Population Politics in the Tropics

*Population Politics in the Tropics* explores colonial population policies in Angola between 1890 and 1945 from a transimperial perspective. Using a wide array of previously unused sources and multilingual archival research from Angola, Portugal and beyond, Samuël Coghe sheds new light on the history of colonial Angola, showing how population policies were conceived, implemented and contested. He analyses why and how doctors, administrators, missionaries and other colonial actors tried to grasp and quantify demographic change and ‘improve’ the health conditions, reproductive regimes and migration patterns of Angola’s ‘native’ population. Coghe argues that these interventions were inextricably linked to pervasive fears of depopulation and underpopulation, but that their implementation was often hampered by weak state structures, internal conflicts and multiple forms of African agency. Coghe’s fresh analysis of demography, health and migration in colonial Angola challenges common ideas of Portuguese colonial exceptionalism.

Samuël Coghe is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Global History at the Freie Universität Berlin.
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Population Politics in the Tropics

Demography, Health and Transimperialism in Colonial Angola

Samuël Coghe
Freie Universität Berlin
For Laura and Nora
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Note on the Spelling of Proper Names

Geographical names are spelt according to the current official norms in Angola. Orthography has changed at various times in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and is now close to the orthography used in the 1920s and 1930s (e.g. Luanda, Cuanza river, Quiçama). Many places in Angola and neighbouring countries have changed names during and after the colonial period. I have retained the names most commonly used by the Portuguese during the period under study (e.g. São Salvador do Congo, Nova Lisboa, Léopoldville, Northern Rhodesia). At the time, Portuguese names were often interchangeably used with African names (e.g. Nova Lisboa = Huambo). Names of African peoples are spelt according to international Bantu standards (e.g. Kuvala, Kwanyama).