Active ageing in Europe: methods, policies, and institutions ; Austrian country report

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Forschungsbericht / research report

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:
SSG Sozialwissenschaften, USB Köln

The ACTIVAGE Project

Active Ageing In Europe: Methods, Policies, and Institutions

**Deliverable D1:
WP 1 – Austrian Country Report**

January, 2004

HPSE-CT-2002-00102

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Introduction

In Austria, like elsewhere in Europe, demographic ageing dominates public policy agendas. Currently, Austrian politics is caught in a divisive and increasingly bitter controversy about how to reform pension and health care systems. While policy actors agree that demographic ageing threatens the financial sustainability of social insurance systems (see Box 1), they vehemently disagree about how to distribute future financial burdens across generations and social groups. Most Austrian policy-makers and experts, then, are busy arguing about who is to bear the costs of demographic ageing.

However, a significant minority (in Austria and elsewhere) argue that there is far more to demographic ageing than costs. Focussing reform efforts on the financial aspects of social protection alone, they suggest, will probably fall short of requirements. In order to prepare Austrian society for the challenges of ageing, they contend, policy must become more pro-active. Adapting successfully to demographic ageing calls for fundamental changes to social structures, a significant shift of values, and the departure from prevalent social practices. If it is to make any significant impact, Austrian policy-making needs to broaden its focus from mere welfare state reform to an active ageing and senior citizen policy.

What, then, is the state of the active ageing and senior citizen policy agenda in Austria? Answering this question involves looking closely at the socio-institutional topography of ageing policy-making in Austria. (Section 1). In section 2, the report goes on to outline the Austrian policy debates about active ageing and senior citizenship policy within and across these policy networks. The last section focuses on what actors in the different policy networks are actually doing (Section 3). The concluding section draws up a balance sheet of barriers and opportunities that emerge from the Austrian institutional and policy landscape for active ageing policies.

Box 1: Demographic Ageing in Austria

The Austrian population, like the populations of most European countries, is ageing. A wide range of factors, not least progress in medical technology and health care provision, have contributed to the steady increase in life expectancy. While an Austrian male born in 1960 could expect to live 65,4 years, a male child born in 1998 could expect to live 74,7 years. Like elsewhere, the development of female life expectancy in Austria is even more impressive: the average life expectancy at birth increased by nine years in the same time period from 79,9 to 80,9 years. Changes in labour force composition, shifting societal values and attitudes as well as a more balanced distríbution of education, in turn, have conspired to keep fertility rates well below the replacement level. In the medium term, meaning in the next 20-30 years, the share of people over 60 years relative to the rest of the population is projected to rise from 20,8% in 2000 to 34,7% 2030 and then progress to 37% in 2050. Increased longevity also means that the relative and absolute number of very old, meaning people 75 years of age or more, will also sharply increase from its current level of 7,2% to 12,1% in 2030. By the same token, the young are set to lose their already tenuous position, at least in terms of human ecology or demography. Low and falling fertility rates further exacerbate the rates of growth old and very old people. By 2050, demographers predict that Austrians aged 0-19 years will only make up 17%. This compares to 22,6% in 2000

(Seniorenbericht, 2000).

1 The Institutional Topography of the Ageing Issue in Austria

In the jargon of policy scientists, ageing is a "transversal" issue. This means that in Austria, like in most other European countries, the institutional landscape is fragmented across (at least) four policy domains. Policy actors in and around the **welfare state**, **the labour market administration**, **the political representation of older persons**, and **the health care sector** are currently thinking about appropriate policy responses to demographic ageing. What are the similarities between these policy domains and how do they differ from each other? And, more importantly, what do these similarities and differences imply for active ageing policy-making?

1.1 Core and Peripheral Organisational Networks in Austrian Policy Domains

Each of the four policy domains dealing with ageing in Austria contains two distinct organisational networks. A core consociational network of organisations forms the institutional backbone of each policy domain. As a rule, these rather exclusive and rigid organisational networks are an integral but nonetheless contested part of the Austrian political legacy. In addition to the core networks, looser and more fluid "issue networks" (Rhodes, 1990) also operate at the periphery of the four policy domains. These changeable and mobile organisational networks are usually younger and have developed as a response to corporatist core networks.

In Austria, **core corporatist networks** resemble each other in terms of their membership, the network structure and the policy styles.

First, corporatist policy networks sustain limited but exclusive organisational ecologies. As a rule, Austrian consociational networks consist of state institutions (such as ministries), quasi-autonomous social partners (the corporatist chambers and national interest groups), and one executive agencies (such as the social insurance carriers). For example, Austrian labour market policy emerges from the interaction between the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour (*BMWA*)[1], the Labour Market Service (*AMS*)[2], and the social partner organisations that manage the *AMS*. Similarly, the core policy network for the welfare state consists of the Federal Ministry for Social Security and Generations (*BMSG*[3]), the social insurance carriers, and the social partnership organisations. Again, the social partners are, at least nominally, responsible for the management and administration of Austrian social insurance. Within these core organisational networks, a small group of career politicians, senior civil servants and political functionaries is responsible for agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision-making. Both informal and formal barriers to entry into consociational policy networks are high while the interaction with the public or other policy networks is low.

Second, corporatist core networks are top-down hierarchies dominated by state institutions. In all domains, legal frameworks create hierarchical divisions of labour formally separating policy formulation from policy implementation. For

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[1] *Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit*

[2] *Arbeitsmarktservice*

[3] *Bundesministerium für Generationen, soziale Sicherheit und Konsumentenschutz*

instance, five federal statutes[4] determine the relations between the organisations in the labour market policy domain. In particular, the *AMSG* creates a hierarchical distribution of policy-making tasks: the ministry is responsible for the policy formulation of while the AMS and the social partners are responsible for policy implementation. In the welfare state domain, the so-called Social Statutebook (*Sozialgesetzbuch*) and its numerous amendments formally defines institutional contexts of Austrian welfare state provision. In principle, social insurance institutions are supposed to govern themselves. In practice, legal provisions reduce the principle of self-governance to the management and administration of policy goals formulated by central government (Badelt and Österle, 1998, p.17; Linnerooth-Bayer, 2001, p.19).

Just like state organisations formally dominate policy processes in core networks, political elites informally control policy-making. Although ostensibly independent, all social partner organisations share key resources such as funds and, most significantly, personnel with the major political parties. As a rule, senior functionaries within the corporatist structure hold a number of offices in both the political and corporatist sphere. So, the head of the social policy department in the Chamber of Commerce, a card carrying member of the ÖVP, also heads the social insurance federation (*Hauptverband der Sozialversicherungsträger*). These ties give rise to small, cohesive communities of policy-makers that interact frequently (Respondent A, 2003; Respondent B, 2003). Not only do informal ties insulate policy communities from other organisations, they also close corporatist policy communities to the rank-and-file within the corporatist structure. Moreover, these informal channels provide a means for the political elite to exert influence and pressure on social partner organisations. For example, since the conservative senior citizen organisation ÖSB is a part of the ÖVP, the leader of the ÖSB takes part in many high-level events (such as the weekly party executive committee meeting). Informally, proximity to the political elite provides ample opportunity to lobby, cajole and persuade key decision-makers. Unfortunately, the proximity to political elites on both sides of the corporatist divide has considerably constrained the ambitions of senior citizen organisations.

Third, policy emerges from a bargaining process between elite policy-makers. These processes typically produce incremental and piecemeal adaptations to the status quo. Since consociational policy processes look for legitimacy in output (functional and efficient policy delivery) rather than process (democratically accountable and transparent contestation), policy conflict is not only disruptive but potentially debilitiating. Consequently, core policy networks cannot readily accommodate real contestation. Excluding potentially dissenting

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[4]*Arbeitsmarktservicegesetz AMSG, Arbeitsmarktförderungsgesetz AMFG, Arbeitsmarktpolitik-Finanzierungsgesetz AMPFG, Arbeitslosenversicherungsgesetz ALVG, Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz AuslBG.*

voices from the outset goes a long way to preventing conflict. Another common strategy is for core policy actors to reduce issues about values and norms to technical problems amenable to rational management. For example, the structure of the Federal Senior Citizen Advisory Council (*Bundesseniorenbeirat)* implies that, if they are to be heard, senior citizen organisations must speak with a single voice. This, in turn, assumes that the major senior citizen organisations (the christian-conservative *ÖSB* and the social-democrat *PVÖ*) cooperate rather compete. In practice, this has meant that the two largest senior citizen organisations have dominated issue definition and agenda-setting to the detriment of other policy actors (Respondent C, 2003).

Each policy domain also features a less cohesive cluster of organisations. Like the consociational policy communities, these **peripheral networks** also share a number of common characteristics.

First, peripheral networks host more variegated and populous organisational ecologies. Whereas core organisational networks tend to consist of a few large institutions, peripheral networks feature numerous smaller organisations. Apart from state organisations (ministries and executive agencies), these networks contain a variety of knowledge-producing organisations (universities, research organisations, research units in public organisations, etc.) as well as a large number of NGOs. In peripheral networks ministerial civil servants interact with professional and voluntary NGO activists, professionals and practitioners, service providers, as well as experts. The barriers to entry into the network are relatively low, membership is fluid and the network features many links to other policy communities. For example, at regional level a wide variety of different organisations provide social services and health care for older Austrians; these include municipal service providers (such as nursing homes operated by regional administration), commercial care providers, as well as a host of different NGOs and charities ranging from the Red Cross to the senior citizen self-help groups. Similarly, the peripheral policy network dealing with the political representation of older Austrians also comprises large NGOs (such as Caritas, Diakonie, Hilfswerk, Volkshilfe, and ÖRK), small NGOs (e.g. GEFAS, EURAG, ASEPS), as well as a number research organisations (e.g. ÖIFF, Vienna University, the European Centre, WU).

Second, peripheral policy networks, unlike their corporatist counterparts, rely on various formal and informal interorganisational ties. Many organisational relations in peripheral networks are contractual. Regional governments contract-out health and care social services to NGOs and, albeit less frequently, commercial firms (Hofmarcher, 2001; Respondent D, 2003). Similarly, although ministries provide a certain amount of basic research funding (Respondent E, 2003), research organisations primarily relate to peripheral networks in terms of research commissions and contracts. Another common form of interorganisational tie within peripheral networks is the policy project. Formally a contractual relationship, policy projects involve organisations co-operating to

pursue a specific objective in a given time period. For example, the KSB has launched an initiative with the private sector on household safety for older persons (Respondent F, 2003). Peripheral networks also rely on formal legal frameworks. Yet, rather than determining roles and responsibilities between different organisations, these formal frameworks set up broad policy spaces in which peripheral networks operate. For example, the federal government and regional governments have outlined minimum standards in long-term care and services for older people. The regional governments, however, are free to implement and enforce these standards as they see fit. Finally, much of the interaction between organisations in peripheral networks is based on ideological affinity and shared policy enterprises. The five largest Austria humanitarian organisations (ÖRK, Diakonie, Caritas, Volkshilfe, Hilfswerk) coordinate policy responses and policy formulation in disability and ageing issues (Respondent G, 2003).

These ties give rise to a varied set of network constellations ranging from flat hierarchies to market-like patterns of transaction. Within these configurations, the distribution of organisational roles in the policy process is not always clear and changes over time. Responsibilities for policy making and policy implementation are more equivocal: institutional actors are (explicitly) involved in more than one type of policy activity. For example, unlike the labour market or welfare state domains, the distribution of roles in the health care sectors is somewhat opaque. Many organisations fulfil a multitude of (sometimes contradictory roles) in different contexts. Ministries are policy-makers and regulators in certain contexts (e.g. hospital management) but also act as policy catalysts and facilitators in other contexts (social service provision) (Hofmarcher et al, 2001). While the line between policy formulation and policy implementation is faint at federal level, it becomes completely indiscernible in regional and local governance. Regional governments not only regulate and formulate policy, they are often also service providers. While NGOs and professional associations are *prima facie* concerned with service provision, these organisations are also involved in policy formulation and regulation (e.g. self-regulation of medical profession).

Fourth, policy processes are more about problem-solving than political bargaining. Policy processes in peripheral networks tend to focus on specific issues and problems, say managing quality control in long-term care. Further, processes in peripheral networks tend to be primarily knowledge-driven, yet at the same time explicitly normative: partly as a challenge to sanitised policy-making in core networks, policy actors in peripheral networks explicitly thematise values. For example, a policy practitioner from the health care and social service sector argues that

> "…the real challenge from demographic change for politics will be to come to fundamental decisions…the politically responsible will have to

think about what they stand for and what these people [old and disabled] are really worth to them…" (Respondent D, 2003).

However, the emphasis on problem-solving does not necessarily mean peripheral policy-processes are linear or rational. Policy outputs are not always predictable while policy outcomes are highly uncertain. Box 2 outlines a peripheral policy process for the life-long learning issue[5].

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[5] The policy network dealing with adult education and life-long learning is, as yet, only tenuously connected to the policy domains dealing with active ageing.

Box 2: The Consultation Process on Life-Long Learning

As a reaction to the European Commission's Memorandum on Life-Long Learning in 2000, the Austrian government launched a consultation process to set the agenda for life-long learning policy in Austria. The process was led and coordinated by an working group comprising civil servants from five federal ministries (*BMBWK*, *BMWA*, *BMSG*, *BMFLUW*, *BMI*, and *BMLV* – although only civil servants from the *BMSG* and *BMBWK* were actively involved) and representatives of the *AMS* and the *KEBÖ*. Responsible for the coordination and implementation of the consultation process, the working group assessed the state of the art in order to set out the themes and questions for the consultative process. The process itself took the form of written responses to the Commission's memorandum (via a website), a so-called coordination workshop and an expert round table.

Since the consultative process was designed as a problem-oriented exchange of information and knowledge, the working group went to some lengths to ensure as broad a participation as possible. In essence, the inclusive bottom-up approach comprised two types of actors: large organisations (such as social partners or senior citizen organisations) and individual professionals in the field of adult education (e.g. teachers, interest representatives). Apart from the written responses to the European Commission's memorandum, the working group organised six thematic workshops in which 18-20 experts participated. In June 2001, the *BMBWK* hosted a final coordination workshop attended by 130 professionals, experts and practitioners. In order to analyse the voluminous material produced by these processes, the working group (led by the *BMBWK*) commissioned two research to analyse the output. Moreover, the working group had produced and posted on the web the draft background report for comment.

Thus, the open and flexible Adult Education policy network rapidly responded to an external policy stimulus. The downside is that since the June 2001, there has been very little activity or follow-up.

In sum, while core policy networks are structurally integrated via legal frameworks and resource interdependencies, members within these networks do not necessarily share a common policy enterprise. Conversely, while members in peripheral networks lack the stable structural environments of core networks, these networks often coalesce around specific belief systems and policy enterprises. In short, peripheral policy communities in Austrian policy domains resemble advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

1.2   Balanced and Imbalanced Policy Domains

Policy domains dealing with ageing issues differ in the way the constituent policy networks relate to one another. The more imbalanced the relationship in favour of core policy networks, the more depoliticised policy-making is likely to be. By the same token, the more peripheral networks determine policy-making, the more conflictual and divisive is policy-making. Accordingly, we can situate the Austrian policy domains dealing with ageing along a spectrum. At one end, we find the labour market policy domain where the core policy network has remained impermeable both in terms of organisational structure and policy-making. At the other end, we find the health care sector where the distinction between core and peripheral policy networks is, at best, blurred. The way policy actors define the ageing issue within a domain reflects the relative strengths of the competing policy networks.

In the **labour market domain**, the core policy network is a *gravity well* that holds the peripheral network in orbit like a satellite. Here, the large and coherent core network controls the small and fragmented peripheral network. The peripheral network consists mostly of small, nominally independent research organisations that do little more than feed knowledge and information into the policy process. Apart from a web-based forum for presenting studies and research on the Austrian labour market, there are no formal venues for communication or co-operation. Here, consociational policy-makers prefer to stay among themselves (Respondent A, 2003; Respondent B, 2003).

As a result, the implications of ageing for labour market policy in Austria are not a hotly contested issue. In general, core policy actors have defined the issue in terms of economic competitiveness and fiscal discipline. In practice, this means that labour market policy-makers need to encourage firms to retain older workers. Measures include fiscal incentives (e.g. tax breaks), human resource development (such as lifelong learning), or work place adaptation. By the same token, policy must also help activate and motivate older workers to remain in the labour market.

The **senior citizenship domain**, in turn, is a *bi-polar policy system* where the state actor (*KSB*) is the cut-off point between the core and peripheral networks. Like in the labour market domain, relations between the core and peripheral systems are imbalanced in favour of the core system. The coherent and impermeable core network's proximity to governmental elites has been successful in excluding the variegated peripheral network from core policy processes. Unlike most other domains, senior citizenship policy-making has a formal venue; the Federal Senior Citizen Advisory council (*Bundesseniorenbeirat).*   However, since organisations from peripheral networks cannot take part in the advisory council, there is little interaction between the two contending networks. Quite the contrary, the climate between

policy actors from the different policy networks is characterised by mistrust and animosity (see Section II).

Senior citizenship and the political representation of older Austrians is a politely contested policy issue. The organisations in this domain point to many different policy problems and advocate a wide variety (sometimes conflicting) policy positions. These issues include pensions and health care but also problems like social exclusion, discrimination, and physical security. Despite the wide variety of policy problems, the central issue for all actors in this policy domain is the political marginalisation of older Austrians. The main debate, then, centres on the strategies for empowering older Austrians both in the political system and in society. However, given the institutional separation of the competing policy networks, the debate is about as interactive as competing street gangs spray-painting taunts onto walls in their respective territories.

The **welfare state domain** features *regal pluralism*. The government has withdrawn the support for the large, rigid core network consisting of the social partnership and the social insurance carriers. What is more, the government has further weakened the core network by personnel changes at management level. This has led to an imbalance in favour of the peripheral network. The government has bestowed an advisory status upon the peripheral network, in essence an epistemic community of reform-minded experts. In effect, the government plays off one instance of quasi-legitimation (expert-led) against the other (interest-led). The level of interaction between members of the different policy networks is reasonably high. Unlike other domains, pension policy-making features a relative abundance of formal policy-making venues. Not only can policy actors debate about pension reform in the Pension Reform Commission *(Pensionsreformkommission)* or the Federation of Austrian Social Insurance Carriers (*Hauptverband österreichischer Sizialversicherungsträger*), the mass media have also been an important communicative resource.

The potential implications of ageing for the Austrian welfare state have taken centre stage in a divisive and controversial debate about welfare state reforms. Like other welfare state arrangements based on Bismarckian social insurance principles, most experts predict that demographic ageing will jeopardise the future financial sustainability in the decades to come. Low fertility and increasing life expectancy, so the argument goes, mean that an increasing number of Austrian pensioners will receive generous benefits financed by contributions of a dwindling number of active workers. Additionally, the wide-spread practice of early retirement exerts additional pressures on the fiscal balance social insurance pension systems. In short, policy actors in the welfare policy domain have articulated the ageing issue primarily as a problem of financial and fiscal balance. As a result, policy actors have taken up their quite divergent policy positions around this basic defintion of the ageing issue.

Last, the **health care domain** is a complex and polycentric policy system. On the whole, the relationship between the core and peripheral networks is balanced. In health care provision, large core actors (the ministry, regional governments, social partners and professional associatons) interact frequently with peripheral actors (large and small NGOs, commercial and charitable care providers, service providers). What is more, many organisations blur the distinction between core corporatist and peripheral networks (e.g. the medical profession, regional governments, or hospital management). The health care domain features a number of different policy venues. Both the federal and regional health advisory councils (*Sanitätsräte)* as well as the federal and regional structural councils (*Strukturfonds*) provide institutional contexts for policy coordination and cooperation.

How have policy-makers in the health care domain defined the ageing issue? In particular, the development of health care costs in the medium- and long-term dominates thinking among Austrian health sector policy-makers. The projected growth of older age cohorts is likely to exert an upward pressure on health care costs (OECD, 1998; Seniorenbericht, 2000). Additionally, many experts argue, increasing life expectancy implies that more people will survive into very old ages. In turn, this implies a increase in demand for long-term care services and facilities (OECD, 1998; Seniorenbericht, 2000). In part, the articulation of the ageing issue mirrors the Austrian welfare state reforms (not least because the same social insurance mechanisms that finance and administer pensions also provide the funding for a considerable portion of the health care). However, the ageing issue in the health sector also addresses concerns about service development and delivery. In particular, policy actors have focused on new ways to provide long-term care.

In sum, the Austrian institutional landscape is fragmented across four policy domains. Each domain features both a core corporatist and a looser peripheral policy network. Across policy domains, core and peripheral networks share broad structural features. However, the way core and peripheral networks interact determines the policy-making within the domain. While the relationship between core and peripheral networks is imbalanced in some domains (most prominently the labour market and senior citizen politics), it is more equivocal and constructive in others (notably the health care sector).

Analogously to much of policy-making *within* domains, the interaction between policy-makers *between* domains is, at best, sparse. Apart from parliament, the Austrian polity features no institutional venues that could encourage communication and cooperation across policy domains. The government filters issues, ideas, and concepts as they float up from the depths of subpolitics on their way to parliament. In a very real sense, informal ties within core corporatist networks serve to keep certain issues and ideas out of parliament. Moreover, although the social partnership and state organisations dominate all policy domains (state organisations also are part of most peripheral networks), both

institutions are too fragmented in themselves to provide a common policy space for active ageing. The organisations in the peripheral networks face a similar dilemma. Either NGOs are too small to span different policy domains and remain isolated. Or they are sufficiently large to operate in several domains (such as the Caritas or the Red Cross) but are interested in a specific aspect of ageing (say, long-term care). Scientists and experts, it seems, are the only actors to operate in all domains (and all networks). However, with the exception of pension reform, experts have not had a noticeable impact on ageing policy in Austria.

2 Visions and Divisions: the Austrian Policy Debate

In Austria, policy debate about demographic ageing is dominated by a public and rather unsightly controversy about pension reform (c.f. Linnerooth-Bayer, 2001). The controversy produces so much heat and light that it obscures from view other conversations about ageing in and across Austrian policy domains. Although commentators and policy actors note with some satisfaction that the awareness of ageing issues has continuously grown in the last decade, they also point out that the policy debate is limited to a pitifully small circle of experts and policy-makers. Beyond pension reform, policy-makers and experts glumly concede, there is no real policy debate about ageing in Austria.

And yet, even given the disjointed nature of Austrian institutional landscapes, the disparate strands of the policy conversation about active ageing contain harmonies as well as distinctive dissonances. On close inspection, the Austrian debate about active ageing and senior citizen policy unravels along two related threads. The first strand lays out critical stories about the Austrian policy process. In essence, this is a dispute about the legitimacy and functionality of the Austrian institutional legacy; that is why, *grosso modo*, this controversy takes place between core and peripheral networks within policy domains. The second seam is rich in policy narratives about the aims and goals of active ageing and senior citizenship. On the whole, this thematic debate takes place between different policy domains.

2.1 Marginal Insiders and Outsiders

Consider the following paradox: Despite the obvious gravity, urgency and importance of demographic ageing, policy-makers in Austria steadfastly refuse to address, let alone deal with the issue. Why, given the weight of scientific evidence (or the volume, not to mention the slightly hysterical tone, at which it is made public), are policy-makers and politicians so sluggish to respond?

The reason, according to some Austrian policy-makers and experts, is simple: the Austrian political system divides actors into insiders (who are in control) and outsiders (who are not). Insiders profit from being inside in a number of (mostly selfish) ways. One of the ways they profit is that they do not have to listen to outsiders when formulating and implementing policy. The reforms dictated by the logic of demographic ageing threaten these privileges. That is why insiders (powerful but short-sighted) keep outsiders (meek but provident) out, much to the detriment of society as a whole.

Who are these insiders and who are the outsiders? Expert interviews revealed that the 'insiders' in Austrian active ageing policy-making are a rather elusive bunch. While policy-makers and practitioners are quick to blame insiders for all sorts of wrongdoings and problems, it is difficult to find anyone who admits to being on the inside of Austrian policy-processes. Instead, what we find is that all policy actors dealing with ageing issues feel in some way excluded from policy formulation and decision-making. Some more so than others. Some in different ways than others. The policy narratives, then, tell stories about different degrees of exclusion.

2.1.1 Outsiders on the Inside

The first policy story is a critique of consociational policy processes from the inside. The basic assumption here is that institutional arrangements such as the social partnership or the senior citizen organisation in principle provide an adequate set of institutional tools to tackle the challenges of demographic ageing. "The instruments," a leading policy-maker points out, "are readily available and range from laws, which I only need in the extreme case, to initiatives, where I can use events and public relations to shape opinions and attitudes" (Respondent A, 2003).

The problem, all policy actors agree, is that there is no political will to apply the available institutional infrastructure to ageing issues. Two divergent explanations account for the apparent lack of governmental enthusiasm. Core policy actors close to the government see a structural issue here. Active ageing is a marginal issue because the political representatives of older Austrians are not adequately represented in decision-making processes (Respondent C, 2003). For example, although the senior citizen organisations are represented in the decision-making committees of the social insurance carriers, they only have an advisory function. Due to political pressures from the working population, a senior policy actor argues, the government has not had the stomach for the necessary reforms. Although these policy actors judge the present policy agenda (particularly the planned welfare state reforms) to be necessary steps in the right direction, the agenda would, however, profit from more coordination and integration into the policy process as a whole

(Respondent A, 2003). This, in turn, will require a firmer financial commitment from government for interest representation (Respondent C, 2003) and policy formulation at ministerial level (Respondent F, 2003). In this sense, even the senior citizen organisations and policy actors close to the government feel outside because they perceive government policy-making to be dominated by interests of the working population.

The explanation proffered by policy actors close to the political opposition is less forgiving. The root of the present problems surrounding the issue of demographic ageing, the argument goes, is the government's abuse of the corporatist institutions. The government is wilfully undermining Austrian consultation mechanisms by freezing out organised labour from policy formulation. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the present government does not care about workers, let alone older workers (Respondent B, 2003). As a result, the present policy agenda is a mess. Apart from radical retrenchment of welfare systems that protected vulnerable older workers, the government programme lacks vision, strategy or co-ordination. While the government is applying the hatchet to early retirement, they have failed replace it with anything. Government is not investing in training for older workers and is silent about the employment prospects of workers over the age of 50. Recently and hastily introduced accompanying measures are too little, too late. So while interest representation of workers (the *AK* and the *ÖGB*) are ostensibly inside the core policy networks, the present government has isolated them along with the rest of the political opposition. As a policy-maker pointedly remarks, "…the co-operation with government, including ministries, is what's missing. However, that has less to do with our recalcitrance than with government's reluctance to co-operate with us" (Respondent B, 2003).

While the assessments diverge, the prescriptions are similar. Active ageing and senior citizen policy does not require a change of the consociational processes and corporatist institutional system. Rather, it requires a more rigorous application of the consociational logic to the issue of demographic ageing. If the representatives of older people (i.e. the senior citizen organisations) and older workers (i.e. trade unions and the chamber of labour) had the political influence that is their due, policy actors could solve the problems of demographic ageing using tried and tested corporatist institutional mechanisms.

2.1.2   Outsiders on the Outside

A more far radical and incisive critique of Austrian policy processes emerges from outside core corporatist networks. The basic premise of this policy story is that consociational decision-making in Austria is irretrievably flawed. In fact, policy actors, typically NGO practitioners and researchers, argue that the

exclusionary system of corporatist intermediation is to blame for the peripheral existence of the ageing issue in Austrian politics.

Far from being a solution, the core corporatist networks dominated by senior citizen organisations are a large part of the problem. First, senior citizen organisations and the corporatist institutional set-up, advocates of this policy story argue, undermine the political aspirations of older Austrians. On the one hand, senior citizen organisations, headed by retired career politicians, provide little real opportunities for older people to participate in policy-making (Respondent H, 2003). On the other hand, the sheer size of corporatist senior citizen organisations crowds out smaller NGOs (Respondent C, 2003). What is more, Austrian senior citizen organisations, so the argument goes, do not represent the interest of older people. On the contrary, close proximity to major political parties allows political elites to co-opt and, if necessary, sacrifice the interests of senior citizens to broader political objectives (Leichsenring and Strümpel, 1999; Walker and Naegele, 1999). Second, despite their proximity to political power, senior citizen organisations have little influence on policy-making. The proponents of this policy story point out that senior citizen organisations have failed to place any of their functionaries into key positions within the corporatist policy process (e.g. social insurance carriers or even parliament) (Respondent H, 2003). Third, even if they were in a position to affect policy, the leaders of senior citizen organisations are not interested in active ageing. They are self-serving politicians (Respondent H, 2003) who are far more concerned about defending their privileges (Respondent G, 2003). For these reason, advocates argue, insiders cannot conceive of, let alone formulate or implement, the type of reforms necessary to face the challenges of an ageing society (Respondent D, 2003).

Yet, critical outsiders argue, this is not to say that senior citizen organisations have had no impact on ageing policy. The hegemony of senior citizen organisations has meant that NGOs for and by older persons operate in isolation with only the *KSB* as a focal point and partner (Respondent H, 2003). There is very little horizontal activity, networking and communication (Respondent H, 2003). A senior NGO activist complains that

> "…Austrian organisations really are not well networked…If you disregard the political senior citizen organisations, the others: everybody plays in their own sandbox. They are not very well informed: each organisation has its specialisation and does that particular thing very well. But there is no connectivity…" (Respondent H, 2003)

Moreover, party political control over the senior citizen organisations, the outsiders contend, has led to an impoverished policy conversation about ageing. Not only are parliamentarians unaware of the issue (Respondent F, 2003), there seem to be no discernible political interest in conducting a rational

and well-informed debate. On the contrary, time and again insiders sacrifice rational policy responses to short-term political interests.

In sum, the outsiders tell us, policy-makers do not take demographic ageing seriously. Beyond a lot of rhetoric, there is no real active ageing policy in Austria (Respondent I, 2003; Respondent H, 2003). The main reason, outsiders contend, is that the rational responses to demographic ageing require painful reforms that affect the distribution of resources. Since politicians do not have the courage to take on these reforms, they put off the decision until problems become too acute to ignore. "Who", an expert asks sarcastically, "is willing to do anything painful without having to be kicked?" (Respondent I, 2003).

The solutions to the problem are simple, advocates contend. Reforms need to empower those actors and organisations that are in a position to really understand and represent older people. On the one hand, this means empowering older people to participate in ageing policy-making themselves (by, say, promoting and funding self-organised NGOs). On the other hand, the demand also implies listening more carefully to expert and scientific advice. In short, this narrative advocates shifting from an interest-based to knowledge-based policy-making.

2.1.3 Who's In and Who's Out?

It is, then, far from clear exactly who the insiders and who the outsiders are. Both strands seem to agree that the government and government ministers are insiders. Above and beyond this rather underwhelming finding, there is little consensus. The NGOs point to the social partners, the senior citizen organisations and the ministries as insiders. The social partners on both sides of the corporatist divide argue that they face equally formidable external antagonists. The *AK* faces a government insisting to freeze out worker's representatives while the *WKÖ* faces stubbornly resistant social attitudes and recalcitrant senior citizen organisations (Respondent A, 2003). The senior citizen organisations complain that they face a "unified front of the active population" that is unwilling to "relinquish power" (Respondent C, 2003). The social ministry (or rather the *KSB*) admits that it has been less successful than it would have liked in generating political interest for (active) ageing issues and senior citizen policy. What is more, neither the *KSB* nor the senior citizen organisations command the types of resources that would enable them to launch a credible political effort. And all the time the experts never tire of reminding anyone who asks (and plenty that do not) that the world would be a much better place if only policy-makers would pay heed to their wisdom. One policy-maker somewhat unhappily observes that

> "what is missing is a global strategy, a set of policy goals that could unify the different actors in a network…in this sense it is difficult to say who is at the margins of policy-making today – in reality all are at the margins" (Respondent B)

However, within this broad community of the excluded, some believe that existing institutional resources equip Austrian policy-makers with the necessary means to deal with demographic ageing. As a rule, the 'marginal insider' story is told by policy actors within core corporatist networks. By the same token, membership in peripheral policy networks suggests a more critical 'outsider' assessment of Austrian policy processes

2.2   The Hidden Divide: Productive Ageing versus Senior Citizenship

Despite institutional distance, the shared feeling of marginality also provides disparate policy actors with a common policy enterprise: the promotion of a broader policy approach to demographic ageing. Actors on the outside and on the marginal inside seem to agree that the current focus on pension reform will not be enough to deal with the projected impacts of demographic ageing.

How, then, should policy-makers be thinking about ageing?

The second narrative strain concerns the significance of ageing and what ageing policy ought to be about. Again, policy actors are tell two distinct policy stories about ageing. Both narratives assume that demographic ageing will have significant impacts on Austrian society. Further, in order to properly address the challenges of demographic ageing, the policy debate about ageing needs to be a lot wider than it is at present. Just how wide, however, is the object of dispute.

2.2.1   Productive Ageing: Demographic Ageing as an Economic Opportunity

The first policy story about the appropriate policy responses to demographic change concentrates on the productive aspects of ageing. On this view, active ageing is as much about individual mental flexibility and fundamental psychological predispositions as it is about public policy (Respondent I, 2003; Respondent C, 2003). In a very real sense, active ageing strategies aim to square the circle by pursuing, to use management-speak, win-win-win solutions (Respondent A, 2003). In other words, active ageing policies aim to provide meaning to later phases in life while exploiting the economic potential of demographic ageing (Respondent A, 2003). Rather than perceiving older workers as a cost to firms, entrepreneurs should look for ways of capitalising on

the demographic changes. This includes encouraging individuals to adapt their expectations (i.e. of early retirement) and practices (i.e. lifelong learning) (Respondent I, 2003). It also means that the physical and psychological work environments need to change to accommodate older workers (Respondent B, 2003).

Basic Assumptions

Ageing policy, proponents of this discourse argue, primarily aims at restoring intergenerational equity. In the near future, older people will become a financial burden to society (Respondent I, 2003). Not only will ageing impose significant costs on younger generations, demographic shifts will also reconfigure the intergenerational balance of power (Respondent I, 2003; Respondent A, 2003). However, older people will have to shoulder a significant portion of these costs (Respondent C, 2003; Respondent I, 2003) because "…a generation that has produced a third less children cannot expect the same level of benefits from a PAYG pension system than the generation for which the system was constructed" (Respondent A, 2003). Part of the policy challenge is to ensure that a politically strong older generation does not block necessary social reforms (Respondent A, 2003).

The Policy Problem

Demographic ageing, advocates of the productive ageing discourse argue, threatens Austria's future prosperity by increasing the so-called dependency ratio. In PAYG social insurance schemes, this means that an ever increasing group of retirees will rely on a shrinking group of workers to finance their pensions and health care. Since social insurance systems rely on payroll taxes, demographic ageing is likely to increase production costs. In a world of globalised goods and service markets, proponents of this policy story argue, economic growth is inextricably linked to cost effective production. Demographic ageing, exacerbated by Austrian practice of early retirement, could therefore severely undermine the competitiveness of the Austrian economy.

Furthermore, the long-term decline in fertility rates will lead to labour supply shortages as a host of older workers leaves the labour market from 2010 onwards. Increased immigration and female labour market participation may go some way towards bridging the gap. However, massive immigration is unlikely to be a politically workable solution for the ageing issue in Austria (Respondent I, 2003). There are, argue proponents of productive ageing, no viable alternatives to extending working life. This, in turn, raises health and training issue for older workers (Respondent B, 2003). Without further policy measures, one advocate argues, the ageing of the work force will have negative long-term impacts on the productivity of the Austrian economy.

Another, far more fundamental problem, proponents of productive ageing argue, is that current labour market practices and career patterns determine the fertility decision. In particular, career requirements impose significant disincentives for women to have children. In general, Austrian women are increasingly postponing the decision to have children for financial and professional reasons. In many cases, financial pressures mean that the decision to have children gets postponed indefinitely. Facing the challenges of demographic ageing means restructuring existing career patterns to give women real choices (Respondent I, 2003).

Apart from these structural and institutional issues, proponents of the productive ageing discourse also point to socio-cultural and ideological barriers. In general, Austrian society does not value work or the idea of productive ageing. A senior NGO activist remarks that in

> "…Nordic countries, people view work as something rather positive and in Switzerland they view work as something rather positive. In Italy, Spain and Austria people perceive work as something absolutely negative. That is why so many choose early retirement as soon as possible…" (Respondent H, 2003)

As a result, Austrian attitudes towards work and retirement are fundamentally distorted: Austrians perceive early retirement as a right rather than a privilege (Respondent I, 2003). Similarly, Austrians approach ideas such as lifelong learning and further education with extreme scepticism. What is more, Austrian society, so the argument goes, is caught up in a youth-cult which devalues ageing and old age (Respondent A, 2003). Consequently, business, the media and the general public are unaware of older peoples' capabilities and potentials. For this reason, advocates of the productive ageing approach suggest, policy-makers have probably not been able to communicate the urgency of the ageing issue to the public.

Solutions

On this view, effective ageing policy enables people to work longer. Policy-makers need to persuade people to live healthier lives when younger so that they remain physically and mentally active as they grow old.

In terms of institutions, this policy solution implies a number of reforms to Austrian social protection systems. Present pension reforms that aim to harmonise different pension systems and tie contributions closer to benefits (e.g. by introducing NDCs and notional accounts) go some way to creating a more transparent system of transfers between the generations. Changes in the health care system, so the argument goes, should anticipate the increased demand for long-term care. This means recasting primary and hospital health

care to efficiently provide new types of health care services while balancing costs and provision (Respondent A, 2003).

Most importantly, argue advocates of productive ageing, the labour market must adapt to the new demographic balance. On the one hand, reforms should aim at creating career patterns that increase flexibility and choice for younger women. On the other hand, current work practices need to be adapted to the needs of older workers (Respondent B, 2003). This implies promoting lifelong learning and retraining for older workers (Respondent B, 2003; Respondent I, 2003). It also requires promoting health and wellbeing at work in order to avoid occupational disability (Respondent B, 2003).

While the structural problems are, in principle, amenable to policy solutions, the socio-cultural issues will require more fundamental change. Older people themselves will need to change their attitudes, beliefs and expectations. Overall, all advocates agree, older people of the future will have to take on more individual responsibility and show more flexibility in the way they shape their old age (Respondent I, 2003; Respondent A, 2003; Respondent H, 2003; Respondent C, 2003). However, Austrian society as a whole will also have to shed its misguided focus on youth and begin to look more closely at the economic and commercial significance of demographic ageing. This presupposes changing the predominantly negative image of old age as a time of decline, dependency and deficiency (Respondent B, 2003; Respondent A, 2003).

Strategies and Policy Pathways

A successful ageing strategy, all proponents of productive ageing agree, will require an integrated policy response. This means, policy actors need to formulate and implement a coherent set of policy measures aimed at raising awareness and restructuring the workplace (Respondent B, 2003; Respondent A, 2003). This means that policy will need to focus at the sectoral and firm-level to be effective. Integrated policies such as these, the proponents maintain, require a concerted effort from all policy actors involved. Moreover, effective productive ageing policy is a matter foresight. Public acceptance and policy effectiveness presuppose gradual and incremental implementation; reform by "shock-therapy" (Respondent A, 2003) is unlikely to lead to success.

2.2.2 Senior Citizenship: Demographic Ageing and Social Emancipation

The second policy story urges policy-makers to adopt a broad approach to ageing. On this view, active ageing is not about preventing financial shortfalls in pension or health care systems. Neither is active ageing about profiting from the 'grey Euro'. Demographic changes are likely to reshape the economic, political and social fabric of our societies at its roots. Ageing will not only change the

composition of electorates and the work force, it also will affect the make-up of families and communities. Such a broad and fundamental challenge to the way we live, so the argument goes, deserves an equally comprehensive policy response. For this reason, active ageing policy must be about promoting a holistic concept of senior citizenship. This implies enabling active participation in all spheres of social life including, but not limited to, the work place. In fact, for advocates of the senior citizenship discourse, productivity is secondary to the promotion of self-determination and autonomy according to individual capabilities (Respondent F, 2003; Respondent H, 2003; Respondent G, 2003)

Assumptions

Active ageing and active ageing policy, advocates maintain, is fundamentally about granting older people social citizenship. Policy must enable and empower older people to fully participate in the social, political and economic life of a community. Active ageing, a senior civil servant maintains,

> "…entirely encompasses the lives of older people, starting with societal participation, with social integration, and ending with the promotion of an active and healthy life. It [active ageing] should not be understood in medical terms alone but should also be understood within a social context" (Respondent F, 2003).

This is why active ageing inevitably is a transversal issue. What is more, on this view the problems and difficulties older people experience are not specific to old age and ageing. Rather, they are symptoms of a deeper social malaise that emerges from inequities and social imbalances within society.

Further, advocates of senior citizenship assume, intergenerational relations in Austria are based on solidarity rather than conflict. In fact, they argue, studies show that conflicts between young and old are far less pronounced than some actors would like to make out (Seniorenbericht, 2000; Respondent F, 2003). For this reason, proponents argue that the public debate about intergenerational solidarity needs to move beyond the limited focus on the welfare state and pension system (Amann, 2000). Rather, Austrian policy actors should be discussing how best to renegotiate the intergenerational contract to bring about more democracy and less inequality for all generations (Amann, 2000). The ultimate goal of ageing policy, then, is to enable people (not just the old) to lead a meaningful, active and socially integrated life.

Box 3: Principles of Senior Citizenship Policy

In the *Seniorenbericht*, the Austrian social gerontologist Anton Amann (2000) outlines a set of guiding principles for policy-making aimed at promoting senior citizenship.

- Senior citizenship policy must reduce social inequities (both between and within generations) as well as acknowledge the diversity of life situations of the elderly;

- Senior citizenship policy requires a holistic and integrated policy approach. When formulating and implementing policy measures, policy-makers need to take into consideration a wide spectrum of factors including

    o Family

    o Working life

    o Education

    o Social and cultural participation

    o Material security

    o Health

- Ageing policy without an integrated labour market, social security and tax policy is incomplete. Public and administrative responsibilities for ageing should reflect the inherently transversal nature of ageing and senior citizenship.

- Ageing is fundamentally about opportunities, rights and choices. Senior citizenship policy must be about safeguarding these civil, political and social rights. Justifying the exclusion of older people on the basis of some concept of contribution is simply unacceptable: social citizenship is non-negotiable.

- Intergenerational solidarity is more than the intergenerational contract. Senior citizenship policy has to aim at maximising social and political participation in all generations. Additionally, senior citizenship policy must balance the material flows between the generations.

- Ageing policy must use scientific knowledge to inform and enlighten. Ageing policy has to break down the barriers of ignorance and prejudice between generations.

Problems

The basic policy problem, proponents of senior citizenship argue, is that older Austrians are politically disenfranchised and socially excluded. Existing forms of political representation do not reflect the growing electoral significance of older Austrians (Respondent C, 2003; Respondent H, 2003). On the one hand, whether in core corporatist networks or in parliament, dominant policy actors deny older Austrians an effective voice in decision-making (Respondent H, 2003; Respondent C, 2003). On the other hand, even if existing political parties and senior citizen organisations were provided with an effective voice, so the argument goes, it is questionable whether they would serve the real interests of older persons in Austria. The challenge here, a senior policy-maker contends, is to

> "…provide the constantly growing number of pensioners and senior citizens with the same political position that, within the organisational forms prevalent in Austria, is automatically given to employers and employees" (Respondent C, 2003)

Furthermore, advocates of this discourse point out that both the material and immaterial infrastructure of Austrian society excludes older people. Discriminatory age restrictions, inaccessible public buildings, inconvenient urban planning, unsuitable education or training services, or limited transport systems conspire to marginalise the old. Contrary to common wisdom, advocates argue, these problems are not amenable to technical quick-fixes and market-based quasi-solutions (Respondent D, 2003). They will require fundamental normative decisions about the value society attaches to older people.

However, the proponents of senior citizenship continue, the social value of older people is precisely the crux of the ageing issue. Austrians equate ageing with a process of mental and physical decline leading inevitably to dependency. This distorted view makes it easy for policy-makers and the mass media to depict older people as a burden to society (Respondent F, 2003). As a result, older people are increasingly victims of overt and covert discrimination in all spheres of social life. Add to this what a health care professional calls the prevailing 'frosty social climate' (*soziale Kälte*) (Respondent D, 2003) and you are left with the situation in which

> "…a country that is the largest donor-nation of all times (or would like to be), desperately needs donations for so many things. How can it be that a country calls itself a welfare state and at the same time…needs to appeal to charity to create adequate conditions for old and dying people….something isn't quite right" (Respondent D, 2003).

At the root of all this, advocates point out, sits a fundamentally distorted set of values characteristic of our socially imbalanced and unjust societies. Money and material goods have become the ultimate measures by which we assess our and other peoples' lives. In our societies, peoples' value as human beings declines in line with their productive value as they grow older (Respondent H, 2003). "When you reach a certain age", a leading NGO activist surmises,

> "you become useless, so to speak. Because quality is always equated with work: if I have a great career, I am a worthy person. If I am retired, I am a nobody" (Respondent H, 2003).

To make matters worse, the majority of older people surrender to these perceptions and attitudes. Many of the societal expectations of old age (early retirement, leisure time, etc.) provide a ready escape from activity. In this sense, socio-cultural values and expectations condition older people to withdraw and disengage from society.

Solutions

If political and social exclusion is the problem, the advocates of senior citizenship argue, then empowering older Austrians in all aspects of life has to be the solution. In practice, this means granting older people full social and civil citizenship.

Although the advocates of senior citzenship vehemently argue against reducing active ageing to pension reform, social rights are nonetheless inextricably intertwined with the material security of older people. In order to fully participate and contribute to society, proponents argue, social protection systems must secure an adequate existence for older Austrians. For some proponents of this discourse, this means that pensions within the current system must continue to grow with wages in the economy (Respondent C, 2003). However, more radical policy actors argue for the introduction of a guaranteed minimum pension regardless of prior contribution (Respondent G, 2003).

Social rights also presuppose adequate health care. The most elegant solutions, proponents contend, would be to avoid health-related dependency altogether. Successful active ageing policy in Austria needs to concentrate on preventative rather than ameliorative health care (Respondent G, 2003). Nonetheless, while increasing longevity necessarily implies an increase in long-term care, long-term care itself need not imply social exclusion. The development of out-patient services, new concepts of care including older people as care-givers as well as quality standards for the provision of long-term care would empower the very old and frail.

However, advocates maintain, social empowerment must go hand in hand with political emancipation. As we have seen, the insider solution here is to provide

existing institutional structures (e.g. senior citizen organisations and advisory bodies) with power that reflects the real political clout of older people. In particular, this means giving the senior citizen advisory bodies within the different consociational committees real influence over decision-making (Respondent C, 2003). The outsider solution, in turn, suggests promoting non-partisan and independent NGOs (Respondent G, 2003; Respondent H, 2003).

Last, advocates of the senior citizenship approach stress that empowering the old invariably means also empowering other marginal and disenfranchised social groups. This includes, among others, young people, women, the disabled, and ethnic minorities. Senior citizen policy, then, should not concentrate on politics alone. Rather, effective senior citizen policy needs to create social networks between the different parts of society to enable and encourage older people to take on social responsibility (Respondent G 2003; Respondent H, 2003). This will also require changing the negative image of ageing in Austrian society.

Strategies and Pathways

The main task for policy-makers is to raise awareness for the broader issues of ageing among Austrian politicians and policy-makers (Respondent F, 2003). Policy-makers need to expand the currently narrow debate about pension reform to include issues of senior citizenship. Here, Austrian policy-makers rely on a number of different policy instruments ranging from the political instruments such as the Senior Citizen Advisory Council, international projects (e.g. a WHO project about abuse of elderly), voluntary work and the *Bürgerbüros*, as well as a multitude of projects aimed at raising awareness about ageing.

2.2.3 Who's Productive and Who's a Citizen?

Whether policy actors subscribe to the social citizenship discourse or the productive ageing story depends on the way policy actors relate to older people themselves. The more immediate and local the relationship between policy actors and the actual lives of older persons, the more policy actors will gravitate towards holistic approaches. Consequently, policy actors whose work-a-day practices centre on providing services for actual older persons or cooperating with older people tend to advocate the senior citizenship discourse. Conversely, the more mediated and global the relations between 'the old' and policy actors, the more likely these policy-makers are to perceive demographic ageing analytically. For this reason, policy actors in domains that deal with older people in the abstract, such as the labour market or the pension administrations, will tend towards the productive ageing discourse.

In terms of the Austrian institutional landscape outlined in Section 1, this implies that the thematic debate maps across different policy domains rather than

across policy networks. Thus, policy actors in both the labour market and welfare state domains frame the ageing issue in terms of productive ageing. Conversely, policy actors in both the core and peripheral networks dealing with senior citizen policy, perhaps unsurprisingly, champion the senior citizenship discourse[6]. In the health care sector, policy-makers at different levels frame the issue in different ways. At federal level and at the level of health care planning, policy actors are relatively far removed from individual older persons; here, ideas of productive ageing have considerable purchase[7]. However, at regional and local levels dealing with the provision of health care and social services, policy actors cannot easily abstract themselves from the actual lives of their elderly clients. Here, then, we find that policy actors advocate the senior citizenship approach.

2.3   <u>The Structure of the Austrian Active Ageing Debate(s)</u>

The two narrative strands define the discursive space in which the Austrian active ageing policy debate takes place. We can think of the institutional policy stories as narratives about he appropriate means of policy responses to ageing. The thematic stories, in turn, revolve around suitable ends of ageing policy. As we have seen, preferences about policy ends do not seem to imply a specific stance on policy means (and vice versa).

Figure 1 about here

Mapping the different positions in the Austrian active ageing debate in terms of different combinations of ends and means (Figure 1), gives rise to the following stylised discursive space:

I.   **Productive Ageing on the Inside**: Policy actors that use the arguments in this quadrant, most prominently the social partners, believe that the appropriate response to demographic ageing is to encourage people to work longer, stay healthy and lead active lives in old age. Here, active ageing is mostly about mobilising the productive potential of older persons. Existing institutions, such as the social partnership and the social insurance edifice, are amply equipped for designing and delivering the required policies to deal with demographic ageing. The only barrier here is the lack of will by the political elites.

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[6] In the cases where older people are themselves policy actors, the relationship is of course very immediate indeed.

[7] Partly because there is some organisational overlap between policy actors in the welfare state domain and health policy planning (e.g. the social insurance carriers).

II.   **Productive Ageing on the Outside**: Policy actors arguing from this quadrant's perspective also believe that in the future, older people will have to shoulder far more of the costs of demographic ageing than is the case at present. However, policy actors here (mostly economists and demographers) are less sanguine about the suitability of existing institutions. In fact, they argue that existing political and social insurance institutions will spectacularly fail to deal with ageing. On the one hand, PAYG social insurance systems are inherently vulnerable to demographic ageing. On the other hand, corporatist political systems do not provide the right kinds of incentives for decisive policy action. If policy-makers were to take ageing seriously, they would listen to the experts and radically existing health care and pension systems.

III.   **Senior Citizenship on the Outside**: The arguments in this sector call for the social and political emancipation of older persons within the general framework of social justice. Organisations such as small age-related NGOs, humanitarian organisations, research organisations, or university-based social gerontologists have followed this call. Part of the struggle for social justice and emancipation, however, is about replacing self-serving corporatist institutions with organisations that represent the real interests of older people..

IV.   **Senior Citizenship on the Inside**: The arguments in this quadrant, mostly espoused by senior citizen organisations and, to a certain extent, the *KSB,* point out that older Austrians are being cheated out of their rightful place in the corporatist policy processes. Yet, the required institutions and resources for effective representation are already in place. All policy elites need do is provide senior citizen organisations with the appropriate legal framework.

Using this model, we can point to six broad areas of potential policy conflict and exchange, but also cooperation. However, much of the debate about active ageing takes place along the vertical axis, that is between contending policy networks. Arguably, the most visible and acrid public dispute about ageing is underway between policy actors in quadrants I and II. The positions in these quadrants broadly describe the prevalent policy conflict about welfare state reforms in Austria. This is a very public and intense confrontation in a number of different institutional venues, most prominently the mass media. In comparison, the dispute between policy actors advocating arguments in quadrants III and IV is subdued. Here, virtually no direct exchange between contending policy actors takes place due to the institutional exclusion of peripheral networks from corporatist policy processes. As a result, this covert policy conflict is characterised by mutual suspicion, distrust and demonisation. Disputes about

the legitimacy of institutional structures in Austria, it would seem, lead to controversial and emotional, but not necessarily constructive policy debates.

Although the horizontal axis holds most promise for a lively and constructive policy debate, there is little real interaction across policy domains. The common (marginal) insider status has not promoted much exchange between policy actors in quadrants IV and I (Respondent A, 2003; Respondent B, 2003). On the contrary, the informal ties to political and policy-making elites tightly control interaction across this dimension. Among outsiders (quadrants II and III), particularly between experts and researchers, there has been some debate within the context of general academic and research exchange. Since, however, different types of experts expound different types of arguments (i.e., economists and demographers in quadrant II, sociologists and social gerontologists in quadrant III), even the academic debate is limited to (uncommon) interdisciplinary conversations.

Last, the policy debate across the diagonals of Figure 1 is, perhaps unsurprisingly, virtually non-existant. Not only are the ideational differences most pronounced, there are few institutional contexts in which policy debate could take place.

In sum, a potentially intractable policy conflict about the legitimacy of Austrian policy-making institutions policy processes dominates the ageing debate. Although there is considerable potential for a lively and interesting policy debate along both the institutional and thematic dimensions of the ageing issue, the fragmented institutional landscape has so far inhibited constructive policy interaction.

3   The Austrian Policy Landscape

What, then, are policy-makers in the fragmented and disjointed Austrian institutional landscape actually doing? Not surprisingly, Austrian policy responses to demographic ageing are as fragmented as the policy environment and policy debate from which they emerge. The Austrian policy agenda includes a wide range of policy measures based on an eclectic selection of underlying concepts and approaches. Many different types of activities are scattered across the disjointed policy landscape, some of which differ quite substantially from one another.

Despite the diversity of measures and instruments, Austrian policy responses to demographic ageing pursue three broad goals. First, some policy measures on the Austrian active ageing agenda primarily *create institutional and individual capabilities*. Second, other policy measures aim at *recognising the capabilities*

of older people. Last, the Austrian policy agenda contains measures that help *exploit or employ the capabilties of older people*.

Box 4: Four Principles of Austrian Ageing Policy

The *BMSG* (2000) outlines fundamental principles that guide Austrian policy responses to demographic ageing:

1) Strengthen intergenerational solidarity by strenghtening distributional justice. Intergenerational solidarity is the central principle of policy-making for Austrian senior citizens. Policy must preserve intergenerational solidarity in the face of demographic ageing.

2) Include older people in policy-making. The policy debate about ageing so far has been dominated by health care and pension reform. However, a paradigm change needs to take place in order to appreciate the transversal nature of the ageing issue. Senior citizen policy also has to find ways of integrating women and elderly women into policy-making.

3) Austrian senior citizen policy focuses on the individual person. Austrian policy-makers explicitly recognise and acknowledge that capabilities and skills of older people. In the future, the human resources of the elderly will play an important role. For this reason, policy needs to integrate and reintegrate older workers into the labour market.

4) Encourage life with children. A policy for all generations has to ease the burden on young families, particularly younger women. In particular, Austrian ageing policy aims to help women balance family and career.

3.1   Creating Capabilities

Of all types of Austrian ageing policies, measures aimed at creating capabilities, both institutional and individual, are arguably the most visible. Typically, these types of policy responses either reform existing institutional set-ups or introduce new types of institutional solutions (or both). More often than not, visibility has also meant policy conflict and even controversy.

Encouraging the Labour Market Participation of Older Workers

A major and highly contested set of policies aims at increasing the labour market participation of older workers. The key reform here is the controversial

pension reform. Like in almost all other European countries, Austrian reforms have strengthened the relationship between contributions and benefits by tightening some of the screws on the social insurance machine (Linnerooth-Bayer, 2001). Most importantly, however, recent reforms have aimed at raising the effective retirement age by closing down the most common pathways into early retirement (e.g. disability pensions). Another, less controversial measure is the so-called partial pension (*Altersteilzeitgeld)*. This statutory benefit for employers recompenses the additional costs of employing older workers part-time.

Autonomy, Disability and Long-Term Care

As we have seen, the provision of adequate health care and social services determines the degree of control and autonomy older people have over their own lives. Although these types of policy responses to ageing tend not to attract quite so much attention from politicians and the media, Austrian policy-makers perceive health care and social service provision to be a central policy objective (Seniorenbericht, 2000).

At present, Austrian policy-makers are applying four different types of policy instruments. First, social partners are lobbying to reallocate existing hospital resources from acute health care to long-term care (Respondent A, 2003). The aim here is to reconfigure Austrian hospital health care provision to better anticipate future changes in health care demand.

Second, since 1993, the so-called Long-term Care Allowance (*Pflegegeld)* helps Austrian care receivers to pay for care provision of their choice. Unlike the German counterpart, the Austrian Long-term Care Allowance is financed from the general budget. Any person requiring more than 112 hours of care for a permanent disability (meaning a disability that is likely to last longer than 6 months) is eligible for the benefit. The level of the allowance depends on an assessed level of need. In all, the *Pflegegeld* recognises seven different categories of need (Seniorenbericht, 2000; Hofmarcher et al., 2001).

Third, and slightly more experimental, each of the Austrian federal states is currently developing and expanding out-patient provision, mobile health care and social services for the elderly. The aim here is to allow older people in need of care to remain as autonomous and independent as possible (Hofmarcher, 2001, p.62). Although the responsibility for developing, managing and providing these services and transfers falls to regional governments, both federal and regional governments have developed a catalogue of minimum standards for out-patient and stationary care of older people.

Last, the social partnership has identified preventative health care at the level of firms as a policy priority in the future. Age management and work-place adaption should help avoid disability and occupation (ill)health from even

becoming a problem. However, beyond the awareness that preventative medicine is important and that Austria had better get hold of some, there is very little in the way of concrete policy that actors could point to.

Political Participation of Older People

Despite arguing from opposite ends of the spectrum, both insiders and outsiders in the Austrian policy process boast and concede (respectively) that consociational structures are a defining feature of ageing policy-making in Austria. Two basic policy tools articulate these institutional capabilities. On the one hand, consociational politics needs suitables policy venues. For this reason, senior citizen advisory councils of many different shapes and forms populate the Austrian policy process at most levels of governance. In addition to the federal and somewhat remote senior citizen advisory council (*Bundesseniorenbeirat*, see Section 1), NGOs, policy-makers from the *KSB* but also senior citizen organisations have tried to establish effective political representation at regional and local level (see Box 5). On the other hand, senior citizen organisations are integral to the political representation of older people in Austria. The functionaries of senior citizen organisations populate senior citizen advisory councils at all levels of governance. Although observers such as Leichsenring and Strümpel (1999) question the representativeness and independence of senior citizen organisations, they undoubtedly are a major resource (often the only resource) for the political participation of elderly Austrians.

Box 5: Political Representation of Older Austrians at Regional and Local Level

In their survey of the institutional structures of political representation older Austrians, Leichsenring and Strümpel (1999) identify a number different models in place at the regional and local level. The basic institutional template was developed in Vorarlberg as early as 1977 and has been adopted in both Vienna and Salzburg in the course of the 1990s. This structure, which in many ways foreshadowed the current policy network at federal level, consists of a regional senior citizens advisory board and a corresponding department within the regional government. Like the senior citizen advisory council at federal level, the advisory councils in the regions primarily advise government, comment on draft legislation and initiate activities (e.g. information campaigns) to combat age-related discrimination. However, in Vorarlberg as well as in Salzburg, the senior citizen organisations have actively participated in policy formulation: in Salzburg, the senior citizen advisory councils drafted the template for a standardised nursing home contract and in Vorarlberg the regional advisory council drafted the a model statute for establishing senior citizen representation at local level. Like the Bundesseniorenbeirat, the senior citizen advisory councils at regional level are also staffed by representatives of senior citizen organisations.

Other regional governments across Austria have established variations on this institutional theme. Most other federal states have a single body dealing with senior citizen policy situated in different locations of the regional governmental architecture. In the Tyrol, for example, senior citizen policy-making takes place in a task force of the regional state administration. In Lower Austria, a sub-committee of the advisory council for 'Youth and Family Policy' takes care of senior citizen issues. While representatives of senior citizen organisations and other NGOs representing older Austrians are not formally part of the task force in the Tyrol, they are part of the sub-committee in Lower Austria. #####

At local level, the political representation of older Austrians is far more precarious. The lack of binding statutes or functioning organsational blue-prints have meant that many of the political structures in place at the local level are of an experimental nature. During the 1990s, the regional government of Vorarlberg promoted the establishment of senior citizen councils in 7 local communities (Leichsenring and Strümpel, 1999). Although modelled on the regional senior citizen advisory council, these gremia were supposed to be more open to all types of local organisations dealing with ageing relevant issues. However, the inclusion of these senior citizen organisations into policy-making was entirely at the discretion of local mayors. In effect, the senior citizen advisory councils had to struggle to be heard (Leichsenring and Strümpel, 1999). The situation in other Austrian regions seems to be similar. For example in Salzburg, the regional senior citizen advisory council has persuaded many communes to institute senior citizen officers. However, despite take-up of about 90%, Leichsenring and Strümpel (1999) maintain that these officers have not really empowered older Austrians at local level. In their study of local representation for older Austrians, Blaumeister and Wappelshammer (1999) point out that local representation of older people is beset with a number of difficulties: not only is institutionalised political representation costly, it is also vulnerable to being hi-jacked by particular interests on the one hand, and to degenerating into window-dressing. Moreover, ensuring that the voices of the elderly are heard at local level is not merely a matter of political institutions: structures need to adapt to prevalent political culture. On the basis of this study, the federal ministry has launched an initiative aimed to support senior citizen representatives at local level ("gemeinsam mitgestalten").

Life-Long Learning

Apart from creating institutional and organisational capabilities, policies within the patchwork of measures that is the Austrian active ageing policy agenda also aim to strengthen individual capabilities. Driven by fashionable concepts such as 'the knowledge society', policy aims to strengthen the position of older workers on the labour market by arming them with cutting edge skills.

The primary instrument to promote life-long learning and further education is the so-called Further Education Allowance (*Weiterbildungsgeld*). The government

claims to have increased the budget for this allowance, in itself not a new policy feature in the Austrian landscape. Further, since the late-1970s, Austrian universities have encouraged and welcomed mature students. The so-called Senior Citizen Degree Course (*Seniorenstudium*) enables older people to attend university courses. Last, the *KSB* as well as a number of organisations specialising in adult education provide course for older Austrians to take the digital hurdle (*BMSG*, 2002).

Maintaining Cognitive and Physical Abilities

Finally, a number of different types of programmes at regional and local level aim at maintaining and conserving cognitive and physical abilities as people age. Here, policies vary widely. While some initiatives are experimenting with forms of housing for older people that depart from the typical two-person household (e.g. *Mehr-Generationen Wohnen, Senioren WG*), others try to raise the awareness about dangers at home (Seniorenbericht, 2000). Others still train care-givers to actively engage with care recipients (*BMSG*, 2002).

Unlike reforms to the pension systems and, albeit less so, health sector reforms, this policy activity emerges from localised and variegated networks geared towards social service provision. In general, policy instruments tailored towards preserving and enhancing the capabilities of older people have received little attention from the political elite, the media. Although this means that life-long learning and supportive social services are horribly underresourced in any conceivable way, the obscurity has also meant that the motley assortment of policy actors in these networks are relatively free of the political pressures that impinge on individuals and organisations within the consociational system. Add to this liberty the rich variety of organisational forms and the multiple ways in which actors relate to each other and you are left with an innovative, if a little chaotic, policy landscape. However, apart from its inspirational function, resource scarcity also implies that the level of social service provision is far from what is needed.

3.2   Recognising Capabilities

The second, albeit far less prominent, set of policies aims at overcoming attitudinal barriers and negative stereotypes concerning older people. These policies, necessarily less concrete and more 'atmospheric', work on changing the ideational climate within the economy, the political system and society as a whole. Additionally, measures and policies in this category also target the (mis)perceptions and insecurities of older people themselves.

Changing Societal Perceptions

Discrimination and ageism significantly impinges on the quality of life of almost all older Austrians. Preventing discrimination and appreciating the potential opportunities of an ageing society imply enabling older Austrians to demonstrate how they can contribute to social, political and economic life. For this reason, policy-makers are currently investigating a number of policy instruments for preventing age-related discrimination[8]. In particular, the *KSB* is looking into the possibility of adding a non-discrimination amendment to the Austrian constitution (*BMSG*, 2002). Additionally, the ministry in cooperation with the senior citizen organisations is planning to design and implement a Senior Citizen Advocate (*Seniorenanwaltschaft*). In policing the non-discrimination legislation, the advocate would not only deal with issues brought to its attention but would also actively seek out instances of age-related discrimination.

Apart from the legal instruments, the *KSB* as well as small and large NGOs are also applying a number of less formal and more interactive policy instruments. The aim here is to promote a more enlightened and positive image of older people and ageing. First, the *KSB* is currently working on a set of guidelines specifying non-discriminatory and positive media coverage of older people (Respondent F, 2003). Second, fighting discrimination and promoting a more positive societal image of older people requires a shift in the style of current public debates about the challenges of demographic ageing. Here, the *KSB* aims to rationalise the policy debate[9] by generating and disseminating knowledge about the situation of elderly Austrians. This not only includes commissioning studies and research projects on different aspect of demographic ageing, it also means organising events such as workshops or conferences. Last, information campaigns aimed at the elderly (e.g. household safety) or at the general public are supposed to challenge prevailing misperceptions. In short, Austrian policy-makers are pursuing a strategy of public enlightenment.

New Capabilities for Elderly Individuals

However, a major problem for active ageing and senior citizen policy is that the elderly themselves internalise negative images of older people (Respondent H, 2003; Respondent G, 2003). Often, older people are not aware or too insecure to take advantage of their capabilities. This is particularly true for older women who experience cumulative discrimination. Policy in Austria, then, not only aims

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[8] Undoubtedly, the interest for wide-ranging anti-discrimination legislation at EU level is an important stimulus for the Austrian debate.

[9] In terms of the policy conflict model, this means shifting the debate from the vertical to the horizontal axis in Figure 1.

to improve access to social and economic life for older women via gender mainstreaming but also to provide women with an independent material basis (*BMSG,* 2002*)[10]*. Another policy strand, albeit rather experimental at present, aims to prepare Austrians for retirement. Seminars, training courses or broschures organised by a variety of different public and private organisations (e.g. the *KSB* or the Red Cross) inform older workers what to expect after retiring and how to use the time productively and actively.

3.3   **Exploiting Capabilities**

The last set of policy measures that make up the Austrian active ageing agenda consists of policy measures that help exploit the capabilities of older Austrians. Here, policy provides the incentive structures and institutional frameworks that enable employers, policy-makers and society as a whole to take full advantage of the knowledge, experience and skills of older people. Again, policy measures target both the macro-institutional level as well as the individual level.

Levelling the Playing Field

A number of institutional and attitudinal barriers ensure that older workers cannot compete with younger workers. The Austrian policy landscape features a set of legal mechanism as well as firm-level policy initiatives that create a level playing field and to help firms use the experience of older workers more effectively. First, the Austrian government has introduced a system of financial sanctions and incentives for retaining older people on the workforce. Using unemployment insurance contributions as a lever, Austrian policy-makers reward firms for employing older workers and penalise firms for dismissing their senior staff. The size of penalty depends on age and distance to pension. Second, at the firm-level, social partners are implementing schemes to adapt work places and work requirements to the needs of older workers. These changes sustain and even increase the productivity of older workers in firms. Last, in order to disseminate knowledge about age firm-level management and the adaptation of working practices, the Austrian social partners have launched a web-based forum (www.arbeitundalter.at). The forum provides in-depth information about best practices in age management.

Promoting Social Capital

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[10] However, the call for an independent source of material security for older women is not particularly original. Centre-left and feminist experts and politicians have been calling for more independent social benefits for women for ages. The gender mainstreaming agenda, in turn, has been a long-standing policy mission of the *Frauenministerium*.

Beyond the labour market, policy-makers are also implementing measures and institutions that enable society as a whole to benefit from the capabilities of older people. The main instruments here are the so-called Citizen Bureaus for the Old and the Young (*Bürgerbüros für Jung und Alt*). These offices are exchanges for voluntary and charitable work in the regions. The idea is to create regionally-based and independent networks of old and young volunteers working on social projects (i.e. provising care for the very old or very young).

4　Conclusion: Barriers to and Opportunities for Active Ageing Policies in Austria

Ageing policy in Austria is a transversal issue that affects different policy domains and policy actors in different ways. For this reason, the organisational and political topography of active ageing in Austria is fragmented. Policy actors in at least four different policy domains deal with ageing in one way or another. To complicate matters even further, Austrian policy domains consist of two types of networks: a core network based on highly integrated corporatist organisations and a peripheral network based on loosely structured, problem-oriented networks. With the exception of the health care system, relations between core and peripheral networks within the policy domains are, at best, tense (e.g. the senior citizen policy domain) and, at worst, hostile (e.g. the welfare state policy domain). As a result, the sectoral policy domains have not been the site of intense policy cooperation on active ageing. Similarly, the absence in Austria of institutional venues that span one or more policy domains has meant actors operating in, for instance, the welfare state or local social service provision are unlikely to cross each others paths let alone cooperate. Although most policy actors recognise the need for some form of cooperation across sectors and policy networks, there are significant institutional and ideational barriers to policy coordination.

Contending arguments, attitudes and approaches to active ageing are scattered across the fragmented institutional landscape in something barely resembling a policy debate. Institutional fragmentation has meant that policy positions on ageing map onto two dimensions: a dominant controversy about the legitimacy of corporatist institutional mechanisms and a far less prominent thematic debate about the appropriate goals of ageing policy. In general, the controversy between core and peripheral networks has relegated debate about appropriate responses to ageing to the margins of Austrian politics. As a result, the advocates and practitioners of active ageing and senior citizen policy speak with a relatively weak political voice. More often than not, their arguments are overshadowed by policy controversies about welfare state reform. What little exchange and cooperation there is takes place among experts and a few committed policy-makers in the margins of Austrian politics.

Institutional fragmentation has necessarily given rise to a patchy and dispersed policy agenda. Policy actors in different sectoral communities have formulated and implemented responses to the challenge of demographic ageing more or less in isolation from one another. Although there are (commendable) efforts by the *KSB* to bundle the somewhat eclectic gaggle of policy measures into a coherent whole, the agenda remains disparate. This is not to say that there is no policy innovation. Away from the glare of media attention, Austrian policy-makers at all levels of governance have been devising and implementing innovative policy responses to the issue of ageing.

What does all this mean for active ageing policies in Austria? What types of *barriers* emerge from this fragmented institutional landscape?

The Austrian institutional and policy landscapes give rise to a number of structural, ideational and practical barriers. The fragmented institutional topography in Austria has encouraged the development of isolated and compartmentalised policy communities. Since the Austrian institutional landscape lacks venues that span the different policy domains, the pillarisation of Austrian policy-making will continue to stand in the way of policy cooperation and constructive interaction. What is more, despite recent reforms, the consociational tradition remains strong in Austria. This means that issues of little 'interest' to the corporatist parties or issues that represent a threat to the consociational system find themselves relegated to the margins of policy-making. It would seem that this is the case with ageing and active ageing policies. All policy actors point out that decision-making is in the hands of organisations whose interests run counter to those of older people. In short, Austrian policy-making and Austrian politics systematically marginalises active ageing concerns by marginalising organisations dealing with active ageing.

Many of the formidable institutional barriers are exacerbated by socio-cultural values and attitudes that stigmatise older people and ageing. Policy actors of any persuasion argue that there is little collective interest in, awareness of or even patience for the problems demographic ageing. Neither politicians nor the general public have much of an understanding for the real issues and problems of ageing, say the policy actors. This is true both at an individual level as well as at the societal level. What little the public does know is tainted by negative stereotypes of dependency and deficiency. There seems to be little evidence of a decisive political will to change this state of affairs: beyond pension reform, policy actors gloomily point out, demographic ageing is not an attractive policy issue.

Finally, policy practices have contributed to constraining the Austrian active ageing agenda. Senior citizen organisations, some claim, have reacted far too inflexibly and sluggishly to the challenges of demographic ageing. Compared to Austrian youth organisations (roughly equipped with the same complement of rights and powers), senior citizen organisations have yet to get off the mark

(Respondent F, 2003). Further, the communication between policy actors leaves a lot of room for improvement. Quite apart from the corporatist compartmentalisation, NGOs and other actors in the field have little or no contact and exchange. Finally, politicians have consistently refused to deal with the problems of ageing. Because necessary reforms are painful, short-sighted politicians have preferred to stick their heads in the sand and hope for the best (Respondent H, 2003; Respondent I, 2003). Any incisive active ageing policy will have to overcome politicians' distaste for action.

What are the *opportunities* for Austrian active ageing policy? Again, the institutional landscape gives rise to structural, ideational and practical opportunities.

In terms of structures, some policy actors argue that the Austrian system of political representation provides the necessary tools for future active ageing policy-making. Although progress is admittedly slow, so the argument goes, the barriers to political participation of older Austrians are gradually disappearing. However, the most decisive opportunity will emerge from demographic ageing itself: in the future, older people will wield considerable electoral clout.

Similarly, the past decade has witnessed a growing awareness of ageing issues throughout society. On the one hand, business and commerce is becoming increasingly interested in the 'grey Euro'. On the other hand, older people themselves are redefining their attitudes towards work and leisure; increasingly, older people are becoming more flexible and open to new experiences. What is more, some actors claim, a shift towards a knowledge-based economy will favour the skills and experience of older workers.

At all levels, the Austrian policy landscape features innovative policy approaches to dealing with demographic ageing. These include financing models for life-long learning and long-term care, new ways physically structuring intergenerational relations (i.e. multi-generational housing projects) or age-management at firm level. Although many of these practices and policies will require networking and coordination, they are 'incubators' for developing more general policy instruments.

In sum, there is considerable institutional capacity, innovative knowledge and individual commitment available for active ageing policies scattered across the disjointed Austrian institutional landscape. The immediate and medium-term challenge for Austrian policy-makers is how best to mobilise, deploy and expand these resources. This, it would seem, is something of a dilemma. On the one hand, mobilising existing resources for active ageing policies will require an open and constructive debate about both the means and the ends of active ageing policy. Not only will this require organisational innovations in the Austrian institutional landscape, it also presupposes a considerable shift in prevalent (mis)perceptions and prejudices concerning older people and ageing.

In short, a constructive policy debate is predicated upon a process of successful public enlightenment and policy-oriented learning. On the other hand, effective ageing policies enabling older people to demonstrate their capabilities and skills will strengthen (not to mention hasten) the invariably fragile process public enlightenment. Additionally, and more importantly, social learning is more likely to result from an open, balanced and interactive policy debate among all stakeholders than from disjointed policy arguments emerging form policy networks isolated from each other and the public. In other words, public enlightenment itself is predicated upon constructive policy debate.

This is not to say that there are no ways out of this predicament. As we have seen, policy actors can conceive of many pathways out of this double-bind. This, however, does imply that there are probably no ready-made patent solutions to demographic ageing in Austria (or elsewhere). Finding ways of living and dealing with the multitude political, socio-cultural, and economic issues that emerge from demographic ageing will not only require a large degree of innovation but also a fair portion of courage for experimentation as well tolerance and patience to both discuss and learn from mistakes. It seems that Austrian policy-makers have their work cut out.

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IV

Means: Existing institutional arrangements are appropriate and suitable

Ends: Empowering senior citizens

Problem: lack of political will from active population

I

Means: Existing corporatist policy-making structures are well suited for active ageing policy

End: Exploit productive potential of older people

Problem: lack of societal awareness

Senior Citizenship

Productive ageing

Means: Organisations need to operate at local and grass roots level

Ends: Empower older Austrians by emancipating society as a whole

Problem: Existing corporatist institutional configurations

Means: Radical overhaul of exiting social insurance systems to allow more diverse sources of pensin and health care provision

Ends: Encourage people to work longer and live acitve lives

Problem: Political elites sacrifice short-term electoral gain over rational policy solutions

Outsiders

III

II