

Request for Exemption of Research Involving Human Subjects

[please print or type responses below]

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Project Title: "Diffusion of Urban Environmental and Planning Policies from Germany to the U.S."
of Human Subjects: Approximately 40

Source of Funding Support: Personal

[] All investigators of this project are qualified through completion of the formal training program or web-based training programs provided by the Virginia Tech Office of Research Compliance.

Note: To qualify for Exemption, the research must be (a) of minimal risk to the subjects, (b) must not involve any of the special classes of subjects, and (c) must be in one or more of the following categories. A full description of these categories may be found in the Exempt Research section of the Virginia Tech "IRB Protocol Submission Instructions Document or in the federal regulations [45 CFR 46.101(b)(1-6)]. (http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.101)

Please mark/check the appropriate category or categories below which qualify the proposed project for exemption:

- [x] 1. Research will be conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices [see item (1), page 6 of the "Instructions" document].
[x] 2. Research will involve the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless the subjects can be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects and disclosure of responses could reasonably place the subjects at risk or criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability or reputation [see item (2), page 6 - "Instructions"].
[] 3. Research will involve the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under item 2) above if the subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or Federal statute(s) require(s) that the confidentiality or other personally identifiable information will be maintained [see item (3), page 6 of the "Instructions" document].
[] 4. Research will involve the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects [see item (4), page 7 of the "Instructions" document].
[] 5. Research and demonstration projects designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public benefit or service programs, procedures for obtaining benefits or proposed changes in such programs [see item (5), page 7 of the "Instructions" document].
[] 6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies [see item (6), page 7- "Instructions].

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I. Introduction - Confronting Urban Environmental Challenges

State and local authorities in the United States are confronting a variety of complex environmental challenges such as urban sprawl, brownfields, combined-sewer overflows, energy inefficient buildings, and loss of open space. In their efforts to promote sustainable urban environments they are looking with greater regularity to policies and experiences overseas, particularly Germany. The reasons are clear, Germany has long been considered a leader in environmental policy and urban planning (Wuerzel 2002:1; Jaenicke & Weidner 1997; Anderssen 1998:26). The union of high population densities, severe resource constraints, and thoughtful planning approaches allowed Germany to develop innovative policies for forestry management, building codes, and transportation ahead of many other countries. For example, Germany's national spatial planning and nature protection policies have merged with regional and local stormwater policies to create 'green' roofs to address sewer overflows, preserve open space, and urban forests to facilitate 'cool air' flows, and to promote sustainable brownfields redevelopment.

Since the 19th century, Germany in particular has served as a model to Americans for innovative urban planning and environmental policies. Pivotal American planners and conservationists, such as Aldo Leopold, Gifford Pinchot, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Frank Lloyd Wright, Benjamin Marsh, and others have traveled to Germany to learn from and apply its experiences in their respective fields. In 1889, Gifford Pinchot went to Germany to study forestry management and returned to the U.S. to create the first national administrative structure to regulate forests (Miller 2001:11). In 1908, Benjamin Marsh published "City Planning," which reformed New York City's zoning laws a by drawing from the models of Frankfurt, Cologne, and Munich (Peterson 2003:239).

Nevertheless, despite a handful of historical and contemporary precedents in the United States which have revealed how park planning from Berlin has been imitated in Washington DC, or brownfields programs from the Ruhr are adopted in Buffalo, New York, an institutional vacuum exists in the United States that has stunted understanding about the diffusion and application of environmental and urban planning policies, ideas and programs into the U.S. from overseas. This vacuum exists at all levels of the United States and includes academia, governmental, and non-governmental sectors . There are few mature communications networks or systems through which knowledge and testing of German urban planning policies can occur. It is nearly impossible to find local or regional authorities in the United States who are actively involved in the analysis and testing of urban planning and environmental policies from Germany or any other countries. As Bob Yaro, director of the Regional Planning Association, commented "Learning from abroad does not come naturally to American planners. Over the past few decades, American planning and land-use regulation have become increasingly insular and

introspective.” (Faludi 2002:210)

The provincial and introverted behavior among U.S. national and international urban planning and environmental bodies is reflected in the work of organizations such as the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Architects, or the International City/County Managers Association, or the U.S. Conference of Mayors. To the extent that these organizations undertake any international work, it is most often contained within the arena of technical assistance to developing countries. The dearth of research and studies involving the diffusion of policies into the United States in general, and environmental and urban planning policy diffusion from Germany in particular, is further demonstration of this reluctance (Ward 1999:1; Masser 1986: 171). At the present, there are no theories and analytic frameworks to help shape understanding about how to identify, interpret and apply best practices local urban environmental policies from Germany to the United States.

The thesis of this paper addresses a wide range of innovative governmental urban environmental policies and programs affecting: 1) low-impact stormwater management; 2) open-space protection and landscape design; 3) “green” buildings; and 4) brownfields redevelopment, which have evolved in Germany that have application in urban regions of the U.S. However, while examples of successful local environmental policy diffusion from Germany into the U.S. exist, there are no sustained or systemic efforts dedicated to identifying, analyzing, and applying these practices. Moreover, the current analytic and policy infrastructure supporting their identification, interpretation and testing is inadequate, restraining the successful transference and adaptation of these and other environmental policies into this country.

Strengthening the analysis and adaptation of urban environmental and planning policies from Germany into the United States will introduce a variety of environmental, economic, and social improvements. Applying Germany’s experiences with ‘green’ rooftops, regional land-use planning, and transportation systems will improve water quality, mitigate consumptive land-use patterns, save public funds, and protect human health. Poucher (2003:1) has highlighted how American pedestrians are more likely to be killed or injured than German pedestrians on a per-trip and per-kilometer basis. Coffman (Hager 2003) has demonstrated how low-impact development strategies from Germany can improve stormwater management for suburban communities in Maryland.

Understanding the transfer and adaptation of urban planning and environmental policies from Germany to the United States must start with interpreting the broad field of international policy diffusion. In addition to analyzing and interpreting broad concepts such as “lesson learning” (Rose 1993) and “policy diffusion” (Dolowitz 1997), understanding policy transfer also requires study of the motives of the participating actors, the means of transference, communications systems, and the incentives and obstacles supporting or inhibiting the adoption of policies. A study of international urban environmental policy diffusion also requires analysis of variables such as coerced versus voluntary diffusion, the concept of innovation, the networks and systems that practitioners and policy makers use to transfer and apply lessons from abroad.

It also requires understanding of organizational behavior and the challenges of coping with change and adoption of innovation. Finally, interpreting and analyzing historical precedents for clues about how and why the transference of urban environmental policies succeeds or fails also is important.

Research Questions:

This study will review and describe current literature and concepts involving international policy diffusion with a special emphasis on the voluntary transference of innovative environmental and urban planning policies from Germany into the United States. This study also will review and description of current literature and concepts affecting the adoption and rejection of environmental and urban planning policies from Germany to the United States.

This study will ask questions such as:

- Why are the networks and systems in the United States involved in the identification, interpretation and analysis of international urban and environmental policies so weakly institutionalized?
- What are the key variables affecting transfer and adoption of urban environmental and planning policies from Germany to the United States? Are they cultural, organizational, political?
- How are urban environmental and planning policies diffused from Germany into the United States?
- Why are urban environmental and planning policies diffused from Germany into the United States?
- Who is transferring and applying are urban environmental and planning policies from Germany into the United States?
- What urban environmental planning policies are being diffused from Germany into the United States?
- What are the key variables affecting the search and identification of urban environmental and planning policies from Germany to the United States?
- What is the relationship between current research and literature on international policy diffusion and the diffusion of urban environmental and planning theories into the United States?
- What are the current research and literature gaps in interpreting the diffusion and adaptation of urban environmental and planning policies from Germany to the United States?

- Why is U.S. urban environmental and planning policy environment so impermeable to changes from international influences?
- How does the universe of literature and theories involving international policy diffusion and lesson learning tell us about the diffusion of urban environmental policies from Germany to the United States?

This paper will be based upon Dolowitz's definition of policy diffusion, defined as:

"the process by which knowledge about how policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administration, arrangements institutions and ideas in another political system" (Dolowitz/Marsh 2000:1)

For practical purposes, this paper will interpret the terms "lesson learning," "policy transfer," "policy diffusion," "policy bandwagoning," "imitation," "policy borrowing," "policy shopping," or "knowledge utilization," as equal, and will avoid an epistemological process that interprets the differences between these terms. This paper also will avoid a review of the application of specific technologies and adhere generally to the diffusion of local urban planning and environmental policies.

Methodology

The methods in this study will rely on social science field research and the development of four case studies involving the transfer of urban environmental and planning policies from Germany to the United States. Specifically, the case studies will review the international, national, state, and local influences on the development of innovative stormwater management (low-impact development), brownfields redevelopment, open space preservation, and solar housing policies in Germany and their transfer and adaptation in the United States. Data for each case study will be collected from a review international, national, and regional literature sources, including published books and journals, articles. Data also will be collected from interviews with approximately 40 US and German urban environmental specialists. This study also will review and distill the general literature of international policy diffusion and identify relationships to contemporary and historical urban environmental and planning policy diffusion from Germany into the United States. A draft copy of the questionnaire is attached.

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Date of Interview:
Location of Interview:
Name of Subject:
Organization of Subject
Address of Subject:
Title of Subject:

- 1) When did you go to Germany?
- 2) How long were you there?
- 3) Where did you go and what sites did you visit, and with whom did you meet?
- 4) Who organized your visit?
- 5) What about Germany urban environmental and planning policies did you know prior to your visit?
- 6) What information sources did you receive to understand urban environmental and planning policies in Germany?
- 7) What urban environmental and planning policies from Germany were you able to transfer and apply after your return to the United States?
- 8) How were you able to transfer and apply urban environmental and planning policies from Germany to the U.S.?
- 9) What obstacles did you encounter in your efforts to apply what you learned in Germany?
- 10) How did you overcome these obstacles?
- 11) Why were these obstacles surmounted?
- 12) What is limiting further application of Germany urban environmental and planning policies in the US?
- 13) Are these limits cultural, political, organizational, or economic?
- 14) What should be done to address these limits?
- 15) What has facilitated the diffusion and adaptation of German urban environmental and planning policies in your work? What aided you in overcoming whatever limits or obstacles you confronted?
- 16) Are these incentives cultural, political, organizational, or economic?
- 17) What have been the economic, social and environmental benefits realized in your work or

city or state?

18) What policy changes are necessary in the U.S. to support the diffusion of German urban environmental and planning policies?