

**Planning Demographic Futures: International Interactions of Gender Equality  
Discourse in Demographic Policy in the EU and Japan**

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A declining fertility rate is generally thought to have negative economic consequences in the guise of a slowdown in economic growth. Less citizens means less labour, fewer consumers and an eventual decrease in international competitiveness. The simultaneous ‘aging’ of the population is expected to result in an increase in social security expenditure in pensions, medical care, nursing, child care, child allowances and welfare. Consequently, the typical policy response in industrialised countries with declining fertility rates has focused on the rearrangement of women’s reproductive and productive labour, to enable women to work and rear children at the same time to replace retiring male workers by working themselves, and biologically reproduce and rear the labour force of the future. (REF –Bakker?)

Demographic policy has therefore made the maternal female body in particular an object of interest for re/productive<sup>1</sup> (REF) reformation. Such is the case also in Japanese demographic policy, where this target has remained unchanged in the past twenty years. However, the discourses shaping them have been by no means homogenous or quiescent. The bodies that are the primary units of demographic interest signify very different things in different contexts, charged with new ethical purposes and corporeal destinies (REF – Foucault, Grosz). The numerical technologies of statistical analysis, population counts, economic forecasts and the like all shape imperatively our images of political life (Dean 1999: 99-101, 107-8, Rose 1999: 198). The arms of demographic policy therefore are widely spread across several policy areas, though often focusing its immediate effects in family, labour, gender equality and reproductive policies. Indeed, they are all densely interconnected policy areas, all concerned with the management of re/production in relation to economic planning. This paper does not attempt to address each of these areas separately, but rather as they appear in the context of demographic discourse. This allows not only for an understanding of the broad yet particular process of demographic planning, but also an examination of the cohesiveness of the techniques of governance through the production of specific gendered subjectivities, subject positions, and choices (REF – Foucault/Butler).

In the early 1990s, declining fertility in Japan<sup>2</sup> was addressed mainly as the consequence, if not fault, of an increase in working mothers. Hence, child care policies aiming for a ‘removal’ of child care ‘burdens’ formed the core of demographic growth policy to enable women to simultaneously work and have children (Repo 2008). At the end of the 1990s, this perception began to change. International pressure to improve Japan’s gender equality standards since its ratification of CEDAW (1985) culminated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), after which Japan passed its Basic Law for Gender Equality in 1999. The sudden appearance of gender equality in political discourse in the late 1990s

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term of re/production for the time being to illustrate the complexity of the demands of women’s labour. This includes productive labour, biological reproduction and social reproduction (REF Bakker). The use of ‘re/production’ attempts to encompass all of these forms as well as blur the boundaries that distinguish them as independent categories.

<sup>2</sup> The fertility rate in Japan had been falling since the 1960s (REF) and fell below the replacement level in the 1970s as it did in many industrialised Western countries. It did not become the highly politicised issue that it is currently until 1989, when the fertility rate fell to 1.57 children to each woman in her lifetime. That this realisation is still known as the ‘1.57 shock’ exemplifies the dramatic entrance it made into Japanese politics, making demography an explicitly politicised articulation thereafter. The situation has even been given its own name *shōshika*, meaning the decrease in the number of children, reflecting fears of a childless society.

happened distinctly in the context of demographic policy. Gender equality, as it were, became the main solution to declining fertility (Huen 2007: 370, Schad-Seifert 2006, Takeda 2005: 177). Also, the persistent recession of the economy since the end of the economic bubble in 1990 and the 1997 financial crises also consolidated the passing of neoliberal reform in the 2000s. Accordingly, 2000s have been defined by a distinct connection made between gender equality, fertility and economic competitiveness (Repo 2008).

The issue of fertility decline became prominent in Western Europe already in the 1970s with similar repercussions, notably also at the level of the EU, where it has remained to the present day. Simon Duncan writes that in the 1980s and 1990s, the 'demographic time bomb' was taken up as a crucial question for national governments and the EU, to the extent that the 1992 Maastricht Treaty's Article 7 was dedicated exclusively to the matter (Duncan 2002: 309-10). During those years, the European Commission (EC) put forward the 'reconciliation of work and family life' as a solution to the apparently immanent threat of economic disaster. Such demo-economic discourse was reflected in the materialisation of policies such as childcare and parental leave (Drew 1998: 14, Daly 2004, Stratigaki 2004). These strategies promised to increase fertility rates and recruit cheap and flexible (female) workers that would also ease the pressure on welfare systems (Duncan 2002: 309).

In this sense, as feminist research of the EU has suggested, demo-economic fears formed a discursive space for the pushing the idea of gender equality policy forward in the region that had initially been promoted by feminists (Stratigaki 2004: 36, Lewis 2006: 421, Lombardo, Meier 2007: 58) and can be said to have set a precedent for other political entities. The continuing Eurocentrism of scientific demographic discourse is not only evident in the neo-Malthusian apprehension of 'overpopulation' in developing countries as a security threat (Bandarage 1997: 50-2). But, historically the high status to which Euro-American eugenic and pronatalist sciences rose by the early twentieth century following fertility decline in the late nineteenth century in industrial Western European countries (Seccombe 1993: 182), that for example led with feminist support to the development of family allowance policy in France (Misra 1998), can also be seen as continuous with the emergence of rigorous pronatalist policies prior and during the Second World War, not only in European states, but also in Japan (Takeda 2005: 77, 96, Driscoll 2005: 195-8, Frühstück 2003, Miyake 1991: 277-80, Otsubo 2005: 243-4). In this sense, demographic subjectivities are very much globalised, because they are integral to the global flows of capital and capitalist logics (Hardt, Negri 2001: 45).

In line with this understanding of transnational interactions of demographic discourse between states and regions, this paper is an inquiry into the current interactions of Japanese demographic discourse with that of the European Union. I am interested in the subjectivities produced in each context, not as isolated or somehow innate to that context, but resultant of global interactions albeit in their proper contexts. Both entities publish documentation on their demographic policy priorities and policy development-orientated demographic research. In these texts, the problem of demography is defined, producing certain subjects of interest that must be managed in the search for solutions. How do Japanese discourses interact with those of the EU and vice versa? What happens in the search for demographic solutions; how are subjects produced, loaded and positioned and with what gendered implications? What

can we learn about the gender politics of demography by examining Japan and the EU side by side? Prior to this analysis, a brief outline of my approach to transnational discursive interactions in the context of this study is in order.

### **Transnational interactions of demographic discourse**

As a regional union whose governance is multi-level (REF), the EU makes for a challenging starting point for the consideration of power relations across political entities. Forms of childcare vary greatly from country to country in Europe, as do patterns of marriage, child bearing and female employment (Duncan 1996: 81-7) and in this sense it is questionable whether the EU has had any concrete homogenising influence on its member states in the area of demographic planning. States are also far from uniform in their fertility rates, ranging from 2.0 in France to 1.31 in Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia and 1.32 in Italy and Germany (Eurostat 2006 figures). The lowest rates are comparable to Japan's, which was 1.32 in 2006, having increased from the record low of 1.26 in 2005. Though these differences can be explained through referral to different socio-cultural patterns of family and social life (e.g. Drew 1998), this would not escape the fundamentally modernist and Eurocentric scientific base on which demographic research generally stands that relies on de-politicised assumptions about linear social development (Greenhalgh 1996: 27). After all, it is the very calculation of fertility rates that results in such discursive explanations of difference in gender and family in the social fabric, including gender equality. Because the EU's gender policies (as well as the UN's global conferences) have been observed to have influenced national-level reforms in governments around the world (True, Mintrom 2001: 28), it is necessary to treat gender in the EU demographic programme with concern.

Within the EU's borders, it can be understood as exercising significant normative power among its member states that cuts through their individual discourses, despite the diversity among them, through processes of Europeanisation. Here, the term refers to the discursive processes of convergence in the framing of politics through the influence of the EU (Kantola 2006: 143-55, Kantola, Outshoorn 2007: 8-10). While legally binding so-called 'hard law' is certainly significant, the EU often functions through 'soft' mechanisms such as guidelines, conferences, recommendations and action plans that produce knowledge, coordination and understandings of 'best practices' in shaping domestic policies (Liebert 2003: 481).

But what about the normative effects of power beyond the EU's borders? One possible approach would be that of policy transfer, which seeks to explain the transfer of specific policies from one government machine to another (Bulmer 2007, Dolowitz, Marsh 1996, Dolowitz, Marsh 2000, Jacoby 2006). This approach assumes a set of actors in and outside government making strategic decisions, which is insufficient in a study of this type. The reliance on cohesive state actors and the notion of intentionality account for neither the contradictions within governments (in actors as in policy discourses), nor the subtle and unpremeditated emergence of discourse.

Instead, it might be more helpful to turn to poststructural literature on globalisation and governmentality. This first involves moving away from the nostalgia that maintains the state as the key political 'actor'. For example, as Kantola and Squires (Kantola, Squires 2008: 3) argue, the private sector is increasingly involved in the

mediation of public policy agendas according market rationalities, embedding state machineries (in their case, gender equality machineries) increasingly in neoliberal market reform. So, instead of seeing the current situation of global politics neither as one of the internationalisation of the state (Cox, Sinclair 1996), nor as a transferral of 'power' from states to markets, 'globalisation' can be seen as a discursive process determined by the governmentality of neoliberalism that produces particular globalised subjects and subject positions (Dean 1999, Larner 2000, Penttinen 2007: 59). From this perspective, the state has always been a part of global processes, albeit in different ways and in interaction with other agents and forces, shaping and reproducing different kinds of respective subjects and relations between them, and is therefore still in some measure accountable to them (Rai 2008: 26, 31). The globalised politics of Western demographic sciences from the nineteenth century onwards can be seen just as much as a part of 'globalisation' as it is presently, producing its own variety of spatially and temporally bound gendered subjects as a result of the settings prescribed by the governance needs of industrialisation at the time in question (cf. Secombe 1993, Greenhalgh 1996, Rose 1999 [1989]: 128-9). In short, globalisation produces bodies with possible forms of agency, while constraining others. Bodies bear the markings of globalisation, showing what the globalisation of governmentality is and what it does (Penttinen 2007: 59).

In addition to conceptualising globalisation as a disciplinary system of power, it can also be facilitative in the provision of new spaces and institutions for the articulation and entrenchment of new normative frameworks, even feminist ones (Hardt, Negri 2001: 25, True 2003: 373, Walby 2002: 534). For example, although the emergence of a gender equality discourse in Japan and its institutionalisation in the Gender Equality Bureau in 1999 can be seen as largely a consequence of globalised neoliberal imperatives, it was nonetheless to the credit of transnational feminist movements and UN gender conferences that gender equality was a discursive possibility in the first place (REF). That its intended purpose has since been embedded with neoliberal rationality is indeed a demonstration of the way in which global discursive interactions contest rules and practices in different issue areas, with varying material consequences (Meyer, Prügl 1999: 5). The power exercised by disciplinary neoliberalism that institutionalises the neoliberal framework at the level of macro-economic policy therefore has also been accompanied by changes in the governance of re/production (Rai 2004: 591-2).

One of the major problems that feminists have identified in this system is the inherent depoliticisation that accompanies it. Depoliticisation can be described as the highly political governing strategy of neutralising the political character of decision making (*not* the removal of politics itself) (Burnham 1999: 47). For example, referrals to the economy, social well-being and scientific imperatives often have this effect. Power becomes focused on individuals and individuality, persuading them into the art of self-government, shaping their lives through the choices, which are the predetermined choices made available to them through discourse (Rose 1999: 190, Rose 1999 [1989]: 239).

This is particularly challenging for feminists, whose agenda is explicitly political and aim for transformation. In terms of gender and demography, neoliberal economic rationality assumes a jacket of neutrality by claiming to merely be governing by the alleged objectivity of numbers (Teghtsoonian 2004: 279). It is one of the main aims of

feminist analysis to dismantle and problematise such assertions, for example by erasing the inscription of 'women' from policy documents and referring instead to 'workers' and 'consumers' (Teghtsoonian 2004: 268). This is even more problematic when it is bound with gender mainstreaming discourse as a technique loaded with the promise of greater economic efficiency, but lacking in radical transformative content. (Squires 2007: 140). Instead, gender mainstreaming becomes an issue of human resource management institutionalised by the technologies of governmentality and thereby claimed by the very techniques of governance that it seeks to transform (Squires 2007: 143, Bacchi, Eveline 2003: 104-5, Woehl 2008: 80-1). Foucault's notion of power as all-inclusive yet impersonal is perhaps more relevant than ever here (REF). Without the subscription of the individual to the gendered self-disciplinary technologies of demographic planning, the entire project of neoliberal economic governance loses its very purpose.

This paper examines two kinds of policy documentation in Japan and the EU to examine the gendered processes of demographic planning. The first pertains to material outlining and explaining current policy goals and the second to material disclosing the course of policy-oriented demographic analysis. For the Japanese case, I examine the latest main demographic policy document, the White Paper on Birthrate Declining Society 2008. It is produced by the executive branch of the Japanese government, the Cabinet, which directs the formation of policy both domestically and internationally. The Cabinet Office also coordinates a number of policy bureaus and institutes (or think tanks), including the National Institute of Population and Social Research (NIPSSR). The NIPSSR was formed in 1996 by fusing together the Institute of Population Problems and the Social Development Research Institute as the institution for policy studies under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). I focus on the articles published in its journals since, Japanese Journal of Population, the Japanese Journal of Social Security Policy and Journal of Population Problems, which feature research mainly by Japanese researchers and occasionally European researchers. Here I focus particularly on the way Europe is treated as an object of demographic experience and study. This also means appreciating when and what kinds of issues emerge as significant for the Japanese context. I examine all documents from 2001 to 2008, as the former was the year of Junichiro Koizumi's accession as Prime Minister (2001-2006), after which Japanese political decisions have been observed to have taken an explicitly neoliberal discursive turn (Cerny 2005: 100-3, Hiroko 2008, Osawa 2005), a direction still pursued in 2008.

The second part of the analysis turns to the EU, specifically the European Commission (EC) where demographic research and reporting is carried out. How does the EU perceive its declining fertility? How does its 'search' for demographic policy solutions differ from that of Japan? In order to consider the demographic planning of the present EU25, I have limited my time frame from 2004 to 2008, when the EU drew up new demographic assessments. The documents I examine are those that the EC itself in its website defines as its core demographic documents. These are the EC Communications of 2005 (Green Paper), 2006 and 2007, the first Europe's Demographic Report 2007 and the Monitoring Report 2007. In 2005, the EC established its research unit, the European Observatory on Social Situation and Demography (EOSSD). It consists of four multidisciplinary networks of independent experts based in the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK. In its website, it defines its objective as the production of an 'overview of the social and demographic situation as

well as research notes and shorter policy briefs on specific issues of high policy relevance'. The EOSSD also produces research papers in the same way as the NIPSSR, but I have chosen to leave those aside in this paper. First of all, they do not release such an abundant and consistent amount of research as the NIPSSR. Second, what is published assesses family policy and fertility policy in EU states, very much to the tone of the NIPSSR's papers. I will therefore focus on other EC documents, which the EOSSD has also participated in researching and producing. This incorporates both bureaucratic and research-based discourse and will hopefully make for a more insightful look into the EU's demographic policy discourses. The paper will proceed first by examining the Japanese case, followed by the EU, after which I consider both cases side by side.

### **Harmonising Lives: Tackling Declining Fertility in Japan**

Each year the main governmental report on the birth rate, the White Paper on Birthrate-Declining Society, reviews particular trends seen as relevant to fertility decline and outlines policy solutions to overcome it. Graphs early in the 2008 White Paper reported on present general analyses and projections of trends such as the fertility rate, proportions of old and young people, and the labour force. Most, however, were concerned with trends in marriage, childbearing in marriage, and child care, including ones divided into trends among men and women. It also outlined the four main countermeasures for the declining fertility rate as the promotion of the independence of young people and children, the work-life balance and new ways of working, the importance of life and the family, and the provision of further support for child raising.

These four points identical with the goals of the latest child care plan, the New New Angel Plan. The first Angel Plan was drawn up in the early 1990s as a response to the declining birth rate. Most previous research related to the Angel Plans is in the field of 'family policy', divulging the persisting prominence that the government gives to child care with the purpose of removing the burdens of care from the family and reinforcing its position and purpose as the primary child-bearing and rearing social unit (Hiroko 2008, Boling 1998, Lambert 2007: 27-8, Harada 1998: 203-28, White 2002: 30, Roberts 2002, Takeda 2003). This has been attempted through the 'Angel Plan' (1995-1999), the 'New Angel Plan' (2000-2004) and the latest 'New New Angel Plan' (2005-2009), all coordinated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Prompted by the '1.57 shock', their general aims have consisted of the improvement and expansion of child care centres, the shortening of child care queues and development of the maternity health care system. The latest New New Angel Plan, however, outlined four new main points of focus; '(1) encouraging the independence of youths and fostering physically and mentally strong children; (2) supporting people in working and raising a family at the same time, and re-examining their working patterns; (3) promoting awareness and understanding of the importance of human life and the role of families, and (4) new forms of mutual support and solidarity related to child rearing' (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training 2005).

The New New Angel Plan therefore is at form the core of Japan's demographic plans. Its dressage in 'family policy' language alludes to fertility decline as a problem situated in the realm of the family, specifically the nuclear family, which is seen as in some way deteriorating or even threatened in the competitive post-Cold War climate.

While, some permanent changes are accepted, such as the increasing employment of women, the basic heterosexual and monogamous foundation of the family is seen as in need of protection. Furthermore, it suggests that each member of the family benefits from these protective policies through support, nurture and encouragement. A supportive society comprised of families with children is a cohesive and harmonious one, thereby more productive, too.

Yet, the discussion of these issues as ‘family’ problems is all the more problematic because this language dresses demographic planning as gender neutral. It is related to the belief of demographic analysis as objective science. The gathering of data and its calculations according to certain variables is seen as a neutral process. Consequently any results it produces are ‘neutral’, that is to say that they cannot possibly be biased or discriminatory (REF?). Yet, the very idea of family is gendered and therefore so are its ‘problems’. Women, for example, are treated primarily as mothers or mothers-to-be. Paid labour is a supplementary task always *in addition* to assumed social reproduction. All of these ‘family’ measures rely on the acquiescence of women to engage themselves in the reconfiguration of their productive and reproductive labour. While men and husbands and their labour and ‘working patterns’ remain unproblematised, it is the female body that must find a new ‘work-life balance’ between invigorating the economy in paid labour and maintaining the heterosexual family as a social unit through reproduction. Indeed, the White Paper displays graphs showing the working patterns of women according to age and childbearing, not men.

An international awareness of demo-economic problems was reflected both in the 2008 White Paper and in governmental research. Primarily, the international constitutes not only a realm of competitors but a pool of possible solutions for appropriation for Japan’s fertility decline. The notably, the White Paper made repeated comparisons between the Japanese demographic situation to that in European countries, mainly France, UK, Germany, Sweden and Norway, as well as on occasion the US. These were most frequent in the examination of family allowances and other benefits, child care, parental leave, employment of mothers, gender divisions in household work. Specifically France and Sweden were singled out as ideals in this respect, as they have been in international research (cf. Towns 2002: 163-4). Their public family policies were seen as models of successful and sustainable demographic governance. Southern and Eastern European countries were conspicuously absent from these comparisons, setting their gaze only to Western and Northern European ones, despite using Eurostat and OECD statistics as a source of information for these comparisons.

The trend is similar when we examine research published by the National Institute of Population and Society Security Research. In addition to the majority of articles that deal solely with Japan, there are a large number of articles dealing with Europe, often in entire Europe-themed issues. Family policies in relation to demographic trends in Western and Northern European countries are examined individually or in groups (Atoh 1999, Beets, van Nimwegen 1999, Chesnais 1998, Hara 2003, Hoem, Hoem 1996, Hohn 1997, Kamano 2003, Kiernan 1998, Knudsen 1999, Kojima 2003, Letablier 2003, Moriizumi 2008, Nakagawa 1997, Neyer 2003, Tsuya 2003) and compared with Japan (Atoh, Akachi 2003, Fukuda 2003a, Fukuda 2003b, Higuchi, Abe & Waldfogel 1997, Suzuki 2006). The EU was always seen as a positive influence over its member states. Its family policy was seen as particularly ‘family



friendly' (Fukuda 2003a: 33-7). In particular, its goals to 'increase women's employment and public childcare' were seen as 'a first step to put the debate about women's care work, women's employment, family policies and fertility development in Europe onto a new basis' (Neyer 2003: 69). This does not mean that the EU member states were seen as homogenous. On the contrary, the EU is treated as a union of demographically and culturally diverse states, but with certain regional trends, each of which was of interest in one respect or another for Japanese purposes, with the distinct exception of Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>.

Southern European countries were therefore examined to compare with Japan as to determine the causes of low fertility and how to best avoid the deterioration of an already bleak demographic situation. Southern European countries, usually Italy, Spain and Portugal were also addressed, but separately in their own articles, specifically in terms of 'lowest-low fertility' (Billari 2008, Nishioka 2003a, Nishioka 2003b). In these articles, Japan and Southern European countries shared particular socio-cultural characteristics that made them susceptible to drastically low fertility rates. These were namely familialistic 'strong family' attitudes, low gender equality, and a correspondingly low compatibility between work and family life for women. The EU was seen as a positive influence also on Southern European countries, but their individual socio-cultural contexts constituted challenges for adjustment into the EU framework. Japan, however, was seen as having even greater gender role differences and stronger traditional values, binding a strong moral understanding of marriage and childbirth. The article concluded with a call for the development of measures for work-life balance and gender equality, with the threat of fertility lower than those of Southern European countries if this is not done as soon as possible (Nishioka 2003b: 280). While this was authored by a Japanese writer, an Italian author in another article, examining Spain and Italy and came to the conclusion that changing societal attitudes was significant in the long term, but that 'replacement migration... seems to be an inevitable avenue for all countries who have experienced lowest-low fertility, if they want to avoid the quick changes on working-age population that are an immediate consequence of extremely low birth rates' (Billari 2008: 16).

This draws attention to an area of particular *discomfort* when addressing Europe. The EU's family policies were admired and its most successful states were seen as models for appropriation. The same cannot be said for the issue of international migration, which proved to be difficult to engage with critically. Articles that discuss migration as a solution refer either only to Europe (e.g. Beets, van Nimwegen 1999, Billari 2008) or they aimed to provide forecasts, such as somewhat ominous assessments of the economic potential of Japanese Brazilians (Chitose 2006, Kojima 2004, Takenoshita 2006)<sup>4</sup>. The only article to actively advocate migration policies as a

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<sup>3</sup> This might be explained by the accession of Eastern European countries into the EU in 2004, relatively late in respect to the time frame set in this study. Eastern European states were either still outside the EU or recently acceded members, with little or no EU research material available on them when these articles were written.

<sup>4</sup> These articles about Japanese Brazilians either compare them to Chinese 'professional' migrants to predict their earning potential, or examine their access to health insurance in relation to employment (Chitose 2006, Kojima 2004, Takenoshita 2006). Also, marriages between Muslim men and Japanese women are examined with a focus on the proximities of the marriage and labour markets, in other words, marriages of convenience (Kojima 2006). Immigration is therefore always seen as bringing problems, rather than solving them.

solution to Japan's declining fertility was written by a non-Japanese researcher, for whom his non-Japaneseness apparently presents a problem. 'What are the appropriate levels and characteristics of international migration to Japan?', asks Teitelbaum;

Fundamentally, these are questions of societal values rather than scientific analysis, and hence can be assessed only by Japanese leaders supported by sophisticated understanding of the measurement, implications and alternatives involved. Advice on such matters from outside is inappropriate, and in any case unlikely to be well-informed, since the appropriate answers also require nuanced and subtle understanding of the complexities of Japanese society and values (Teitelbaum 2004: 36-7).

The question of international migration was framed as a matter of 'societal values' and therefore somehow special that cannot be answered by scientific analysis. Japanese nationals as 'insiders' are the only suitable group of people that can address the issue as they have a special understanding of what is at stake. Perhaps it is the difficulty of a non-Japanese addressing a Japanese audience here that is most apparent. Earlier in his article, Teitelbaum discussed openly the nationalist sentiments in demographic debates in Europe (Teitelbaum 2004: 34), but the possibilities of such features are not brought up in the Japanese context. Instead, Teitelbaum by humbling himself as an 'outsider [to be] forgiven' and referring to 'quantitative realism', Teitelbaum 'offer[ed] some thoughts as to how responses to such questions might be approached' (Teitelbaum 2004: 37). He thereby proceeded to refer to the globally normative level, UN *Replacement Migration* report, to advocate large-scale immigration as a policy response that 'would produce rapid changes in demographic composition if Japanese fertility rates were to remain at recent lows' (Teitelbaum 2004: 37).

It is in this uneasiness that the discursive limits in the examination of Europe become apparent. This was conveyed in the vague and contradictory discourses of the uniqueness of the Japanese self. In effect, the question of whether or not Japan could 'learn' from Europe was a problem in itself as Japanese society was regarded as special and unique by some Japanese researchers (Suzuki 2006). On the other hand, comparisons between Japan and Europe were made anyway, and with Southern European countries in particular, from which Japan could learn to adapt its constraining traditional values (Nishioka 2003b). Finally, Japanese researchers distanced themselves from the historical legacy of population control, whereas European researchers discussed it openly and challenged it.

An interesting example of the first point is an article by Toru Suzuki (2006), who took a self-professed 'cultural deterministic view on fertility', seeing cultural factors as the main drivers of fertility change. He claims the failures of Japanese pronatalist policies stem from 'cultural features, not governmental effects'. Because Japanese family patterns are so resilient to policy intervention, it is likely that Japanese lowest-low fertility will last longer and fall further than that of its European forerunners (Suzuki 2006: 16). According to Suzuki, the European 'weak' family is deeply rooted in the pre-industrial era, in the Reformation, when marriage was transformed into a civil contract, enhancing women's social position and lowering paternal authority. Therefore, 'gender equity and compatibility between wife's work and childcare in today's moderately low fertility countries have a long historical background' (Suzuki

2006: 15). These claims are problematic on several counts. Feminist social contract critique has long claimed the opposite, that the notion of the social contract actually institutionalised women's subservience (Okin 1979, Pateman 1988). A Foucauldian perspective would argue that it marked a turn in gendered governmentality (REF). Such an approach also demeans if not silences the struggles of previous feminist movements, as well as the broad range of feminist critique in academia today. Suzuki's conclusion reflects a conservative derision for so-called 'weak' family patterns, which he articulates as cohabitation and extramarital births. For example, in interpreting economic support for single mothers as not just support but active *promotion* of extramarital births, Suzuki effectively closes off the possibility to recognise that non-normative family forms exist in Japanese society and consequently also the stigma that still marks single women, for example, in contemporary Japan (Hertog 2008, Holloway et al. 2006, Iwata 2007, Kambara 2007). It is therefore perhaps no surprise that Suzuki saw gender equality as 'a widely accepted political goal', but one strongly tied to the support of women's ability to work and rear children, as opposed to rights, for example, as 'it would be difficult to catch up with Western-Northern Europe, which as a long historical background' in it.

In evaluating whether or not it is worth looking at Europe and therefore whether or not Japan and the EU are comparable, Nobutaka (2003) took a more accommodating perspective. He argued that over the last hundred years or so, Japanese has adopted many features derived from the West, resulting in a hybrid welfare system that combines 'traditional familialistic and postwar liberalist elements' (Fukuda 2003a: 31). Like Suzuki, he believed the main causes for differences were grounded in cultural traditions and norms, seen as 'indigenous and endogenous' therefore distinct from European countries 'irrespective of economic and demographic convergence' (Fukuda 2003a: 31). The two regions were nonetheless seen as comparable as the matter was acknowledged, then dropped thereafter in proceeding to the comparative analysis. Problematic, however, was the view of certain social structures in Japan as being somehow inherent and static. Again, cultural differences were used to explain divergences with Europe, but such claims of intrinsic nature block out possibilities for challenging certain social structures, such as gendered ones, by signing them off as 'innate' cultural features.

The final area of discursive tension was one of the legitimacy of demographic policy. Tensions and discomfort with historical past were recalled. Significantly, these tensions were brought up by non-Japanese researchers in relation to non-Japanese (i.e. European or Chinese) history, but never Japanese. Japanese researchers stood out in their silence on the issue. The first approach was the tie to the pronatalism of Nazis, fascists, and the Soviet Union to a broader historical consistency in pronatalist policy. This also shed light on the 'relative quiet' in West and unified Germany due to the Nazi's rigorous pronatalism that 'somewhat compromised' the discipline of demography itself (Teitelbaum 2004: 29-30). Another approach articulated more concretely that population policy is 'oversimplified' by many intellectuals as a policy of dictatorship or imperialism, pointing out that 'pronatalist policies were implemented by both "rightist" (Hitler, Franco, Mussolini, etc.) and "leftist" dictators (Stalin, Ceausescu, Honecker, etc.) at a time characterised by the scarcity of democracies, but pronatalist policies were also launched in democracies like France and Sweden' (Chesnais 1998: 97). The same goes for antinatalist policies, pointing to a developing countries from regime to regime, with contemporary China as 'the most

extreme case'. Chesnais claims that population policy, whether pro or antinatalist, is possible in a pluralistic democracy on the terms that '(1) it is given financial and political priority, and (2) it is built in accordance with social demand... If adapted to the needs of parents and well explained to citizens, such a policy is likely to become popular' (Chesnais 1998: 97-8). The latter justification is an eerily coercive, and unintentionally captures the nature of the neoliberal governmentality in question; one where economic demands are so closely fused in with the notion of societal well-being that the two appear inseparable and necessary. The final author confirms the need to avoid openly pronatalist population policy, as 'in most European countries overt population policy measures would meet resistance rather than acclamation among the population' (Neyer 2003: 49). Reference is made to campaign and slogans in Austria and Germany that had to be withdrawn due to unfavourable public reactions. Instead, family policy is 'a viable means of encouraging childbearing' (ibid).

As mentioned, these concerns were all voiced by non-Japanese, most likely European researchers. The silence of Japanese scholars on the issue is striking, yet if one was to look beyond the defined corpus of this study but still within the NIPSSR, a surprising reference to such debates can be found in the NIPSSR's 2003 report on 'Child Policies in Japan'. Here, the stance is taken that the Japanese government's policy is not explicitly pronatalist, because it is a matter of choice to have children, and because 'the Japanese public is also sensitive to the government stance toward low fertility because of historical reasons' (NIPSSR 2003: 13). In an unexpectedly astonishing footnote, it is clarified that before the Second World War, the Japanese government pursued a 'strong pronatalist policy to supply future man power for military purposes' (NIPSSR 2003: 21). A cross-reference is also made to the Austrian and German cases mentioned in Neyer's (2003) article, discussed above. Explicit distance is taken from the stigma of this legacy and the terms for the legitimacy of contemporary 'government intervention' are strictly defined in terms of a 'social environment [that] is not supportive enough for women, men and couples to have children even though they wish to have one'. The government therefore does not want to define its demographic policy as a pronatalist one, but as 'a part of a welfare policy that aims [for an] environment more supportive if families with children' (NIPSSR 2003: 13).

Although this is an interesting matter that deserves further attention, it the purpose of this paper limited to drawing attention to this silence. The non-articulation of the historical legacy must be interpreted in the realm of power relations in demographic discourse. It does not mean that the historical legacy is not important or somehow prediscursive, but rather that its articulation is rendered impossible because of the implications it has on broader societal and political norms, from the notion of Japanese uniqueness to the very possibilities of articulation of a demographic discourse. It is at this moment when attention to gender becomes ever more significant. For, the only point of discursive consensus between these documents is in the question of the gendered restructuring of re/productive labour in heterosexual relationships (cf. Bedford 2005, Bedford 2007). 'Family policy' constitutes the main policy approach to declining fertility, which mainly involves the restructuring of women's productive and reproductive labour. Gender equality itself is not addressed as an explicit policy field, yet this is the framework that provides demographic policy with its legitimacy, its normative acceptability as justification for

governmental invention into the organisation of individual lives. 'Family policy' is not equivalent to 'gender equality policy'. Rather, 'gender equality' is the normative political ideal that validates the implementation of 'family policy'. In this respect, we find that demographic researchers see feminist research as valuable material for the framework it can provide 'for reviewing European family policies with the aim to trace their potential effects on fertility' (Neyer 2003: 54-5). Another article concurs that 'feminism and pronatalism work together' because 'in feminist societies like those in Scandinavia, the fertility rate is not as depressed as it is in the sexist societies of Southern Europe' (Chesnais 1998: 96). Clearly, Japanese and Western researchers examined here have very different ways of understanding the terms 'feminist' and 'gender equality' (cf. Suzuki 2006). In both cases, however, they are seen as positive and legitimate ways of addressing the problem of declining fertility.

One might therefore summarize Japan's relationship towards the EU as follows. Japan sees Europe very much through the EU, whose regulation of family policies has a positive influence on member states fertility rates. Clear divisions are made between states and the purposes for studying them. Northern and Western Europe are seen as models with successful family policies. By contrast, Southern European countries are seen as most similar to Japan, as traditionalistic familialist societies resulting in exceptionally low fertility. They define what *not* to do and how *not* to end up. There are some hints of tensions pertaining to the issue of Japanese culture and its place in demographic policy. An attachment to ideas of something intrinsic in the Japanese culture is alluded to, but never explicated. That Europe is so frequently examined and compared in relation to Japan at all suggests a belief that Japanese social structures *are* flexible. In fact, the concern, however uncertain, for 'endogenous' Japanese values is more instrumental in maintaining the notion of Japanese uniqueness than actually arguing for or against it. The silence on the matter of historical legacy is also an exercise of power, silencing that which cannot be spoken, as its articulation would be too problematic, as it already is for Western researchers publishing at the NIPSSR. That which is spoken, however, has a justificatory and legitimising power on demographic policy.

### **Mainstreaming Equality into the EU's Demographic Future**

Like Japan, the discussion in demographic policy in the EU is primarily defensive, of how to maintain stability and competitiveness within ones borders. However the defining difference in how the EC constructed its policy approach was characterised by diversity in both its projection of political geography, social structures and policy solutions. The demographic 'problem' was not primarily a challenge, but an 'opportunity' (REF) that could contribute to the EU and its Member States in various ways. But, for this to be possible required the introduction of new ideas and categories with which to innovate demographic policy solutions.

First of all, declining fertility was seen something that happens at and must be addressed from various political levels; the national, regional, local and the European (European Commission 2006: 3), and reaching the international through immigration. Second, in these documents the EC did not look outside its borders for possible solutions, not even to Japan, even though this is one of the few non-EU industrialised countries that is also experiencing declining fertility. When Japan was mentioned it was in the intermittent inclusion of OECD comparisons of demographic projections.

Instead of searching for solutions or dialogue with non-EU states, its extra-territorial explanations were formative of the position and purpose of the EU in the world system. This involved mapping out the declining fertility in other large or rising economies such as China and India, and the continuance of high fertility rates in Africa and the US, attributed to high immigration and high fertility rates in the latter (European Commission 2007b: 45-7). Europe's immediate geographical neighbours, such as North Africa and the Middle East were also of interest. Growing and productive labour markets elsewhere were seen as profitable investment opportunities for Europeans. But, the combination of high fertility and slow development were possible causes of instability in these countries and could increase the pressure to emigrate to Europe – which would be a threat to Europe (European Commission 2006: 4). This cartographical construction of political geography locates the EU at the centre of movements in global population, a position that becomes ever more apparent when discussing international migration.

For the time being, however, it will suffice to focus on the EU seeing the self as a model. The variations and divergences within the self, often between north and south or east and west, were compared 'to identify the most efficient family policies', taking into account that countries define their objectives differently as well (European Commission 2007a: 5). Again, instead of seeing differences as a burden, it was an opportunity to conduct 'international comparisons' (i.e. comparisons between EU Member States) on the effectiveness of various policy mixes (European Commission 2007b: 72). The conclusions of these comparisons were repeatedly twofold in favour of greater gender equality and migration. Countries that had engaged extensively with gender mainstreaming in public policy and in the private sector were observed to have both high fertility and high levels of female employment (European Commission 2007a: 5). The EC also looked for examples of successful migration from within its borders. Spain and Ireland were held as exemplary of the rapid economic growth resultant of considerable internal and external migration in the EU (European Commission 2007b: 13). The individual Member States were united in the pursuit of these two objectives as EU policy under the Lisbon Strategy.

The implementation of the Lisbon Strategy was seen as essential for the employment of certain groups of people, especially women and the elderly, for 'a more productive and dynamic Europe' (European Commission 2006: 10) through 'innovation and productivity' (European Commission 2005: 2). It was taken as the main framework for 'innovative measures to support the [fertility] rate and judicious use of immigration [so that] Europe can create new opportunities for investment, consumption and creation of wealth' (European Commission 2005: 10). In the 2007 Communication 'Promoting solidarity between the generations', the follow-up to the first 2005 Green Paper, the EC clarified gender equality and the reconciliation of work and family life were 'key conditions' to meet demographic challenges (European Commission 2007a: 3). The Lisbon Strategy offered a framework for this through 'the promotion of equal opportunities and in particular through a better reconciliation of work and private/family life which contributes to female labour force participation' (European Commission 2007a: 5-6). Also the 2006 European Pact for Gender Equality, the Barcelona target for access to childcare, and the Commission's Gender Equality Roadmap were seen specifically as tools to 'meet the demographic challenge' and to help achieve the goals of the Lisbon Strategy and the European Employment Strategy. Reference was also made to infertility as 'biological obstacles

to fertility', whereby the availability of infertility treatments was also seen a potential area of demographic policy relevance. (European Commission 2007b: 10-1, 75, 87)

Greater gender equality was seen as the way to enable people to have as many children as they wish, assuming that people generally want to have more children than they are able to have at present. It would also enable an increase in female labour participation to replace a retiring male workforce, help bear the fiscal welfare consequences of ageing and nourish labour markets with their special skills (cf. Rubery 2005: 7). Public policies promoting gender equality and the reconciliation of work and care were seen as the most successful in this respect. Previously in the 1980s, the correlation between fertility and female labour force participation had been negative, but now it was observed that 'greater gender equality' (i.e. childcare, parental leave for men and women, flexible working hours) 'seems to be conducive to increasing both female labour force participation and fertility'. Gender equality was therefore a simultaneous solution to two crucial demographic problems packaged in one. Gender equality was equated with 'reconciliation'. It was in Member States where reconciliation of work and family life has been less successful that tended to have lowest-low fertility and small increases in female employment. It is therefore a question of each Member State finding the right 'successful policy mix' for itself to enable 'reconciliation' (European Commission 2007b: 75).

Feminists have been critical of the EU's problematic equation of 'reconciliation' with 'gender equality'. First of all, the concept of reconciliation gained a central place only when broached in employment policy, escaping or at best taking advantage of gender equality policy discourse. Leaving aside problems like the sharing of domestic tasks, the emphasis was placed on creating a flexible and productive workforce where men and women balance their mutually exclusive professional and family obligations, as opposed to challenging conventional gender divisions of labour (Stratigaki 2004: 38, 42, Woehl 2008: 71). In effect, attention to gender inequalities was minimised, whereas the possibilities of investment and human capital through reconciliation and women's employment moved to the forefront (Jenson 2008: 142). This explains why, as in other EU family policy documents (Lombardo, Meier 2006: 157-8), references to men and the sharing of household duties remained vague and inconsistent. Indeed, repetitive references to 'the quality of family life' (European Commission 2007a: 3) do not aim to support equality, but rather to protect particular forms of family and its stereotyped gender subjectivities (Stratigaki 2004: 46).

This logic of equality at the EU level does not differ to a great extent from that exercised in Japanese demographic policy, a hint at the discursive interactions of the globalisation of demographic discourse. Yet, there is one marked difference, that is that gender equality in the EU is essentially a matter of gender mainstreaming. In identifying the main demographic policies of the EU, the 2005 Green Paper termed it as 'respecting the principle of equality between men and women and taking this dimension into account in all the Union's policies ("gender mainstreaming")'. Gender mainstreaming, it added, is a set of 'measures to help achieve a better work/life balance [and therefore] play a vital role in raising the employment rate' (European Commission 2005: 13). It was essential to mainstream gender into a broad range of policy areas for successful reconciliation to ensure economic growth.

Here we find the tension identified by several feminists between gender mainstreaming as a feminist goal as opposed to a neoliberal means for efficiency. Feminist discourses of mainstreaming aims to question claims of gender neutrality, while neoliberal techniques of power instil it with the impartiality of governance by numbers (True 2003: 371, Teghtsoonian 2004: 279, Squires 2007:138-43, Bacchi, Eveline 2003: 104-5). As Lombardo has argued, the EU's gender mainstreaming discourse in its family policy documents effectively lacked any feminist definition (Lombardo, Meier 2006: 160). The feminist meaning of gender mainstreaming was shifted and replaced by market-oriented reasonings of utility, efficiency and productivity. This is in line with previous feminist research arguing that gender mainstreaming has only been put into use in areas where gender equality coincided with other, mainly economic priorities in the EU (Stratigaki 2005: 166). Therefore, with the EC's demographic logic, captured in statements like 'never in history has there been economic growth without population growth' (European Commission 2005: 5), gender mainstreaming enters the discourse as facilitative of both as a technology of governance and self-governance.

There remains, however, another issue which is absent from the Japanese context, and that is the issue of migration, which European researchers touched upon but did not elaborate on its logic other than its necessity as 'replacement migration'. The question of migration in the EU was not so straightforward however, but was characterised by particular notions of who and what kinds of people should be admitted into the EU and on what grounds.

First of all, increasing fertility was seen as the first and ideal demographic solution, but insufficient by itself as it would take at least two decades to even out the burdensome generational differences (European Commission 2007b: 87). Migration was observed to have had a positive effect on economic growth and had 'become vital to ensure population growth' in certain Member States (European Commission 2005: 2). Research of both the OECD and the UN, therefore international normative authorities, were referred to as recommending migration to address labour shortages (European Commission 2008: 25). Despite the explicit advocacy of migration and the belief in its necessary and 'crucial role in solving future labour market shortages' (European Commission 2007b: 30), it was not believed that it would have a definitive overall impact. The 'truly massive and increasing flows of young migrants' that UN scenario calculations indicate would be required to halt population ageing was, without further explanation, not a viable solution, concluding that 'clearly, increased immigration cannot prevent ageing, but it can realistically contribute to alleviating labour market bottlenecks'. The UN recommendation on replacement migration showed that immigration could stop population ageing, but the outright rejection of this option showed that such numbers of migrants were not desirable. Instead, migration was a solution to alleviate labour shortages, rather than end them. As such, 'gender equality' was given priority. International migration was after all seen as 'the most volatile demographic process'; unpredictable, unreliable and difficult to monitor, in addition to the potential dangers of instabilities in countries of origin and dissatisfaction among European citizens (European Commission 2008: 5).

The reproductive productivity of migrant women also received some attention in this respect. With reference to EU and UN data, Hispanic, non-Hispanic, Mexican and Turkish women amongst others became objects of interest in trying to determine if the



presence of migrants in a country yield higher overall fertility levels (European Commission 2008: 27). The conclusion accorded with the need to focus on mainstreaming gender in the EU, stating that ‘although migrant groups on average have higher fertility than native born population, the impact of this on the national fertility level is usually overestimated’, especially as succeeding generations take on the fertility behaviour of their host/new national country.

The way in which migrants and their labour was understood reflected the tension in the appropriation of migration as a demographic solution. Immigrants, like European women, were seen as ‘unlocked potential’ or untapped resources that needed to be integrated into the European labour market (European Commission 2007b: 109). This included both skilled and unskilled labour, and internal and external migration (European Commission 2006: 11). Here the EU was again placed cartographically at the centre of world political geography. Europe was seen as an attractive migration destination, so much so that the management of migration was ‘a difficult balancing act between openness and control and searching for a proper mix of selected and non-selected migrants’ (European Commission 2008: 25). Care must be taken in the control of the immigrant influx, not just numerically, but profiling the labour skills and proficiency of individual migrants in terms of their desirability for immigration. A need for more high-skilled migrants was necessary to balance the entry of low-skilled labour, which seemed to flow in without end (European Commission 2007b: 113). Yet, whether high or low-skilled workers, their legal migration and legal employment was essential because this would financially contribute to uphold public pension schemes jeopardised by population ageing (European Commission 2006: 5). Carefully hierarchalised non-European subject positions were thereby produced and endowed with labour functions and purposes.

Bringing gender back into this setting provides for a more nuanced understanding of these subject categories and their problematic assemblage in migration policy discourse. In particular, the mainstreaming of equality into the migration discourse was instilled with neoliberal rationalities of economic governance, whereby it prioritised the rights and needs of certain migrant subjectivities over others. The EC advocated equality and non-discrimination on the basis that immigration was ‘only helpful if immigrants and their descendants have equal opportunities for successful integration within the economy and society of their host country’ (European Commission 2007b: 113). Equality was a matter of being able to extract labour power, to maximise and channel it into where it is required. It consisted of extending the reach of biopower to migrant populations, normalising them and integrating them by ensuring their capacity for self-governance (ref. Foucault & other research). This was legitimised with an internationalist discourse of human rights, whereby the EU saw it necessary that it actively implement successfully a coherent immigration policy. It was seen as the very role of the EU, ‘founded on principles of non-discrimination and the respecting of differences, to inform public opinion and combat prejudice, to identify the real objectives to be overcome and also to point to the riches of diversity’ (European Commission 2006: 11). The EU presented itself as a responsible entity that bestows rights on individuals, manages ‘diversity’ and engages in the public education of tolerance and non-discrimination (European Commission 2008: 6).

When it came to migrant women, they were seen as having ‘particular problems’ in the labour market as they face ‘dual discrimination’ because of discrimination on the

basis of both their gender and ethnic origin (European Commission 2007b: 112). Furthermore, because of an observed high employment of 'non-native' women in some countries like Spain and Greece in care work, it was concluded that these countries 'have attracted female workers in particular'. These statements produce an approach to multiple discriminations that effectively withholds the possibility of being critical of sex-segregated labour statistics. To continue to see forms of discrimination as mutually independent and equality as a cumulative technical process as opposed to an understanding of intersectionality that demands a genuinely integrative approach (Squires 2007: 166) is to miss out on the interactions between different subjective categories and their consequences. Feminist research has been highly critical of the blindness of EU documents when it comes to intersectionality, where women feature a homogenous category experientially detached from other cross-cutting dimensions such as race, sexuality or ability (Lombardo, Meier 2006: 158). Because of the normativity of middle and upper-class women's interests, the specific power relations affecting 'other' women like the care workers in question become depoliticised and normalised with language of economic competitiveness. By contrast, feminist research as shown that care workers continue to be a solution to the global economic care problem in the so-called first world that recruits cheap female labour from the third world, forming what are generally termed global care chains (Anderson 2000, Ehrenreich, Hochschild 2003, Peterson 2007).

In sum, the EU's demographic discourse as produced by the EC locates demographic goals within the framework of the Lisbon Agenda is highly self-oriented; the self was mapped geo-politically in terms of demography with its neighbours and other regions. The diversity within the self was an asset in terms of the possibilities it provided for reaching demo-economic goals. At the same time, categories of discrimination were trimmed down or evaporated (such as gender and ethnicity); they were valuable in terms of removing obstacles for the utility maximisation of the re/productive labour of gendered bodies (for example, through 'reconciliation'). Yet, the reach of gender mainstreaming did not extend far beyond the 'reconciliation' of work and home for middle-class European women. Even though international migration was seen as a major solution to declining fertility within the EU, questions of gender and gender equality were suddenly not so important there. Migration and gender equality were therefore kept apart from each other, as separate issues, as separate but interdependent solutions to the labour deficiencies resulting from declining fertility.

### **Transnational demographic interactions: Tensions and spaces for contestation**

As becomes clear from the examination of the documents of the Japanese government and the EC, each produced very different demographic discourses to the extent that they hardly appear comparable. One might say that the EU and its Member States were subject to the gaze of the Japanese demographic institutions that the EC's demographic institutional entities did not return. However, I would argue that there are three discursive happenings that merit attention for the meaning they bring to the demographic discourses of one another. Things 'happen' first, when Japan examines the EU and second, when the EU plans its demographic future. Finally, together they tell us about the problems and tensions involved in the articulation of policy issues. This demands a politicisation of the terms on which these policies are founded, which is what this paper has striven to accomplish.

The main question posed in each of the NIPSSR's articles regarding Europe is essentially at matter of the extent to which European countries and their systems are comparable, or even transferrable to Japan. Despite the exceptional outright objection to such comparisons, the two are generally held similar enough for comparisons to be warranted. Although some endorse the pursuit of broader and more effective family policies in Japan, there were two points of hesitation or disregard that are apparent. First, gender equality was seen as an integral part of a successful fertility policy as something that came naturally to European countries. Since they had a long historical background in it, gender equality was a widely accepted political goal there. The implication is, of course, that it is not in Japan and therefore its implementation there is much more difficult. This allows for an avoidance of addressing gender equality in Japan and the possible changes in societal structures that proper dedication to the cause would demand. Gender equality was accepted as a political goal, but mainly as a normative political value, and to the extent that it would aid the realisation of women's 'work-life balance'.

The reluctance to transform societal structures was also evident in the question of international migration. This was a non-issue for Japanese researchers and addressed exclusively in the context of Europe/EU by non-Japanese researchers. The hesitant European researcher suggesting that Japan should increase its international migration reflected the difficulties not only of discussing migration as a whole, but also lack of a legitimate discursive space for even non-Japanese experts to be able to voice alternative concerns.

When looking at the EU, specifically at the EC's demographic policy reporting documents, there were four points of particular interest. First, the EU was not interested in Japan as a specific comparative case study. When Japan was brought up, it was generally amongst a host of other states with demographic problems. This way the EU's external reach was more about discursively negotiating its demographically defined world political position. The self was held as a diverse body of possible models and solutions for mutual appropriation; some states were models of gender equality, others of migration policy, but all could contribute informationally to the building of the EU's demographic future. This relates to the second point, that neoliberal discourse, through the Lisbon Strategy, was much more explicit in the EU than in Japan. Labour, family, migration and gender equality policy were all knotted together as mutually dependent policy areas under demographic policy, all essential for a competitive EU through maximising the human resources available. EU demographic planning was therefore more explicitly competitive, inclusive and intrusive than Japanese discourse. This was reflected in the third difference, that is, the emphasis of mainstreaming equality. Gender equality and other areas of equality were seen as facilitative of the realisation of demographic policy, including international migration, the fourth and most striking difference. The way in which migration was not only, but essential contrasted strongly with the Japanese silence on the matter.

For the EU, migration is was necessarily something that must be addressed, and it is, in terms of what is seen as useful to the region. To articulate the necessity of migration makes inevitable the expression of conditions by which this should happen. A continued silence on the matter, on the other hand, enables an avoidance of the issue of migration altogether as a serious demographic policy issue that should be

addressed. Different discursive preconditions also exist between the two. The EU sees its population as diverse and sees this diversity as an economic asset. The Japanese government, on the other hand, has long upheld the discourse of homogeneity in its legislation. This is apparent, for example, when reviewing the (almost non-existent) recognition of indigenous rights by the state; it was not until June 2008 that the Diet recognised one indigenous people, the Ainu (cf. Siddle 1997, Siddle 2003). Likewise, there continues to be little to no legislation protecting the rights other minorities, such as Korean Japanese, Chinese Japanese, the Ryukyans/Okinawans, Burakumin and *Nikkeijin*<sup>5</sup>. Challenging this notion, John Lie argues that ‘the myth of monoethnic Japan is fundamentally a post-World War II construct... The truth of the matter is that Japan has always been multiethnic’ and it is really the increase in Asian migrant workers since the late 1980s that has posed the first serious threat to this discourse (Lie 2001: 141).

This does not mean that simply the recognition of minorities and the introduction of a more open approach to immigration is an end in itself or sufficient as such. As the case of the EU has shown, an immigration discourse creates a new space for the articulation of diverse identities, but what attention is accorded to them and how, to whom, is still a matter of power and can and does result in discrimination. Yet, this space also provides a space for counter-discourses. In Japan, a broadly-conceived immigration discourse in demographic policy could provide a space for the articulation of still invisible concerns, such as the status of many migrant women (Piper 2003), both legal and illegal, like entertainment workers (often in the sex industry) (Allison 1994), the trafficking of women (Piper 1999, Watanabe 1995, Yayori 1997: 152-3), and the discrimination often faced by non-Japanese (especially Filipina) women married to Japanese men (Piper 1999, Burgess 2004). Furthermore, a broadly-conceived contestation of the notion of a cohesive national ‘family’ could also provide opportunities to challenge the hegemonic housewife-mother and *salaryman*-father family model by making visible for example non-heterosexual family forms that exist in Japanese society (cf. e.g. Kamano, Khor 2008).

What this paper has shown is that demographic discourse in both Japan and the EU have particular discursive foundations prescribing what society is, who it should be composed of and for what purpose. Both produce a hegemonised neoliberal discourse in this respect. The prioritisation of gender equality in one way or another in both cases does not reflect the advancement of a primarily feminist agenda, but rather the engagement of gender equality in a broader biopolitical project of neoliberal governmentality. In the case of the EU, immigration and minority rights are also ‘mainstreamed’ into this agenda, not unproblematically. In examining Europe/EU, Japan defines itself and confronts various tensions within its own discursive fabric apparent only in a conspicuous silence on immigration. Nonetheless, in both Japan and the EU, bringing gender equality into the realm of demography enables a legitimate pronatalist discourse. In both cases, it lacks feminist content. In the EU, this means a lack of attention to issues of intersectionality (for example, insufficiently addressing those outside the middle-class EU citizen norm). The continuing lack of

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<sup>5</sup> Burakumin are the descendants of social outcasts of the former feudal caste system, still seen by many as contaminated, although this view is changing (Neary 2003). *Nikkeijin* refers to South American-Japanese descendants up to the third generation and their spouses, mainly from Brazil and Peru, who have returned to Japan to work mainly in unskilled job sectors and are regularly subject to discrimination (cf. Sellek 1997).

legislative tools to counter inequalities means that gender equality rests at a rhetorically normative level, bringing legitimacy to pronatalist family policies, and in Japan enabling a continued avoidance of challenges to the idea of a homogenous national 'family'. Overall, the isolation of these two policy fields from one another reflects the extent to which gender equality is utilised as a means to a neoliberally permeated demographic end, rather than a feminist one.

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