
REVIEWS

Governing China's Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics, by Susan Greenhalgh and Edwin A. Winckler. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. xvi + 394 pp. US\$65.00 (hardcover), US\$24.95 (paperback).

China has experienced one of the world's most rapid fertility declines: between 1975 and 2000 the country's total fertility rate fell from around 3 to 1.6, well below replacement level (2.1). Covering events from the 1950s to the present, *Governing China's Population* offers a fresh, engaging and comprehensive analysis of the politics surrounding this dramatic transition. Much international discussion has focused on the coercive dimensions of the Party-state's birth-planning program and the abuses suffered by infant girls as their parents have struggled to obtain one son within aggressively enforced birth limitations. Yet while coercion has been a prominent feature of the program, Susan Greenhalgh and Edwin A. Winckler balance the picture by considering the efficacy of the program's "softer" developmental measures such as education campaigns, improvements in infant and maternal health care and the distribution of contraceptives. Characteristic of their thought-provoking insights, the authors posit that a similar decline in fertility rates may well have been achieved if the billions spent on coercion had been directed towards other renowned "soft" depressants of fertility, especially the education of women and children in rural areas.

A further set of soft incentives for smaller family size has arisen as an effect of rapid economic growth, to which fertility decline has contributed. On account of investment in safe childbirth and in contraceptives, parents are able to have fewer children to achieve the goal of having surviving offspring. This in turn generates an economic bonus because the proportion of dependent children relative to the productive population declines and economic growth follows. Meanwhile the socio-economic environment resulting from growth generates additional incentives for lower fertility. For instance, a growing economy both increases the financial costs of parenthood and the earning opportunity costs of motherhood. Yet the virtuous circle of economic growth and fertility decline is only a one-off opportunity, lasting a decade or two, because then the working population grows old and becomes dependent at the other end of the age scale. Accordingly, rapid fertility decline creates a social security crisis, and current trends suggest that China may be the world's first nation to grow old before it has grown rich.

While perilous population dilemmas—coercive contraceptive procedures, neglect of baby girls, and ageing—dominate Western imaginations of the PRC, much less is known about the politics that underpin China's ambitious social engineering program and the substantial shifts that have occurred in its population policies. By charting these shifts in policy as well as the politics shaping them, the authors fill a major gap in the literature and provide a valuable corrective to continuing mainstream Western perceptions of an uncompromising policy implemented by a monolithic and unethical state. This aspect of the book's contribution is important because, as the authors demonstrate, Western perceptions of China's population policy have serious consequences. They have, for instance, informed the Bush administration's decision to withdraw funding from the United Nations Family Planning Association.

Grounded in Foucauldian analysis, the book's central arguments—that the politics of China's birth planning have an ethical basis and that population politics have propelled cutting-edge governance reforms which have ultimately strengthened the regime—are both challenging and compelling. The authors demonstrate that, particularly in the post-Mao era, the wellbeing of the population became the primary means and ends of government. They suggest that the antinatalist program was ethical in a life-cultivation sense because preventing some births enhanced the wellbeing of those born. The authors use the lens of governmentalization to explore gradual shifts from the program's early reliance on the hard Leninist methods of bureaucratism and mobilization to the later ascendancy of neoliberal approaches. The authors show that the newer approaches involved the indirect regulation of individuals' reproductive behavior by state agencies, professional experts, social institutions such as schools, and market forces. At the same time, also under neoliberal influences, some hard instruments of Leninist governing such as quotas and evaluations assumed more managerial forms.

The authors demonstrate that, alongside governmentalization, quality came to replace quantity as the focus of the population project. Meanwhile the substance of quality also changed. In the early eighties, quality was subordinate to quantity. There were concerns to prevent low-quality births, and to use increased investment in quality human capital to help reduce quantity. During the nineties, individuals were motivated to use expert knowledge, technology and consumer goods to achieve "quality" unions, births, parenthood and citizenship through their own initiative. By the early 2000s, the concern of the birth-planning establishment expanded from birth planning to "population security", the aim being to improve the overall attributes and life satisfaction of the population. A Comprehensive Reform of population policy was promulgated which placed emphasis on informed contraceptive choice, quality care, balanced sex ratios and social security rather than on fertility decline *per se*. Meanwhile, new concerns such as migration and population distribution, communicable diseases (for example, HIV and SARS), public health education, pollution and employment were formally incorporated into the ambit of population policy.

Governmentalization and the expansion of the substance of population work occurred in response to global rights discourses, changes in political economy,

lessons derived from experience and error, the mounting social and political costs of coercion, census confirmation of dramatic fertility decline, and challenges arising from demographic change. According to the authors, changes in the style and content of population work helped to bring China's governance practices and social policies into greater harmony with more reputable international norms and practices. Especially when compared with the under-funded and lack-luster health system, changes in the style and content of population work have also revealed the immense governing capacity that has accrued to the birth-planning apparatus over twenty-five years of experience. The authors argue that this has enhanced the regime's capacity to govern and to confront existing and evolving challenges to people's wellbeing and therefore to the regime's own legitimacy. They note, however, that further political reform of persistent Leninist/Stalinist modes of governing may be necessary if aspirations for people-centered human development are to be realized.

The authors explain that their study is an unfinished project in that it is an experiment that combines the approaches of a political scientist and an anthropologist. In Part 1, the political scientist consults documents from which the program has been run to delineate the institutional dimensions of population governance such as regime capacity. In Part 2, the anthropologist draws on extensive field studies to detail society's experience of a new domain of biopolitics grounded in the production and cultivation of life and the program's human costs which are omitted from the official balance sheet. In making their complementary contributions, the authors successfully articulate their arguments in a single, coherent and powerful authorial voice. Scholars writing about governance in other countries, such as James C. Scott on Southeast Asia and Timothy Mitchell on Egypt, have revealed the fruitful insights that a cross-pollination of political science and anthropology can yield. *Governing China's Population* is an outstanding and thought-provoking accomplishment certain to inspire methodological and analytical innovation among students and researchers of China. At the same time, this groundbreaking book also has the potential to help invigorate branches of the social sciences which derive most of their theory-building from European experience and to revitalize disciplines such as demography where scholars are earnestly searching for fresh approaches (see Nancy E. Riley and James McCarthy, *Demography in the Age of the Postmodern* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003]).

Rachel Murphy
Bristol University

Translocal China: Linkages, Identities, and the Reimagining of Space, edited by Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein. London: Routledge, 2006. xii + 194 pp. £65.00 (hardcover), £18.99 (paperback).

This is an excellent collection of essays on the translocal flows of people and images within China, the construction of a translocal imaginary, and its