

National Urban Policy—The Case of West Germany

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West Germany is a federal republic; responsibilities and powers to guide urban development are shared among governments of three levels—federal, state, and local. There are several sectoral policies such as housing, urban redevelopment, land use planning, environmental controls, historic preservation, transportation, economic development, and spatial planning that add up to what might be called a national urban policy. Most of these sectoral policies are based on intergovernmental grant-in-aid programs planned by a number of coordinating organizations which crosscut federal, state, and local jurisdictions. Although there has been an attempt to achieve more comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated guidance of urban development, the actual pattern of policy implementation remains rather fragmented. Thus, Germany's national urban policy can be better described as the "resultant" of a great number of—more or less well coordinated—sectoral policies and decisions interacting in an unforeseen way.

Like policy makers in many countries, German politicians and planners have come to appreciate the complexity of the dialectic relationship between urban problems and government decisions. However, the depth of their appreciation has grown far quicker than their ability to intervene adequately. Reacting to a variety of urban problems, planning institutions and planning practice have changed a great deal since the government's first interventions in urban problems. However, evaluating policy outcomes and impacts shows a different picture. There is little doubt that some objectives have been achieved; other policies have clearly fallen short of the expectations of the government and public. Still others have had unintended consequences, which have cast doubt on the legitimacy of government intervention in those areas.

This article surveys the various sectoral policies and specifically addresses the issue of coordination in an interlinked network of planning institutions. It discusses policies affecting cities both directly and indirectly, some of the socioeconomic problems they are designed to address, and the degree to which the goals of these policies have been achieved. The final part assesses how well these policies have been coordinated

and the general limits of coordination in West Germany's present planning system.

Emerging interdependencies of the planning system

West Germany is a federal republic; responsibilities and powers are shared between both the legislatures and the executives at three levels: federal, state, and municipal (Bund, Länder, and Gemeinden, respectively).

In most policy areas the role of the federal government is constitutionally limited. Reflecting Germany's history, the constitution of the Federal Republic (1949) has been designed to weaken the power of the central government, as compared to the previous constitution of the Weimar Republic (1919). In the urban arena the

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