



Imitation and Politics: Redesigning Modern Germany

Wade Jacoby

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Following World War II, a poorly funded, piecemeal effort to transfer British and American institutions into West Germany resulted in many positive changes for that nation's citizens. After reunification, however, a more ambitious, well-funded, and systematic effort to establish West German institutions in the former GDR has been less effective. Through a close analysis of these two cases, Wade Jacoby explores the conditions under which one society can serve as a model for the reshaping of another.

In the initial transfer, Jacoby finds, Allied occupying forces sought to build institutions in Germany that were the functional equivalents of ones they valued at home. They encouraged the development of selected German organizations that became co-architects of the postwar society. Several decades later, by contrast, policymakers in Bonn used exact rather than functional imitation, and they ignored regional interests when redesigning East German society. For both cases, Jacoby focuses on attempts to reform industrial relations and secondary education.

For innovations to be "pulled in" from abroad, Jacoby argues, local civic groups must participate in and benefit from the institution-building process. In addition, the state imposing the transfer must have a flexible strategy. By looking at international examples, Jacoby provides further evidence that political imitation is at heart a process of coalition building.

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