



BOOK REVIEW

Xiao Feng, Alina M. Popescu (Eds.), *Infrastrukturprobleme bei Bevölkerungsrückgang (Infrastructure problems related to population decline)*, BWV – Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008 (in German and English)

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Infrastrukturprobleme bei Bevölkerungsrückgang (Infrastructure problems related to population decline) is a tribute to **Professor Peter Friedrich**, one of the most distinguished scholars of the world's regional science community, on the occasion of his retirement from the University of Armed Forces of Munich (March 2006), followed by his transfer as Professor Emeritus to the University of Tartu, Estonia.

The volume is edited by **Xiao Feng**, a close collaborator to Professor Friedrich and **Alina M. Popescu**, his latest disciple, who succeeded to attract within this project outstanding academics and friends of Professor Friedrich as well as young scholars he has supported in their professional evolution. The contributions are organized in six chapters, all subordinated to the main topic. They are written either in English or German.

Chapter One addresses issues regarding the *influence of population decline on infrastructure*, including three papers.

It is opened by **Walter Buhr**, who offers a deep insight into the essence of the term “infrastructure” and discusses the role of the state and the impact of population decline and ageing. A special emphasis is put on the influences of institutional and personal infrastructure on material infrastructure output, pointing out the key issues of economic efficiency in the decision-making process.

Xiao Feng and Qian Yang analyse the structural effects of population decline at spatial level on production and investment and highlight the particular effects of agglomeration. By means of an algebraic model and numerical example they demonstrate that – unexpectedly – the agglomerated centres may continue to increase.

Peter Eichhorn concentrates his investigation on the demographic changes in connection with public utility firms of local interest. He reveals the diversification of these firms profile from “classical” activities to additional, new ones such as consulting, project development, banking, finance, transportation infrastructure, technical centres, etc. They are addressed from the viewpoint of the demand changes based on demographic decline and ageing, the structure of supply, governance watch, corporate governance and improvement of transparency in relation with citizens.

Chapter Two refers to *the financial problems induced by population decline*.

Georg Milbradt analyses the social, political and administrative consequences of demographic changes providing a case study for Saxony. One of the basic ideas is that the new strategies should focus on the better use of human resources by attracting the inactive persons on the labour market. Building infrastructure in accordance with future demand is also considered.

Chang Woon Nam and Rüdiger Porsche refer in their paper to the structural reform of social assistance at local level pointing out the local administration response in terms of supplying the necessary financial support. The need for new administrative structures able to take over the responsibilities regarding the additional financial requirements is considered.

Sylvia Kreiss discusses the financial instruments for public investment in infrastructure considering the major demographic changes. A special emphasis is put on Toll Collect as one of the largest public-private partnerships in Germany and one of the most controversial addressed in terms of risk taking and incentive system.

Chapter Three deals with *adapting the transportation infrastructure to the housing estate stock considering the population decrease*.

Helmut Brede examines the ways to adapt the strategies of local public utility firms to population decline and discusses the possible solutions such as price increase, the reduction of the service supply, required technical changes related to infrastructure, financial incentives and the firm representatives' participation in the decision-making process at local level.

David Boyce proposes an account on road network design method, concentrating on expressway spacing, system configuration and economic evaluation. He discusses the example offered by the expressway construction of the past 40 years in the Chicago area, expressing his belief that there are opportunities to learn from the past American and European experiences with urban transport development and "to apply this knowledge to the planning of the emerging modern metropolises in the developing countries" (p.158).

Helmut Jenkis addresses the question of urban planning under the circumstances created by ageing and demographic decline. A forecasting of Germany's population at 2050 horizon is provided, highlighting the expected changes in terms of age, gender, etc. and influence upon urban systems in general and housing in particular. The author also discusses the mistakes made in East Germany with regard to real estate market evaluation mainly as a result of internal migration.

Wolf Gottschalk focuses on local energy-related issues in connection with market liberalization and population decline. He refers to the new legal conditions regarding the energy supply, the adaptations in terms of investments in networks and equipment, labour as well as internal organization, owners and clients' behaviour, cooperation and competition with other firms.

Günter Valjak offers an essay on changes over time in cultural activities and free time spending, emphasizing the importance of location to an event organization. The social consequences of demographic ageing, unemployment increase, pension reduction, etc. on the interest in cultural and other free time activities are discussed, revealing the new trend of focus on young population as target groups.

Chapter Four concentrates on *the influence of demographic decline on health sector*.

Günther E. Braun and Jan Güssow discuss the perspectives of stationary supply of health services based on demographic changes. A series of prognoses is provided with regard to health care in the hospital system and its costs at the 2050 horizon, considering the population decline and various

behavioural illnesses induced by civilization tendencies. The consequences for hospital planning are also addressed.

Günter Neubauer highlights the effects of demographic changes on health services in Germany. The starting point consists in the demographic evolution and the social insurance system, offering a forecasting of the material resource needs until 2040. He also refers to the relationship between the election cycle and health system reform.

Chapter Five envisages *the economic incentives in relation with population decline*.

Florian W. Bartholomae and Alina M. Popescu focus on the regional competition for attracting population. They have identified the German regions of positive and negative net migration, the consequence being the competition between communities for attracting additional population or, at least, to stabilize it. Various mathematical models are proposed in order to identify the optimal demographic policy.

Ernst Mönnich deals with the disadvantages of suburb development in Germany, with the land of Bremen as a case study. He analyses the city reaction to an acute competition in connection with the risks of population orientation to suburbs (population density reduction in central areas of the city, the expanding of infrastructure while financial resources decrease, the filling of empty facilities in central areas by immigrants or low income population).

Robert W. Obermeier discusses the economic perspectives determined by the demographic decline in Munich region. A demographic diagnosis of Munich region in comparison to the whole land of Bavaria is provided, followed by a couple of prognosis variants of the demographic trends. The expected impact on regional economic development is emphasized, considering that, compared to other German lands and regions, Munich may even attract additional population. The main issues of interest in this context are ageing active population, family and profession and qualification.

Zizi Goschin, Daniela L. Constantin and Cornelia Parlog refer to the dynamics and territorial distribution of human resources and infrastructure-related issues in Romania. They analyse the demographic potential and human resources trends since 1990 in relation with the economic and social infrastructure evolution at both national and regional level. Possible influences of infrastructure state upon population dynamics are also envisaged.

Chapter Six addresses the issue of *labour market and demographic decline*.

Zenon Wisniewski focuses on unemployment and migration problems in Poland. They are mainly discussed in connection with Poland's accession to the European Union, emphasizing the migration consequences post-2004. A survey with regard to Polish population's opinion about economic development chances is also presented, revealing an overall optimistic view.

Joanna Malgorzata Landmesser proposes a comparative micro-econometric analysis of unemployment in Poland and Germany. An empirical inquiry into the effects of certain variables upon individual unemployment duration is performed, showing that the main influence is exerted by age, gender, education level and nationality. It is pointed out that a younger age reduces the duration of unemployment in a higher degree in Germany in comparison to Poland.

To conclude, the whole book makes a great advance in the study of two very sensitive, interrelated issues of the contemporary world – the demographic decline and the high costs entailed by infrastructure development. The impact of the changes in population behaviour on urban systems' evolution also brings about a very interesting scientific insight.