by the numbers of “fat” and “lean” years and, therefore, cannot be considered as an appropriate tool to measure the effects of demographic policies carried out in a particular period.

Evaluating the results of the 1980s’ demographic policies, Zakharov writes: “The effect could have been stronger for women’s cohorts of 1955-1965 if they had lived the third decade of their lives in a calmer socio-economic situation than the one which they experienced in the 1990s” (Zakharov, 2006, pp. 63-64). However, the same can be said about the cohorts of women born after 1965: if the demographic policy of the 1980s had been continued in the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, the total number of births in this period would have been higher. If this had been the case, the effect of the demographic policy would have been so tangible that the nation would not have experienced the demographic collapse such as it did in the 1990s.

In our view, the empirical data quoted in the first part of this chapter evidence the significant state’s influence on fertility in Russia in the period under review. The fastest growth of the period total fertility rates was witnessed when the state’s demographic activities were at their peak: in 1981-1987 and 2007-2012. To the contrary, in the periods when the state was pursuing a mostly tokenistic policy in this area, without supporting the families financially, the birth rates were falling or growing very slowly.

Those researchers who are skeptical about the practical implications of demographic policy-making are inclined to view the Soviet demographic policy of the 1980s as an isolated episode. In our opinion, however, this policy was an experiment that got off to a good start, came to a halt as the course of history took a dramatic turn but was resuscitated when the economic circumstances changed for the better. A support to this conclusion can be found in the obvious resemblance between the Soviet demographic policy of the 1980s and the today’s Russian demographic policy. In both cases the key actor is a central government, with an important but far less significant role played by regional authorities and small role of non-governmental organizations. Both for the Soviet and Russian demographic policies cash grants are pivotal, and mothers remain to be the main addressees and recipients of these grants, while fathers or children themselves – only in exceptional situations. In both cases birth rates began to grow after the introduction of economic incentives.

In my opinion, the persistense of such model of demographic policy both in a planned economy and in a market economy is not a matter of chance. On the one hand, majority of Russians believe that it is the state’s responsibility to take measures to increase birth rates in the country – according to the polls conducted by the Obshchestvennoe Mnenie [Public Opinion] foundation, this view was endorsed by 86% of respondents in 2006 and by 81% in 2011 (The Situation... 2011). As suggested by the findings of the survey “Family and Fertility” carried out by the Rosstat [official statistics agency] in September-October 2009, a majority of Russians believe that the improvement of the

demographic situation requires resource-intensive measures in demographic policy-making: granting the maternity capital, housing subsidies, etc. (Zvereva, 2012). On the other hand, given the large-scale scope of these measures, they can be carried out only using federal revenues. In addition, reliable transferring the payments to the addressees is possible, even from the technical viewpoint, only when the state authorities are in command.

Taking a broader view of the issue, one can suppose that in the final analysis a demographic policy with the state at the center is a natural outgrowth of the structural characteristics of the Russian society, where the institutions of centralized state management have always played a bigger role than in the West. Moreover, despite the obvious differences between the modern Russian society and the Soviet society in the 1980s, the factors determining the state's key role in demographic policy-making have not significantly changed.

It is clear, however, that although the present model of demographic policy is a natural outcome of evolution, it needs to be developed further. Although demographic policies should be implemented with the state in command and control, the situation when the state is the only actor has several deficiencies. They include, first of all, an insufficient utilization of the potential of citizens' and NGO's activism, as well as insufficient involvement of employers and municipal authorities in the realization of the policies. Thus, further development of the demographic policies requires not only increase in financing but also the involvement of a larger range of social actors in the process of its formulation and realization.

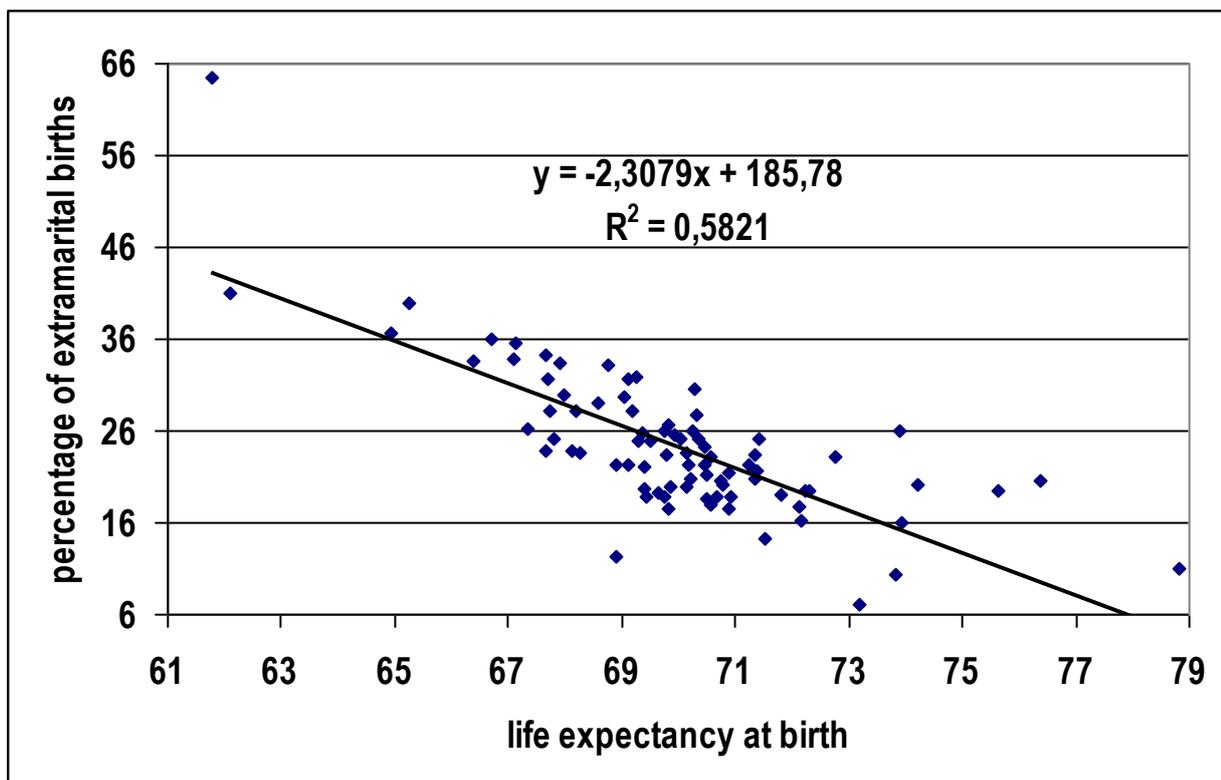
### **Social differences as determinants of fertility changes**

As is known, the second demographic transition theory pays little attention to social and ethnic heterogeneity of society. This can be partly explained by the fact that the theory was being constructed when developed countries had fewer immigrants from developing countries than now. Another important factor is that this theory is focused more on convergence than on divergence.

Proponents of the second demographic transition theory assume that the main direction of fertility changes in Russia is toward the Western models. I believe this process to be more complex than that. The changes in family formation patterns observed in Russia cannot be reduced to a simple adoption of the Western European patterns of demographic behavior. Moreover, these changes are not even a "transition", if this word is taken to mean a movement from one currently prevailing family model to another, which is to replace its predecessor. In reality we witness only certain shifts in the incidence of specific patterns of demographic behavior and family types, with each of them remaining socially significant.

This is evidenced, in particular, in the dynamics and regional variations of marital and extramarital births in Russia. If the growing number of extramarital births could be largely explained by a shift to "post-materialist" values referenced in the second demographic transition

theory, one would expect a direct correlation between the level of a region's socio-economic development and the share of extramarital births there. However, in reality this is an inverse correlation (Figure 3). The data for 83 territorial-administrative units of the RF for 2013 shows a close negative correlation ( $r = -0,76$ ) between extramarital births and the life expectancy at birth. The life expectancy at birth meanwhile determines 58,2% of the regional variations in the percentage of extramarital births. In Moscow and St.Petersburg – the cities where the “Maslowian shift to post-materialist needs”, one would assume, should be the strongest – the share of extramarital births in 2013 was 20,6% and 20,1%, which is lower than Russia's average (23,0%) . In urban communities, which are traditionally regarded as more advanced in the adoption of post-materialist values, the share of extramarital births, (23,8% in 2011), was lower than the respective share in rural communities, which was 28,6% in 2011 (*Demographic...2012*, pp. 168-174). So, extramarital births in Russia are to a large extent related to the social and economic malaise, evidenced by low life expectancy.



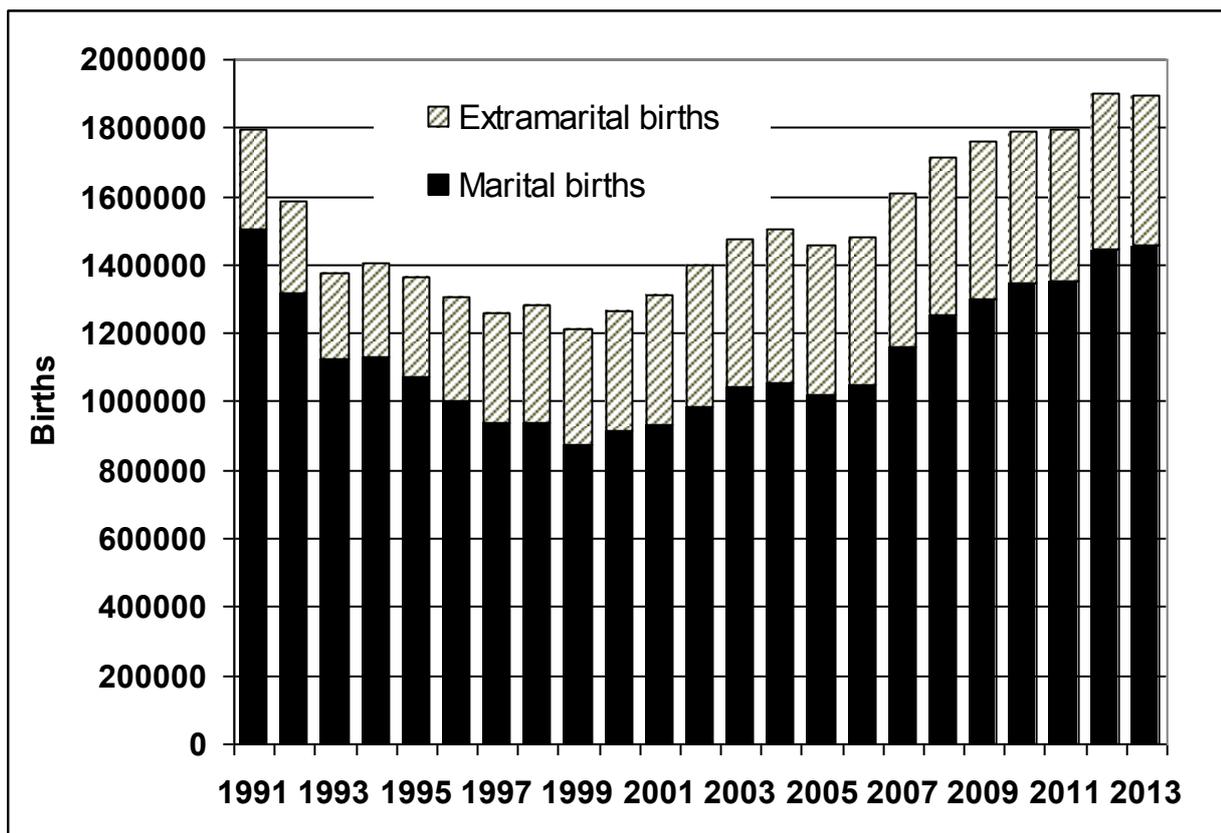
**Figure 3 Life expectancy at birth and the share of extramarital births in the territorial-administrative units of the Russian Federation in 2013.**

Source: (Vital..., 2014, table 4); Rosstat database <http://www.gks.ru/dbscripts/cbsd/dbinet.cgi> (accessed 20.01.2015)

This is also suggested by an analysis of individual biographies (Perelli-Harris, Gerber 2009). According to them, in Russia extramarital births are more common among less educated women. The reason for this is that women from this group have fewer chances to become married after an extramarital conception than women with a higher degree of education.

Entrenched ethnic and religious traditions should not be discounted either – the share of extramarital births in the republics of North Caucasus, where Islam is a dominant religion, is appreciably smaller than Russia’s average, while in the rural communities of Tyva, Buryatia, Khakassia the corresponding figures are 64,3%, 42,7% and 40,5% (*Demographic...*, 2012, pp.168-174).

The dynamics of marital and extramarital births in 1991-2013 also demonstrates a complex character of this process. A fast growth of the number of extramarital births in the period of transformational shock in the 1990s among one group of the population was related to the changes in the values system described in the second demographic transition theory, and among another group – to instability of the family life conditioned by a deep economic and social crisis. As the nation’s social and economic situation was improving, the growth rate of the number of extramarital births first slowed down, then stabilized, and in recent years this number has been declining (Figure 4). Marital births account for nearly all increases in the number of births in 2007-2013, stimulated by the demographic policies.



**Figure 4. The numbers of marital and extramarital births in Russia in 1991-2013**

Source: (*Socio-...* 2012); (*Rosstat...*, 2014, p.83, 88).

In view of all that has been said above, the social and demographic policy makers in Russia should avoid relying on such feature of the second demographic transition theory as the division of

families into “progressive” – the ones that are guided by non-conformist values (Surkyn, Lesthaeghe, 2004) and give birth when they are close to 30 – and the rest. Demographic policy in Russia should be differentiated, take into account specific needs of different types of household and ensure a fair balance of their interests.

### **Conclusive remarks**

The attempts to explain Russia’s modern demographic situation through the lens of the second demographic transition theory have been made for 20 years now, which warrants a preliminary analysis of this theory’s application. I believe that this theory gives an adequate description of the behavior of only a particular group of Russians. This group, however, was not in the majority during the period under consideration. Moreover, presently we do not have any compelling evidence that it will be in near future.

In the period we review, the second demographic transition theory was adapted to non-Western societies by way of expanding its initial formulation. In its initial version, this theory was intended for describing processes that take place in Northern and Western Europe. It was not by chance that the description of these processes based on this theory referenced “democratic welfare states”, “democracy with roots from below” and “post-materialist values”. What was meant was not simply changes in demographic indicators (in this case we would have, instead of a theory, a commentary to a statistical compendium) but shifts in the value system, which were conditioned by a particular socio-economic environment and generated new patterns of demographic behavior. Such coupling of the theory and its object made it difficult to use it to explain changes going on outside Western countries. A solution – illusory, I believe – found by proponents of this theory was to replace the initial definition of the second demographic transition by a different, wider one.

Zakharov in his works, for instance, uses several definitions of the second demographic transition, the contents of which are somewhat at odds with each other. “An individual in his demographic behavior,” he argues, “is most likely to be guided by non-materialist values, ‘fine-tuning’ his individual calendar of demographic events to changes in the specific and diverse life circumstances” (Zakharov, 2002). “The second demographic transition,” writes Zakharov, “is related to shifts in the modern individual’s life cycle that are as critical as the first transition: there is even more freedom of choice among marriage partners and forms of partnership, there is an ever more responsible approach to the consequences of sexual relation, matched by a child planning that is more efficient than in the past” (Zakharov, 2005). As is easy to see, none of the formulations reference “a democratic welfare nation”, and the second one does not even mention “non-materialist values”. Zakharov’s later works simply mention “the evolution of fertility in developed countries, which is called the second demographic transition” (Zakharov, 2008, p. 250). When even the

definition of the second demographic transition becomes blurred, there is a danger that a discussion about common features of fertility patterns in Russia and other developed countries will prove fruitless.

I believe (Klupt, 2008, 2010, 2012; Klupt, 2011) that a different approach would be more fruitful. Russian modernity is different than the Western one. It cannot be appropriately described if the theories expounding Western modernity are ignored; but it is equally impossible to explain it relying on such theories alone. Rather, the researchers should apply the prism of Russian institutions to explore social, political, economic and other mechanisms that refract the global and Western European impulses. The multiple modernities paradigm and institutional approach are a better platform for solving this problem than the second demographic transition theory.

The issues reviewed above have two aspects that appear to be of paramount importance. First, although the state's role has significantly changed during the recent decades, the state continues to be a powerful influence on demographic processes in Russia. This implies that if we want to understand these processes we should take into account not only the "family – fertility" dyad but also the "state – family – fertility" triad. Second, an issue that urgently needs exploring is the impact of the Russian society's evolution on the procreative behavior of different social groups and this behavior's motivational basis. To become more effective, Russian demographic policy should be based on a better understanding of the mechanisms of procreative behavior and the needs of different social groups of Russian society.

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