

Simonis, Udo E.

Book Review — Digitized Version

[Sammelrezension] Dietrich Fürst (Hrsg.): Stadtökonomie. Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1978. Joachim Klaus, Werner Vauth: Stadtentwicklungspolitik. Bonn [u.a.]: Haupt, 1978

Modern law and society: a review of German language research contributions on law, political science, and sociology / German studies, section II

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FÜRST, DIETRICH (Ed.)

Urban Economics

["Stadtökonomie"]

Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1978;

KLAUS, JOACHIM – VAUTH, WERNER

Urban Development Policy

["Stadtentwicklungspolitik"]

Bonn / Stuttgart: Verlag Paul Haupt, 1978;

In the last decade, in many developed and developing countries of the world the city has been a field of action for thorough scientific research by economists. It is rather surprising that in this respect German economists seem to be very much behindhand. While in the United States, for example, a group of economists after a period of cooperative discussion made a great effort in establishing departments of urban affairs and writing a large number of recommendable text books, nothing comparable took place in Germany. In fact, until recently there was not even one chair of urban economics at a German university and not one text book written on urban economics. Given this background, it is a great pleasure to announce and to examine two new German books on that subject, Dietrich Fürst's reader on urban economics and Joachim Klaus' and Werner Vauth's book on urban development planning.

Fürst starts with a well documented synopsis on the state of the art in the field of urban economics and then assembles various articles written by prominent American experts (W. R. Thompson, W. Alonso, H. W. Richardson, W. Z.

¹ Cf. e. g. the excellent bibliography by DIANE BAERWALD and CHIZUKO SAEKI: *The Urban Way. A Guide to Research on Japanese Cities*. Ed. Mary Vance. Monticello/Ill. 1970.

Hirsch, J. Rothenberg, E. S. Mills), covering such topics as external effects and urban size, transport demand, slum clearance and urban renewal, urban growth and distribution effects. In addition, two articles written by German economists are included: J. Wolf on the labour market and urban development, and K. Zimmermann on environmental problems of urbanization. A well structured bibliography is added to these articles, which together makes a fairly good introduction to urban economic problems for German readers. The various chapters of the book, however, also reveal the deficiencies German economics has to overcome in order to reach international standards. The book written by *Klaus* und *Vauth* concentrates on the urban planning process and the contributions that can be expected from economists. They thoroughly check three phases of urban planning – goal setting, development strategy, and process evaluation – and look for the areas where economic analysis may come in or should take command. In general, the authors seem to be sceptics regarding the role economics could play. In detail, however, they actually overemphasize that role. As in current mainstream economics, the assumptions are often based on hypothetical behaviour and not on actual (empirically observed) behaviour; and, in addition, this hypothetical behaviour is often reduced to “ideal” behaviour. Given this twofold reduction, a thorough empirical enquiry into the behaviour of economic agents and the institutions in which they act, is more or less avoided. However, the book by Klaus and Vauth contains remarkable points of departure for integrating economic theory into the urban development issue, which is interdisciplinary by nature.

I hope that right from the beginning this necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to urban development planning will be fully understood by German economists, thus not giving them an excuse for too early a retreat from this field of research.

Professor Dr. Udo E. Simonis, Berlin