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Occasional Paper

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**Suburbanisation and Urban Development in Germany
Trends – Models – Strategies**

Statement

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1. Trends

The Federal Republic of Germany since re-unification has a population of 82 million people, living at present in some 14,600 municipalities. The smaller communities and towns are combined in community associations (districts), the larger towns and cities are "district-free". In these 113 district-free towns and cities about 33 percent of the population live on 5 percent of the land area. 83 towns and cities have more than 100,000 inhabitants. Germany is thus an urbanised country and its towns and cities are geographically relatively evenly spread. This spatial structure on the national level is seen as an advantage - in international competition too. When it comes to the spatial structure at regional level, the sub-urbanisation of living, shopping and working has been since 1960, and will remain in the foreseeable future, the dominant and general spatial trend in German urban regions.

There is no standard process for this suburbanisation. The differentiation is much more a matter of manifested forms with, sometimes, considerable differences in dimensions and resultant consequences. This is true both inter-temporally and also inter-regionally:

- between western and eastern Germany,
- between polycentric and monocentric urban regions,
- between prospering and stagnating towns and cities.

There has been a long debate about the "correct" demarcation for the inner urban area, the surrounding area (various "rings") and the urban region in its entirety, about suitable indicators and statistical methods. I will not mention these here. In the former Federal Republic (i.e. West Germany) the following trends can be seen:

1. Where suburbanisation is measured with the help of suburbanisation coefficients (= share of the population/employment in the surrounding area to total regional population/employment), these coefficients are slowly and continuously increasing everywhere.
2. The degree of suburbanisation of the population is greater than that of employment, the degree of urbanisation is greater in the secondary sector than in the tertiary sector.
3. As a result of suburbanisation there is a decline in the former discrepancy between the population and employment densities between the inner urban and the surrounding areas. The "country" is also becoming more "urban" statistically, while an urban lifestyle is in any case dominant.
4. In the 1960s and 1970s suburbanisation was marked by the

centrifugal migration out of the centre into the surrounding areas. The growth of a region was a consequence of the growth of a city. The city "overflowed" like a full wash basin. Commuter distances increased.

5. In the 1980s and 1990s regional development lost its dependence on the centre. Inter-regional migration and the establishment of companies strengthened the surrounding areas more and more directly.
6. The dispersed settling of the intermediate areas between the settlement axes, too, was brought about by land and rent price differences, growing motorisation and the extension of the road infra-structure. In this, the construction of apartment block settlements spread there, too, and not only close to suburban railways.
7. The suburbanisation of employment was less dispersed, concentrated in places with good transport links. It transformed the initially centrally-oriented commuting more and more into tangential commuting. Commuting distances are to some extent sinking.
8. Large area shopping and large area leisure facilities (pools, sports centres, musical theatres, cinemas etc.) are appearing to a great extent in surrounding areas in mono-functional locations□ which are easily reached by car. These tertiary centres lead to a functional upgrading in those localities. At the same time the danger of a relative functional loss in inner city grows, when, for example "experience shopping" becomes possible in the surrounding area also.
9. The inhabitants of a region are no longer so focused on the town or city as the centre for work, shopping and cultural services. The entire region becomes the field of activity for people, who with their individual selection of what is on offer (as though from a "menu"), also visit spatially widely strewn locations.
10. On the other hand, there are also surprising "spatial" connections. Those who live to the south of an inner city, often move to a southern suburb. Even companies located to the west of the city centre, move more readily into the western surrounding area, etc.

Many structures and processes in eastern Germany are even today, significantly different from those in western Germany. After 40 years of a state regulated urbanisation policy with a "socialist" city as its goal, the old city centres were, in-so-far as they had not been destroyed, in a condition of advanced decay in 1990. Urban renewal simply did not take place on the whole, the need for homes was met by industrialised prefabricated apartment buildings, often on the edge of old cities (Halle-Neustadt, Leipzig-Grünau, Berlin-Hellersdorf). Through the elimination of market processes (price of land, rents) and

specific political priorities (in urban planning, in public transport), the extent of sub-urbanisation was generally significantly lower.

After re-unification, a rapid suburbanisation of the retail trade was seen at first. In the east a significantly higher share of turnover is made "in the green fields" than is the case in the west. Because of the difficulties involved in the reform of ownership (re-privatisation), in building land zoning and because of lagging incomes, suburbanisation in housing followed later, although today, at a greater pace than in the west. While migration streams were to a great extent interregional (from east to west) in the years after 1990, they are today to an equally great extent intra-regional (from the inner city into surrounding areas). Higher migration coefficients than in the west mirror the process of closing the gap.

The consequences of suburbanisation are widely varied. The following aspects are often mentioned:

- Social polarisation and segregation,
- Using up of land and increased traffic,
- Additional infra-structure requirements,
- Problems for communal finances,
- Problems with the design of urban planning,
- Decline of inner cities,
- Disintegration of town/city identity.

While the decisions of households and companies serve the attainment of individual objectives, the negative external effects have an impact on public property and social objectives are endangered. This will be explained briefly with regard to the first two points:

Re 1: Social polarisation and segregation

In a qualitative examination it can be said as a rule, that the suburbanisation of the German population goes hand in hand with significant social segregation. Higher income bracket "middle class families" leave the inner cities or old developments close to the inner city and look for areas of preferential single family housing in the surrounding areas, while the well known urban problem groups are concentrated in the simpler, inner city, old development areas. Here the old, the poor and single-parent families are over-represented, as well as young adults still in training. In some German cities, the share of single households in the city centre has risen to over or close to 50 percent. There are well situated persons with an "urban life-style" among them (YUPPIES, DINKS), but these are in the minority.

A particular problem is created, in that in addition to this segregation among the German population, we have a concentration of foreigners in the inner cities.

A particular phenomenon of Berlin and the east German towns is that a similar sorting process has appeared in the large prefabricated high-rise housing developments, which until re-unification, could be

considered as thoroughly mixed areas. In 1996 some 13,000 apartments stood empty in the eastern urban areas of Berlin. Even if some of these are derelict due to reconstruction or renovation, urban housing associations complain that they can no longer find tenants for flats in areas with high settlement density and poor residential environment, which is typical of inner urban areas and prefabricated high-rise housing settlements.

Re 2: Using up of land and increased traffic

Population growth (as a result of international migration), changes in household structure, income growth and the higher demand for housing resulting from it, increase the demand for further settlement areas. In West Germany the living area per inhabitant grew from 22 to 37 square metres between 1965 and 1991. This will continue to grow until 2010 to 42 square metres per inhabitant and will thus have doubled within 50 years. The values which are still low today in eastern Germany will adjust to this trend (figure 1).

The increasing pressure of settlement and the spatial extension of settlement areas (city sprawl) into the surrounding areas of agglomerates lead to a constantly increasing demand for space and an ever greater decline in near-natural land areas, with grave ecological consequences.

Sinking transport costs in relation to income, the increasing spatial division of functions and the growing share of leisure time lead to growth in traffic. Even today, some 50 percent of traffic in passenger transport is "experience traffic" for leisure and holidays (figure 2).

The increase in, and the sprawls of personal transport in cars and business traffic in trucks lead to an increase in traffic-related emissions and noise pollution and thus the consumption of non-renewable energy sources, an intensive utilisation of space□, and the criss-crossing of natural environments.

The utilisation of land and increase in traffic go hand in hand and endanger central ecological objectives. The interrelationships between urban structure, transport systems and land requirement can also be made clear in the following city comparison, which was presented in a recent publication of the German Institute of Urban Affairs (see figure 3).

We compare cities of different structures:

- The "Delft city type" (Netherlands) is characterised by high building and use density, mixed use and by the priority of public transport, bicycles and pedestrian traffic.
- The "Oldenburg city type" (Germany) is of only medium density, with less mixed use; cars and bicycles play the main role in the transport system.

- The "Denver city type" (USA) is characterised by low density and total fixation on car transport.

The total settlement area requirement (including transport areas) for a fictitious city of 100,000 inhabitants - oriented on data from the three cities cited - is extremely varied. As a result of its low building density and the large transport area required, a Denver-type city needs almost four times the settlement area per inhabitant as a Delft-type city.

This comparison makes the following clear: low car orientation and high building and use density make smaller distances possible, that can be largely covered on foot or by bicycle. For greater distances, public transport is suitable; the need for car traffic is then low. Greater car orientation gives rise to traffic and environmental problems that do not appear in a more compact city with less car traffic: city sprawl, high environmental pollution from traffic, dependence on cars, low mobility opportunities for the car-less, loss of streets as public areas and lack of security in public areas.

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- 1 In summer 1998, 250 additional leisure parks are to be in the planning stage.
 - 2 Motorised personal transport needs on average, 10 times the surface area used per transported person and kilometre, compared with forms of mobility more acceptable city life (rail, bus, bicycle, walking).
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2. Models

In the German discussion of normative models for spatial urban structure and urban development, two competing and contradictory urban models have currently moved to the centre of the stage:

- the model of the compact, mixed use, "European" city, often called the "short distances city" and
- the model of the network city, conceived around axes and nodes, offering partly unmixed and partly mixed functions.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the dominant normative model until now has been to revitalise and only partially transform cities because in almost all recent urban development concepts for German towns and cities, mixed function and urban density are formulated as guiding objectives. This model is based on the conviction that the urban planning structures of the "European" city have proved to be stable and at the same time flexible. All in all, they are sufficiently neutral when it comes to use, and they are capable of integration, allowing them to cope with changing requirements. This model can also take better account of the ecological objectives referred to. It is credited with making a contribution to social integration, urban lifestyle and economic innovation, too. It thus appears to be right and important to establish a link to the European roots of urban culture and to transform towns and cities as historically aware yet fit for the future.

In the present new phase of comprehensive urban development planning, urban space inter-weaving (of housing, work, politics, administration, education and the arts) or the mixed function principle as an urban development political motive has once again moved to the forefront. Several German cities orient their urban development targets both in current city expansion and in urban re-structuring to abandoned industrial, military and transport sites with mixed functionality as the guiding objective. This can be seen, for example in Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Heidelberg and also towns and cities in the northern part of the Ruhr within the framework of projects for the International Building Exhibition (IBA) at Emscherpark.

However, the actual separation of functions in urban regions contradicts - as shown - in many aspects, the model of the compact, mixed city. Proponents of the "European" city face reproaches about a lack of openness to new ideas and innovation, and are accused of sentimentality and backwardness. The champions of the network city on the other hand, are confronted with the criticism of an unscrupulous accommodation to the ruling development tendencies and a normative acceptance of previous policy failure, of cultural ignorance and the devaluation of existing urban structures.

If we assume that the "European City" is the dominant aim of today, then it seems that legal jurisdiction, financial manoeuvrability and democratically determined political will are at present insufficient to prevail against the powers of the economy and society.

3. Strategies

What then can be the strategies of urban policy do that acknowledges these powers, that respects its own legal, financial and political limitations and that nonetheless wishes to do something for its normative model? This is not the place to elaborate on a comprehensive strategy in all its details. Some important aspects will be drawn out from a broad spectrum of possible courses of action.

3.1 City-Marketing

The city centre should remain an "urban" centre. The "decay" of the inner city is to be opposed by government policies, local co-operative management and marketing strategies (see the German Bundestag's "Policies for the Maintenance and Strengthening of Inner Cities", 23 June 1998, and the German Association of Towns and Cities "The Future of the City Centres", 17 June 1998) among other things. (Re-)Vitalising requires more than mere diversity in the retail trade, yet this does play a large role:

- With so-called "retail trade concepts" or "centre concepts" a division of labour can be influenced between retail business in the inner city and on the outskirts. A further growth of large firms at non-integrated locations should be prevented.
- Germany has had good experience with city reconstruction, traffic reduction and pedestrian zones.
- The restructuring of railway stations and inner city railway areas offers opportunities for improving the value of the retail trade and other functions.
- Since the mix is important for attractiveness, opportunities for subsidising individual, less profitable tenants by the city or other lucrative tenants should be checked, as practised in shopping "Malls" for instance.

"City marketing" is used to mean new efforts to strengthen attractiveness through integrated concepts and public-private co-operation.

- "Integrated concepts" aim to combine measures for the support of retail trade with other measures, including:
 - Urban planning (preservation of monuments, green areas, water),
 - Increasing the quality of spending time in the city (cleanliness, lighting, security),

- Improving the quality of street life (markets, festivals, street artists, extended opening hours).
- "Co-operation" must include the city administration, commerce, residents, cultural institutions and tourism. It must aim to achieve both agreement of objectives as well as co-operation on implementing specific projects.

In addition to the outward effect (e.g. on tourists, consumers, investors) the inner effect, such as the growing understanding between the groups involved, is stressed.

3.2 Housing policy

Homes which are attractive, affordable and suitable for the development of home ownership, should be available in a city in order to apply the brakes to the flight to a home of one's own out of town. After the end of the homes shortage of the post-war years, regional and local conditions and requirements have determined more and more housing construction and urban building policies. An increasingly differentiated, but at the same time, ever more involved and contradictory instrumentation was created in order to deal with the changing requirements. The need for a basic reform of the housing construction legislation, that dates from 1956 and was above all geared to post-war conditions, is thus undisputed. That the quarrel here is also about public funds in housing policy, should surprise no one. Clarification of the financing question is of extraordinary importance for the municipalities, because the communal level has gained in influence and there has been an increasing municipalisation of housing policy since the early 1980s.

In the Land of Berlin, for example, there has been a rethinking process with regard to subsidy policies in connection with the urban construction policy since re-unification. This is not only a result of the special situation of Berlin, but in the following points, it is typical of the change:

1. A change in urban planning objectives: away from loosely structured housing development to the mixed use "suburb";
2. Dismantling of the exclusive orientation to traditional social housing construction;
3. Introduction of income dependent subsidies for the housing requirements of the middle class;
4. Increasing the share of private ownership, in apartment block developments as well as houses.

This change in perspective for housing policy is currently accompanied by a relaxed housing market. The feverish construction activity of recent years (since 1991, 2.6 million homes have been built

and around 3.5 million homes renovated in Germany) led in some places, to a drop in rents of up to 30 percent and to empty apartments. This development may appear positive, but for the low-income groups who rely on inexpensive housing, the relaxation trend in the upper and middle market segments does not play a role. An added difficulty for the provision of this group, is the decline in the amount of social housing available. While West Germany had 4 million social housing apartments in 1980, it has only 2.4 million today. It is estimated that only 1 million social housing apartments will be available in 2005.

In view of the very tight budgets in many German cities, new methods of increasing revenue are being considered. This will affect many things including the sale of shares in municipal housing corporations, the direct sale of social housing apartments (e.g. to tenants), and the sale of land currently owned by municipalities. Many experts see in this a great danger for city housing policy and thus for social integration in the city. They see that securing a functional mix, a foresighted communal land policy, must be encouraged. Budget consolidation must not become the uppermost goal of city real estate policy.

3.3 Designing city outskirts

A functional mix and density should be the development aims for the outskirts of cities, too. Varied, but low density city landscapes should facilitate recreation close to the city. The outskirts of a city should no longer be the site of "unplanned" development or over-dimensioned and mono-structured large settlements on the edge of town (e.g. West Berlin: Märkisches Viertel with 16,000 apartments, East Berlin: Hellersdorf with more than 50,000 apartments). Instead, the task must be to recognise opportunities and the development potential of these areas and also to make them eligible for a sustainable settlement development.

Functionally mixed and relatively dense, but from their size, "comprehensible" settlement structures with an opportunity for an identity on city outskirts can show a largely acceptable development path. Since the end of the 1980s, various forms of municipal settlement have been developed or planned on city outskirts in several German cities as new urban districts or new "suburbs" with from 1,500 to 5,000 apartments or houses, pursuing the conceptual objective of "intensification on the edge of the city". Examples of this are a series of new suburbs on the outskirts of Berlin (Karow-Nord, Buchholz, Alt-Glienicke), Frankfurt am Main (Riedberg), Freiburg (Rieselfeld) and Hamburg (Billwerder).

These new city districts or suburbs are intended to meet several requirements of new urban development and urban expansion and avoid the mistakes of the past. Mixtures of population and income levels, of commercial use and public infra-structures, of building and housing forms (rented flats and own home building) and good public

transport links are to be taken into account as central pre-requisites for their "ability to survive". To ensure the economic and sustainable viability of these concepts, however, urban planning minimum densities are required on the one hand to ensure economic feasibility for private investors, transport connections and the public social and cultural infrastructures, and on the other hand, to keep land use within acceptable limits.

By observing these principles, individual living and residential ideas of a large section of the population can be brought to an acceptable balance with economic and ecological considerations:

- The realisation of wishes to live close to urban or regional services and jobs with a good "local source of supplies" in one's own suburb at the same time;
- "Comprehensible" and attractive living environment through a qualitatively high and identity-furthering design of public and private spaces producing a high standard of residential quality;
- Good accessibility to natural attractions and local recreation facilities "at one's doorstep".

Landscape planning should accentuate and develop the diversity, uniqueness and beauty of the surrounding landscape and as a public space, it should be an integral element of the city landscape.

3.4 Traffic policy

Transport policy presents an important instrument for influencing the settlement structure of the inner city, centres of city districts and the outskirts of cities. A new urban policy emphasising compact urban structure with mixed use, with high urban planning and ecological qualities, needs to provide mobility in keeping with urban acceptability. The following classical strategies at least, are necessary for this:

- Traffic avoidance: Avoidance of increased distances through more compact city structures, mixed use and concentration on central locations within a region where there are rail links.
- Shift in the means of transport: A large portion of car traffic can be shifted to public transport, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
- Slowing down traffic and planning of street space: By restricting vehicle speed, dangers, accidents and noise pollution can be significantly reduced.

Through priority policies in favour of public transport, bicycle and pedestrian traffic, city centres in particular, can be supported in their economic and cultural functions. Only by means of the efficient, land-use-saving means of transport such as trams, city and suburban railways, bus and bicycle can high tourism and employment figures for

a city centre be maintained at all. Those cities with the highest share of rail and bicycles in traffic moving toward the city centre enjoy a high level of attractiveness, e.g. Munich, Vienna, Milan, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Zurich, Bern, with at least 80 percent of all routes to the inner city reserved for trains, buses, bicycles or pedestrians and a maximum of 20 percent for cars.

City district centres can also be strengthened through traffic policy: firstly, by being on an important junction point of the public transport network; secondly, by traffic reduction in the area and planning of street space which enhances conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and for spending time outdoors. Urban planning and ecological improvement in the districts can strengthen people's orientation to the locality and thus upgrade the urban quality of the district centres.

In addition to improved and more effective local and regional planning, the framework conditions imposed from above (the state) must be designed so that they are no longer counter-productive to sustainable settlement and traffic development, but promote these objectives. Together with investment policy, prices are also of great significance for traffic development. When prices for transport do not correspond with the overall costs to the economy, then mistakes involving competing means of transport will result. This occurs in traffic planning quite often. Truck, car and air transport are sectors with very high external costs. It is appropriate here that market imperfections are offset by means of taxation. This is required firstly for reasons of correct prices and secondly, as an incentive to strengthen the use of more environmentally friendly means of transport.

3.5 Administration policy

The administrative borders are of central significance in a dual sense for spatial developments in city regions:

- They determine the financial economic consequences. If the city area is trimmed "very close" administratively, then tax revenues will quickly be lost to the central city because of suburbanisation. In Germany income tax and commercial tax are affected. If the administrative city area is "broad", however, the displacement of housing and work has less effect on the central city. The avoidance of these financial consequences leads today to certain zoning decisions and settlement plans in central cities, that from a regional perspective, are sub-optimal to say the least.
- In various urban regions of Germany, new institutional solutions are therefore being implemented or discussed, to weaken the financial consequences and to improve the "control" of the development of urban areas at regional level. Problem areas do not orient themselves on administrative borders. The solutions range from the amalgamation of municipalities (e.g. Leipzig) to the formation of regional districts (e.g. Hanover)

and regional associations (e.g. Stuttgart), from traditional functional associations to registered societies (e.g. Rhine-Neckar-Dreieck), and to new forms of informal co-operation (urban networks, regional conferences).

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