

WDA Discussion Paper

On Demographic Challenges

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“The Power in Demography – Unlocking the Value of Health”

Clear Thinking and Careful Analysis with
the Aid of “*Demographic Heat Maps*”

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Foreword

by Professor Thomas Zeltner

The history of humanity is also the history of **constant demographic transformation**. Mankind has been and continues to be a migrant species and has over the centuries successfully conquered the entire planet. **Humans** are also smart and creative creatures who have succeeded in **improving their living conditions** over time such that more and more of their offspring survive the critical first years of life and enjoy a steadily increasing lifespan.

These **evolutions** have substantially gained in **speed since** the second half of the **19th century**. The development has, however, not been homogeneous, resulting in very different demographic patterns in various continents and countries. Understanding the causes and dynamics of these differences is not just of scientific interest. It also allows us to **shape the future** with custom-made interventions, respecting the local **opportunities** and values.

The tool of **“Demographic Heat Maps”** presented in this paper adds a new and promising instrument for **policy makers and business leaders** to better understand each local situation and to bring added value to the life of local communities.

It asks, however, for some level of **cooperation between different** regions and countries to address population dynamics across regions and thereby enhancing the benefits of respective interventions. Because another phenomenon needs to be considered, namely that we are **“tied together** into a single **globalized marketplace and village”¹**.

And finally, to remind us, as is so well formulated in the preamble of the Swiss Constitution, that the **strength of a population** is measured by the **well-being of its weakest members**.

Professor Thomas Zeltner
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¹ Thomas Friedman, cited in Ryan Poll, *Main Street and Empire: The Fictional Small Town in the Age of Globalization* (Rutgers University Press, 2012), p. 160.