

# The awaking Giant: The Development of Civil Society Infrastructure in Germany

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Modern, functional differentiated and plural societies depend on and profit from a vivid and vibrant civil society (CS). In normative terms a civil society is an independent and autonomous sphere separated from the state and the economy. The institutional core of CS is formed of private, voluntary associations, organisations and social movements, which serve not only as a sort of sounding board for and multiplayer of interests, problems and conflicts<sup>2</sup> of people in political and public processes but also as reservoir for civic engagement and participation for an integrative society. Social ties, solidarity, trust, democratic culture and effective and efficient government depend highly on a vivid and plural scene of civil society organisations.

Among the universe of diverse civil society organisations a special one gained significance during the last decades. It is an organisation of a higher order compared to ordinary civil society organisations in performing overall functions in the realm of CS, which I label here as civil society infrastructure (CSI). CS-Infrastructure in my understanding has to: 1) to stimulate participation and engagement across different societal spheres and sectors to foster social integration, 2) to gather and channel private and organisational engagement, support it and make it more visible for the public. By doing so, CSIs are nodal points with superior functions within the complex and diverse society. CSIs do their work by means of financial support and know-how transfers, development of civic projects, providing information, and doing lobbying and campaigning. The label CSI refers to organisations, which are characterised by a particular constituency, purpose, and driving principles based on a normative concept of civil society (cf. Habermas 1992; Cohen / Arato 1994: Capital 1). For the organisational structure of civil society infrastructure this implies that they have to be organisationally independent from the state (at least to a certain extent); their main purpose is not the realisation of profits for its members or employees (often called non distribution constraint) but to foster and promote civic engagement and development of social capital in the domain of the civil society (for the concept of social capital see Putnam 1993; Putnam

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<sup>2</sup> Habermas highlights the political function of CS. The people and collective actors raise and discuss their claims, meanings, concerns and critiques in an open and free debate within the public sphere. After forming the public opinion, the people such as the collective actors' exercise their influence vis-à-vis state through public pressure and participation in formal and informal channels of representation. Hence, CS is an important public counterweight to the power exercised by the state (cf. Habermas 1992: 443).

1995). Their mission and commitment should be directed to a local community or region but not to special or exclusive interests of only one organisation or one target group. Moreover, the associational governance should rely on principles of voluntarism i.e. doing things on voluntary a basis, solidarity or reciprocity i.e. acting out of altruistic and meaningful motives in order to contribute to the common good and an integrative society (cf. Zimmer / Priller 2007: 17).

Volunteering centres (VC), community foundations (CF) and similar organisations are such organisations which aim at fostering and promoting the development of people's civic engagement and to strengthen the social ties and solidarity in the community<sup>3</sup>. In comparison to classical "volunteering nations" like the Dutch, the English or the American, which have a long history and rich traditions of institutionally fostering and encouraging civic engagement, the development of the German civil society infrastructure has taken place only in the last ten years (cf. for examples from other countries Bos 2008; Brudney 2008; Howlett 2008). The historical roots, however, started in the end of the 1970s. But since then the growth of the volunteering centres, community foundations and other organisations dealing with volunteer issues remained sluggish until the end of the 1990s. Fortunately, since that time the numbers of VCs and similar organisations is dramatically growing and the movement is flourishing in many respects (cf. Jakob / Janning 2000; Braun, Bischoff et al. 2001; Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002).

Today, more than 300 VCs are officially registered members of national umbrella organisations and an almost equal number of volunteer centres for elderly people are available, for example more than 190 community foundations came into being during the last decade (cf. Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen e.V. 2008; Bürgerstiftung online 2008; Seniorenbüros 2008). It is estimated that more than 800 civil society infrastructure organisations exist in Germany. This includes network and umbrella organisations, associated foundations, and other organisations that contribute to the civic engagement as well. Apparently, a fully developed, rich and functionally differentiated organisational landscape has emerged with strong horizontal as well as vertical dimensions. The network of organisations, thus, covers not only organisations in all German states

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<sup>3</sup> According to this definition, self help groups and citizens advice bureaus are not part of civil society infrastructure in the narrow sense (cf. Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 32). The former for instance is highly exclusive in the sense that this type of organisation serves predominately one special group of people which are concerned by a specific disease or other special interests/ concerns. The latter is part of the local administration of a city or municipality and therefore part of the state government and not a unit of an independent civil society.

(horizontal dimension). These include the newly formed as well as the old German states. But there are also organisations represented at the local, the state and the federal political level of Germany (vertical dimension).

In this article I describe as a first step, the history of German civil society infrastructures. Due to their pioneering function in this domain, I will focus on volunteering centres as a major manifestation of civil society infrastructure. VCs emerged as a cutting edge organisation and played a leading role in the development of the movement. When ever possible, developments related to other organisations of civil society infrastructure like community foundations are mentioned as well. In the next step, I sketch the recent and sometimes preliminary development of the movement with respect to ownership, regional allocation and financial resources and recent business activities of VCs. Finally, I pose the hypothesis that the emergence of civil society infrastructure were accompanied and strongly influenced by a transition of the state in Germany, which impacted the local, the state and federal political governments to a large extent and thus facilitated the emergence of VCs. This transition of state can be traced back to changing power relations among state, society and market caused by driving forces of globalisation and europeanization. As a consequence of increased competition among states, the German state lost parts of its regulative capacities. The eroding state in return, lead to the dominance of a more liberal state conception in German politics. This opened spaces for new and changed governance arrangements between state, society and market sphere. Within these arrangements VCs play a crucial role for legitimizing of state authority.

## 1.) The short History of German Civil Society Infrastructure

### **Social change and the promotion of volunteering**

The development of civil society infrastructure in the last three decades was accompanied by and embedded in a tremendous cultural change of mass attitudes in the German society. In the course of this process, individualistic values of self expression, autonomy, freedom and participation gained influence, whereas traditional systems of beliefs and related institutions like church, family and authority lost significance (cf. Inglehart 1977 ; Beck / Beck-Gernsheim 1994; Noelle-Neumann / Petersen 2001; Inglehart / Welzel 2005). This ‘silent revolution’ resulted in changing motives as well as altering actions of volunteers to engage in community. The German language has two separate labels for these different types of civic

engagements: “Ehrenamt” and “freiwilliges Engagement”(cf. Olk 1989). The former represents traditional motives of civic engagement such as duties, obedience and religious and civic norms like grace of charity, help and altruism whereas the latter is connoted with hedonism, self expression, self interests, and pleasure such as secular norms. “Ehrenamt”, therefore, is exercised predominantly for others and is connected to permanent memberships. It is often situated in large scale organisations like churches, unions, parties and welfare associations such as voluntary fire companies and sport clubs etc. “Freiwilliges Engagement”, however, is exercised for the individual itself and temporary limited in its character. The new volunteers demand fun and active participation such as personal gains like the further development of competences and skills (Gensicke 2006: 13-14). Their engagement is mostly placed in small self help groups, grass root organisations and social movements organisations, citizens groups, ecological projects, non institutionalised political campaigns and demonstrations such as open space activities in the internet (Behr, Liebig et al. 2000: 17 et seqq.). These radical changes of the people’s attitudes impacted the traditional volunteer organisations like welfare associations, unions and churches too a large extent in the 1990ies. They were not only confronted with this new, and more demanding type of volunteer, but also by a decline of memberships and participating volunteers in their organisations. As a consequence, they needed to build up organisational capabilities and expertise to cope with these new motives and more pluralistic conditions of volunteer management. The leading experts for those issues have been VCs. However, the first generation of German VCs mirrored the traditional understanding of volunteering to a large extent by promoting motives like help, care and altruism. Whereas the first generation of VCs left new motives of the people to engage largely aside, the second generation of VCs started to actively promote the more pluralistic motives and forms of new civic engagement.

### **The historical roots of volunteer centres**

The history of VCs in Germany started in 1977. At this time, the city council of Munich decided to establish the first volunteer centre in Germany. As a consequence, the “Verein für Fraueninteressen e.V.” [Association for Women’s Interests, JHK] was asked to build up such an organisation. In 1980, on behalf of the local government, the first volunteering centre in Munich and in Germany, namely the “Münchner Helfer Information”[Helpers Information München, JHK] (MHI) was founded (cf. Tatendrang 2008). In doing so, the local government

aimed at the “activation of [predominantly female J-HK] voluntary helpers in the social-cultural area” (Janning / StremLOW 2006: 1). Thus, the cutting edge creation of such an organisation for Germany was done. Thereafter, the MHI performed three main tasks which served as archetype for later upcoming organisations in this domain. The organisation was responsible for a) recruiting of female volunteers for community duties, b) finding opportunities for their engagement and c) the brokerage of volunteers in organisations of the third sector i.e. the recruitment of volunteers and matching them to opportunities to engage in third-sector organisations (cf. Tatendrang 2008).

After the pioneer work had been done, it took further eight years to create a second volunteer centre in Germany. In 1988, the Berlin based “Treffpunkt Hilfsbereitschaft” [Meeting Point Helpfulness, JHK] was founded (Schaaf-Derichs 1997: 49). Again, the decisive incentives and financial support came from the state government of Berlin. The senator for health and social affairs of Berlin at that time, Ulf Fink, was a strong driving force for the creation of the VC in Berlin (Janning / StremLOW 2006: 1). He was strongly inspired by volunteering organisations and developments in the United States. Fink was member of the conservative party in Germany (CDU) and convinced of the fact that the German social welfare state will transform dramatically in the future. Therefore, he promoted a reconstruction of the welfare state instead of a cutback (cf. Fink 1990). In his view, the state has the responsibility to motivate and to activate its citizens for caring and helping each other. One important measure to do so was to systematically encourage and stimulate the readiness of the people to help. The organisation, which was instructed to realize this idea, was the “Treffpunkt Hilfsbereitschaft” in Berlin. The volunteering centre mainly performed the basic tasks to advise and broke volunteers (Schaaf-Derichs 1997: 49).

In 1995, the “Freiwilligenagentur Bremen” [Volunteer Agency Bremen JHK] opened its doors (Janning / StremLOW 2006: 1).<sup>4</sup> It was the first VC in Germany which took the changing motives and demands of the new volunteers into account by creating and shaping an adequate organisation. In doing so, the founder was highly inspired and influenced by Dutch and North American experiences and examples in the domain of volunteering infrastructure at that time (Janning / Luthe 1996: 74). The supporting organisation of the third VC in Germany was the “Sozialer Friedensdienst Bremen (SFD)” [Social Peace Service Bremen, JHK]. Heinz Janning, the executive officer of the association, studied the American

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<sup>4</sup> The „Freiwilligenagentur Bremen“ was founded as a project in 1992 but the official start of VC as a permanent organisation dealing with volunteering affairs was in 1995 (Janning / Luthe 1996: 73).

and Dutch organisational developments and trends in the area of volunteering infrastructure on the occasion of different trips to these countries. Drawing on these rich experiences gathered on his trips, Heinz Janning studied these organisations and transferred new and important elements and characteristics of VCs to Bremen and Germany. Thus, the “Freiwilligenagentur Bremen” emerged, which was not only the first fully developed VC in Germany but also a role model for other volunteering organisations, which came into being during that period of time. The development and formation of the VC was conducted by the supporting association but the agency was highly depending on the financial support of the state government of Bremen.

In contrast to VCs in Berlin and Munich, the Bremer VC was conceptualised as a unit independent from the state, which is situated in an autonomous civil society. Moreover, the range of responsibilities and functions performed was expanded in contrast to its German forerunners. The VCs main tasks were: “Advising, Coaching, Involving”. More precisely, the organisation performed a) advising of volunteers, b) brokerage of volunteers, c) coaching and training of organisational leaderships in the third sector organisations in managing volunteers and d) promoting and lobbying for volunteering issues (Janning / Luthe 1996: 75-76). A few years after its establishment, the organisation started to conduct volunteer involvement and participation within its own organisation. The volunteers were invited to participate in project development, the day to day business and the steering of the VC. The inclusion of volunteers in the management and operation of the organisation served as a model for other VCs which increased the standards leading to a better performance.

Another influential VC of the early days of the movement was founded in 1994 (cf. Sass 1997). The “Freiwilligenzentrum Dortmund” [Volunteer Centre Dortmund, JHK] was a joint initiative by a group of institutions. The founding organisation was the private foundation “Stiftung Deutsche Jugendmarke e.V.” [Foundation for German Youth Brand, JHK] as well as different governmental actors. The VC followed the conceptual line of the VC in Bremen and other examples from the Netherlands (Sass 1997: 59). In contrast to Bremen, the scope of activities was focused on the group of young people. Unfortunately, the centre had to close down after two years of work in 1996. The project based funding expired without a follow up endowment (cf. Jugendring Dortmund 2008).

Between 1993 and 1997, the German federal ministry of families and elderly people initiated an important policy program called “Bundesmodellprogramm Seniorenbüros” [Federal Pilot

Programme for Volunteers Centres for Elderly People, JHK]. Herein, the central government promoted a particular type of civil society infrastructure in Germany (cf. Braun / Bischoff 1998). In times of remarkable demographic change processes in the German society, the politicians recognized that there are certain resources and potential in elderly people, which have not been utilized yet. The basic approach was: elderly people should be considered as potential resources for society which can take full advantage of their personal capabilities and resources at this stage of life. Consequently, the government started this pioneering program. The government aimed at two things: 1) promoting and boosting volunteering of elderly people and 2) developing a type of volunteer organisation specifically for catering to the needs and interests of elderly people [Seniorenbüros], which activates, supports and manages volunteering of the targeted group (cf. Institute für Sozialwissenschaftliche Analysen und Beratung (ISAB) 2008). One of the major results of the program was that more than 44 volunteer centres for elderly people came into being throughout Germany at this time.

### **The welfare associations stepped in**

In 1996, a significant change took place, which boosted the promotion of civil society infrastructure in Germany considerably. The six major welfare associations, which dominate social sector started to engage in building VCs. Today, these organisations employ more than 1.2 million people and are thus one of the largest employers in Germany (Neumann / Schaper 2008: 329). Before 1996, they retarded the development of VCs within their realm for a long period of time<sup>5</sup> (Jakob / Janning 2000: 3). One reason for this was that the welfare associations were dominated by professional employees. This influential group considered volunteers as a threat to their view of profession i.e. how things should be done in there work, as well as for of their jobs.

The welfare associations controlled the provision of social services over the past decades (cf. Rauschenbach, Sachsse et al. 1995; Boeßenecker 2005; Neumann / Schaper 2008: 329 et seqq). Traditionally, this cartel of associations is strongly intertwined with and regulated by the state in terms of funding and public legitimacy (cf. Bauer / Pfaffenberger 2004). The “Caritas” for example receives more than 80 % of its recourses from public funding (Neumann / Schaper 2008: 330). Hence, the associations are highly integrated into the

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<sup>5</sup> That does not mean that the welfare associations did not worked with volunteers in the organisations before. On the contrary, most welfare associations have their roots in the early volunteering movements (For the "Caritas" cf. Baldas, Teresa et al. 2001: 29 et seqq.). But the steady growth and increased professionalisation led to fact that the organisation neglected the promotion and fostering of volunteers to some extent.

provision of welfare state measures and services of the government. And they regularly participate in the formulation, financing and implementation of public programs and policies (cf. Bauer / Dießenbacher 1984). During the 1990s, however, major societal and political changes took place. In the light of increasing market competition among states, stagnating welfare state expenses and increased deregulation of the social sector, the domain of welfare associations changed dramatically (For an overview of the challenges for the welfare state and welfare associations see Klug 1995; Heinze / Schmid 1999; Die Arbeiterwohlfahrt 2008). These dramatic changes demanded not only a stronger market and service orientation from the welfare associations but also led to an increased competition with other providers of welfare services for the limited state resources. Under the growing pressure of competition and threats of budgetary deficits, the welfare associations started the institutional development and promotion of volunteering. In 1996, the catholic “Caritasverband e.V.” was the first of the major welfare associations which decided to alter its position towards the institutional promotion and fostering of volunteering within the association (Jakob / Janning 2000: 3). Herein, the “Caritas” in 1996 initiated a pilot project called “Modellverbund Freiwilligen-Zentren” (An overview of the project and its outcomes provides Baldas, Teresa et al. 2001; cf. Deutscher Caritasverband e.V. 2008). The project was jointly financed by the central government and the association. The general aim of the project was to build up own organizational capacities to inform and to recruit people to volunteer at “Caritas” organisations, groups and associations. The “Caritas” wanted to integrate volunteers systematically into their workforce in order to benefit from their resources and know-how (cf. Deutscher Caritasverband e.V. 2008). The project started with just 16 “Caritas” volunteer centres in 1996. Ten years of positive experiences led to the extension of the project. Today, there are 45 “Caritas” volunteer centres available throughout Germany. Shortly after the “Caritas” changed its position towards a stronger promotion of volunteering, the other major welfare associations subscribed to this view as well. As a consequence the „Diakonie“, the „Arbeiterwohlfahrt“, the „Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband“ and the “Rote Kreuz” among others started to promote and develop volunteer centres and programmes within their associations (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 31).

### **Booming times of a growing scene of civil society infrastructure**

In 1996, as a result of the flourishing development of VCs in Germany, the first national conference of volunteer centres took place. Around sixty representatives of VCs, politicians and representatives of other interested organisations met in Würzburg. The aim of the convention was to establish a first exchange of information among the relevant actors in the field and to discuss common affairs like the promotion of a network among them (cf. Stiftung Mitarbeit, Treffpunkt Hilfsbereitschaft Berlin et al. 1996).

In 1996, the organizational landscape of civil society infrastructure was joined by another important player, namely the “community foundations” (An overview of the role and functions of foundations is provided by Anheier 2003). At the end of 1996, the first organisation of this type has seen daylight. Reinhard Mohn, head of the Bertelsmann foundation, initialised the establishment of the first foundation in the city of Gütersloh. Just one year later, the second community foundation opened its doors in Hannover (Aktive Bürgerschaft online 2008: 7). This was the starting point for a tremendous development in the following years. Today, there are more than 190 foundations available (Aktive Bürgerschaft online 2008: 1). The community foundations perform different task in the field of civic engagement in the local community. One of the major tasks is to promote social capital and to foster volunteering activities in non profit organisations and within municipality and cities by means of financial support. In doing so, the foundation operates often as partners of VCs in the local context. The division of labour between foundations and VCs can be described as follows: The former provides the financial means whereas the latter develops and manages the volunteering programmes and projects. Hence, the foundations serve as institutional framework as well as financial backbones of the civil society infrastructure organizations. This major boom of the number of foundations is unique in the German history and can be seen as an indicator for changing power relations among state, civil society and market (Anheier 2003: 46)<sup>6</sup>.

The positive development of civil society infrastructure was supported by the fact, that the already existing and established foundations recognized the extraordinary development of the movement and started to promote civil society infrastructure more actively. The VCs

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<sup>6</sup> According to the “Deutsche Bundesbank,” the private sector in Germany accounts for more than 4 Billion Euro of financial assets in 2006, whereas the national debt of the municipalities, the federal and the central government reached its peak result in history with 1, 4 Billion Euros. To put it simple: the private sector gained wealth and influence in the last decades, whereas the state sank into poverty and lost financial power.

received more and more attention and support from different actors. Not only the “Bertelsmann Stiftung”, the “Robert Bosch Stiftung”, the “Körper Stiftung” but also the “Stiftung Mitarbeit” and other less prominent foundations became occasionally financial supporters during the last decade.

In 1996, the “Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur e.V.” opened its doors, which later developed to one of the largest and most significant VCs in Germany. The VC in Cologne was initiated and founded by an association called the “Kölner Kommunitaristen” (cf. Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur e.V. 2008; Peters 2008). This association and its members subscribed to the general ideas of American communitarism. They wanted to promote the ideas of communitarism and voluntarism in their city by establishing a VC in Cologne. Hence, Cologne’s VC was one of the rare results of a pure civil society initiative in Germany, which led to the emergence of civil society infrastructure. Even today the agency is not financially depending on the support of the local government. Most VCs, however, which developed at that time, resulted from governmental initiatives and activities.

In 1997, the first umbrella organisation for the German volunteering centres was founded (cf. Scharf-Derichs 1999). The “Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen e.V. (BAGFA)” [Federal Working Group of Volunteer Agencies, JHK ] emerged as a consequence of the growing movement, which needed institutions and players for representation on the central political level in order to express their needs and interests (cf. Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen e.V. 2008). In the following years more and more umbrella organisations on the respective state level came into being. The so called “LAGFAS” or regional groups closed the final gap of representation of VCs at the state political level in Germany (A list of existing regional groups is provided by Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen e.V. 2008). The BAGFA and most of the LAGFAs are depending on the state to a large extent. Not only that they are financed by the respective government, most organisations of that type choose to be under the patronage of influential politicians instead of representatives of an independent civil society. These facts are indicating the close ties and strong orientation of the VCs to the German politics.

In 1997, the foundation “Bürger für Bürger” [Citizen for Citizen, JHK] was founded by a group of influential and well-known people from politics, science, culture and large scale third sector organisations. A small amount of money for the foundation was given by the German umbrella organisation of the saving banks. The patronage was handed over to the

federal president of Germany at that time (cf. Stiftung Bürger für Bürger 2008). Unfortunately, the foundation was not able to increase its stock of capital in a sufficient way in the following years. As a consequence, their level of activity and significance for the promotion of civil society infrastructure in Germany is limited.

Since 1997, a significant boom in the development of civil society infrastructure can be observed which continues to the present time (cf. Jakob / Janning 2000; Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 40). Since that time, the number of VCs, volunteering centres for elderly people and volunteering centres of the welfare associations such as community foundations are rapidly growing. Most VCs and community foundations, however, are challenged by securing their continued existence respectively to strengthen their financial basis (cf. Jakob / Janning 2000; Janning / StremLOW 2006; Bürgerstiftung online 2008). A high proportion of VCs depend on governmental project grants which expire usually after two or three years. As a consequence many VCs had to close down after project funding expired whereas others got follow up funding (cf. Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002). In the same vein, most of the community foundations still suffer from low financial endowments.

Nevertheless, the organisational network became more and more differentiated and dense since 1997. In 2002, for instance, the network organisation „Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement (BBE)“ [Federal Network for Civic Engagement, JHK] was set up with financial support of the central government (cf. Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement 2008).

The peak of public recognition for civic engagement was reached in 2001/2. At that time, the German parliament published an influential report originated from a parliamentary initiative which started in 1999. The report of the “Enquete-Kommission for the future of the civic engagement [translated by JHK]” aimed at: a) compiling a comprehensive overview of the situation of civic engagement at that time and b) promoting to develop the civic engagement in Germany (Bericht der Enquete-Kommission 2002: 5). In doing so, the commission had a huge impact on the future development of civic engagement in Germany. First, the commission promoted an understanding of civic engagement, which included a wide range and multiple forms of civic engagement. This understanding included not only forms of engagement related to the old “Ehrenamt” but also the new “Freiwilliges Engagement”. Second, the commission clear sighted advocated for and demanded from business actors like corporations to act more responsible for the society. Moreover, the

commission developed significant proposals for policies to promote civic engagement in Germany more actively, which impacted the governmental policies and activities in following years to a large extent. And finally a group of experts for civic engagement emanated from this parliamentary initiative, which successfully impacted political and public debates on that topic in the following years.

## 2.) Recent developments in a vivid organisational landscape

### **Functional differentiation among civil society infrastructure organisations**

The organisational landscape altered considerably during the last years. There is not only a growing number of civil society infrastructure organisations but also a huge number of different types of organisations, which perform diverse tasks and functions within the booming movement. The following descriptions of different types of organisations are slightly over aggregated and stylized in its character. The VCs are conceptualised as prototypes, which serve a better understanding of the organisational landscape of civil society infrastructure in Germany.

Generally, there are different types of volunteering centres available. The most common type of VC is located in a municipality or city. The purpose of the organisation is to promote and foster the engagement of volunteers and the development social capital within a city or region. These organisations are highly committed to and integrated to the local community. Their mission is neither to serve only special interests or specific target groups like elderly people, migrants, students etc., nor do they cooperate exclusively with one organisation in the third sector like particular churches, welfare associations or political parties. Instead their focus of work is directed to a whole local community. Ideally, all VCs perform a certain set of functions and tasks. Basically these are: informing and brokerage of volunteers, deliver trainings for organisational leaderships in third sector organisations in how to properly manage volunteers, and to do lobbying and marketing for civic engagement in the local realm. In practise, however, there is a huge variety which of these task and functions the respective organisation actually performs. This depends on the respective support the VC gain in terms of endowments with resources such as money, competences etc. The number of VC of this type is difficult to estimate. According to the study of Ebert et al., around 50% of all VCs (VCs for elderly people are not included) are counted among this type of organisation in 2001. If we take this number for granted, we can estimate that today around 150 VCs belong

to this category. Most of these organisations are driven by independent associations (30%), 15% are owned by local governments and 6% that have more than one supporting organisations including not only welfare association and churches but also local governments. According to Ebert et al more than 60% of money given to the VCs comes for the state. The public funding originates predominantly from local and state sources. Only a small percentage of money comes from the federal government (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 53).

A second type of VC is integrated and driven by large welfare associations. These VCs recruit and place volunteers predominantly in organisations of their association. The commitment and loyalty, therefore, is predominantly directed to the aims of these organisations and to a less extent to a community or region. Approximately, more than one third of all VC are exclusively driven by large welfare organisations in the year of 2001 (VCs for elderly people are not included) (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 43). The number of VCs, however, controlled by welfare associations is higher if we consider that these organisations maintain VCs also together with other organisations like the church, local authorities or even together with other welfare associations. If we take all these facts under account, it can be concluded that the welfare associations control more than 50 % of all VCs. Moreover, it can be assumed that the number of VCs controlled by welfare associations increased since 2001, because the associations increased their endeavours to promote volunteering in their organisations in the meantime. Financially, these VCs depend on public funding as well like the VCs in communities (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 52).

The third type of VC is focused on the work with elderly people. These VCs inform, recruit and place particularly elderly volunteers in organisations of the third sectors. Their work, campaigns and measures to promote and advance volunteering of elderly people are specified to this target group (cf. Braun / Bischoff 1998). Generally, the VCs are committed to a local community but their main purpose and mission is to support elderly people during a major transition in their life course. In doing so, it's aimed to empower elderly people in their transition phase of life in being an active and integrated part of society (Braun / Bischoff 1998: 1 et sqq.). According to the national umbrella organisation, there exist more than 250 volunteering centres for elderly people in Germany (cf. Seniorenbüros 2008). Around 80% of these VCs are owed and financed by local authorities and district administrations. Just a small

percentage of these organisations are driven by welfare associations or free and independent associations.

The most recently emerged type of actors in the field of civil society infrastructure are the community foundations. Their purpose is to provide financial means to projects and organisations, which foster the development of volunteering actions, non profit organisations and social capital in the local community. Thus, they are operating, among others, as partners of VCs in the cities and regions. Conceptually these organisations are strictly separated from the local governments and serve as an expression of an independent and autonomous local citizenship (cf. Anheier / Appel 2004). But obviously, governmental actors like city governments and local politicians increasingly make attempts to take control over the foundations and their financial aid. Recent reports from Baden-Württemberg show in a dramatic manner the threat being posed by governmental actors of getting controlled and thereby losing control to these actors (Aktive Bürgerschaft online 2008: 4-5). However, the number of community foundations amounted to 196 in 2007 and there number is still increasing. The number of foundations doubled in the last three years. After the United States, Germany has the highest number of foundations in the world (cf. Aktive Bürgerschaft online 2008). The total assistance to disposal of all German community foundations accounts for 84 million Euro in 2007, whereas the ten largest foundations hold 35 million Euro which amounts to more than 30 % of the total assistance. The average foundation, however, has access to only the tiny amount of 430.000 Euros of aid (cf. Bürgerstiftung online 2008). Unfortunately, there is a huge gap concerning the financial strength between the larger and the smaller foundations. From these figures, it can be concluded that the collected funds of the foundations in Germany are still of a limited scale. The findings suggest that the foundations may serve as institutional framework as well as financial backbone of the civil society infrastructure organizations in the community in future. This will only be the case, if the foundations continue to develop like in the past.

Finally, a huge nationwide landscape of umbrella, network and special interests organisations such as supporting structures like foundations and science oriented institutions emerged which represent and support the movement on different occasions. In the area of VC, for instance, organisations like the BAGFA and the regional groups of VCs (LAGFAS) came into being. Moreover, foundations like the foundation “Bürger für Bürger” or networks such as “Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement“ emerged (cf. Bundesnetzwerk

Bürgerschaftliches Engagement 2008; Stiftung Bürger für Bürger 2008). Organisations like this focus their work on supporting the development of civic engagement and its infrastructure organisations by contributing financial resources, knowledge and services like occasions to meet and exchange to the movements organisations. Additionally, these organisations arrange not only competitions, symposia and workshops to stimulate and promote the development but also act as lobbyists for the movement's interests. Corresponding developments can be observed for the domain of community foundations as well. Here we have, on the one hand, the influential network organisations "Aktive Bürgerschaft", which is driven and financed by the German umbrella organisations of cooperative banks (cf. Bürgerstiftung online 2008). On the other hand, there is the umbrella organisation of the community foundations called "Initiative Bürgerstiftungen" originated in 2001. In contrast to the umbrella and network organisations in the domain of VCs, the community foundations are financially carried by private actors and thus more separated from and independent of the state.

### **Regional allocation and qualities of civil society infrastructure**

After ten years of successful development of the movement it can be stated that VCs and other organisations of the civil society infrastructure are represented in all the states of Germany. Even though there exists no blind spots on the map any more, in a few states are only solitary organisations. This points to a massive unequal distribution of civil society infrastructure among the states (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 38).

With regard to VCs, there is a twofold regional bias observable. On the one hand, there is a certain gap with regard to the pure number of VCs available between the north and the south of Germany. According to the study of Ebert et al. from 2001, most VCs are located in the states of Nordrhein Westfalen, Hessen, Bayern and Baden-Württemberg, whereas the states of northern and eastern Germany are lacking behind with regard to the numbers of existing VCs. On the other hand, there is a misbalanced representation of VC between the newly formed and the old states observable. 85% of all German VCs are to be found in the old states in contrast to 15% in the newly formed once (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 48).

Apparently, the regional distribution of community foundations corresponds to a large extent with the allocation of the VCs in Germany (cf. Bürgerstiftung online 2008). Again, there is a strong regional bias between the newly formed and the old states regarding the distribution of

foundations. Over 90% of all 197 community foundations are located in West German states. An elevated concentration is observable in Nordrhein Westfalen, Baden-Württemberg, Niedersachsen, Bayern and Hessen whereas most northern states lack behind with regard to the number of community foundations situated in their territory (cf. Bürgerstiftung online 2008).

In addition, unequal regional distribution of civil society infrastructure is observable; this includes a huge gap between organisations located in larger urbanised areas and those which are located in less populated and economically weak. According to Braun et al., in almost all cities in Germany, with more than 100.000 inhabitants, we can find civil society infrastructure organisations (Braun, Abt et al. 2000: 28). But only 21% of all cities with less than 100.000 people, do have (at least) one organisation. This rough indicator points to a problem which is related to the unequal regional distribution. Rural areas correspond with tiny budgets for the civil society infrastructures (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002; Aktive Bürgerschaft online 2008: 8). This gap reflects unequal working conditions of civil society infrastructure organisations. A high proportion of VCs, for instance, is working under insufficient working conditions mostly in rural and economically less favoured regions. One fourth of the VCs in Germany have to provide their services with less than 20.000 Euros each year. Another one-fourth deals with between 20.000 and 100.000 Euros, which is pretty tough as well. Only 30% of the VCs have between 100.000 and 200 000 Euros whereas around 15 % of the organisations have more than 200.000 Euros available (Ebert, Hartnuß et al. 2002: 51).

The results in field of civil society infrastructure, however, reflected existing differences of the population's density, socioeconomic power and the size of the territory among the German states to some extent. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the east is lacking behind as well as the development of southern states is significantly advanced compared to the northern states with regard to the development of civil society infrastructure.

### **Recent developments in the market: shifts to new activities and new resources**

Recent developments in the domain of VCs show that more and more organisations are expending their business activities to new segments and thematic fields. These developments are indicated by a twofold trend, which is described in the following paragraph.

The first development is related to activities in private markets. VCs acts increasingly as a type of corporate consultancy or broker between the civil society and the market sphere. Hence, they access new sources of money and support which make them in the long run

more independent from state support. A group of leading centres mostly located in large cities and vested with strong resources play a crucial role with regard to this. These organisations started to develop projects in domain of corporate citizenship and corporate volunteering (for the concepts and early examples see: Schöffmann 2001). Successful corporate citizenship and corporate volunteering projects can be found in Köln, Frankfurt, Bremen, Mühlheim to name but few (cf. BüroAktiv - Freiwilligenagentur 2008; Centrum für Bürgerschaftliches Engagement 2008; Freiwilligen-Agentur Bremen 2008; Kölner Freiwilligen Agentur e.V. 2008). Most prominent examples are market place events and one-day-engagements of employees of companies. The former refers to meetings where business actors and third sector organisations come together. At this marketplace both actors offer and exchange services in order to serve the common good. A kindergarten for instance need help to renovate their rooms. The members of the kindergarten offer to sing songs on a company's outing. A local company takes this offer and in return renovates the rooms for the kindergarten. The latter refers to engagement of corporation's employees in third sectors organisations. Here employees spend one day of their working time in order to do good in third sector organisations. In both cases the volunteer centres function as arranger, coordinators and broker, which stimulate events or projects to bring together actors from different societal backgrounds in joint actions and projects for the society (for an overview of recent projects see: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2008).

In doing so, these VCs are getting in open competition with private actors to attract new businesses and certainly more demanding clients. In addition, a few huge corporations and some strong foundations started to support the activities of VCs by initiating joined projects, workshops and programme' to boost these developments. Apparently, these developments change the organisational character of the VCs to a large extent. In order to be successful in this segment, the VCs started to do active marketing to canvass customers and to think and act more market oriented.

The second development is an opening up to new policy fields. This opening corresponds with a deeper and intensified cooperation with governmental actors. In contrast to earlier times some VCs started to develop projects addressing current and serious social and societal problems in the domain of education, integration of migrants, family support and elderly care. The prime example can be found in Nürnberg where the local VC corporate extensively with the local government in order to develop and implements project which addresses

serious societal problems (cf. Zentrum Aktiver Bürger 2008 ). The VC offers projects where volunteers can help families, migrants, elderly people and sick people to deal with their respective problems. The VC signs service contracts with public bodies and the CSIs activate citizens to engage in these areas. Along this line, other VCs started to engage in these and similar projects as well. Significant and most prominent examples can be found among others in Halle, Bremen, and Frankfurt (cf. BüroAktiv - Freiwilligenagentur 2008; Freiwilligen-Agentur Bremen 2008; Freiwilligen-Agentur Halle - Saalkreis e.V. 2008).

It can be assumed that focus of the VCs work is slightly shifting from soft policy areas to hard policy areas and from permanent tasks to project based working arrangements.

With regard to the described developments, it can be concluded that a group of larger VCs has taken a leading role within the movement. These VCs are innovative and trigger new developments and working conditions for the VCs. These organisations set qualitative standards, develop new projects and ideas and function as model for others working in the field (cf. Janning / StremLOW 2006).

### 3) Concluding Remarks: CSI as Expression of an Independent Civil Society or Associative Democracy Framework?

The findings outlined before characterise a vivid movement in transition, which is strongly intertwined and interlocked with the state and its intermediate organisations.

The historical development of civil society infrastructure indicated that the emergence of a high percentage of organisations in this field is stimulated by governmental policies and financially depending on public funding or is integrated in organisations and structures of intermediate associations which have close ties to the governments.

The whole branch of volunteer centres for elderly people, for instance, was triggered by a top down programme of the central government. Subsequently, the local governments took over the ownerships and responsibilities for this kind of organisations and integrated them into their local administrations.

The VCs committed to a local community, however, emerged primarily from bottom up initiatives in the local or regional domain. The historical developments indicate that only a few organisations in the field solely emerged from civil society initiatives. Most of the VCs can be traced back on local or federal initiatives of different governmental actors. Although most VCs in the field are organisationally independent from state authorities, they highly

depend on public or more precisely communal funding and the delivery of services for public bodies. Hence, the VCs act as intermediate organisations and are interlocked and intertwined with the local and regional authorities. The local communities as main financiers of VCs were facing a fundamental financial crisis during the 1990ies (cf. Bogumil 2003). As a consequence the local governments started to promote “new public management” concepts (Bogumil / Holtkamp 2006: 80 et seq.). These concepts included an increased participation and activities of citizen in the community affairs to reduce costs and increase the effectiveness of public management (Bogumil, Holtkamp et al. 2003). Hence, VCs served not only as an operational link between the local citizens and the administration but also as a potentially successful public instrument to stimulate and activate the people.

The VCs integrated in welfare associations historically originated from a joint pilot programme of the welfare associations and the central government. Later the local governments stepped in and supported the VCs financially. Again, the state and its intermediate organisations remain responsible for a huge proportion of VCs in Germany. In the case of VCs in welfare associations, it seems to be obvious that the interests of state and intermediate organisations coincide to large extent. The welfare associations, on the one hand, recognized that volunteers are a new and significant resource, which supports the organisations and increase the general performance in times of decreasing public financial support. Moreover, the associations anticipated that the domain of civic engagement is one of the rare policy areas where governments are still willing to increase their financial efforts. The federal, the state as well as the local governments, on the other hand, had an interest in stabilising the performance of welfare associations in times of budgetary cutbacks and decline of state performance in the 1990ies in order to secure the public legitimacy.

Only the historical emergence of community foundations doesn't correspond with the patterns of emergence described for other types VCs. Initially, the foundations originated from private bottom up initiatives in a few German cities. At the same time, the foundations got strong support from nationwide operating and influential private foundations, which were highly committed to foster and promote the development of CFs in Germany. More importantly, these dominant private actors had an interest to keep these foundations independent from governmental control and political influence. They advocated and supported concepts of an independent civil society. Therefore, these new type of civil society

infrastructure is more separated and autonomous from the state than the other organisations in the field.

As we have seen, only single patterns in the field indicate developments which point to increased autonomy of the organisations from the state resources and support. The concept of independent civil society structures is misleading if we look on the historical geneses and the current status of VCs and related organisations and structures in Germany. Thus, most of the recently formed civil society infrastructure represents expended and changed forms of German corporatist state and society relations.

### **Political Background of the Emergence of Civil Society Infrastructure**

The posed thesis here is that the described developments indicate a change of relations among state, society and market. In times of globalisation and europeanization, the state lost parts of its regulating powers (cf. Zürn 1996; Habermas 1998; Rüb 2004; Leibfried / Zürn 2006). The sharply increased international competition and market integration, such as rapid technological change and intensified exchange of persons, goods and services are dominant driving forces of this change. This general shift was capturing Germany during the 1990ies. The state was faced by tremendous challenges. The national debts were steadily increasing and reached its leading edge. The German reunification and fulfilment of criteria of the Maastricht Treaty increased the pressure on governments. The central state as well as some states and municipalities were threatened to be incapable to act because of their debts. In times of crises the public legitimacy is at risk because of a cutback or decline of welfare provision and state performance in general (cf. Narr / Offe 1975: 20 et seqq.). Hence, the federal state, the state governments and the municipalities such as the intermediate organisations were seeking for new or undiscovered societal resources. In doing so, the respective governments were searching for ways to keep the people loyal to the state despite decreasing state performance. There was a search for appropriate solutions and concepts which legitimated the decline of welfare provision and state performance (cf. Rüb 2004). In the course of political debates more liberal concepts of limited statehood gained influence in politics during and supplemented concepts which advocated expansive welfare provision<sup>7</sup> (cf. Schröder / Blair 1999; Schröder 2000). To put it simple, the deal was like this: the people got

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<sup>7</sup> The Schröder, Blair paper is the main manifestation of the altered understanding of the functions and role of the state at that time. It indicates as well the European and Global dimension of the discourse because it is a joint statement of two social democratic party leaders and thus should provide a guiding function for Europe's socialists movement and it argues with the threats of Globalisation.

more autonomy, freedom and supporting / activating policies but less permanent and secure welfare services and support.

With the idea of the limited state, the model of an active and self-reliant citizenship has become very influential (cf. Blanke / Bandemer 1999). The activating state approach at the central political level and the new public management approach on the local political level gained dominance in politics at that time. In accordance with that, the policies and measures to promote participation, engagement and volunteering were applied and extended on all political levels. This includes stipulating programmes and projects on the federal, the state, and the local political level. The transition of the German state impacted the local, the state and federal political governments to a large extent and thus facilitated the promotion of civil society infrastructure. Even though the federal, the state and more importantly the local governments opened up and expended the space to act for civil society organisations, the state tries to control and regulate this domain by means of more market-based policy instruments. Hence, the state actors externalise much of the work to associations in order to activate citizens and their resources to solve societal problems and increase the efficiency of government policies. The design, implementation and enforcement, however, is up to the associated organisations, whereas the policy goals are defined by the governmental actors and the results are evaluated, monitored and controlled by governments (Brudney 1993).

The civil society infrastructure has a crucial and sometimes contradicting role within this changed governmental framework. On the one hand, based on the self-conception of CSIs, they shall be part and expression of an independent civil society as manifestation of citizens' self-determination, subsidiary and self-regulating capacities of the people. But, on the other hand, these organisations work on behalf of, strongly supported by and sometimes even controlled by state authorities.

By theorizing on that issue, it can be stated that CSIs are becoming a central element of an associative democracy framework (cf. Hirst 1994; Cohen / Rogers 1995). Herein, the role and function of associations in performing quasi-state/public functions are becoming more and more important (Cohen / Rogers 1992: 425). The state subsequently offers increasingly spaces and opportunities for private and civil society activities. This liberal turn offers spaces, which are legitimized under labels of increased participation, civic engagement, activation, public-private partnership to name a few measures and concepts. The state, however, needs accepted and trusted agents and interlocking institutions. These organisations work as

accepted broker between the different social spheres and systems. Their tasks are to translate different interest, wishes, objectives and even communication from separated backgrounds in order to arrange and coordinate joint initiatives, projects, actions and common understandings. Thus, CSIs function as intermediate organisations, which build bridges between market, civil society and the economic sphere for a more integrative society. From the state perspective, only this type of organisation is able to accumulate resources, empower and persuade people, corporations, and associations to engage in the way the government aims at within the realm of the civil society and the economic sphere.

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