Comparative Studies in Society and History 2007:49(1):170–201.
0010-4175/07 $9.50 © 2007 Society for Comparative Study of Society and History
DOI: 10.1017/S0010417507000448

Nation, Empire, Globe: The Spaces of Population Debate in the Interwar Years

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All populations of real organisms live in universes with definite limits. The absolute size of the universe may be small, as in the case of the test-tube . . . or it may be as large as the earth, most of which could conceivably be inhabited, on a pinch, by man.

——Raymond Pearl, 1927[1]

There are several analytical strands through which historians and demographers understand the evolution of twentieth-century population politics and expertise. One is the history of the declining birthrate, nationalism, pro-natalism, and modern degeneration anxieties, including histories of eugenics.[2] A second strand is the story of global overpopulation, its mobilization as a mid-twentieth-century issue in Cold War politics, the dominance of the idea

Acknowledgments: For comment on drafts of this work, the author thanks J. C. Caldwell, Lesley Hall, Christopher Hilliard, Margaret Jolly, Philippa Levine, Carolyn Strange, members of the Huntington-USC Institute for California and the West medicine/public health group, and four *CSSH* reviewers. Research assistance by Émilie Paquin, Catie Gilchrist, Meg Parsons, and Kate Blake was made possible by a grant from the Australian Research Council. Thanks also to Matthew Connelly and Andrew Fitzmaurice for generously sharing unpublished work.

[1] Raymond Pearl, "The Biology of Population Growth," in Margaret Sanger, ed., *World Population Conference Proceedings*, Edward Arnold, 1927, 22 (hereafter *Proceedings*).

[2] Michael S. Teitelbaum and Jay M. Winter, *The Fear of Population Decline*, Academic Press, 1985; Michael S. Teitelbaum and Jay M. Winter, eds., *Population and Resources in Western Intellectual Traditions*, Cambridge University Press, 1989; Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy*, Cambridge University Press, 1996; William H. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France*, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Alisa Klaus, "Depopulation and Race Suicide: Pronatalist Ideologies in France and the United States," in Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Policies and the Origins of the Welfare State*, Routledge, 1993; Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, University of North Carolina Press, 1990; Miriam King and Steven Ruggles, "American Immigration, Fertility, and Race Suicide," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20 (1990): 347–69; Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom*, University of California Press, 2001; Neville Hicks, *This Sin and Scandal: Australia's Population Debate*, 1891–1911, Australian National University Press, 1978.

of demographic transitions and political economy, and subsequent links between aid, development, family planning, and various international agencies.[3] A third is the history of reproductive and bodily rights, feminism, and birth control, which has been analyzed with respect to the history of technology, the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the history of nationalism, and to some extent the history of internationalism.[4] The political economy aspects of the population question tend chronologically to bookend the feminist narrative, with Malthus at the late eighteenth-century end and Cold War political economy of third world development at the twentieth-century end.[5] A fourth strand is a burgeoning intellectual history of demography, social science, and economic theory.[6]

Most scholars on population comment on the diversity and complexity of the topic as an historical problematic.[7] Indeed, it is probably the intriguing reach of

[3] Richard Symonds and Michael Carder, *The United Nations and the Population Question 1945–1970*, Chatto and Windus, 1973; John Sharpless, "World Population Growth, Family Planning and American Foreign Policy," *Journal of Policy History* 7 (1995): 72–102; Meri Koivusalo and Eeva Ollila, *Making a Healthy World: Agencies, Actors and Policies in International Health*, Zed Books, 1997, ch. 11; Kelley Lee, "Linking National and Global Population Agendas: Case Studies from Eight Developing Countries," *Third World Quarterly* 16 (1995): 257–73; Matthew Connelly, "The Cutting Edge of Population Control: The Origins of Coercive Family Planning in India," unpublished paper, 2006.

[4] For example, B. N. Ramusack, "Embattled Advocates: The Debate over Birth Control in India, 1920–40," *Journal of Women's History* 1 (1992): 34–64; Dennis Hodgson and Susan Cott Watkins, "Feminists and Neo-Malthusians: Past and Present Alliances," *Population and Development Review* 23 (1997): 469–523; E. W. Watkins, *On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives, 1950–1970*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998; Lara Marks, *Sexual Chemistry*, Yale University Press, 2001; Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America*, University of Illinois Press, 2002; Carol Summers, "Intimate Colonialism: The Imperial Production of Reproduction in Uganda, 1907–1925," *Signs* 16 (1991): 787–807; Susanne Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910–39*, Palgrave, 2004; Sumati Nair, "Population Policies and the Ideology of Population Control in India," *Issues in Reproductive and Genetic Engineering* 5 (1992): 237–53; Atina Grossman, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–50*, Oxford University Press, 1995.

[5] Lesley Hall, "Malthusian Mutations: The Changing Politics and Moral Meanings of Birth Control in Britain," in Brian Dolan, ed., *Malthus, Medicine and Morality*, Rodopi, 2000, 157. See also Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex and Contraception 1800–1975*, Oxford University Press, 2004, 54, 297–302.

[6] Simon Szreter, "The Idea of Demographic Transition and the Study of Fertility Change: A Critical Intellectual History," *Population and Development Review* 19 (1993): 659–701; Susan Greenhalgh, "The Social Construction of Population Science," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996): 26–66; J. C. Caldwell, "Demography and Social Science," *Population Studies* 50 (1996): 305–33; Robert van Krieken, "Sociology and the Reproductive Self: Demographic Transitions and Modernity," *Sociology* 31 (1997): 445–71; Simon Szreter, Hani Sholkamy, and A. Dharmalingam, eds., *Categories and Contexts: Anthropological and Historical Studies in Critical Demography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; J. C. Caldwell, "Demographers' Involvement in Twentieth-Century Population Policy: Continuity or Discontinuity?" *Population Research and Policy Review* 24 (2005): 359–85.

[7] For example, Matthew Connelly, "Population Is History: New Perspectives on the International Campaign to Limit Population Growth," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003): 122–47; Dennis Hodgson, "The Ideological Origins of the Population Association of

"population" across historical, social, and economic disciplines, across political movements, and from intimate governance to world governance, which attracts a certain breed of scholar. Within this acknowledged complexity, however, several orthodoxies have emerged, which this article seeks to complicate through a specific focus on the interwar period. First, if much scholarship posits that a mid-century world "overpopulation" discourse displaced an interwar national "depopulation" discourse,[8] we find book after book on overpopulation written in the earlier period sitting alongside the "degeneration" and "depopulation" tomes that historians typically focus on.[9] Second, if the scholarship broadly implies or explicitly poses a link between overpopulation and Asia,[10]

America," *Population and Development Review* 17 (1991): 1–34; Hodgson and Watkins, "Feminists and Neo-Malthusians," 469–523.

[8] As Simon Szreter puts it, fertility decline was, and continued to be, problematically conceptualized as a "national, unitary phenomenon." Simon Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain, 1860–1940*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 9–21. See also Hall, "Malthusian Mutations," 156; Karl Ittmann "Demography as Policy Science in the British Empire, 1918–1969," *Journal of Policy History* 15 (2003): 426; Hodgson, "The Ideological Origins," 21. There is a generally agreed chronology that after the Second World War, an earlier pro-natalism shifted to the problematizing of large populations. See Marks, *Sexual Chemistry*, 15; Hall, "Malthusian Mutations," 157. In their content analysis of international population conferences, Barrett and Frank state confidently (but incorrectly) that before World War II "the problem of 'overpopulation' was virtually unthinkable." Deborah Barrett and David John Frank, "Population Control for National Development: From World Discourse to National Policies," in James Boli and George M. Thomas, eds., *Constructing World Culture*, Stanford University Press, 1999, 200. But see Matthew Connelly, "Seeing Beyond the State: The Population Control Movement and the Problem of Sovereignty" (forthcoming in *Past and Present*), in which the interwar discussion of overpopulation is examined with reference largely to the Asian overpopulation and "white civilization" debate.

[9] For example, Edward Isaacson, *The New Morality: An Interpretation of Present Social and Economic Forces and Tendencies*, Moffat, 1913; Edward Alsworth Ross, *Standing Room Only?* Chapman and Hall, 1928; George Handley Knibbs, *The Shadow of the World's Future*, Ernest Benn, 1928; Harold Wright, *Population*, Nisbet and Co, 1922; Harold Cox, *The Problem of Population*, Jonathan Cape, 1922; A. M. Carr-Saunders, *Population*, Oxford University Press, 1925; Warren Thompson, *Danger Spots in World Population*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1929; Edward East, *Mankind at the Crossroads*, Charles Scribner's, 1923; E. F. Penrose, *Population Theories and Their Application with Special Reference to Japan*, Food Research Institute, Stanford University, 1934; Frederick Sherwood Dunn, *Peaceful Change: A Study of International Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1937; Radhakamal Mukerjee, *Food Planning for Four Hundred Millions*, Macmillan, 1938.

[10] Symonds and Carder, *The United Nations*, 105–7; Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution*, 297–302; E. A. Wrigley, *Population and History*, McGraw-Hill, 1969, 204–27; Marks, *Sexual Chemistry*, 28–29. For the Indian focus of U.S. postwar population policy, see Connelly, "The Cutting Edge of Population Control." For the history of fertility transition theories and post-World War II development programs, see Sharpless, "World Population Policy"; Paul Demeny, "Social Science and Population Policy," *Population and Development Review* 14 (1988): 451–79. Connelly argues that the Asian and Latin American origins of population limitation need recognition, in "Population Control Is History," 123, 127. See also Sarah Hodges, "Governmentality, Population and Reproductive Family in Modern India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 Mar. 2004, 1157–63.

during the interwar period we find *Europe* as a region also problematized in these same terms.[11]

How do we explain the trends of the scholarship? A first, fairly obvious suggestion is that research questions based on national histories of the problematization of population have generally trumped research questions based on international histories, and even world histories, with some significant exceptions, in particular the work of Matthew Connelly.[12] A second suggestion is more complicated and provocative but I think more important: the problem of sex has trumped all. Scholarship on population too often reduces the topic to issues of reproductive sex—advocacy of, theorization on, or opposition to various techniques of population limitation on the one hand, or population increase on the other. Understandably given its aims, feminist scholarship on population tends conceptually to privilege "natality," thereby rendering population almost solely a question of a gendered politics of bodies and of sexuality.[13] For example, Barrett and Frank, in their study of international population conferences frame population exclusively in this way.[14] Yet, as we shall see, the very experts these sociologists study would have puzzled over such a privileging of sex and reproduction. As biologist Raymond Pearl insisted in 1927, there are three primary variables in the study of population: "natality, mortality, migration"—birth, death, and space.[15]

Historically everywhere,[16] the spatial dimension of the population question has been historiographically underplayed, or at best separated out for study by geographers. I argue in this article that population experts from a number of disciplines in fact debated geographic issues deeply: land, migration, territory, soil, density, emptiness, arability, colonization, and settlement. For a significant number of these experts, the problematization of world population was characterized as much by a logic of density and redistribution of people as it was by

[11] For example, Thompson, *Danger Spots*, chs. 10 and 11; Dunn, *Peaceful Change*, 5.

[12] Connelly, "Population Control Is History," and "Seeing Beyond the State."

[13] See note 4; Importantly, the few historical studies of international population debate tend to focus on the birth control issue, or the "internationalizing" or "export" of U.S. and European feminist activism or of transition theory. For example, Klausen, *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control*; Genevieve Burnett, "Fertile Fields: A History of the Ideological Origins and Institutionalisation of the International Birth Control Movement, 1870–1940," Ph.D. thesis, University of New South Wales, 1999.

[14] In their article, the spatial aspect of population is conceptually and empirically absent, and the migration question explicitly excluded from consideration. Barrett and Frank, "Population Control for National Development," 199, 201; Likewise, in Connelly's excellent survey of recent scholarship the analytic center is population-as-reproduction, the "international campaigns to limit population growth," but he notes also the earlier twentieth-century cross-over between population expertise, eugenics, and immigration restriction platforms. See Connelly, "Population Control Is History."

[15] Pearl, "The Biology of Population Growth," *Proceedings*, 22–23.

[16] J. C. Caldwell notes, "in terms of researchers working within the population field, especially in global terms, students of migration have always been numerous." In "Demography and Social Science," 308.

either the ambition for a gross numerical reduction or increase of numbers. The population question emerges, then, not only as an issue of women, men, sex, and reproduction, but also as one of density, territory, and migration. It was a spatial issue as much as a sexual issue, one that problematized the fertility of soil as much as the fertility of women. In emphasizing here the "space" aspect of population, however, I suggest neither that it was more significant than nor separate from the "sex" aspect.[17] Rather, there is a need to enrich and expand our understanding of this crucial arena of twentieth-century history at the very least to the same extent that it was multi-layered and complex for the historical actors we study.

Connelly has suggested a range of methods to analyze what was, he rightly insists, the "arena rather than [the] agenda" of international population politics:[18] comparative micro-studies of local contexts; long histories of the changing intellectual relationships between leading figures; ethnographies of demographers themselves. I take up a different method again, focusing closely on one important moment when population intellectuals met to exchange ideas, theories, and strategies: the 1927 World Population Conference held in Geneva. This approach highlights the disciplinary range brought under "population" as an object of inquiry—biology, geography, statistics, economics, agriculture and horticulture, eugenics, public health, and international relations.[19] At one level, the Conference is atypical because, as we shall see, the issue of birth control was specifically excluded. At another level, however, precisely this aspect of the meeting allows us to see all the other terms through which population was comprehended. The opening statement for the *Proceedings* immediately prepares us for an unfamiliar take on the issue: "The earth, and every geographical division of it, is strictly limited in size and in ability to support human populations."[20]

In the first section of this article I describe and contextualize this important meeting, and explain the ways in which the topic of birth control was apparently excluded. My second section lays out the specific arguments through which experts at this meeting understood population to be about space and density, and therefore considered redistribution as much a solution to the population problem as was reduction. I then explore the relations between this spatial understanding of population and ideas about nation-states in two respects—migration and geopolitics—both under-studied in world histories

[17] The link between biopolitics and geopolitics is precisely the object of my current work.

[18] Connelly, "Population Control Is History," 147. For "micro-studies," see also Susan Greenhalgh, "The Political Economy of Fertility: Anthropological Contributions," *Population and Development Review* 16 (1990): 85–106.

[19] In order to demonstrate the level of public circulation of this expertise, I supplement analysis of the Conference *Proceedings* and personal papers concerning it with research into the published works on population by delegates.

[20] Sanger, ed., *Proceedings*, 5.

of demography and population politics. In contrast to scholars who describe a neat confluence of national immigration restrictionists and early population expertise, particularly in the United States,[21] I describe in the third section a direct counter-argument in circulation at the international and world levels of discussion. I then turn to the other side of the population-density coin: territorial expansion. Not surprisingly, it is geographers rather than historians, demographers, or sociologists who have come closest to recognizing the centrality of space to historical expertise on population. Geographers of German *Geopolitik* over both the Weimar and Nazi periods noted in passing the link between "life" and "space," between "bio" and "geo."[22] The extent to which interwar experts understood population (and birth control for that matter) as being about territory, peace, and war, and in surprising ways, needs to be recognized and integrated into the historical literature.

The centrality of a redistribution logic as a mode to address density in practice means that in addition to the national and international history of population politics with which we are most familiar there is a significant colonial history to population. I argue this in the fifth section. Karl Ittmann is correct in his claim that British demography was never solely domestic, but "functioned as an imperial science, one that understood population trends within Britain in relation to those of other nations and the Empire as a whole."[23] But we need to explore further the intellectual manifestations of this claim, and in slightly different ways than seeing the imperial politics of population as having to do with sex, maternity, and health, in the tradition of scholarship begun in Anna Davin's key early article.[24] Finally, I argue that the interwar population question as it was expressed in Geneva in 1927 was not just about nationalism and internationalism (as we would expect of the period); it was also about an emerging globalism, a surprisingly strong supra-national, supra-imperial, and even "planetary" geography. The Westphalian territorial nation-state was being discursively dismantled as much as it was being asserted. This world meeting, then, in the interwar "world city" (as it saw itself), was part of the provenance of thinking not just internationally but globally about population and that mass human movement and exchange we now call "globalization."

THE WORLD POPULATION CONFERENCE, 1927

The World Population Conference was held in Geneva in the last days of August 1927. It was initiated, planned, and executed by U.S. birth control

[21] Hodgson, "The Ideological Origins," 6–9; Connelly, "Seeing Beyond the State."
[22] Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "(Dis)placing Geopolitics: Writing on the Maps of Global Politics," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12 (1994): 534, n. 8.
[23] Ittmann, "Demography as Policy Science," 418.
[24] Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978): 9–65.

pioneer Margaret Sanger, presided over by Sir Bernard Mallet, ex Registrar-General of England and Wales, and administered by Edith How-Martyn, English campaigner for women's suffrage and birth control.[25] This meeting was explicitly packaged by all of its organizers, including Sanger, as "scientific," involving "carefully considered scientific essays by recognized authorities. . . . Propaganda of any kind, or for any objective or doctrine whatever, will find no place in the Conference."[26] "Propaganda" meant not only advocacy but also critique of birth control. The meeting brought together an eclectic mix of human and natural scientists—biologists, agriculturalists, economists, statisticians, psychiatrists, medical doctors, horticulturalists, sociologists, political scientists—and Sanger swiftly collected, edited, and published the fascinating papers. Topics ranged from the proposition of new population laws to differential fertility, economic theorizing over the concepts of "standard of living" and "optimum population," food supplies in India, and international migration (see Table 1).

The meeting had one pre-planned organizational outcome: the establishment of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population Problems. Initially chaired by Raymond Pearl of Johns Hopkins University,[27] it held meetings through the 1930s in Rome, Berlin, and Paris. It became important as a professional body on world population when UNESCO, and later the United Nations itself, started work on population, beginning with the 1954 conference in Rome. A second, less anticipated organization to emerge from the meeting was the Birth Control International Information Centre, based in London. This was a network of women physicians, social workers, and birth control activists whose agenda was to disseminate "applied knowledge" on contraception.[28]

The intellectual and organizational provenance of the 1927 meeting was Malthusian in that it was originally intended to be the seventh in a sequence of International Neo-Malthusian Conferences, the first held in 1900. After the successful 1925 meeting in New York, Sanger launched plans immediately with Clarence Little, biologist, and then President of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. By March 1926 they had approached three American

[25] Ellen Chesler, *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*, Doubleday, 1992, 258–59. The Conference was funded by Sanger herself, as well as by a grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund, the Bureau of Social Hygiene (itself financed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.), and the U.S. National Research Council, which contributed a further $10,000 for the formation of a permanent union of scientists. See Pearl to Sanger, 13 Apr. 1927; Sanger to Pearl, 27 Oct. 1927; World Population Conference Budget, 11 Nov. 1927; Sanger to Clinton Chance, 16 Jan. 1928. All in Sanger Papers, Library of Congress MSS 16,700, Box 191. All subsequent references to the Sanger Papers refer to this box.

[26] "Announcement," *Proceedings*, i.

[27] Sanger, *Proceedings*, 362.

[28] Chesler, *Woman of Valor*, 258–59. Anne Kennedy to Mary Boyd, 7 Sept. 1927, Sanger Papers.

TABLE 1

Papers and Speakers at the 1927 World Population Conference

Paper title	*Speaker and affiliation*
Biology of Population Growth	Raymond Pearl, Director, Institute for Biological Research, Johns Hopkins University
Development of the Population in Italy	A. Niceforo, Professor of Demography, University of Naples
Optimum Population	H. P. Fairchild, Professor of Sociology, New York University
Food and Population	E. M. East, Geneticist, Bussey Institute, Harvard University
Is the Increase in the Population a Real Danger for the Food Supply of the World?	Jean Bourdon, Director of International Studies, Sorbonne
Population and Food Supply in India	Rajani Kanta Das, Economist, ILO
Considerations on the Optimum Density of a Population	Corrado Gini, Professor of Political Economy, Director of Statistical Institute, Rome
Some Needed Refinements of the Theory of Population	T. N. Carver, Professor of Political Economy, Harvard University
Differential Fertility	A. M. Carr-Saunders, Professor of Social Science, Liverpool University
Differential Increase in the Population in France	Alfred Grotjahn, Professor of Social Hygiene, Berlin
Some Italian Enquiries into Differential Reproductivity	Corrado Gini
Results of Differential Birth Rate in the Netherlands	H. W. Methorst, Lawyer, Director of International Statistical Institute, The Hague
Fertility in Marriage and Infantile Mortality in the Different Social Classes in Stockholm	Karl Arvid Edin, Statisician Stockholm University
Psychology of the Fall in the Birth Rate	Julius Tandler, Chief of Public Health and Welfare, Vienna
Concerning Fertility and Sterility in Relation to Population	F. A. E. Crew, Director of Animal Breeding, Edinburgh University
Anthropogenetic Selection	Boleslav Rosinski, Anthropologist, Poland
International Migration and Its Control	Albert Thomas, Director, ILO, Geneva
The Principles of Migration Restriction	J. W. Gregory, Professor of Geography, Glasgow
Some Aspects of the Migration Problem	A. Koulisher, Professor, Institute of Slav Studies, Paris.
The Phenomenon of Emigration in Italy	Livio Livi, Statistician, Rome U
Australia and Its Immigrants	Charles H. Wickens, Director of Federal Statistical Office, Sydney

TABLE 1 (*contd.*)

Paper title	*Speaker and affiliation*
Heredity, Disease and Pauperism	E. J. Lidbetter, 'Eugenic Research Worker, Administrative Poor Law'
Race Biological Institutes	H. Lindborg, Director, State Institute for Race Biology, Upsala
Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems	Warren S. Thompson, Director, Scripps Foundation, Miami University

SOURCE: Proceedings of the World Population Conference, Edward Arnold, 1927.

academics to initiate an organizing committee: Edward East (a geneticist at Harvard University),[29] Raymond Pearl (Institute of Biology, Johns Hopkins), and Adolph Meyer (Professor of Psychiatry, Johns Hopkins Medical School). Soon after they recruited three British scholars: Bernard Mallet, Alexander Carr-Saunders (Social Science Professor, University of Liverpool), and Julian Huxley (Biology Professor, then at King's College).[30] At that point, and more or less with Sanger's backing, the purpose of the meeting shifted toward "science," and the meeting's title changed from "The Seventh International Conference on Population and Birth Control" to the "World Population Conference."[31] Negotiations between Sanger, Little, and Pearl resulted in a merger between the Conference idea and Pearl's somewhat vague plans for an international union of scientists of population. In Pearl's view, this required "that birth control, or Neo-Malthusianism shall not appear as being the

[29] East had publicly supported Sanger, but questioned the statistical validity of much "Neo-Malthusian" population research in his important 1923 book: "[F]ew social movements have had the support of such accomplished and inspiring essayists; but it is the exceptional few like Havelock Ellis, Dean Inge, and Margaret Sanger, rather than the many, who have investigated matters thoroughly and have generalized from the truths thus uncovered." In, *Mankind at the Crossroads*, 10.

[30] Little to Sanger, 25 Mar. 1926; Sanger to Pearl, 7 Feb. 1927, Sanger Papers.

[31] Miss B. W. Johnson to C. C. Little, 11 Mar. 1926; Sanger (Secretary) to C. C. Little, 22 Mar. 1926; C. C. Little to Sanger, 20 Mar. 1926, Sanger Papers. Ramsden suggests that Pearl "hijacked" the Conference from Sanger, but this correspondence in the Sanger papers indicates how interested she herself was in distinguishing this Conference from prior events, and how expedient she thought a 'scientific' Conference would be. See Edmund Ramsden, "Carving Up Population Science: Eugenics, Demography and the Controversy over the 'Biological Law' of Population Growth," *Social Studies of Science* 32 (2002): 857–99. Connelly also sees Pearl as taking over ("Seeing Beyond the State"). But for the strategic usefulness of a "scientific" conference for Sanger and How-Martyn, see the latter's reports, American Birth Control League to Raymond Pearl, 2 July 1926, Raymond Pearl Papers, American Philosophical Association, B P312, Folder 2 [hereafter Pearl Papers]. Indeed, Pearl's overall reluctance is occasionally evident in this correspondence: "I do not think that we can organize a conference for 1927 as an international union project." R. Pearl to C. C. Little, 6 May 1926, Pearl Papers, B: P312, Folder 17.

dominant element in the organization or plan."[32] A different kind of conference emerged in which the only speakers were scientists; though Sanger remained the central presence, she agreed not to speak. Matters of applied contraceptive method were explicitly barred, placing "the population question on a . . . higher plane altogether," as Mallet put it.[33] The apparent absence of "propaganda" and "applied questions"—that is, birth control—is probably why this Conference has received little attention from historians, and this itself suggests a questionable historiographical conflation of "population" with "birth control."

It was by explicitly avoiding "applied" questions that the "purely scientific" nature of the meeting, and therefore particular speakers, was to be secured. Professor Gini, statistician at the University of Rome, who opposed Malthusian theories on population and economics as well as birth control per se, told Mallet that many in Italy thought the Conference "a 'camouflage' for neo-Malthusian propaganda. In Italy these accusations have reached high quarters, and I have been asked for explanations." Mallet reassured Gini, "I am personally pledged . . . that this Conference should not be one of a Neo-Malthusian character."[34] Privately, however, and quite typically for interwar population experts, Mallet was "open-minded on this question. I see clearly well that society must [exercise] some control over the reproduction of its members if civilization is not to decay . . . it [birth control] exists and always has existed in one form or another."[35] But if Mallet's public assurances secured the presence of Gini and other Italians, it had the opposite effect on others. For example, when Norwegian doctor Otto L. Mohr learned from Julian Huxley that the Geneva meeting had abandoned the topic of birth control, he withdrew: "I regard it far more important that some scientists openly join the birth control movement . . . than to have a great number of scientists . . . discuss population problems in general, without committing themselves at all. I regret that I shall not be able to cooperate."[36] Table 1 lists the Conference speakers, and an abridged list of other participants by world region is appended in Table 2. While the dominance of British and U.S. participants is no surprise, the tables display the level of interdisciplinarity that marked expertise on population in this period.

The 1927 Conference is also important to study closely because it captures the ambivalent place of the intergovernmental bodies of the period, and their relation to population questions. In holding this Conference at Geneva, Sanger was at once courting and challenging the League of Nations. The

[32] Pearl to Sanger, 19 Apr. 1926, Sanger Papers. Pearl published in Sanger's journals, for example, "The Menace of Population Growth," *Birth Control Review* 7 (1923): 65–67.

[33] Mallet to Sanger, 3 Aug. 1926, Sanger Papers.

[34] Mallet to Gini, 26 Aug. 1927; Gini to Mallet, 22 Aug. 1927, Sanger Papers.

[35] Mallet to Sanger, 3 Aug. 1927, Sanger Papers.

[36] Dr. Otto Mohr to Sanger, 12 Mar. 1927. See also Mohr to Julian Huxley, 12 Mar. 1927, Sanger Papers.

Secretary-General of the League, Sir Eric Drummond, declined any personal or institutional presence, because the League did not endorse birth control. But the economic formulation of "population" as an international problem was endorsed. As I have argued elsewhere, it was rather more in the Economics Section of the League, than the Health Section or the Social Questions Section that population received attention.[37] In personal capacities, however, the 1927 Conference greatly interested significant officers in the League of Nations. Dame Rachel Crowdy, Chief of the Opium and Social Questions Section, pressed Drummond quite firmly on the issue.[38] Acting Director of the Health Section Dr. Norman White and Director of the Economic and Financial Division Sir Arthur Salter both attended as "Observers."[39] The Director of the International Labor Office, Albert Thomas, was considerably less constrained, and spoke at the Conference on international migration and its control, as "a free man and citizen of the world."[40] Amongst League officers, then, there was the same flurry to distinguish between public and private belief, between sanctioned comment and open secrets, as was evident amongst organizers like Mallet. The irony in all this diplomatic care was, of course, that birth control was not to be discussed at the Conference anyway: rather the meeting worked through the same kind of political economy of population that the League already pursued.

DENSITY: POPULATION AS A SPATIAL PROBLEM

In Geneva, the old social problem of "overcrowding" was turned into the biological and mathematical problem of "density." The first speaker at the Conference, Raymond Pearl, presented new work that argued that there was a direct and predictable correlation between numbers of individuals in a bounded space and both fertility rates and death rates. "[D]ensity of population, when it reaches a certain degree, has an adverse effect upon both of the two primary biological forces underlying population growth, natality, and mortality," Pearl argued. "[B]irth rates are markedly affected adversely by small increases in density."[41] Presenting a précis of his book, *The Biology of Population Growth*, Pearl's work was based on two studies: "the indigenous native population of Algeria" and, more conclusively for Pearl, experiments with the

[37] Alison Bashford, "Global Biopolitics and the History of World Health," *History of the Human Sciences* 19 (2006): 67–88.

[38] "I am . . . extremely anxious, if it is not possible to attend it officially, to be allowed to do so unofficially." Rachel Crowdy to Sir Eric Drummond, 16 May 1927, Box 1602, Dossier Concerning World Population Conference, 1927, LNAG. See also, Symonds and Carder, 13–14.

[39] Frank Ricardeau, League of Nations Health Section to Sanger, 9 Nov. 1927, Sanger Papers; Mrs. Alfred Zimmern to Sanger, 1 Feb. 1926, Sanger Papers; Norman White to Deputy Secretary General, 17 June 1927, Box 1602, Dossier Concerning World Population Conference, 1927, LNAG; Draft ideas for a Population Union, 1927, B: P312, Folder 14, Pearl Papers.

[40] Albert Thomas, *Proceedings*, 266.

[41] Pearl, "The Biology of Population Growth," *Proceedings*, 29, 38.

ubiquitous fruit fly.[42] Not a few demographers and statisticians disagreed with Pearl's resulting logistical curve, which he argued was a population law applicable to all organisms, from "yeast cells" to "man."[43] Others, less able to assess the mathematical theory, sought to emphasize the vast and unpredictable complexity of human organization. Nonetheless, in opening the Conference, Pearl's paper foregrounded the key spatial aspect of the whole problematic of population, and this line of analysis was pursued throughout.

Many of the experts understood density to be an important, but relative rather than absolute concept. "Crude density," argued Professor of Sociology at New York University, H. P. Fairchild, "has almost no significance at all. For area of land, taken by itself, means almost nothing in terms of human welfare."[44] "Optimum" density or "optimum population" depended, many argued, on at least two factors: standard of living (and differing expectations of a certain standard of living) and the capacity of the earth, literally soil, to support people in a given bounded area. The first factor was an interesting new intervention of mass psychology in the population question, not evident in nineteenth-century population theory.[45] Many of the delegates wrote about how perceptions of discrepancies in standards of living between one national group and another were as important as actual discrepancies. For example, Warren Thompson, Director of the Scripps Foundation for Population Research, wrote of China, "not *absolute*, but *felt* pressure is what leads to the explosion of peoples." And elsewhere, "the Indians are coming to *feel* that the pressure is greater."[46] The second factor was the food aspect of classical Malthusian theory, the claim that population numbers would exceed capacity to feed those numbers. It was an aspect of population theory that always exercised the experts, and it therefore needs far greater integration into the historiography, and not just that of economic history. For Edward East, in his 1923 book *Mankind at the Crossroads*, "The World Situation in Population, and the Food-Supply" preceded, in order and importance, chapters on "Racial Prospects,"

[42] Pearl, "The Biology of Population Growth," 26, 36; "[H]uman populations have behaved in their growth in the same way that experimental populations of lower organisms do, with truly remarkable faithfulness" (p. 31).

[43] Pearl, "The Biology of Population Growth," 28. Statistician Sir George Knibbs argued strongly against Pearl's logistical curve theory in *The Shadow of the World's Future*. He wrote to Mallet: "The whole argument is, I believe, invalid and the "proof" that the population conforms to the logistic curve, quite invalid. . . The assumption which gives rise to the curve is altogether too elementary, and is so incomplete and insufficient, that it is amazing that it should have found acceptance in the external politics of a great nation." Knibbs to Mallet, 20 June 1927, Sanger Papers. For the impact of Pearl's theory as well as its antecedents, see P. J. Lloyd, "American, German and British Antecedents to Pearl and Reed's Logistic Curve," *Population Studies* 21 (1967): 99–108. For the intense scrutiny of his theories at the time, see Ramsden, "Carving Up Population Science."

[44] H. P. Fairchild, "Optimum Population," *Proceedings*, 81.

[45] Dr. J. Tandler, "The Psychology of the Fall in the Birth Rate," *Proceedings*, 208–12.

[46] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 70, 148.

"The Role of Death," and "Birth Restriction."[47] In his Geneva talk, "Food and Population," East repeated his calculation, "since it takes at least two and a half acres to support each individual under the present standards of agricultural efficiency, it is clear that the world can sustain only five thousand million people."[48] A French delegate immediately problematized East's calculation of maximum population on the basis of experience in China and the Far East: "I would remind you that half of humanity does not eat beef, but eats fish … Everybody in the world need not feed on the celebrated Anglo-Saxon roast beef."[49]

Various optimum densities were discussed without leading to agreement. The larger point is that experts debated population as a fundamentally spatial and geographical issue. The "space" in question was neither abstract, nor the kind of "air-space" which was the basis of an established medico-architectural discourse.[50] Rather it was space determined most significantly by the earth—not just amount of land, but the nature of soil. Indeed, land and soil appear as motifs throughout the *Proceedings:* "The first thing we need," said Dr. K. S. Inui, Professor of Commerce at Tokyo University, "is accurate and scientific statistics of land."[51] "What are the most fruitful soils and how [can] population be brought thither?" asked German Dr. Henriette Fürth, while Director of International Studies at the Sorbonne Jean Bourdon noted, "North Africa … has a fertile soil."[52]

In privileging land and agriculture, these experts inherited and extended an intellectual tradition of political economy in which land, not just people, were theorized as the source of wealth.[53] Malthus, of course, pointed often to the significance of "fresh land" in this respect. The "happiness of the Americans depended," he argued, "upon their having a great plenty of fertile uncultivated land."[54] The idea of and ambition for "fresh land"—that is "virgin" or "empty" land—tied population closely to migration, to colonization, and as we shall see, to the very question of the right to occupy. It was land and soil which were continually understood to create the limiting conditions for optimal, over, or under-population in any given area. As East put it, "The prosperity of the human race depends, in the last analysis, upon the soil."[55]

[47] East, *Mankind at the Crossroads*.
[48] East, "Food and Population," *Proceedings*, 89.
[49] M. H. Brenier, "Discussion," *Proceedings*, 92–93.
[50] See Alison Bashford, *Purity and Pollution: Gender, Embodiment and Victorian Medicine*, Macmillan, 1998, ch. 1.
[51] Dr. K. W. Inui, *Proceedings*, 271.
[52] Fürth, *Proceedings*, 286; Bourdon, *Proceedings*, 296; Thomas, *Proceedings*, 299.
[53] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Modern Library, 1994 [1789] (5th ed.), 169.
[54] Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, W. W. Norton, 2004 [1798], 109–10.
[55] East, "Food and Population," *Proceedings*, 91.

In this way, economists, agriculturalists, and geographers were as natural intellectual owners of the population question as were biologists, medical doctors, sexologists, and geneticists. Put another way, it was not in the least surprising for contemporaries in the birth control movement, Sanger included, that an economist such as J. M. Keynes or a geographer such as J. W. Gregory should be concerned with birth regulation alongside food production and trading agreements. All were linked aspects of the population question.[56]

MIGRATION AND EUROPEAN OVERPOPULATION

The concern with the density problem was manifest in studies of rural/urban distinctions within single countries, and various strategies of internal migration to equalize the density of population.[57] Still more common was discussion about relative densities of whole nations, and how this, it was argued, gave rise to international migration. As one delegate argued, "Migration problems and population problems are inseparably bound up with each other."[58] The statistician Robert Kuczinski, who was to produce monumental studies of population in the British Empire, theorized clearly that there were eight means to affect population: "increase or reduction of births or deaths, promotion or restriction of emigration or immigration."[59] Indeed, the earliest sketches for the content of the conference included sessions for "International Migration and Its Control"—the migration aspect of population was not a subsidiary but a primary factor.[60] The question of migration was not eclipsed, as historians have suggested, but on the contrary it sat at the center of population thinking, the action that accompanied the density problem.[61]

Emigration, immigration, and the population question had been linked in nineteenth-century politics. In Britain, both the Disraeli and Gladstone governments, recognizing overpopulation as a problem, endorsed the idea of emigration as a solution to the seeming over-supply of labor. At that point, the Malthusian League strongly resisted emigration as any kind of solution to the problem of poverty: it was a stopgap measure, they argued, which created the impression of a solution but could never keep pace with rate of increase of births. C. R. Drysdale of the Malthusian League wrote in 1894, "Perhaps no other single cause has done more to prevent ordinary people from recognizing the necessity for a lower birth-rate than the fact of our

[56] J. M. Keynes to Sanger, 4 Feb. 1927, Sanger Papers. Keynes' unpublished early work on population is reprinted and analyzed in John Toye, *Keynes on Population*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

[57] Thomas, *Proceedings*, 299.

[58] Thomas, *Proceedings*, 264.

[59] Kuczinski, "Discussion on Food and Population," *Proceedings*, 110.

[60] Mallet to Dr. Corrado Gini, 2 Mar. 1927, 9 Mar. 1927, 20 Aug. 1927. Sanger Papers.

[61] Symonds and Carder argue for an eclipse of Malthusian ideas, of migration as a population question, and for the dominance of the depopulation anxiety in Europe in the early to mid-twentieth century. In *The United Nations*, 3–7.

colonial possessions."[62] By 1927, however, colonial possessions, migration, and overpopulation were being linked in ways that were far more positive and productive.

While classic depopulation and differential birth-rate cases were certainly put forth at the 1927 Conference (in particular the French case, see Table 1), overpopulation was discussed as well. Surprisingly, Europe was analyzed as a problem-space of over-population as much as were China and India. The centrality of Europe as the dense global hotspot, and the Americas and Australasia as the sparsely populated spaces to which European population should ideally flow, was sustained from nineteenth-century discussion. "Europe is overpopulated," Karl Thalheim put it simply.[63] For writers like Warren Thompson, for example, Italian population density was the great issue of the moment, partly because a restriction on U.S. immigration had recently been enacted.[64]

In this way, a logic of population redistribution rather then population reduction emerged. Thompson wrote in 1929, "at present there is room for vast improvement in the distribution of population over the earth."[65] For some, migration was a backup policy to effect reduced density. For example, Australian statistician Sir George Knibbs wrote to Mallet that, failing birth control policies, overcrowded countries needed to pursue emigration policies: "Italy has been somewhat urgent about the migration policy. Both Italy and Japan must find outlets for their people; both have declared against birth control. Mussolini, I hear, prevents the dissemination of any information on the subject."[66] Others were interested in migration policy and practice as the most manageable variable in human organization, "the most susceptible to direct intervention and control," said Albert Thomas.[67] In other words, movement of people was much more manageable than their sexual conduct.

Migration was certainly being managed in the interwar period: immigration restriction law was one of the era's defining transnational phenomena. Nearly all the "settler colony" nations enacted powers to limit and screen people's entry based on racial, national, and/or eugenic criteria.[68] This was an important

[62] C. R. Drysdale, "Emigration as Failure," *The Malthusian* 18, Sept. 1894, 68. See also Rosanna Ledbetter, *A History of the Malthusian League, 1877–1927*, Ohio State University Press, 1976, 151–53. C. V. Drysdale was at the 1927 Conference representing the Malthusian League.

[63] Thalheim, *Proceedings*, 291.

[64] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 211–13.

[65] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 7.

[66] Knibbs to Mallet, 20 June 1927, Sanger Papers.

[67] Albert Thomas, "International Migration and Its Control," *Proceedings*, 256.

[68] For New Zealand, South Africa, and Australia, see R. A. Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the Self-Governing Colonies, 1830–1910*, Cornell University Press, 1976; A. T. Yarwood, "The Overseas Indians: A Problem in Indian and Imperial Politics at the End of World War One," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 15 (1968): 204–18; Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health*, Palgrave, 2004, 137–63. For Canada, see Stainslaw Andracki, *Immigration of Orientals into Canada, with Special Reference to the Chinese*, Arno Press, 1978; W. Peter Ward, *White*

twentieth-century expression of sovereignty in a new hyper-nationalist mode. Most scholars have drawn a strong connection between population, immigration restriction, and the eugenic "quality" question.[69] As Hodgson shows, the connection between the "quality" issue and the "quantity" issue is complicated: part of the U.S. discourse, for example, was clearly the idea that the nation's territory had "filled up."[70] Charles Davenport, then Director of the Department of Genetics at the Carnegie Institution, repeated this idea in Geneva. Immigration from southern and eastern Europe to the United States changed "the complexion of the whole population," he argued, and it coincided with a point of maximum density: "No land remained for settlement."[71] Yet this familiar eugenic and national Malthusian argument was by no means the only approach that population experts took to the immigration restriction phenomenon of the 1920s.

In Geneva, delegates critiqued the immigration restriction acts as much as they endorsed them. In this intellectual milieu, and given the meeting's brief of "world" rather than "national" population, national governments were frequently chastised for inappropriately placing barriers (immigration acts) in the way of a desirable world population redistribution. Albert Thomas thought that "migration has assumed an increasingly national character," and that this posed real and direct problems for a world population policy.[72] Several of the experts understood that immigration restriction acts cut across the "natural" global flow of people from high-density to low-density spaces. For others, such acts were deeply problematic because they denied humans' right to move freely.[73] Kuczinski argued, "restriction of emigration interferes so essentially with modern conceptions of personal freedom that it can hardly be recommended."

Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia, McGill-Queens University Press, 1990. For the United States, see Desmond King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of Diverse Democracy*, Harvard University Press, 2000; Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design? Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America*, Harvard University Press, 2004; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton University Press, 2004.

[69] Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*, chs. 6 and 7; James A. Tyner, "The Geopolitics of Eugenics and the Incarceration of Japanese Americans," *Antipode* 30 (1998): 251–69; Kenneth M. Ludmerer, "Genetics, Eugenics and the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 46 (1972): 59–81.

[70] Hodgson, "The Ideological Origins," 1–34. For Dennis Hodgson in his analysis of the early twentieth-century national U.S. framework, the immigration question appears as only a "spatial" question in a subsidiary way. He understands the key concern to be a qualitative one, a "valuative dimension" (p. 22).

[71] Davenport, *Proceedings*, 275.

[72] Thomas, *Proceedings*, 260.

[73] J. W. Gregory, *Proceedings*, 302–3.

A clear narrative emerges in the *Proceedings* in which the nineteenth century was framed as a golden age of (apparently) free flow of population around the world, when people were appropriately unrestrained by national legislation. By the early twentieth century, so this story goes, nation-states had erected barriers around their territory, at their borders, and artificially stopped a natural flow of population outwards from Europe. This represented "the closing up of these immigration countries."[74] Professor Koulisher of the Institute of Slav Studies, University of Paris, and formerly of the Petrograd University, represented "Russia," according to the Conference programme. He pronounced the nineteenth century "the only epoch in the whole history of the world when . . . international migration was free. . .. There existed then a kind of universal citizenship right . . . a special feature of nineteenth-century Civilization, unknown to former epochs and not practiced today."[75] On the grounds both of the liberty of movement, and the imperative to redistribute from overpopulated Europe to the "new world," many of the population experts argued for a return to a nineteenth-century model of (supposedly) unrestricted and encouraged emigration. "That was a period of liberty, and this liberty had far-reaching results," said International Labor Office chief Thomas.[76]

Two Acts came under most scrutiny in Geneva, for slightly different reasons. Australia's Immigration Restriction Act had gained renown at the Peace Conference in 1919, where, despite Japanese opposition, the right of sovereign nations to determine their racial constitution was upheld as a principle of international relations.[77] Many interwar geographers, economists, and demographers discussed this legislation and policy, not only because of the stridency with which it was notoriously defended in international circles, but also because of the amount of apparently empty land available on that continent. Realizing the extent to which Australian "emptiness" interested demographers and economists, the geographer Aurousseau wrote anxiously to the Australian High Commission in London urging official representation: "This conference is deeply interested in the existence of great areas which are unoccupied or occupied by backward races and in the general questions of migration, and the restrictions placed upon immigration by many countries. . . . Undoubtedly, our immigration laws and white Australia policy, are to be examined by all nations."[78] And indeed they were.

[74] Koulisher, *Proceedings*, 290.
[75] Koulisher, *Proceedings*, 102, 306.
[76] Thomas, *Proceedings*, 267.
[77] Sean Brawley, *The White Peril*, University of New South Wales Press, 1995.
[78] M. Aurousseau to The High Commissioner, Commonwealth of Australia, 17 May 1927, Sanger Papers. For development of these ideas, see Alison Bashford, "World Population and Australian Land: Perspectives from Twentieth Century Demography" (unpublished paper).

The U.S. 1924 Immigration Act also came under fire. As a Swedish delegate put it, "nothing has done so much in opening people's eyes to the meaning of the population question as the American immigration legislation."[79] Others put the two famous statutes together, and thought that they did not close off so much as re-direct "surplus" population, insofar as Europe was concerned. Speaking on "The Principles of Migration Restriction," geographer and lawyer J. W. Gregory thought that the U.S. restriction would force "Europe by increased population pressure to seek new outlets. Australia is likely to be regarded as the most spacious asylum for refugees from the overcrowded rural population of Southern and Eastern Europe, who can find no room in their own towns and who cannot be excluded [from Australia] on the ground of race or color."[80] The "quantity" and "quality" aspects of population policy here were entwined: U.S. restriction based on largely "quality" grounds was manifested as "quantity" issues for European countries of emigration. The immigration restriction acts were criticized as narrowly nationalist in this context: they might minimize population pressure and maximize "quality" for the country of immigration, but for the country of emigration they could build up population pressure, and thereby increase international tension.

The qualifier, however, was the question of race. For many (but importantly not all) at the Conference, the right of movement was not universal, but racially determined. This was, of course, the great question for the British Empire and Commonwealth, particularly with respect to the movement of Indians then being regulated by Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian laws. Cutting across human rights to move freely (as well as the physical law of population equalization and flow, as many saw it) were national sovereign rights to shape the constitution of their populations: "Every nation has the right to protect itself from deterioration by racial intermixture," wrote Gregory. Thus "Australia is biologically well supported in its claim to restrict immigration to the white race, and it would no doubt prefer to maintain its present British racial solidarity, but immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe cannot be excluded as belonging to a different race."[81]

These competing principles of quality and quantity were profoundly irresolvable for many interwar population theorists. The idea of "assimilation"—usually seen to be highly desirable—often became the conceptual sticking point. Put another way, without the conceptual possibility of irreducible difference as a social good, many theorists produced hopelessly confused social policy recommendations on population and migration. The Japanese delegate speaking in Geneva certainly held more complicated views than did geographer Gregory. Yet the idea of assimilation remained both the ideal and the problem.

[79] Silverstope, "Discussion on Food and Population," *Proceedings*, 100.
[80] Gregory, "The Principles of Migration Restriction," *Proceedings*, 302.
[81] Gregory, *Proceedings*, 303–4.

The principle on which international migration should proceed, Inui argued, should not be based on discrimination but "classification," the former applicable only "vertically" to a social group, the latter, more appropriately applicable horizontally across groups, across races. He invoked two subsidiary principles. First, no nation should send emigrants where they are not wanted. Second, invitations to migrate or admission to settle should be issued to "all peoples alike." He upheld assimilability in principle, interestingly placing onus on both parties (the immigrant and the receiving community). But assimilability depended, he wrote, on "the degree of similarity of the civilization streams of the countries of immigration and emigration," and in a further (impossible) qualification: "so long as they [nations] take into consideration the solidarity and universality of humanity."[82] The confusion here between racial difference and identity in population was marked. Inui's important countryman Inazo Nitobé addressed the question (though never overcame it) by conceptually obliterating difference. One-time Chair of the League's Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, he attended the Conference in 1927 as Member of the Japanese House of Peers and Professor at the University of Tokyo. Nitobé refused any scientific theory or policy application of racial difference: "races of all colors and grades have freely mingled all through the ages. . . . I hail all scientific researches: but I am doubtful of their hasty application to social politics."[83] Geographer Gregory also wanted it all ways: "It is generally recognized that migration can no more be stopped from an overcrowded poverty-stricken area to one where *the same race* enjoys more prosperous conditions than water can be prevented from flowing from a higher to a lower level on an open slope."[84] The pronouncements of many of these commentators expressed the classic liberal paradox: they favored human and natural universality, but also racial particularity.

GEOPOLITICS: POPULATION AND TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

The question is one of peace or war.

——Albert Thomas, 1927

If, contrary to much scholarship, some population experts were critical rather than supportive of immigration restriction acts, they were (equally surprisingly) supportive rather than critical of the principle of geopolitical territorial expansion. Of course, the interwar years represented an era of high nationalism in which sovereignty, territoriality, and population constitution were acutely politicized by and about Germany in the first instance.

[82] Dr. K. S. Inui "Discussion–International Migration and Its Control," *Proceedings*, 272.
[83] Handwritten Note by Nitobé, 24 Dec. 1920, attached to International Eugenics File Box R 642, LNAG.
[84] Gregory, *Proceedings*, 302–3. My emphasis.

Well established by 1927 was scholarship on the politics of national geography: the theory (and indeed the practice) of geopolitics in which nations were not understood to be fixed in Westphalian agreement, but rather (in the case of any vital state) as necessarily and organically expansive.[85] Now often used as an ahistorical analytic to be applied to present or past international relations, geopolitics is itself an historical concept of this particular period, and, as it turns out, the particular problem of population.[86] Geographers were deeply engaged with the theorization of political territory, and with the question of the peopling of that space, and this brought them regularly to the table of interwar population expertise. A core idea of this corpus of geopolitical scholarship was that a state was both territory and was "living": the Weimar idea of *raum* and the emerging version labeled, significantly, *lebensraum*.[87] A "demopolitical" economy developed which formed a defining set of ideas in many foreign policies in the period.[88] The intellectual history of geopolitics from the Swedish historian Kjellen, to the British geographer Mackinder, to the Germans Ratzel and Haushofer together formed a strong part of Hitler's intellectual inheritance as he developed the idea of *lebensraum* in *Mein Kampf* in the years immediately preceding the Geneva Conference.[89] But geopolitics also shaped Italian and Japanese policy, and, as Neil Smith has shown in his study of Roosevelt and the geographer Isaiah Bowman, U.S. foreign policy.[90] Thus the population pressure argument, grafted so successfully onto the *lebensraum* idea by the Nazi regime, was neither an invention of, nor limited to, Fascist policy. It belonged equally to this world gathering of population experts, invited and promoted by their essentially spatial conception of the population problem.

When Professor Gini said to his colleagues that density spreads "the thought of the nation beyond its national frontiers," he was offering not only a population theory but also a foreign policy of the Italian Fascists.[91] Other demographers offered some endorsement of, and even direct policy recommendation

[85] Mark Bassin, "Imperialism and the Nation State in Friedrich Ratzel's Political Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 11 (1987): 477; Holger H. Herwig, "*Geopolitik:* Haushofer, Hitler and Lebensraum," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22 (1999): 218–41.

[86] Ò Tuathail, "(Dis)placing Geopolitics," 525. See also Klaus-John Dodds and James Derrick Sidaway, "Locating Critical Geopolitics," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12 (1994): 515–24. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

[87] David T. Murphy, "A Sum of the Most Wonderful Things": *Raum*, Geopolitics and the German Tradition of Environmental Determinism, 1900–1933," *History of European Ideas* 25 (1999): 125–26.

[88] Robert Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics: The Struggle for Space and Power*, G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1942, 157.

[89] Herwig, "*Geopolitik*."

[90] Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, University of California Press, 2003.

[91] Gini, "Considerations of the Optimum Density of a Population," *Proceedings*, 120.

for, Italian, Japanese, and even German territorial expansion. For the likes of Thompson, managed geopolitical expansion would secure world peace. He approvingly quoted Fascist policy that, "[t]here is only one solution for Italy's problem—land."[92] Typically returning to the soil motif, he elaborated on Italian soil, which was "poor and stony" at "home," and "poor-grazing lands and desert" in its colonies.[93] As we shall see, it is unclear just how Thompson reconciled this geopolitical position, which of course resulted in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, with his trenchant critique of British colonialism. In other instances a general endorsement of geopolitics was expressed at the level of principle, or as population law. New York University sociology Professor Fairchild asked, "How is a country that has reached the stage of optimum population … to progress? … [Through] increases of land … an opportunity for re-establishing the equilibrium on the basis of a larger circle."[94]

While few at the Conference spoke of German expansion, Japan was certainly discussed in this way. One is struck by how many argued that Japan, even after it had occupied Sakhalin, Formosa, and Korea, should be given more territory. Professor Bourdon thought the "surplus populations of Japan and Russia" should be allocated to the "fertile soil" to be found in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the temperate zone of South America, and the south of Siberia. This distribution would be undertaken "not from a national point of view, but from wider considerations, say the point of view of the League of Nations."[95] Thompson argued that the only reasonable way forward was to grant Japan new lands with larger resources: "We must now ask where Japan can find the new colonies which will furnish an outlet for its surplus population until such time as birth control will furnish permanent relief from overcrowding." For Thompson, the voluntary cession of Pacific Islands to Japan was quite simply the alternative to war.[96] The most discussed case of available global space was Australia. Thompson thought that it should make large concessions,[97] and if Australia should consider an "enlarged Japan," so too the United States should consider ceding the Philippines to the Japanese in order to avert a war in the Pacific.[98]

The threat of war was the one factor that occasionally trumped even national-racial homogeneity, and it was firmly and consistently connected to the spatial

[92] Francesco Coppola, "Land for Italy" (1926), cited in Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 226.
[93] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 229–30.
[94] Fairchild, "Optimum Population," *Proceedings*, 84.
[95] Bourdon, "Is the Increase in the Population a Real Danger for the Food Supply of the World?" *Proceedings*, 113.
[96] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 43, 45.
[97] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 118. See Bashford, "World Population and Australian Land."
[98] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 124.

questions of population density, territory, and migration.[99] Thompson introduced and framed his 1929 book with the question: "Will the efforts to equalize pressure result in war or will some other method of adjustment be found?"[100] Professor of International Law at the University of Liège, Ernest Mahaim, said, "Human migration is not only a natural phenomenon, or only a phenomenon of race, but is essentially a social phenomenon, which today involves problems of international politics on which the future depends, whether it be peace or war."[101] For some, the artificial restriction of population flow on any grounds caused tension: "If persons deprived of food are not allowed to enter a territory where they think it can be found, it is evident, and all world history proves it, that they will try to make an inroad by force. Overpopulation implies migration, and migration almost always implies war."[102] For others, reducing population density was not an end in itself, but a means to international security. If population density, social unrest, and the idea of a natural inclination toward territorial space were accepted as causes of war, the corollary was that international efforts to relieve population pressure would work crucially toward peace. The Czechoslovakian anthropologist and statistician Dr. Netusil stated categorically, "I do believe that the chief objective of this Conference is international peace. Otherwise it would have no meaning."[103]

The formative idea of geopolitics in the early twentieth century was that the world had become a closed system because of colonial expansion into all continents. Unlike for eighteenth-century Malthus, there was apparently no more "fresh" land to colonize and settle, and so the colonizing nations struggled over "space and power," as Strausz-Hupé put it in 1942.[104] This did not mean that various international relations theorists, geographers, and population experts could not visualize and mobilize the idea of "empty land" or "under-utilized" land: they did so to a remarkable extent. It was in this context that the significance of "empty space" became critical but also intensely difficult: occupation of apparently un-peopled or under-utilized space was eminently sensible and desirable for many world population theorists, but it constantly came up against prior territorial claims, based not on indigeneity but national (settler) sovereignty.

[99] For example, Harold Wright had written in 1922: "The 'White Australia' policy, by which a population considerably smaller than that of London claims the whole continent and excludes Asiatics . . . is a typical, if extreme, instance of attitude which the white man has adopted. . . . To reconcile it with a future of peace and disarmament is impossible." In *Population*, 123.

[100] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, v.

[101] Mahaim, *Proceedings*, 265.

[102] Koulisher, *Proceedings*, 102.

[103] Netusil, *Proceedings*, 48–49.

[104] Strausz-Hupé, Geopolitics: *The Struggle for Space and Power*.

EMPTY SPACES: THE COLONIAL AND ANTI-COLONIAL HISTORY OF POPULATION

I believe that wars of expansion cannot be avoided in the near future unless certain traditional nationalistic and imperialistic modes of conduct are much modified by the great powers holding lands not in use.

——Warren Thompson, 1929

The sustained discussion of food, resources, land, and redistribution of people—largely from Europe to the "New World" to use a shorthand—suggests not only the need to connect population-demographic history fully with migration history and the history of geopolitics, but also with the history of colonization. World population debate becomes a colonial history in two ways: first through the argument that European expansion and colonial rule were manifestations of a problematic European overpopulation; and second, through the reliance on the idea of "empty space," the conjoined discourse of emptiness and primitiveness in the redistribution model. As Thomas said in 1927, there was an imperative to redistribute population to "empty" parts of the globe.[105]

As we have seen, by 1927 there was an established understanding that overpopulation caused European expansion. For German *Geopolitiker* this was justified, while for the British this was a longstanding explanatory aspect and benefit of the Empire. Koulisher spoke for many at the Conference when he explained that in the nineteenth century, "the exceedingly rapid opening up of virgin countries at once relieved Europe from her surplus population and placed prodigious food resources at her disposal."[106] The alignment of geopolitics with French, Dutch, and especially British colonialism escaped few participants and was explicitly discussed. Hitler was by no means alone in drawing the parallel.[107] Thompson, for one, argued, "We should recognize that the urge towards expansion is just as legitimate in the Japanese as in the Anglo-Saxon."[108] And Leon Wenic, President of the Polish Eugenic Society said that his government was "desirous of securing for its emigrants in a peaceful way territories for colonization, where they can have scope for free development and can cultivate tracts of untilled land."[109]

This expression of desire for colonial territorial extension based on alleged overpopulation generated a limited amount of critique based on indigenous dispossession. Professor T. N. Carver, a political economist at Harvard University,

[105] Thomas, "International Migration and Its Control," 256.
[106] Koulisher, 308.
[107] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (2 vols., 1925/26), Ralph Manheim, trans., Pimlico, 1992, 127–28, 130–32.
[108] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 278.
[109] Dr. Leon Wernic, *Proceedings*, 301.

thought the expansion of population resulted in "robbing lower races of their land."[110] A Peruvian engineer at the Conference, Pedro Paulet, offered the most extensive discussion of the place of indigenous peoples historically and demographically, although he did not advance any principle of relationship between indigeneity and land ownership. Imitating interwar (and anticipating later twentieth-century) world histories and world geographies, Paulet drew a long historical picture. Before the Spanish conquest, the Inca's "population policy" was to preserve the "life and happiness" of people they conquered. If they did not submit, they were transported to another territory, according to the approving Paulet. Despite centuries of Spanish "abuse and neglect," native people "have been preserved much better" in various South American republics than elsewhere. At the same time, and paradoxically, he thought the native races in the present needed to be, and could be, assimilated "or civilized." This was another instance of the conceptual difficulties of positioning assimilation and homogeneity within this discussion.[111]

Specifically anti-colonial nationalist critiques were also being voiced at this time. Connelly has introduced the intriguing case of Indian Taraknath Das who spoke at the 1925 International Neo-Malthusian Conference in New York, but not in Geneva. Density was precisely the issue for Das, but he called for recognition of the fact that it was higher in Europe than in India. As a result, Europe had problematically acquired land three times the area of itself.[112] And Thompson, though not an anti-colonial nationalist like Das, presented one of the most damning critiques of British imperialism to be written in the period: "to regard the exploitation of all unused, or poorly used, tropical land and all backward peoples as his [the white man's] special prerogative is wholly unjustified."[113] And further, "The acquiring of large blocks of the earth's surface by the more aggressive nations for their use in an indefinite future did not prove a very difficult task. . . . Still others, particularly tropical possessions, were acquired with even greater ease, since almost no settlement took place after the acquisition. These are being held today as areas of pure exploitation."[114]

More typically, these spaces were perceived as literally empty or, if occupied, entirely available for more extensive European acquisition. Gregory claimed, "As there are large areas in the world which are uninhabited or sparsely occupied, nations with a large surplus of population should do their

[110] Professor T. N. Carver, "Some Needed Refinements of the Theory of Population," *Proceedings*, 124. Lecturer in Economics at the University of Reading, Dr. Mabel Buer, linked European population increase with a displacing colonialism and a problematic domination of "large parts of the world." In *Proceedings*, 57.

[111] Paulet, "Discussion," *Proceedings*, 292. Paulet was Director of the National School of Arts and Letters, Lima.

[112] Taraknath Das, "The Population Problem in India," in Margaret Sanger, ed., *Religious and Ethical Aspects of Birth Control* (1926), cited in Connelly, "Population Control Is History," 142.

[113] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 101.

[114] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 7.

share of breaking-up new land."[115] In such statements, the descriptors "uninhabited" and "sparsely occupied," were rendered problematically equivalent. "Emptiness" was also a kind of waste, an agrarian missed opportunity, nature ready to be rendered properly productive. The empty places usually nominated were in Canada, Argentina, and, as we have seen, Australia. Each was represented as dramatically "underpopulated" at most, "empty" at least.[116] Thomas's plan for an international court to determine how populations could be brought to "the most fruitful soils" was labeled by Frankfurt social scientist Dr. Henriette Fürth as an "extreme pacifist conception because its execution would exclude every form of war."[117] Fürth was, of course, ignoring the violence of dispossession, and indeed each of these conceptions represented a vision of a "world colonialism": the bids to occupy mandated territories and empty territories with different populations were premised on a discursive obliteration of prior indigenous occupation.

Not all land was understood to be equally available to all people, however. Deeply ingrained was the idea of the value of some land to some people (racially defined) and not to others, and in particular the barrier that "the tropics" posed to permanent white settlement. This complicated the "redistribution" thesis as much as it complicated "white" peoples' claim to legitimately occupy tropical zones.[118] "No European nationality is at all likely to succeed in their conquest,"[119] wrote Thompson in an extensive discussion of the Australian situation. Again, he and others thought that eventually the tropical sections of the continent would be demanded by the Japanese and the Chinese and should be granted to them, despite the fact that the Japanese "are a southern people rather than a northern people."[120] In terms of agriculture, they would settle the tropics of the Australian continent more effectively, and therefore more legitimately, than would white Australians. In other instances, both native population density and the "white man in the tropics" thesis served to secure rather than threaten colonial rule. For example, the French tropical colonies were positioned by Bourdon as out of bounds as a solution for general European overpopulation, precisely because of the climate: "none can take a large number of European landworkers. Most are in tropical climate, where the European cannot work on the land, and North Africa … has such a numerous native population that there is no room for millions of Europeans."[121]

[115] Professor J. W. Gregory, "The Principles of Migration Restriction," *Proceedings*, 303.
[116] Fairchild, *Proceedings*, 80. See also Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 83.
[117] Fürth, *Proceedings*, 286.
[118] See Alison Bashford, "Is White Australia Possible?: Race, Colonialism and Tropical Medicine," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (2000): 112–35.
[119] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 94.
[120] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 293.
[121] Bourdon, "Is the Increase in the Population a Real Danger for the Food Supply of the World? *Proceedings*, 111, 113.

Occasionally, experts from the period discussed the emigration of people from dense parts of the world other than Europe. Thompson, for instance, developed a long chapter titled "Where Can the Indians Go?" His answers are most interesting as a study of colonization and diaspora; they pose heavy critiques of both British exploitation and indigenous sovereignty, in terms of agriculture. Thompson thought that millions of "surplus" Indians might go to Madagascar, which is "almost empty," or to Kenya and East Africa generally.[122] The latter territories, under British, French, and Portuguese rule, "have a great undeveloped area of good land which would seem to be the natural region for the expansion of the Indians," mainly because of the climate. There would, he claimed, be room for both a "large increase in the natives" and Indian immigration.[123] Thompson's critique of British rule in Kenya was total, almost postcolonial: "To the oriental... the history of the West during the last five hundred years or more is a constant denial in conduct of the theory that lands should be preserved for the use of those who happen to live in them. It appears to the man from the East that the Westerner has never hesitated an instant to dispossess the natives of any land he has wanted for his own use. If he has not wholly driven out the natives or exterminated them, he has enslaved them as far as was possible and made them serve him."[124]

Yet this level of critique of colonialism and exploitation did not necessarily lead to a defense of indigenous claim to territory. For a demographer, the overriding principle was need, determined by relative population density, and not indigeneity: here the global was privileged over the local. Though Thompson was deeply critical of the British, he still considered Kenyan land legitimately available for Indian use, based on his belief that the land was underutilized. The idea that the land was the "birthright" of any indigenous people was invalid, he argued, because "no people has any moral right to hold lands out of use which are needed by other peoples. This would apply to the Negroes as well as the whites, and indeed, the white in going into thinly settled lands and assuming control and undertaking settlement have generally assumed the soundness of this position."[125]

These were significant twentieth-century expressions of Lockean arguments: the natural law that people have a "right to free and peaceful access to all parts of the globe";[126] that a nation or a people gain or lose the right to claim territory according to their capacity to cultivate land. Under this political philosophy,

[122] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 159.
[123] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 161.
[124] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 164–65.
[125] Thompson, *Danger Spots*, 163.
[126] Allen Buchanan and Margaret Moore, "The Making and Unmaking of Boundaries," in A. Buchanan and M. Moore, eds., *States, Nations and Borders: The Ethics of Making Boundaries*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 12, 233.

the act of "mixing one's labor" with resources of the natural world signaled the right to claim it as property. This places the insistent discussion about soil, cultivation, and population not only within a Malthusian political economy and a geopolitical tradition, but also within a much older legal defense and critique of colonization.[127] But in this interwar population arena Lockean principles were brought to bear more often to question the sovereignty of long-established settler-colonial nations, rather than indigenous sovereignty. It was an open question, Albert Thomas thought, whether nations should claim sovereignty over territory "which it does not exploit and from which it is incapable of extracting the maximum yield."[128] Here, the doctrine of *terra nullius* was in effect being applied not to indigenous people and spaces but to national governments that had failed to extract a yield reasonable to their area and their population density.[129]

GLOBAL SPACE: PROBLEMATIZING "THE WORLD"

This little terraqueous globe.

——Edward East, 1927

Population debate in the interwar period was not just precociously international, as Connelly has described it[130]—it was precociously global. In the absence of birth control as a way to frame a world population conference, Sanger had to create an alternative governing idea. One might expect a national/racial eugenic comprehension of population (which certainly was the frame of reference for many of the delegates) or possibly the related national depopulation question in comparative dimension. But this was not the case. Sanger began with a world framing of the problem: "The earth, and every geographical division of it, is strictly limited in size and in ability to support human populations."[131] At issue here were not only, or not even, nations and empires, but a supranational comprehension of social space: the bounded space of "the earth," or, as Edward East described it, "this little terraqueous globe."[132]

Given the centrality of density and therefore movement and migration to the comprehension of the problem, a cosmopolitan and supranational approach was invited: "One considers an isolated country and says such and such is its birth rate, such its growth, such its natural and artificial resources. If one

[127] Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Origin and Meaning of *Terra Nullius*," paper delivered to the Department of History, University of Sydney, May 2006.
[128] Thomas, *Proceedings*, 261–62.
[129] The significance of these arguments with respect to Australia is detailed in Bashford, "World Population and Australian Land."
[130] Connelly, "Population Control Is History," 123.
[131] Sanger, *Proceedings*, 5.
[132] East, *Proceedings*, 85; Davenport, *Proceedings*, 242; Gregory, *Proceedings*, 302–3.

reflects for a minute, however, one sees all at once that this problem of an isolated population does not exist. In reality, the whole area within which migration is possible is a unit."[133] One expression of this world discourse of population was a trans-border articulation: the "really pan-human question of population growth and birth control."[134] As Connelly has also noted, in their spatial conceptualization of population, and in their economic interest in traffic and exchange, not a few of the Geneva delegates articulated the phenomenon of a "shrinking world." "The world is now an economic unit," Harold Wright wrote.[135] Or as East said rather more imaginatively, if not journalistically: "The world has been explored from pole to pole; its resources have been chartered, from aard-varks [sic] to zymogens. The seas are dotted with ships; the lands are meshed with railroads. Our hands, our voices stretch from continent to continent. We have become neighbours, whether we care to be neighbourly or not."[136]

This development was informed by an emerging language of globalism, part of the intellectual and discursive constitution of an early twentieth-century "quest for one world."[137] In this milieu Albert Thomas could imagine and propose a world court, a fully supranational body with authority to direct the movement of people around the globe. "A Higher Migration Council with the power of deciding the right of overpopulated countries to populate other territory."[138] And when the Czechoslovakian Dr. F. J. Netusil argued that the evolution and management of human population absolutely required "the organization of the world in one political unit," he was drawing on an already well-established discourse. He thought, "Only the world as a unit is really self-supporting ... the human population on the globe of the earth needs one organization which would embrace economic life."[139]

Yet something slightly greater than supranational cooperation was being articulated in Geneva: a planetary discourse was emerging as a way to comprehend the space of population, the "universe with definite limits" that Pearl theorized.[140] While thinking about and visualizing "the planet" tends to be associated with the Cold War space race several generations later, in fact reference to the "Earth" and the "planet" appear remarkably often in this earlier

[133] Koulisher, 102.
[134] J. Belehradek, Unioversite Masaryk, Tchecoslovaquie, 31 Oct. 1927. Sanger Papers.
[135] Wright, *Population*, 147. In "Seeing Beyond the State" Connelly also discusses the consideration of "the planet as a single analytical unit" and deftly details the ramifications of this for population policy and planning later in the century.
[136] East, *Proceedings*, 85.
[137] See Joanne Pemberton, *Global Metaphors: Modernity and the Quest for One World*, Pluto, 2001. The relation between these ideas of global population and an emerging world health is examined in Bashford, "Global Biopolitics and the History of World Health."
[138] Thomas, *Proceedings*, 262, 269.
[139] Netusil, *Proceedings*, 48. See also Bashford, "Global Biopolitics."
[140] Pearl, *Proceedings*, 28.

population discussion. In problematizing immigration restriction acts, for example, Norwegian economist Wilhelm Keilhau argued that all humans have the right to move freely "based on the fact that we are all compatriots of the same planet."[141] "The Earth is filling up fast, and one of our questions is what to do about it," said American eugenics leader Charles Davenport. And Knibbs described his book *Shadow of the World's Future* as "an exposition of the consequences of the limited population-carrying capacity, under various conditions, of our earth."[142]

Massive encyclopedic studies linked geography and population, and documented precisely what was available for use. Professor Grothe told delegates of German scientific journeys interested in "the globe from the point of view of feeding people … a journey round the world … with a view to finding out more about the physical and anthropogeographical side of the world … he intends making a map giving information about climate, surface of the globe, mankind, and the possibilities offered by the different areas as a dwelling-place for human beings."[143] Such ambitions mirrored eighteenth-century natural science journeys and their documentation of the vast potential of what were then other worlds. But in such twentieth-century versions, they aimed fundamentally to document the limits of the planet, of space and resources: the terraqueous globe was now "little," and more significantly, it was finite. Here, the genealogy of a later environmentalism is discernable, and indeed there are many references to deforestation, salinity, and depletion of resources in interwar population studies. The Peruvian Paulet, for one, wondered "how to colonize the country without injuring or destroying the immense natural wealth perhaps unique in the world, of the still unexplored heart of South America."[144] Crucially, the global discourse was not one of possibility and growth, but of limit and finite boundaries.

CONCLUSION

The 1927 Geneva Conference and its *Proceedings* reveal a curious and telling mix of conceptual frames. At one level, the content of the *Proceedings* is unsurprising: studies of differential fertility between urban and rural groups, between different social classes, research on links between heredity and pauperism, concern for qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of population in terms of both race and health, typically in a squarely national frame of reference. Yet, as I have shown, both under- and overpopulation were problematized. Further, while many papers were nationally defined or comparatively national—that is, strictly inter/national in scope—some delegates, not least

[141] Keilhau, *Proceedings*, 273.
[142] Knibbs, *The Shadow of the World's Future*, 5.
[143] Grothe, *Proceedings*, 297.
[144] Paulet, *Proceedings*, 292.

Sanger herself, conceptualized world population more globally than nationally or internationally. In all of these ways—in its organizational provenance and legacies, its compilation of population expertise in other than the over-studied birth control issue, its ambivalent connection with the League, its dance between difficult gendered politics of bodies and politics of populations, and its movement between nations, empires, and globe—the World Population Conference represented a nodal point in the twentieth-century history of population politics and ideas.

Introducing the spatial dimension of the population question into historical analyses both widens and sharpens the picture of the multiple contemporary connections drawn between "biopolitics" and "geopolitics." This area of multi-disciplinary expertise was fully concerned with population and the regulation of space at overlapping and sometimes confused national, imperial, and global levels. It was both a politics of, and an expertise on, people, land, and claim to territory, between new and old worlds, between densely populated and sparsely populated areas—a naming and coveting of "empty" spaces. There was neither one outcome, nor one intellectual trajectory to this interwar spatial dimension of the population question. We have seen that it produced both colonial and anti-colonial positions, nationalist and supra-national projects, and both defense and critique of white settler sovereignty. Overall, however, this suggests new ways in which twentieth-century population politics have implicated not just feminist, medical, national, and international histories, but colonial, migration, and world histories as well. When we shift our attention from the issues of sex to those of space, a chronology and geography of twentieth-century world population emerges that is more complex than the one we have receive from current scholarship. We can see the extent to which overpopulation sat alongside depopulation as an interwar issue, and to which Europe as well as India, China, and Japan figured as overly dense regions. Not only was overpopulation thinkable in an earlier period, it was deeply theorized as a problem unsettled within, and indeed actively unsettling, a changing national-colonial-global world.

APPENDIX

TABLE 2

Delegates at the 1927 World Population Conference by region (speakers excluded)

Name	*Affiliation (as per proceedings)*	*Country (as per proceedings)*
Central and South America		
Thomas Amadeo	Secretary-General, Museo Social Argentino	Argentine
A. Lipschütz	Director, Institute of Physiology, University of Concepçion	Chile
Pedro Paulet	Engineer, Former Director, National School of Arts and Letters, Lima	Peru
G. H. de Paula Souza	Director, Institute of Hygiene, São Paolo	Brazil
Asia		
Prince Charoon	Minister Plenipotentiary of Siam to Paris	Siam
Liang Chi-Chao	Tsing Hua University, Peking	China
Kiyo Sye Inui	Professor, Tokio University of Commerce	Japan
Inazo Nitobé	Member of the House of Peers, Professor University of Tokio	Japan
Australasia		
George Knibbs	Director, Institute of Science and Industries	Australia
Eastern Europe		
Vincent Babecki	Director, Hygiene Laboratory	Poland
Jan Belehrãdek	Director, Institute General Biology, Masaryk University	Czechoslovakia
A. Bohác	State Statistical Office, Prague	Czechoslovakia
Rudolph Goldscheid	Economist, Vienna	Austria
Liebmann Hersch	Professor of Demography, University of Geneva	Poland
Stanislas Kohn	Faculty of Law, Prague	Czechoslovakia
F. J. Netusil	Demographer, Anthropologist, Statistician, Ministry of Health, Prague	Czechoslovakia
Alexander Paldrock	Dermatologist, University of Dorpat	Estonia
Leon Wernic	President, Polish Eugenics Society	Poland
Western Europe (39 delegates including)		
Severino Aznar	University of Madrid	Spain
Léon Bernard	Professor, Faculty of Medicine, Paris	France
Marcello Boldrini	Catholic University, Milan	Italy
Eugène Dupréel	Professor Philosophy, Brussels	Belgium
Eugene Fischer	Professor of Anatomy, University of Freiberg	Germany

TABLE 2 (*contd.*)

Name	*Affiliation (as per proceedings)*	*Country (as per proceedings)*
Richard Goldschmidt	Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Biology, Berlin	Germany
Hugo Grothe	Lecturer on Foreign Affairs	Germany
Maria Herweden	MD Assistant Professor, Utrecht	Holland
Max Hirsch	Gynecologist, Race Biological Institute Berlin	Germany
Ernest Mahaim	Professor of International Law, University of Liège	Belgium
René Sand	League of Red Cross Societies	Belgium
Scandinavia (8 delegates including)		
Wilhelm Keilhau	Economist, University of Oslo	Norway
M. G. Jahn	Director, Central Bureau of Statistics, Oslo	Norway
Vincent Naser	President, Danish Students International University, Copenhagen	Denmark
G. W. Silverstople	Lecturer, Political Economy, Gotsborg	Sweden
Great Britain (30 delegates including)		
C. P. Blacker	Psychological Medicine, Guy's Hospital	
Mabel Buer	Lecturer in Economics, University of Reading	
C. V. Drysdale	President of the Malthusian League	
Binnie Dunlop	MB, Writer on Population	
Havelock Ellis	Sexologist	
Morris Ginsberg	Sociologist, London School of Economics	
J.B.S. Haldane	Genetics Department, John Innes Horticultural Institution, Merton	
Julian Huxley	Kings College, London	
John M. Keynes	Economist, Cambridge University	
G. H. Pitt-Rivers	Anthropologist	
Gladys Pott	Chairman, Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women	
H. G. Wells	Author	
North America (no delegates from Canada, 17 from United States, including)		
Leon Cole	Genetics, University of Wisconsin	
Charles Davenport	Director, Department of Genetics, Carnegie Institution, Washington, D.C.	
F. H. Giddings	Sociologist, Columbia University	
C. C. Little	Experimental Biologist, President, University of Michigan	
Adolf Meyer	Psychiatrist-in-chief, Johns Hopkins Hospital	
V. Stefansson	Ethnologist, Explorer	
W. Welch	Professor of the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University	