

The role of ‘policy mix’ in creating sustainable city districts: Lessons from Freiburg city

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Urban arena provides a good example of operationalization of policy mix, where many actors and institutions work together for an efficient use of urban resources and artifacts. By drawing on insights from studies in urban innovation policy and institutions, this paper will examine the potentials and challenges of using the ‘policy mix’ as a tool to achieve urban sustainability. Freiburg has been internationally recognized as forerunner of environmental policy and urban sustainability transitions. The City of Freiburg decided to construct two new city districts (Rieselfeld in the early 1990s and Vauban in the mid-1990s) to meet the increased demand for housing. However, the City has used a mix of different policy instruments to achieve its sustainability goals about which there is only fragmented research.

Many scholars emphasize the context of institutions and actors in which the policy instruments operate (Flanagan, et al. 2011; Foxon and Pearson, 2007). This study will shed new insights on the role of institutions and organizations in creating a coherent and integrated policymaking framework for sustainable city district, which has not yet been systematically addressed in the current debate on policy mix. The interaction and trade-offs between policy instruments (social housing, low-carbon neighborhood and sustainable mobility) in Freiburg will be studied from the early 1990s. It will be discussed how the sectoral policies are mixed up over time to achieve the urban sustainability in Freiburg city.

The wider institutional and actor context in which the innovation policy operate can change over time, which require flexible policy instruments. According to Flanagan, et al (2011:711) “A key role for innovation policy studies should be to highlight the trade-offs and tensions inherent in any policy mix”. The case of Freiburg offers opportunities to conduct an in-depth analysis on how the policy instruments for different sectors have evolved and adapted over time to achieve transitions to urban sustainability. The key question would be how the interaction and trade-offs between different policy instruments has been occurred. It will be analyzed if and how the policy instruments have been flexible and coordinated across sectors and evolved over time. The information finding methods will largely be desk study and semi-structured interviews with key actors.

Key words: urban sustainability, policy mix, innovation policy, institutions, Freiburg

References

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