

Balancing cooperative federalism with local autonomy: subnational governments and governance in Germany

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1. Introduction

Despite being – like many other countries – a federation, Germany has a unique system of subnational government and governance, which reflects its historical development and more recent structural reforms. In particular, the country is often cited as a classic example of ‘co-operative’ or ‘administrative’ federalism, emphasising the collaborative and consensual nature of decision-making across different levels of governance (Müller 1998; Börzel 2005; Benz 2007; Hegele and Behnke 2017). However, despite a high degree of interdependence or ‘interlocking’ between tiers, each of Germany’s sixteen federal states (*Land*, plural *Länder*) has responsibility for local government within its territory, and this has contributed towards a patchwork of different administrative structures across the country. This lack of a single ‘system’ of subnational governance has led to the *Länder* adopting different approaches towards issues such as outsourcing, performance management and local government amalgamation, as well as in specific policy sectors.

This chapter sets out the key characteristics of subnational government across Germany, highlighting some of the contrasts between different *Länder* in terms of public management and discussing their implications for policymaking across the country. Drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources, and focusing on both the state and local levels, Section 2 sets out the constitutional context, and how this creates an

overarching administrative and legal framework that facilitates legal and bureaucratic compliance. This leads to cooperation between tiers of governance in decision-making, whilst retaining a strict adherence to the principle of local autonomy. Sections 3 and 4 illustrate how these structures are reflected in the nature of public sector reform initiatives and local climate policies, contrasting the German situation with other comparable countries. The chapter concludes with a recap of key characteristics of the German multilevel system, and what this tells us about how power is distributed across different tiers.

2. Subnational governance and collaborative federalism in Germany

Germany did not become a unified nation-state until 1871, much later than most other Western European countries. Until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, it remained a relatively loose federation, reflecting a long history of decentralisation that stretched back to the Holy Roman Empire – a patchwork of territories, principalities and largely autonomous cities that had covered most of the same geographical area for over a millennium (Conradt 2001; Eckersley 2018b). After 1945, communist East Germany (the GDR) did have fairly centralised governing structures until the end of the Cold War and unification in 1990 (see Wollmann 2021 for a detailed overview). However, the Western Allies that established the Federal Republic in 1949 were keen to disperse power across tiers and institutions, to try to prevent the re-emergence of a dominant, centralised German state. For example, the second chamber of the federal parliament (the *Bundesrat*) consists entirely of 69 *Länder* government delegates (i.e., not directly-elected politicians), and a simple majority within this body is enough to veto most federal laws. The *Länder* have parliamentary systems, and each individual state casts all of its votes in the *Bundesrat* as a block, normally headed by its prime minister. As such, not only do the states have significant veto power over federal policy and legislation, but each of the *Land* constitutions also prevents the concentration of executive power in a single individual (in contrast to state governors in many other federal countries, for example).

Furthermore, reflecting its constitutional role as the expression of state interests at the federal level, the *Bundesrat*'s membership remains unchanged unless and until a new governing coalition takes office in a state, after which that particular *Land* will appoint new representatives to sit in the chamber. As Table 1 illustrates, the more populous states have more seats in the *Bundesrat* than their smaller counterparts, although their level of representation is not allocated strictly on a per capita basis. Specifically, every *Land* has a minimum of three votes, but those with more than two million inhabitants can appoint four members, those with over six million are entitled to five, and states that have in excess of seven million can have six representatives (see bundesrat.de).

In addition, Article 28 of the post-war constitution (*Grundgesetz*) allocated significant autonomy to counties, cities and municipalities through the right to 'local self-administration' (*lokale Selbstverwaltung*) – a principle that also features in the constitutions of each of the sixteen *Länder* (Ruge and Ritgen 2021). This allows municipalities to carry out any function that is not specifically assigned to another government body in law. The principle of local self-administration dates back to 1808 in Prussia (which at that point was an independent country but whose territory now comprises most of contemporary northern Germany) and is deeply embedded within Germany's political culture. For example, as well as giving municipal governments formal powers to act freely in the interests of the local area, the idea retains a normative pull and provides them with the legitimacy to act as genuine local *authorities* within subnational governance arrangements (Eckersley 2017). Reflecting its high status, much of the German public and political class views local councils as the 'schools' or even 'cradles' of democracy for budding German politicians (Bogumil and Holtkamp, 2006).

State	Population (2021)	Number of municipalities	Average size of municipalities	GDP per capita (2019, €)	Number of votes in the Bundesrat
Baden-Württemberg	11,125,000	1,101	10,054	47,290	6
Bavaria	13,177,000	2,056	6,360	48,323	6
Berlin	3,677,000	1	3,644,826	41,967	4
Brandenburg	2,538,000	417	6,023	29,541	4
Bremen	676,000	2	341,493	49,215	3
Hamburg	1,854,000	1	1,841,179	66,879	3
Hesse	6,295,000	422	14,848	46,923	5
Lower Saxony	8,027,000	942	8,474	38,423	6
Mecklenburg-West Pomerania	1,611,000	726	2,217	28,940	3
North Rhine-Westphalia	17,925,000	396	45,284	39,678	6
Rhineland-Palatinate	4,106,000	2,302	1,774	35,457	4
Saarland	982,000	52	19,048	36,684	3
Saxony	4,043,000	419	9,733	31,453	4
Saxony-Anhalt	2,169,000	218	10,130	28,880	4
Schleswig-Holstein	2,922,000	1,106	2,619	33,712	4
Thuringia	2,109,000	634	3,380	29,883	4
Germany	83,237,000	10,795	7,690	41,358	69

Table 1: Population, municipal size, GDP per capita and Bundesrat representation of the sixteen Länder (adapted from www.de.statista.com and www.bundesrat.de)

Since 1990, Germany has had sixteen federal states, which vary significantly along demographic, socioeconomic and geographic dimensions. As Table 1 illustrates, the most populous state (North Rhine-Westphalia) has nearly 18 million residents and covers almost the same amount of territory as the Netherlands, whereas Bremen has fewer than 700,000 inhabitants. There are also self-evident differences between the thirteen ‘territorial’ and the three highly-urbanised ‘city’ states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen. These contrasts play out in terms of state politics, with different party coalitions in control across the country, and larger, wealthier *Länder* generally able to punch at a higher weight in federal policymaking arenas (Behnke and Kropp 2021). Furthermore, more than thirty years after unification, the five territorial states of the former GDR (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia) remain significantly poorer than their counterparts in the west. Figure 1 locates each of the states on a map.



Figure 1: Map of the German *Länder* (adapted from

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_Map_Germany_States.png)

The *Länder* can make their own laws and are also responsible for local government within their respective territories. In some policy areas, such as culture or education, they have exclusive legislative powers, whereas other sectors (such as climate policy) fall under the so-called 'concurrent legislation' principle, which prevents them from introducing new regulations where the federal government has already passed a law (Eckersley et al 2023). Notably, before the official creation of the Federal Republic in 1949, the western Allies had already introduced models of local government within their respective zones of occupation that reflected their own systems (Wollmann 2004; Eckersley and Timm-Arnold 2014). Although there has since been some convergence in recent decades, these factors contributed to the evolution of different local governance arrangements across the country (Ruge and Ritgen 2021). For example, although most

of the territorial *Länder* comprise a mixture of county councils, large county-free cities and smaller district municipalities (*Gemeinde*) that sit within county boundaries, the size of each unit varies significantly across different states. There are also huge differences within most individual *Länder*: unlike in countries such as the UK, municipal boundaries usually reflect local identities and geographies rather than what is deemed to be the optimum administrative size for a local authority. As a result, rural towns are not normally amalgamated into larger units, and big cities tend to be governed by single councils rather than be divided into smaller authorities. For example, 201 of Germany's municipalities have fewer than 100 inhabitants (and nearly 4,000 have populations below 1,000), whereas the fourteen biggest cities are each home to more than half a million people (Statista.com 2021).

Despite these contrasts, however, all politicians at both the local and regional tier are directly elected (albeit on different franchises: some, but not all, states allow 16-year-olds to vote in subnational elections (Leiniger and Faas 2019)). Indeed, with the exception of the three city-states (where executive mayors are chosen by the *Land* parliament), every German municipality has been headed by a directly-elected mayor since the early 1990s, in what Wollmann (2014, 332) characterises as a "kind of local presidential system". Terms vary from five to eight years, depending on the *Land*, but mayors may sit for an indefinite number of terms in most cases. Furthermore, mayors in eleven of the sixteen states can be recalled following a local referendum (and citizens in three of these *Länder* can initiate the recall referendum themselves, Wollmann 2014). In November 2022, for example, the mayor of Frankfurt, Peter Feldmann, lost office after over 95% of citizens, on a turnout of nearly 42%, voted to remove him after a series of scandals (Hessenschau 2022).

City councils also consist of directly-elected politicians, who can normally be re-elected an indefinite number of times and on a different electoral cycle to the mayor. Elections to local councils occur every five years in each *Land* except Bavaria, where terms are six years (Ruge and Ritgen 2021). Most *Länder* also allow for the creation of 'deputy

mayors': these are indirectly-elected, in that they are voted on to the council by citizens but then selected to perform this role by party groupings according to their share of the vote. Deputy mayors normally direct council departments or functions in a similar way to cabinet ministers (Wollmann 2014).

In addition, the constitutional right to local self-administration means that the states can only require municipalities to undertake new functions or services if they provide them with the necessary resources to do so. Since the *Länder* are usually unable or unwilling to allocate this extra funding, this means they rarely introduce new mandatory functions for local government. As a result, municipalities in Germany tend to have more freedom from central direction and regulations than their counterparts elsewhere (Kuhlmann et al 2022). Nonetheless, where the federation views a specific problem to be particularly important, but feels that the states are neglecting or ignoring the issue, it can bypass the regional tier and provide direct funding to local authorities (Eckersley et al 2023).

In their classic categorisation of governance arrangements in different countries, Hooghe and Marks (2003) set out two ideal 'types' of multi-level governance. With its relatively clear demarcation of responsibilities across tiers that is anchored into the rigid legal and constitutional framework (Sommermann 2021), and its preference for allocating tasks to holistic, multi-purpose *Land* and municipal governments rather than fragmented, function-specific bodies (Kuhlmann et al 2021), Germany is often characterised as a classic example of having relatively inflexible 'Type I' arrangements (Herschel and Newman 2002; Eckersley 2018b).

Notwithstanding this apparently rigid structure, however, there is significant interaction across and between tiers of governance within Germany – and therefore the 'Type I' label does not apply wholesale to its multilevel framework. Beginning with Scharpf et al (1976), various scholars have stressed the importance of this 'cooperative' or 'administrative' federalism for policymaking, and highlighted how it blurs the legal allocation of specific powers to levels of government (Börzel 2005; Benz 2007; Hegele

and Behnke 2017; Scheiner 2017; Eckersley et al. 2023). Scholars such as Müller (1998) have contrasted this interdependent model with the 'dual' federalism of the USA or Switzerland, in which different tiers operate much more independently of each other. Various factors have contributed towards this unique German approach, including:

- The fact that *Länder* governments appoint delegates to the *Bundesrat*. This allows the states to vote on legislation that directly affects them (indeed, they veto around 40% of all federal laws), and the federal government therefore has to win sufficient support from the *Länder* to deliver its political agenda (Scharpf 1988; Kropp and Schnabel 2021)
- A complex system of fiscal equalisation that re-distributes money from wealthier to poorer states through federal grants, and which is embedded within the constitutional framework. Article 72 of the *Grundgesetz* allows the federal government to legislate in those areas where it has legal competence "if and to the extent that the establishment of equivalent living conditions throughout the federal territory or the maintenance of legal or economic unity renders federal regulation necessary in the national interest" (Federal Ministry of Justice 2020). This means that deprived municipalities, in particular, receive a large share of their revenue through federal funding schemes (Hartmann 2013; Eckersley 2018b)
- A system of shared taxes, through which the federal government sets the rate for income and sales taxes, but different tiers of government receive an agreed percentage of the revenue they generate, according to a needs-based formula (Scherf 2010; Färber 2021).
- The fact that *Land* governments are legally responsible for implementing most federal laws, and these responsibilities are usually delegated to municipalities (Wollmann 2004). In cases where municipalities receive the requisite resources, they are also required to implement state laws (Behnke 2020). Overall, local

government implements around three-quarters of federal and *Land* legislation (Reichard 2003).

- A highly-developed system of federal-state associations (*Bund-Länder Arbeitsgemeinschaften*) and ministerial councils (which bring together *Länder* ministers). These strengthen the role of administrators and executives in policymaking (Behnke and Kropp 2021) and reinforce vertical collaboration in certain functions (Bundesregierung 2019; Flaskühler 2018)

When there is broad consensus around the need to tackle a particular problem, this collaborative approach can help to ensure effective coordination and policy implementation, because it helps to mobilise a broad coalition of actors behind the chosen solution (Wollmann 2004; Eckersley 2018b; Kropp and Schnabel 2021; Kuhlmann and Franzke 2022). However, it can also lead to a policymaking approach that is slow and bureaucratic, because the high number of veto players means that decisions are taken based on the 'lowest common denominator' (Adelberger 2001; Monstadt and Scheiner 2014). In addition, others have argued that the opaque decision-making process is undemocratic, because it is not clear which actors should be held accountable for policy (Scharpf 1988). Although a series of reforms tried to address these problems in the 2000s by setting clearer boundaries for jurisdictional responsibilities, they did not change the country's culture of collaborative policymaking fundamentally (Scharpf 2009; Zohlnhöfer 2009).

Some have argued that Germany's cooperative style of federalism is a logical consequence of its post-war legal and constitutional architecture that sought to disperse power across different tiers and institutions (Scharpf et al. 1976; Scharpf 2009). Others argue that it is a pragmatic response by politicians and – predominantly – bureaucrats, who try to increase their ability to make and implement effective policy within the country's rigid legal structures (Männle 1998; Kropp 2010). In this sense, we can see how subnational actors view collaboration as a crucial driver for mobilising resources

along the policy chain, whilst respecting jurisdictional autonomy. Regardless of the reasons for such an interdependent system, however, there is broad agreement amongst scholars about the importance of these relationships between tiers of government. As the next sections will illustrate, these structural arrangements shape the development of distinct local approaches to administrative reform and climate policy.

3. Territorial and administrative reforms in German subnational government

Germany's cooperative decision-making culture, underpinned by the constitutional guarantee of local autonomy, has meant that neither federal nor state policymakers are able to implement reforms in a top-down manner, or require municipalities to introduce new approaches against their will (Herrschel and Newman 2002). The case of territorial reforms at the municipal level, particularly attempts at local authority amalgamation to create larger units, are a case in point (Wollmann 2004).

Reforms in the 1960s and 1970s reduced the total number of county councils (*Landkreise*) from 425 to 237, and the lowest-tier district municipalities (*Gemeinden*) from approximately 24,000 to around 8,500 (Reichard 2003). As Table 1 suggests, however, these reforms were not implemented uniformly across Germany. Indeed, even if we exclude the city-states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen as outliers, the size of individual municipalities varies considerably across the different states. *Länder* such as North Rhine-Westphalia have reduced their total number of municipalities by over 80% since the early 1970s, whereas local government boundaries in Rhineland-Palatinate, in which nearly every municipality has fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, have remained largely unchanged since the creation of the Federal Republic. Crucially, however, where amalgamations and territorial reforms have taken place, *Land* governments involved local government representatives throughout the process, to try and reach consensus over the most appropriate size and location of new municipal boundaries. This is in stark contrast to territorial reforms in some other countries, such as the UK Government's

unilateral abolition of metropolitan councils and the Greater London Assembly in the 1980s (Norton 1994; Eckersley 2018b).

There has been a similar uneven approach to reforming public administrations, such as the introduction of market mechanisms and private sector techniques into public services ('New Public Management' or NPM, Hood 1991). Germany's brand of NPM, the 'New Steering Model', began to take hold from the 1990s, later than in most Anglo-Saxon countries (Proeller and Siegel 2021). However, federal and state governments were notably more reluctant to introduce reforms to their own administrations than to local authorities (Reichard 2001). Moreover, the constitutional guarantee of local self-administration meant that municipalities could not be required to adopt new service delivery models such as outsourcing or privatisation, nor introduce internal reforms such as performance management systems (Reichard 2003). In addition, much of the philosophy underpinning NPM principles conflicted with the traditional legalistic and Weberian bureaucratic culture that characterises German public administration, which made their introduction more difficult than in many other countries (Wollmann and Thurmaier 2012). Although some senior local government figures did favour NPM-style reforms, they tended to view them as a way to strengthen municipal capacity rather than as part of a neoliberal agenda to reduce the size of the state (Proeller and Siegel 2021).

Overall, municipalities adopted a 'pick and mix' attitude towards NPM ideas: a landmark study found that only 16 per cent had adopted them as a comprehensive reform model, and there had been no 'paradigm shift' away from traditional public administration approaches (Bogumil et al., 2006; Kuhlmann et al 2008; Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2019). Overall, the focus has been more on internal administrative reforms than on outward-facing changes to service delivery through outsourcing, contracting or privatisation. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) characterised this approach as 'modernising' rather than 'marketising', and suggested that such internal changes could make it easier for officials to direct and control activity by providing them with more information about

how public organisations function. As such, these could reinforce traditional administrative hierarchies and lead to the emergence of a 'neo-Weberian' state. Whilst some disagree with Pollitt and Bouckaert's interpretation of Weber (Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert 2016; Treiber 2022), this distinction between internal and external reforms, and its concomitant impact on bureaucratic decision-making, is nonetheless valuable. Indeed, internal changes were also more popular with the *Länder* (particularly amongst the city-states), although these were even more limited in scale and scope than at the municipal level (Reichard 2003; Proeller and Siegel 2021).

To give one specific example, there is broad agreement that accrual accounting can help to facilitate more performance-based and informed budgeting decisions than traditional cash-based approaches, and most *Länder* have sought to introduce it into local government (Proeller and Siegel 2021). However, although the shift in approach has been largely complete across Germany, a recent study of municipalities in three states found that it has not led to a change in organisational steering or decision-making (Weiss and Schubert 2020). Similarly, performance objectives and indicators lack comprehensiveness, and the information they generate is rarely used to inform operational, strategic or – especially – political decisions (Proeller and Siegel 2021; Weiss and Schubert 2020). As such, there has been an overwhelming focus on 'hard' instruments (setting up new information systems for cost accounting or budgeting, as well as performance indicators or benchmarking exercises), and less appreciation for the 'soft elements' that might help to translate the data these systems generate into organisational or service reforms, such as human resources or change management functions (Reichard 2003).

These factors have contributed towards NPM principles being adopted less comprehensively in Germany than in Anglo-Saxon countries (Wollmann 2003). Although traditional models of public service delivery are no longer completely embedded in the administrative culture, with ideas of 'co-production' and the involvement of the voluntary sector becoming increasingly common (Grohs 2021), strong local autonomy has meant

that municipalities have adopted their own approaches to public management. Neither federal nor *Land* governments can introduce mandatory functions for local authorities very easily, and this is reflected in the country's variegated pattern of public administration reform implementation. As the next subsection will illustrate, these factors have also resulted in a similar patchwork approach to climate policy.

4. Climate policy in subnational German government

Where there is consensus amongst governing actors on the need to tackle a particular issue, Germany's cooperative system can be very effective in mobilising resources and coordinating activity between different policy actors (Eckersley 2018a; Kuhlmann and Franzke 2022). However, where disagreements exist about the nature of a problem or how to tackle it, it can result in suboptimal outcomes (Scharpf 1988).

Climate policy is an interesting sector to examine in this context. Contrasts between the approaches of different parts of Germany show clearly how regional and local factors shape decision-making across different levels of government. For example, despite federal politicians pushing the idea of an energy transition (*Energiewende*) for many years (Hennicke and Welfens 2012; Beveridge and Kern 2013), municipal and *Länder* governments have adopted very different policies across the country, largely shaped by their local political and economic conditions. Municipal initiatives to combat pollution (e.g., through vehicle restrictions or planning regulations) are often controversial. As such, the pattern of environmental policy adoption across jurisdictions can reveal a great deal about the extent to which local preferences and interests may conflict with or reinforce federal and national agendas.

For example, in those parts of Germany where fossil fuel extraction and combustion, and/or manufacturing industry are still important to the local economy, subnational governments have been reluctant to advance more ambitious climate mitigation policy. This applies most obviously at the *Land* level, where nearly all of the 'coal states' have relatively weak Green Parties and have refrained from introducing climate protection

legislation (Eckersley et al 2023). However, it is also apparent within municipalities, where smaller, poorer, (post) industrial cities with less educated and older populations have been much more reluctant to act (Otto et al 2021), albeit with a few exceptions (Haupt and Kern 2022). Meanwhile, perhaps unsurprisingly, those parts of the country that are more vulnerable to climate threats such as heatwaves and flash flooding have been more active in adaptation policy (Kern et al in press). As such, we can see how local priorities tend to be reflected in municipal and state-level policy.

An additional factor here is the capacity of any particular jurisdiction to develop and implement policies that may be effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions or preparing for climate impacts (Eckersley 2018a; Kern 2019). Alongside the relative wealth of a municipality, its size can play a key role here. Studies have found that larger cities tend to be much better placed to act than smaller rural districts (Salvia et al 2021; Otto et al 2021), because they can employ more specialist staff and are also better placed to work closely with other large local actors such as universities, research institutions and businesses.

With this in mind, the huge variation in municipality size across Germany has resulted in the development of different vertical and horizontal relationships between governments in various states. In Rhineland-Pfalz, for example, where the vast majority of municipalities have fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, the *Land* has actively encouraged greater collaboration between local governments through regional energy agencies, in order to help build capacity for action (Eckersley et al 2023). Other state governments, such as North-Rhine Westphalia, Baden-Wurttemberg and Thuringia, have provided funding to municipalities to help them develop climate strategies and recruit staff. Alongside such initiatives, federal funding streams are also available to help lagging municipalities keep pace with the forerunners (Kern et al in press; Zeigermann et al in press). This illustrates the degree of flexibility within Germany's multilevel system, particularly when higher tiers of government want to enable local authorities to implement national priorities such as climate protection (Kern 2019). Compared to

smaller authorities, large cities such as Cologne, Frankfurt or Stuttgart find it easier to identify appropriate policy solutions for their areas and act independently of other municipalities and their respective state governments (Heinelt and Lamping 2015). Nonetheless, even these 'leaders' have also sought out resources from elsewhere. Indeed, they are probably better placed to bid successfully for external funding than smaller municipalities, because they have often the necessary resources and relevant experience to develop successful applications.

Overall, we can see how climate policy provides a good illustration of how Germany's multilevel governance context allows for local experimentation and choice, whilst operating within a structured framework. Where there is broad agreement on priorities for action, the federation can often mobilise activity relatively easily because the cooperative system has ensured better coordination between policy actors. On the other hand, however, the *Länder* remain powerful at the federal level, and therefore it can be difficult for Germany to progress in more controversial sectors where consensus amongst the states and their respective local interests is less common. In addition, the constitutional principle of local self-administration makes it particularly difficult for higher tiers of government to require subnational authorities to act on a specific issue, which can slow down progress. As such, although there is substantial scope for local autonomy within Germany's governance framework, this can also make it difficult to respond quickly and decisively to emerging problems.

Indeed, Bogumil and Kuhlmann (2022) argue that Germany's rigid governance structure contributed to its public bodies responding too slowly to the migration 'crisis' of 2015, and ultimately becoming overstretched in some areas. The risks of bureaucratic inertia regarding such 'wicked issues', which cross over traditional sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries, are particularly high when public bodies are faced with a sudden and rapid increase in demand and the mechanisms are not in place to facilitate collaboration between organisations (Bogumil et al 2018). In addition, although Germany coped better than many comparable countries with the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic

(Bouckaert et al 2020), its coordinated approach between different tiers of government unravelled somewhat after the first wave of infections (Kropp and Schnabel 2022). As such, we can see how the country's robust governance structure can have advantages and drawbacks when dealing with major public problems.

5. Conclusions

As this chapter has shown, the constitutional framework that the Allies established in western Germany after World War II, which included features such as state government representation in the federal parliament, has contributed towards a culture of collaboration and cooperative federalism, particularly across tiers of government. This can help to mobilise resources and co-ordinate policy implementation where there is broad agreement on how to tackle policy problems, but it may also slow down progress where consensus is lacking. As such, despite Germany having a largely 'Type I' intergovernmental structure in terms of relatively fixed scales and institutions, there is substantial interaction and collaboration across levels of government.

Moreover, subnational governments in Germany can exercise considerable autonomy in their operations and decision-making. Partly due to the culture of consensus and collaboration, the sixteen *Länder* have adopted very different local government structures; for example, there are substantial differences in the average size of municipalities across the various states. In addition, the constitutional principle of local self-administration means that *Länder* governments cannot require local authorities to undertake new functions unless they provide them with the requisite resources. As a result, different local priorities and preferences across the country led to a patchwork implementation of New Public Management-inspired reforms such as outsourcing or performance management. Despite attempts by the federal government to provide funding directly to municipalities for climate mitigation, local and state climate policies also tend to reflect the political and economic contexts within each locality and *Land*. Such examples illustrate the deeply embedded culture of local autonomy within

Germany, which gives municipal governments more space to develop their own approaches to public administration and policy than in many other Western democracies.

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