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Book Review — Digitized Version

[Rezension] Detlev Kantowsky (Hrsg.):
Evaluierungsforschung und -praxis in der
Entwicklungshilfe. Zürich: Verlag der Fachvereine, 1977

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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Suggested Citation: Simonis, Udo E. (1980) : [Rezension] Detlev Kantowsky (Hrsg.):
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Modern law and society: a review of German language research contributions on law, political
science, and sociology / German studies, section II, ISSN 0026-7953, Hohnholz, Tübingen, Vol. 13,
Iss. 2, pp. 206-208

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/112368>

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KANTOWSKY, DETLEF (Ed.)

Evaluation Research and Practice in Development Aid

[“Evaluierungsforschung und -praxis in der Entwicklungshilfe”]

Zürich: Verlag der Fachvereine, 1977; 414 pp.

Evaluation, as an attempt to determine, as exactly as possible, the influence and success of instrument variables (measures, projects, programmes) with respect to dependent target variables (objectives, goals, aims), is evidently particularly important in the public sector. The size, duration and impact of public measures, and the type and character of social policy targets, all of these factors speak in favour of this hypothesis. Hence, evaluation has been institutionalized in the Federal Republic of Germany, e. g. by the Federal Budget Order of 19. 8. 1969, § 7, para. 2, as well as by the Law on the Principles of Budget Law of the Federal Government and the Laender (constituent states of the Federal Republic of Germany), § 6, para. 2, ac-

ording to which "cost-benefit analyses" are to be undertaken in the case of measures "of considerable financial significance" before they are carried out (*ex ante* evaluation). The Federal Audit Office inferred from these legal principles (in 1971) that criteria for objectives must be laid down and suitable efficiency controls be provided for, both during and after the execution of the measures (*ex post* evaluation).

In contrast to these rather general demands on administrative action, the concept of "evaluation" in the Federal Republic of Germany is, to a large extent, connected solely with the practice of development aid policy. It seems likely that in no other government activity does evaluation crop up so frequently as a topic of discussion as in this particular field of allocation of public funds.

Detlef *Kantowsky*, a sociologist from Constance university with pertinent experience of his own with West German development policy measures in the field of social structure aid, has prepared an omnibus volume on this subject; it is both generally informative and provocative, and represents, in a particular way, his own "sitting in judgement" over West German development aid policy. In contrast to frequent polemics, sufficiently well-known in day-to-day party politics, against development aid – the picture puzzle of the "hidden treasures" and the "fringe benefits" – this work gets down to the legitimatory substance of development aid. Kantowsky says: "Evaluation confronts government action... with its inherent contradictions" (p. 20). The history of the evaluation of state development policy measures is "above all a history of political defensive reactions... , a general reflex of state institutions to critical evaluation findings" (p. 20). He goes on to say that scientifically based rationality has no chance of gaining real acceptance. Refinements of financial examination processes are the best that can be achieved in 'this country'; evaluation is little more than a "restrictive instrument for thinning out programmes whenever a fiscal bottleneck crops up" (p. 21).

Kantowsky explains why this is so: The findings of virtually all evaluations undertaken are not dealt with in public. "The control function of evaluations, therefore, continues to be restricted to the internal area, and allows selective reactions on the part of the state institutions" (p. 22) – and it is no secret that these have changed their minds in recent years. At least the rationality of capital aid (but also technical aid) is justified primarily more and more according to domestic economic requirements, and only secondarily from the viewpoint of the receiver. Kantowsky establishes a "correspondence relationship between state development aid measures and the expansion strategies of private capital" (p. 8), and a conceptual return to the classical rationality criterion of legal correctness of

one's own measures, also on the part of the staff working in the field of development policy. The noticeable bureaucratic ossification in the once reformistic Federal Ministry of Development Aid and its subordinate agencies, can be explained by changes in overall conditions, within which development policy can legitimate itself in 'this country' – the one-time "Ministry of Development Aid" is degenerating more and more towards a "Ministry of Economic Cooperation".

Alongside these and further provocative assertions in the editor's introductory and summing-up chapters, the volume under discussion contains a series of further theoretical and practical analyses, that are worth reading, on techniques of orienting the planning and assessment of development measures towards the target groups and their needs (viz.: the historical survey on evaluation research by Gudrun *Lachenmann*, pp. 25–87; Dieter *Weiss*'s critical comparison of the new World Bank approach, the UNIDO approach and the revised OECD approach to project evaluation, pp. 89–144; Inge *Kaul*'s contribution on the state of discussions on evaluation in and around the UN, pp. 145–174; and the article by Detlef *Schwefel* on product path analysis, pp. 175–195); it also contains case studies on corresponding policy and its limits (e. g. by Reinhard *Koppe* on the evaluation of an aid measure undertaken by the Land of Baden-Württemberg, pp. 241–296; by Eberhard *Weller* on the European Development Fund, pp. 297–345; and by Gerhard *Bierwirth* on the influence of mass media projects, pp. 347–393) and – a contribution that is especially welcome – a bibliography on the general problems of project and programme evaluation (compiled by Gudrun *Lachenmann*, pp. 395–414).

The overall impact of these analyses is to make clear why the discovered disenchantment with development aid policy came about, which interests state action is tied to in this field, and the fact that in situations of conflict political opportunism takes priority over scientifically founded rationality. Reading this volume leads one to a highly sceptical assessment of the question as to whether it is possible to make political decisions scientifically sound, or whether this endeavour is not bound to be frustrated by the self-interests of the institutions and the social groups that support them.

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