a causal effect itself. If that is our benchmark, most of the evaluations referenced by the country studies do not pass muster. Thus the findings about the effects of the governance reforms, which point in opposing directions across countries to start with, are tentative at best.

Sampling the case studies, in the fascinating Czech case a hybrid of the procedural and the market models of governance seems to have been hijacked by the ‘fragmented, unfinished and inconsistent innovations’ caused by the availability of EU structural funds. These crowded out budget resources earmarked for active labour market policies before accession. In the instructive chapter about the United Kingdom, Sharon Wright does not just present the waves of reforms moving Britain from a procedural towards a procedural-market-corporate hybrid model that is still mostly procedural in a clear and convincing manner. She also helps us understand the changes by adding the political and macroeconomic background that the reader often misses from the other, more narrowly construed country chapters. Wright is also in an enviable position when analysing the (mixed) effects of the governance reforms. When spelling out the outcome, output and process effects of the ‘New Deal programmes’, the ‘Employment Zones’, and ‘Working Neighbourhoods Pilots’, she could build her judgements on such by now slightly dated but very thorough and methodologically advanced studies as NAO (2007), based on longitudinal cohort data, and the survey of Hasluck and Green [2007].

In conclusion, if policy makers want to get welfare policy measures right, they cannot afford just to play around with euros, days and percentages and not to consider also changes in governance mechanisms. In order to get them right, they have to be able to predict where what sort of changes can achieve what sort of results. We need answers to questions like: given the kind of country we live in, if we want a more efficient, fairer, or more empowering activation policy, what exactly should we change about the public employment agencies? Those answers are still a long way away, but reading this book can take the reader one step closer to them.

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References

Sven Kunisch, Stephan A. Boehm and Michael Boppel (eds.): From Grey to Silver. Managing the Demographic Change Successfully

Aside from globalisation, climate change, shrinking natural resources and urbanisation, demographic change is one of the most crucial issues of the upcoming decades [Vanhuysse and Goerres 2012]. ageing and shrinking populations in some parts of the world and massively growing populations in others will present completely new challenges and opportunities
for our socio-political and economic systems, including pension policies [e.g. Tepe and Vanhuysse 2012]. This book proposes an interdisciplinary approach to shed light on the entrepreneurial and business perspectives of demographic change, including contributions from economics, organisational psychology, human resource management, marketing and consulting. The result is a scientifically grounded, succinct overview of the most significant fields in which companies and policy makers should react, or ‘pro-act’, to deal with population aging. It has an introduction and three main sections that include two types of chapter—academic papers and shorter comments labelled either ‘point of view’, ‘counterpoint’, or examples of good practice. This format underlines the editors’ attempt to provide a profound yet succinct volume mainly aimed at practitioners, though as I show below this is not wholly successful. In the excellent introduction, the editors elaborate a short integrated framework for investigating the challenges and the opportunities posed by the demographic change. Describing the triggers, as well as the short-, mid- and long-term effects of demographic change, they identify three major economic implications, which they explore through distinct ‘perspectives’—a general economic and social perspective, a human resource and leadership perspective and a marketing and innovation perspective. For its brevity, this is a very useful overview of current understandings of the most relevant themes and issues.

As the current levels of youth unemployment in Greece and Spain were not yet foreseeable in 2010, the volume’s first main section deals with the question whether keeping older workers working longer will be able to compensate for the shrinking of the labour force in OECD countries. Whilst this will develop into a major issue in the medium and long term, given the high levels of unemployment caused by the financial crisis in certain countries at the moment, it is unlikely to be viewed as an area of immediate priority by most politicians in the near future. Golo Hensecke devotes the most interesting part of his chapter to the comparison of different labour market institutions and the effects of pension policies on employment rates amongst older workers. One of his main findings is that these rates are not simply affected by employment protection policies or the generosity of the pension system on their own, but that they are the result of their interplay. The second chapter in the first section, by Martin Karlsson and Florian Klohn, deals with how age and health influence labour productivity and the development of care costs. They point out that very little is known about the influence of age on productivity, whereas health seems a much better predictor. Karlsson and Klohn present the results of an empirical study in which they analysed the development of long-term care (LTC) costs in all 290 Swedish municipalities. Even though care costs are not wholly predictable, their findings clearly show that local age structure and mortality rates have a big influence on LTC costs [pace Fries 1980]. This means that the outlook on future care costs is pessimistic for regions with a strongly ageing population (not only in Sweden).

The shifting concept of work is Carola Wolf’s theme. She argues that our society is currently undergoing a shift from the Protestant work ethic to an ‘emotional work’ concept, where physical stresses are increasingly replaced by emotional ones. Carola Wolf skilfully shows how society’s understanding of the role of work changed from the 16th century to the present day. She is insightful on the influence of the integration of women into the workplace and she describes present and predicts future intergenerational conflicts arising from different work values. She concludes with a discussion of the consequences of these developments for individuals and for organisations.
Carola Wolf’s paper already touches on many themes which are taken up in the second main section which approaches demographic change from the angle of human resources and leadership. Florian Kunze, Stephan A. Boehm and Heike Bruch try to answer the question how companies can manage five different generations in the workforce. They begin by outlining five generations—Post-War, Economic-Boom, Baby-Boom, Golf (as in Volkswagen) and Internet—and their characteristics with regard to work. They argue that leadership needs to be as flexible as the characteristics of the different generations. They then go on to elaborate different leadership styles appropriate to the different generations in a useful, practice-oriented way. Employees in the Post-War generation work best under ‘experience-based leadership’, which accords extensive life and work experience its due respect and a role in decision-making. The Economic-Boom generation prefer ‘meaningful participative’ leadership in which the purpose (‘meaning’) of their work is fully explained to them. Development-oriented leadership is suggested for Baby-Boomers, who are supposedly more competitive and constantly on the lookout for personal advancement at work. For the Golf, the fourth, generation the authors advise a pragmatic goal-oriented leadership style for employees as down-to-earth as the eponymous vehicle. The Internet generation prefers direct and vision-oriented leadership which sets clear goals and limits. Though these styles are clearly oversimplifications, they provide useful sociological food for thought as to the different requirements of different generations at work.

Heike Schröder, Matt Flann and Michael Muller-Camen discuss why human resource management should change its focus from a youth-centric to an age-neutral understanding. Based on examples from Germany and Britain they examine the influence of demographic change on the HR strategies of different sectors (steel, chemical, retail and schools) and conclude that there are no single best practices applicable to all sectors. Age-neutral HR management has to take institutional contexts and sectorial specifics into account. In her refreshing counterpoint, Eva Bilhuber Galli calls the reader’s attention to the fact that age is not ‘the ultimate driver of (un)productiveness’. She alludes to the significance of learning attitudes and advocates a holistic organisational learning approach instead of an age-related HR management approach.

How age diversity can influence work performance and the implications for organisations is the topic of the chapter by Stephan A. Boehm, Miriam K. Baumgaertner, David J. G. Dwertmann and Florian Kunze. They distinguish between negative and positive diversity effects and provide an overview of the current literature on diversity outcomes and diversity factors. Based on this they describe practical implications and provide useful recommendations for practitioners. Peter Greve and Winfried Ruigrok’s study on post-executive careers in Switzerland, by contrast, is ambitious but of limited relevance to other occupational groups or even countries.

The final section shifts the perspective to ageing customers and their changing needs. Angelika C. Bullinger, Mathias Rass and Sabrina Adamczyk discuss how online innovation contests can help us in managing challenges caused by an ageing population. They begin with a brief overview of the history and design elements of innovation contests. They then describe two examples of how innovation with and for older people works in practice. The next paper by Frank Leyhausen and Alexander Vossen also refers to one of these examples but focuses on product and communication. They also enrich our marketing vocabulary by categories of the mature market that range from the ‘go-goes’, who are experiencing their parents’ and their own ageing but themselves ‘feel young at heart’,
to the ‘slow-goes’, the ‘no-goes’ and, finally, to the mentally-confused ‘no-knows’.

Whether marketing experts who demonstrate such a complete lack of empathy and respect for their customers can be successful remains to be seen. The authors underline once again that the 50+-costumers represent an extremely heterogeneous group compared to other age groups [see also Wolfe and Snyder 2003].

The last chapter, by Florian Kohlbacher, Pascal Gudorf and Cornelius Herstatt, argues that the Japanese silver market presents an attractive opportunity for foreign (German) companies. Only a few Japanese companies recognised around a decade ago that their country contained the world’s largest proportion of seniors. One would expect that by now a large number of Japanese and non-Japanese companies would be exploiting the Japanese mature market as an opportunity to raise their turnover. However, neither local nor foreign companies can be found developing, producing or selling products for older customers in large numbers. The study presented shows that only one in five German companies doing business in Japan offers products or special services for older customers. The authors argue that the vast majority of German companies acting on the Japanese market have not yet reached their potential. Kohlbacher and his colleagues note that there are several reasons for this but do not explicitly name them. What remains is that companies not only forego the chance to increase their market share in Japan, they also miss the opportunity to test new products and strategies before some of the European countries will overtake Japan in the race of the world’s oldest population [see also United Nations 2004].

The volume as a whole thus offers a range of approaches whilst providing concise overviews over the full range of issues involved in the economic consequences of the demographic change, if necessarily succinctly. Whilst the key idea to combine theoretical and practical approaches is, perhaps unavoidably, executed with varying success in the different chapters, it is on the whole a readable volume which can be recommended to both academics and practitioners.

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References

Robert Frodeman, Julie Thompson Klein and Carl Mitcham (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity

This impressive Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity is not an anthology of already published material, but rather includes 37 new essays related to the many possible intersections between disciplines. The co-editors explain their goal as follows: ‘to introduce a greater degree of order in the field of interdisciplinary research, education, and practice by creating a work that will become