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Research

Content

I. Status and Situation of Voluntary Activities Research in Germany	4
II. Phases and Lines of Research.....	9
III. Important and Current Projects	14
IV. Selected Countries, International Research Networks and Projects	16
4.1 Voluntary Activities Research in Austria.....	16
4.2 Voluntary Activities Research in Switzerland	18
4.3 Voluntary Activities Research in France.....	21
4.4 Voluntary Activities Research in the Netherlands.....	23
4.5 Voluntary Activities Research in the United Kingdom	26
4.6 Voluntary Activities Research in Sweden and Norway	28
4.7 International Research Networks and (Data) Projects (Selection)	29
V. Conclusions and Future Tasks for Voluntary Activities Research.....	31
References.....	33

I.

Status and Situation of Voluntary Activities Research in Germany

Introduction

Voluntary activities research in Germany is a young field of scientific research that has experienced a notable upswing. In terms of its institutional and professional establishment, the data basis, and theoretical and prognostic statements, however, voluntary activities research in Germany is still in its infancy. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the scientific findings available to date regarding the development of voluntary activities are inconsistent, and in part also unsatisfactory. While a number of empirical studies find continuing growth in voluntary activities and the number of associations, many civil society organisations report a decline in (active) membership, and various surveys note a decrease in the number of associations.

These contradictory results are an expression of the fact that the status of research is currently still unsatisfactory. At the same time, there is growing demand for scientific expertise and research results, broken down according to different scopes and aims. So far, voluntary activities research has not really covered the entire spectrum, from theory-oriented basic research and application-oriented research, all the way to direct, practice-related research. Research to date is still very much limited to the documentation and measurement of specific forms of voluntary activity.

The purpose of the present Monitor is to provide an overview of the current status of voluntary activities research at the national and international level. It focuses on presenting fundamental structures and developments in Germany, the international review being restricted to selected European countries, for which important cornerstones of voluntary activities research are briefly outlined in each case.

The results of the recently presented “Report on the Situation and Prospects of Civic Engagement in Germany” constitute an important basis for the following statements relating to Germany. Future, regular scientific reporting on voluntary activities – as resolved by the German Bundestag – necessitates the intensification of scientific research.

Results

Empirical knowledge relating to voluntary activities has improved greatly in the last 15 years, and there has been a substantial increase in the number of scientific publications. Studies, specifically such as the “Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement”, have created a sound data basis in Germany for the first time. Numerous individual studies have made it possible to more accurately document the extent and nature of voluntary activities in various fields.

The Central Archive of Empirical Social Research in Cologne has roughly 40 empirical surveys on record that have been conducted since 2000 and which contain information on aspects of voluntary activity. Typically, however, only a few studies are available that examine the subject of voluntary activity in depth. These surveys are usually limited to individual aspects, or questions relating to voluntary activity which are only dealt with in passing. Consequently, they often only contain information on specific fields or selected facets of voluntary activity, while data on other sectors, such as newly emerging fields of voluntary activity, are completely missing. This confirms that the usable empirical data basis in Germany is still relatively small, despite numerous studies.

Depending on the study involved, there are substantial variations in the percentage of people engaging in voluntary activities (according to their own assessment) in relation to the resident population in Germany (voluntary activity quota). This is due not only to differences in the samples and the survey methods, but also to the different concepts and their operationalisation. For instance, the Eurobarometer asks about active membership or honorary activity. If 52% of the respondents in Germany give a positive reply, this quota appears to be relatively high. However, it is put into perspective when examining the results of the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, which arrives at a quota of 36% for people engaging in voluntary activities in 2004. For 2007, the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) shows that 17.2% of the population over the age of 16 engage in regular voluntary activity, which is defined as an activity taking place at least once per month. For its part, the Allensbach Institute for Demoscopy arrives at a quota of 18.3% in its Allensbach Market and Media Analysis (AWA) 2008, which surveyed 20,000 respondents over the age of 14.

Comparing the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement and the SOEP, whose data is most frequently analysed, the differences in the results are attributable not only to method-related aspects, such as telephone or face-to-face interviews, but also to differently formulated questions and the underlying concepts of voluntary activity: while the SOEP asks about “honorary activities in clubs, associations or social services”, the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement deliberately goes beyond “honorary offices” and the organisational framework of voluntary activity specified in the SOEP. The annual Allensbach Market and Media Analysis uses the following statement: “I work without payment and in an honorary capacity, in a citizens’ action group, club, association or similar organisation”.

The approaches of voluntary activities research are characterised by a disciplinary orientation, both in Germany and internationally. In addition to sociology and political sciences, a particularly great influence is exerted by educational sciences, social psychology, economics and social work education. Since thinking in disciplines and the disciplinary orientation of departmental research institutions are still very common, the interdisciplinary voluntary activities research necessary to deal with the topic so far has only insufficient institutional roots. This applies both to the university and the non-university sector. The fact that this situation in voluntary activities research can be overcome is demonstrated by the example of the institutionalisation of women's and gender research with an interdisciplinary orientation.

Up to now, there are just a few, relatively small research units. They were only set up in recent years, are usually affiliated to universities and generally only devote part of their work to voluntary activities research. In this context, particular mention should be made of the Centre for Developments in Civil Society (zze) in Freiburg, the Centre for Social Investment (CSI) in Heidelberg, the Centre for Nonprofit Management (npm) in Münster, the Research Centre "Civil Society and Social Capital" at the University of Konstanz or the Research Center for Civic Engagement at the Humboldt University of Berlin. At university institutions, there additionally exists a number of chairs in different departments that are partially associated with the subject of voluntary activities and conduct individual research projects. Chairs specifically for the subject of voluntary activities have so far not been created. Of the non-university institutions, the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), for example, has good prerequisites for the field of basic research and application-oriented basic research, owing to its past research and its structures.

Deficits

Up to now, it is impossible to refer to a generally valid concept and a uniform definition in voluntary activities research. For example, terms such as honorary office, civic engagement or voluntary engagement are used simultaneously and, in some cases, synonymously. The inadequate status of research is attributable to, among other things, a marked change in, and greater differentiation of, voluntary activities: in addition to involvement in sovereign functions (e.g. lay assessors, municipal representatives) and cooperation in the welfare organisations integrated in the welfare state, the topics covered by research have therefore increasingly come to include aspects of social integration and participation, self-organisation and self-help.

Civic engagement is generally taken to mean individual action that is characterised by its voluntary nature, the absence of aims to achieve personal, material gains, and orientation towards the common good. It is furthermore emphasised that this activity takes place in the public sphere, in order to primarily secure participation, transparency, responsibility and dialogue through publicity. As regards orientation towards the common good, more recent research does not rule out the possibility of personal benefits in the form of acquisition of knowledge and skills, development and fostering of social relationships or other, non-material gains.

In the political and scientific debate, the concept of civic engagement is usually very closely linked to contexts of political participation, and the perception and strengthening of democracy. Engagement is frequently reduced to the fact that it is embedded in civil society organisations or state institutions.

The hitherto unclear concepts and definitions additionally indicate that the subject has so far not been sufficiently addressed. However, they also negatively impact the empirical approaches. Although more and more data is available, it is subject to comparability problems as a result of terminological uncertainties. Some studies give no exact definition of what they mean by the term “voluntary activities”. It is often the case that either the respondents are left to decide what it means – honorary office, active or passive membership, certain activities – or the survey tools used different indicators simultaneously. Certain spheres and forms of voluntary activity are neglected or disregarded entirely. The data situation regarding the organisations in the voluntary activities sector continues to be unsatisfactory.

In addition to the inconsistent use of the concept, there are generally also numerous gaps in our knowledge. Existing data is often not sufficiently sound, or it does not offer the necessary degree of differentiation. The indicators used are insufficiently tested as regards their scope and information value.

Research mainly restricts itself to documenting actual situations. Theoretical generalisations and forecasts regarding the future development of voluntary activities hardly exist and are underdeveloped. The lack of coordination and gearing to a research agenda encourages the tendency towards numerous, small-scale projects. Not even the larger surveys, such as conducted in the context of the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, have any major scientific potential – the result being under-analysed data records and so-called data graveyards. Owing to the highly disciplinary orientation of voluntary activities research, the subject is, as a rule, associated with linking to and integration in other, larger topics. In this context, particular mention should be made of approaches of democracy theory, social capital, the third sector, welfare state theory and social work.

The current research status is characterised by still poorly developed research infrastructure and a lack of coordination, as well as inadequate funding of research, particularly of basic research.

Thanks to funds from the “Active Citizenship” initiative, voluntary activities research has experienced a surge in growth since 2008. However, this does not mean that a long-term research programme exists. Current research funding is likewise still insufficient. The volume of corresponding funds, and particularly the lack of long-term resource allocation, are not enough to firmly establish voluntary activities research. By failing to initiate programmes and projects, the research promotion organisations, and similarly the major foundations, give the topic only inadequate support.

Broadening the perspective

There continue to be too few, empirically sound findings regarding the extent to which, apart from voluntary activity in the political, social, cultural or sociality-oriented sector, there are also informal activities that are realised in forms of non-organised voluntary activity. What is meant here is activities that are encountered from individual to individual, e.g. in neighbourhood help systems, in the spirit of all-embracing public benefit. Most studies do not document these activities, or only in undifferentiated form – as a result of which their scope and their societal impacts are underestimated. Thus, informal voluntary activities in Germany are not systematically and regularly documented, in contrast to the official statistics in Austria and Switzerland, for example. In Germany, informal voluntary activities have so far mainly been the subject of individual studies – with a view to poverty research, social networks, migrant milieus, urban and neighbourhood research.

Statements regarding future developments in, and the prospects of, voluntary activities are so far not available in a systematic form in voluntary activities research, and are presented more in a hypothetical manner. There are contradictory theses regarding the medium and long-term development of voluntary activity, the willingness to engage in voluntary activity and its potentials. A decline in voluntary activity is frequently expected. According to the individualisation thesis, for example, a change in values will lead to growing disinterest in forms of community relationships. However, studies like the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement show that community orientation and self-realisation motives are not contradictory in persons engaging in voluntary activities and that personal meaning is also to be found in forms of community relationships. According to the thesis of structural change in voluntary activities, there will be a shift in voluntary activity potentials towards smaller organisational forms and towards informal forms of voluntary activity that are, of course, hard to measure.

Population forecasts assume that the ageing of the population will affect the potential for voluntary activity to different degrees in the individual sectors. Accordingly, only the social sector can expect to see growth, while all other fields of activity or voluntary activity sectors will experience losses. The sectors suffering particularly marked losses will be schools and kindergartens, emergency and rescue services, and the voluntary fire brigade.

II.

Phases and Lines of Research

The past 15 years have seen a quantitative and qualitative upswing in research on the subject of voluntary activities. A rough distinction can be made between three phases: the first phase begins with the growing importance of topics of civil society in the 1980s and 1990s, ending with the first Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, which was conducted in 1999. This was also the time of the scientific paradigm shift, away from the classical honorary office and towards civic engagement. The second phase lasted up to the second round of the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement in 2004. A third phase can be dated after that, at the end of which new emphases in voluntary activities research are today being sought.

In the **first phase**, research reacted to the increasing importance of the new, and yet old, concept of civil society, initially with considerations relating to definitions, the history of ideas and concepts. However, this topic was still of only marginal interest for empirical research. In Germany, it was the new social movements that gave the political dimension of civil society an additional boost. Research policy interests focused on a political understanding of civil society and civic engagement based on joining in and jointly shaping society. This was associated with the “participatory revolution” that Max Kaase (1982) and others had been diagnosing since the 1970s.

This first phase is the time of the observation that the traditional term “honorary office”, which is still commonly used by the population today and was hitherto used to denote voluntary activity in clubs and associations, no longer did justice to the changes in voluntary activity patterns. In addition to the previously existing association-type structures, organisational sociologists determined enormous growth in the number of new organisations (NGOs, human rights groups, environmental and animal protection organisations) and initiatives in regional and local areas. This explosive increase in the number of interest and subject groups increasingly broke down the firmly established structures in the civil society sector.

The changes in social policy, and particularly in the major welfare associations and providers of public welfare themselves, are a central topic of the research policy debate on voluntary activity in this first phase.

Research into the third sector also began in this first phase of reorientation. This new term is used to denote the sphere between the market and the state, in which a great variety of charitable and non-profit organisations can be found. Research started in 1990 with a large-scale, international comparative project, the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, and still has an impact today.

In the **second phase**, which began around 1999, the research findings of the first phase were examined and translated into new concepts. At the same time, research in this subject area became increasingly relevant for politics, and social science research was also launched by political institutions.

The reorientation of research in this phase is thoroughly documented in a number of publications (cf. Heinze/Olk 2001; Beher et al. 2000; Kistler et al. 1999). This new stage was sparked off by the Eurovol study (cf. Gaskin et al. 1996), a comparative study on volunteering in ten European countries. Germany took second to last place in this study. It additionally became clear that the German language had no suitable word for “volunteering” up to that time.

One striking result of the scientific discussion encouraged by the Study Commission on the Future of Civic Activities (1999–2002), is the new concept of civic engagement, which was agreed on in the framework of the Study Commission to create a distinction from the traditional “honorary office”. A number of criteria (link to general welfare, voluntary nature, gratuitousness, public character) define the concept more clearly and relate it to “civil society”. At the same time, this also gave voluntary activity a framework in social theory. The concept of “civic engagement”, which had highly political origins, was moving away from the internationally customary term (volunteering), making comparative studies more difficult. Voluntary activities of, in and with businesses (the watchword here being “corporate benefit”) are just as hard to reconcile with the category “gratuitousness” as the benefit-oriented approach often found at least partially among people engaging in voluntary activities. Individual elements of the definition therefore need to be examined for their suitability.

The results of the first Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement in 1999 put the scientific discussion on a new, empirical basis. The largest representative survey of voluntary engagement in Germany to date, with 15,000 telephone respondents, yielded a comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of voluntary activities. Although other empirical studies (Time Budget Study, SOEP) arrived at different results, the voluntary activity quota of 34% determined provided a reference value from this point onwards. This comprehensive survey radically improved the oft-bemoaned inadequate data situation at the individual level. The Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement made an important decision regarding who is defined as being voluntarily active. Other key topics were: fields of activity, organisational framework, self-image, motives for engaging in voluntary activities, time expended, sociodemographic data (age, income, education, gender, regional origin, church affiliation), channels of access to voluntary activities, and expectations of people engaging in voluntary activities. There were additionally in-depth analyses of the voluntary activity patterns of young people, senior citizens and the unemployed, and also in relation to the gender perspective.

The results of the 1999 Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement were intensively analysed by the Study Commission on the Future of Civic Activities of the German Bundestag and used as a basis for a host of recommendations for action. The Commission Report, which was submitted in 2002, considered a wide range of scientific

expert opinions on numerous aspects of civic engagement. They were issued in a series of publications. Many books and essays in the subsequent scientific debate referred to the results of the 1999 Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement and the Report of the Study Commission.

However, this intensive phase of scientific occupation with the topic still yielded too little secure knowledge regarding the subject matter, particularly as numerous findings are inconsistent or even contradictory. The Study Commission more or less based its work solely on the results of the 1999 Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement. Its publication marked the start of an intensive debate on the indicators and methods of the empirical survey. The results were the subject of controversial discussion, because they painted a picture of voluntary activities that did not correspond to the self-perception of many organisations.

It was during this period that, in the context of expanding the concept of voluntary activities, the Anglo-American concept of corporate citizenship was picked up in the scientific debate regarding voluntary activities of business enterprises. An international corporate study and the first quantitative study on corporate citizenship in Germany were conducted in this phase.

The **third phase** of voluntary activities research, which began roughly in 2004 and is still in progress today, continues in the direction taken in the first phase, i.e. of expanding the view of voluntary activities. This is leading to a more intensive examination of individual subject areas that have previously tended to be neglected, such as migrants, foundations, older people, volunteer management.

An important data basis is provided by the second Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement in 2004, which was only slightly modified compared to the first round. The findings largely confirmed the results of the first survey. In-depth analyses of the data for the individual Federal Länder yielded new insights in the second Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement. In addition, there were special analyses regarding voluntary engagement in specific sectors, e.g. for the Lutheran Church, the welfare associations and for voluntary activities in sport. The two Sport Development Reports for 2005/2006 and 2007/2008 improved the data situation regarding voluntary activities in the sport sector, and particularly for sports clubs (cf. Breuer 2009).

The data basis was partially expanded by research funded by foundations and business enterprises. The trend towards regionalisation was continued in the Voluntary Activity Atlas, which was presented by AMB Generali in 2008. The Bertelsmann Foundation compiled a study on foundations.

There are still deficits in the data situation regarding voluntary activity organisations. The “Civil Society in Figures” project aims, with the help of official statistics, to provide information on the scope, structure and number of employees of public-benefit organisations.

In the phase since 2004, there has particularly been an upswing in the scientific study of donations and donation reporting, partly prompted by publications in other countries. The annual Donations Almanac of the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI), the Emnid Donation Monitor survey and further publications (e.g. Priller/Sommerfeld 2009) can be named as examples in this context. This area also includes the growing attention being paid to fundraising and the financing of nonprofit organisations.

Scientific interest in foundations and community foundations has likewise grown, not least also due to the rapid growth in this sector. The publications by the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Maecenata Institute should be mentioned in this context.

Lines of research

Parallel to the development of voluntary activities research, there are also lines of research that relate to key aspects of the subject, but can at the same time claim to have an independent tradition of research. This particularly applies to research in the fields of democracy/participation, welfare associations, the third sector and social capital.

Participation research can look back on a long tradition of studying democratic forms of participation in political processes above and beyond elections. Research into political engagement is a firm element of empirical democracy research and research into political culture. As a result of the “participatory revolution” since the late 1960s, participation research has increasingly become characterised by the distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of political participation. While the results for the field of conventional participation were documented in publications on electoral research, the second perspective devoted itself to more intensive forms of political involvement in social movements, protest events, citizens’ action groups, opportunities for participation in the municipal sphere and, most recently, also participation offers that exploit the new possibilities offered by the Internet. The result of this line of research is that the repertoire of political activity has grown substantially in the past decades. In the last two decades, there has particularly been an upswing in research into participation in the municipal sphere, involving the emergence of the concepts of the citizens’ community and cooperative democracy (cf. Bogumil et al. 2006).

Social capital research has developed relatively independently of voluntary activities research in the social sciences. The concept of social capital generally encompasses trust, network relations, membership of civil society associations, and norms of reciprocity. In addition, it is sometimes viewed as an individual resource and sometimes as a societal resource. Among the different concepts of social capital (Coleman, Bourdieu, Putnam), that of Robert Putnam has clear reference points for measuring the performance of democracies. This connection was then applied in its entirety to voluntary activity. Social capital is considered to be an expression of the strength of a civil society. Accordingly, a decline in social capital was interpreted as a loss of common ties and a threat to social cohesion. Social capital research has always been highly comparative and internationally oriented. More recent research work relating to social capital addresses the question as to

the direction in which ethnic and cultural differences in modern societies influence social capital; some of this research suggests that increasing ethnic diversity has a negative impact on social capital. However, the concept of social capital has a number of methodological problems, in which context there is often no clear distinction between the micro and the macro level, and the term remains unclear or ambiguous.

Welfare state research examines the welfare associations as important players in the field of voluntary activity. Welfare associations are analysed in their dual function of providing services and representing interests. They are furthermore seen as having the function of serving the public good. With their numerous services and institutions, welfare associations provide opportunities for voluntary activity. Research into welfare associations (cf. Schmid/Mansour 2007) has always examined this multi-dimensional structure. However, it has also investigated the change in the organisational structures of the institutions and services, and studied the impact of the changes in welfare-state arrangements on voluntary activity patterns. The main subject of study was how the civil society function of serving the public good increasingly came to contrast with the tendencies towards economic orientation of the institutions and services. On the one hand, research focused on the change processes within the associations and the new management methods for reorganising services and institutions. On the other hand, it was a question of the relationship between the welfare associations and the emerging self-help movement and the numerous self-help groups, as well as the new organisational forms of volunteer agencies, senior citizens' offices, municipal contact points, etc. Research in the last few years was primarily geared to the efforts being undertaken by the welfare associations to more strongly integrate civic engagement into their actions again.

An important line of research, **third sector research**, developed parallel to voluntary activities research. Greatly influenced by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, international, comparative research into third sector organisations began in the early 1990s. The term "third sector" has now become established. One of the key objectives of the research was to document the third sector empirically. By 1999, the Johns Hopkins project had created a data basis covering the third sector organisations in 20 countries. The information recorded included size, self-image, relationship with the state, financing, share of total economic output, number of employees, activity profile, income structure and integration in civil society (cf. Zimmer/Priller 2007). Third sector research is important for voluntary activities research in several respects: it is empirically oriented, examines the organisations and centres on their economic dimension. Although it has not become the dominant branch of voluntary activities research, it has made an essential contribution to sharpening the profile of the civil society sector and underlined the need for empirical documentation of civil society organisations and of the voluntary activities taking place in them. Clubs and societies, foundations, cooperatives and other third sector organisations are included.

III.

Important and Current Projects

An overview of research projects conducted after the year 2000 reveals a great diversity of different projects. A wide range can be seen, both as regards the topics and in relation to the scope of the projects and the number of research institutions. A review remains incomplete, as there is not yet any specific documentation. Owing to the small scale and fragmentation of the research, individual projects attract only limited attention, and they are only partly to be found in established scientific databases. Consequently, the following overview concentrates on particularly important ongoing or recently completed projects. A look at the topics addressed makes it clear that there is no coordination through a research agenda. The lack of pooling of topics in specific research promotion programmes likewise has a negative effect.

Important information on civic engagement in Germany at the individual level is provided by the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, commissioned by the BMFSFJ, the third round of which is taking place in 2009, following 1999 and 2004. Informative statistical data is also expected from the “Civil Society in Figures” project, which was launched in April 2008. The project was jointly initiated by the Stifterverband innovation agency, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the Bertelsmann Foundation and is intended to develop a reporting system on cornerstones of the third sector on the basis of data from Germany’s official statistics. The aim for the medium term is to establish a satellite system that supplements national accounting and will in future permanently provide dependable figures on the third sector.

The “Report on the Situation and Prospects of Civic Engagement in Germany” has already been presented and, based on the various available data records and studies, provides a comprehensive overview of the current status of voluntary activities. In addition to analyses at the individual level, it also includes information on the civil society organisations as the providers of voluntary activities. Focusing on voluntary activities in the context of the family and family-oriented forms of support, a topic that receives little attention in research is illuminated. This report, which was prepared in the framework of the initiative Active Citizenship “With one another – For one another”, not only points out existing problems in voluntary activities research, but also ways of solving them. It can be seen as the precursor of a scientific report that the German Bundestag has commissioned the Federal Government to prepare at regular intervals, once per legislative term (cf. German Bundestag 2009).

Other projects funded (and still in progress) in the framework of the Active Citizenship Initiative and by the BMFSFJ deal with “Qualification and Civic Engagement” (CSI, University of Heidelberg), the “Evaluation of the Potential Impacts of Mediator Organisations of Civil Society Engagement” (University of Potsdam/University of Halle-Wittenberg), the “Stocktaking, Further Development and Evaluation of the Infrastructure of Local Voluntary Activities Policy” (University of Münster/Centre for Nonprofit Management, Münster), “Ethnic Diversity, Social Trust and Civic Engagement” (WZB), the role of the “Sports Clubs in the German Olympic Sports Confederation as Civil Society Players in the New Welfare Mix” (Research Center for Civic Engagement at the Humboldt University of Berlin), the “Corporate Benefit of Civil Society Engagement” (Research Center for Civic Engagement at the Humboldt University of Berlin), the “Executives of Economically Operating Nonprofit Organisations and the Management of Civic Engagement” (University of Münster/University of Dortmund), the “Analysis of Existing Networks for the Promotion of Voluntary Activities at the Land and Regional Level” (University of Halle-Wittenberg), and the “Individual and Institutional Forms of Civic Engagement” (University of Dortmund/German Youth Institute, Munich).

Noteworthy projects receiving funding from other quarters include the following: “Civic Engagement, Social Capital and Democracy” (University of Stuttgart, funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation), “Teaching Community Spirit and Community Skills” (University of Munich/Centre for Applied Policy Research, Munich, funded by the Bertelsmann Foundation), “Identity and Social Engagement” (University of Kiel, funded by the German Research Foundation – DFG), “Civic Engagement and Senile Dementia: On the Way to a New Culture in Long-Term Care” (University of Duisburg-Essen, funded by the Ministry for Innovation, Science, Research and Technology), “A Study of Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in 25 States” (University of Oldenburg, funded by the European Commission), “Lifelong Learning and Active Citizenship in Europe’s Ageing Society” (Institute for Social Science Analyses and Consulting, Cologne, funded by the European Commission and the BMFSFJ), “Structurally Weak Rural Regions – Networks and Honorary Office” (German Youth Institute, Munich and Halle, funded by the BMFSFJ), “A European Comparison of Civil Society Resources” (Universities of Mainz, Stuttgart and Mannheim, funded by the Centre for Applied Policy Research), “Integration Through Honorary Office?” (Centre for Nonprofit Management, Münster, funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees), “Prospects of Honorary Office in the Church” (Social Sciences Institute of the Lutheran Church, Hanover, self-funded), “Honorary Office – A Complex Field of Work for Adult Education Centres” (University of Duisburg-Essen, self-funded), “Voluntary Engagement in Youth Work in the Land of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania” (Bremen and Neuenburgerland Universities of Applied Sciences, funded by the Regional Youth Council of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania).

IV.

Selected Countries, International Research Networks and Projects

4.1 Voluntary Activities Research in Austria

Among other things, voluntary activities research in Austria is characterised by

- A strong focus on third sector research and research into civil society organisations, as well as on,
- Voluntary activities at the individual level, in close cooperation with official statistics.

Important research institutions in these sectors are the Institute for Interdisciplinary Nonprofit Research (NPO Institute) and the Institute for Social Policy, both at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, and Statistics Austria.

Voluntary work policy is institutionally and politically anchored in the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work, set up in 2003, which serves as a forum for discussion between political decision-makers and representatives of voluntary organisations. Management of the business of the Council for Voluntary Work is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK). The Council for Voluntary Work is involved in the prioritisation and conception of the Austrian Voluntary Work Report, which is in future to be submitted to parliament once per legislative term.

As in Switzerland, the concept of **voluntary work** is of central importance for voluntary activities research. Voluntary work is defined as a service rendered voluntarily and without payment for persons outside one's own household. A distinction is made in this context between two forms of voluntary work: (a) formal voluntary work, performed in the framework of an organisation, a society or an institution, and (b) informal voluntary work or neighbourhood help, performed outside an institutional framework.

Third sector research

Research into this subject area, the organisational side of voluntary engagement, constitutes a central element of voluntary activities research in Austria. The NPO 2006 project (cf. Statistics Austria 2008), a survey conducted jointly by Statistics Austria and the Institute for Social Policy of the Vienna University of Economics and Business among nonprofit organisations (with at least one paid employee), stands for quantitative research into the nonprofit sector.

Vienna University of Economics and Business performs numerous projects on NPO research, e.g. on the societal function of the nonprofit sector between rendering services and representing interests (2006-2008), on the influence of the financing structure on the functions of nonprofit organisations (since 2006) or on the advance of business economics in nonprofit organisations (since 2007).

Examination of individual commitment/ 1st Voluntary Engagement Report

The “1st Report on Voluntary Engagement in Austria” was published in June 2009 and was prepared by the Institute for Interdisciplinary Nonprofit Research at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (NPO Institute) on behalf of the BMASK (cf. BMASK 2009).

The most important data basis is the supplementary survey to the 2006 microcensus – “Structure and Volume of Voluntary Work in Austria” – conducted by Statistics Austria. In contrast to the microcensus, completion of the supplementary survey was voluntary. The survey covered participation in formal and informal voluntary work, voluntary workers by sectors, motives for voluntary work, reasons for not doing voluntary work, and the amount of time expended on voluntary work (sample size: roughly 14,000 persons over the age of 15). According to this survey, roughly 44% of the Austrian population does formal and/or informal voluntary work.

The Report also deals with voluntary engagement from the following angles: voluntary engagement in the international discourse, structures of the voluntary work sector, the relationship between voluntary work and gainful employment, voluntary engagement of young people, migrants and with regard to the gender issue.

As regards the development of voluntary engagement, the Report arrives at the conclusion that a quantitative increase cannot necessarily be expected, but definitely a further qualitative change: voluntary engagement will increasingly play a role over the entire lifetime, various institutions (e.g. education systems) will increasingly have to open up to public good-oriented participation perspectives, and the intentions expressed by voluntary engagement will continue to become more differentiated (e.g. housing quality, culture, climate).

Further research topics

Among other things, further research topics address specific groups of people. Mention should be made here of, for example, the “Routes to Civil Society in Austria” Working Group, affiliated to the Austrian Research Association. One of its recently completed projects dealt with the role of NGOs with a Muslim or inter-religious background in shaping the image of Muslims in the public eye in Austria. The civic engagement of migrants in Austria is also the subject of a study financed by the EU (cf. Grilz-Wolf 2003).

The relationship between the understanding of citizenship, participation and democracy was among the aspects examined in the framework of the research project on “National Identity and Citizenship” (completed in 2006), which was conducted at the University of Graz and financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

The social capital approach also plays a role in voluntary activities research in Austria. It is, however, viewed critically for two reasons: first, there are only relatively few studies and papers on this field and, second, those that do exist are often of a highly specific nature or not comparable with each other.

4.2 Voluntary Activities Research in Switzerland

Voluntary activities research in Switzerland is characterised by the following fields of research:

- Recording of individual voluntary activities,
- Voluntary activities in connection with third sector research and research into civil society organisations,
- Voluntary activities of business enterprises,
- Research into participation, democracy and social capital.

The Swiss Society of Public Utility in Zurich (SGG)¹ and its “Commission for Voluntary Work Research” (KFF), set up in 2002, have a particular influence regarding voluntary activities research in Switzerland. The latter has developed a specific research programme on voluntary activity issues, the task of which is to initiate its own research and promote scientific research by third parties. The previous history of the Commission includes a report, prepared on behalf of the SGG in 2001, on the status of research on the subject of voluntary work in Switzerland. The conclusion drawn by this report was that there is only little coordination between the activities in the individual fields of research, and the individual research sectors do not refer to each other. There is no system and no continuity. Research is hardly developed, and exists only on a decentralised basis. The SGG report rates the research as being ideologically biased.²

The term “voluntary work” is of central importance for surveys in Switzerland. It is characterised empirically by the following attributes: voluntary nature, gratuitousness and commitment for third parties. The emphasis on “work” indicates an understanding of voluntary activity as non-gainful or unpaid activity, i.e. as a productive performance of private households. This unpaid work is recorded (a) as institutional or formal voluntary work (activities in societies, organisations, etc.) and (b) as non-institutional or informal voluntary work (assistance in the neighbourhood, for acquaintances, friends and relatives, outside the household). In addition, the Voluntary Work Monitor empirically surveys donation practices as a form of voluntary work. If voluntary work is associated with an office/function, reference is sometimes made to honorary activity. The terms voluntary and civic engagement have come into increasing use in recent years.

¹ The SGG was founded in 1810 with the general goal of promoting activities of public utility in Switzerland. The SGG today has over 3,500 members, including 2,500 individual members.

² Taken from www.sgg-ssup.ch/download/12/page/1131_homepage_f_f_vorgesich__verst_ndnis.pdf (accessed on 6/8/2009).

Recording of individual engagement

One of the central activities of the SGG is the Swiss Voluntary Work Monitor (cf. Stadelmann-Steffen et al. 2007). This survey was first conducted in 2006, the next round being scheduled for 2010. The long-term nature of the survey is a particularly striking feature: the Voluntary Work Monitor is designed as a long-term observation over a period of 20 years.³

In contrast to the German Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, which is considered to be the sole basic survey for voluntary activities, the Voluntary Work Monitor sees itself as being a supplement to the “Unpaid Work” module of the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SAKE). SAKE is an annual sample survey, designed as a rotating panel, whose primary function is to record data on the employment structure and employment patterns of Switzerland’s resident population. A special module on unpaid work additionally asks questions relating to formal and informal voluntary activities.⁴

For example, the Voluntary Work Monitor poses the question – like the German Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement – as to what potentials exist for mobilising people to take up voluntary activities. The overall assessment of these mobilisation potentials is very sceptical.

Above and beyond this, other official statistical surveys also include information on aspects of formal and informal voluntary activities: the Swiss Health Survey, the Income and Consumer Expenditure Survey (EVE), the Swiss Household Panel (SHP) and the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC).

The Voluntary Work Monitor is extensively based on the German Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, but can concentrate more on the motives and attitudes of the volunteers thanks to the better integration of the subject in official statistics.

A comparison between 1997 and 2007 shows a decline in the number of persons engaging in voluntary activities in the Swiss population: formal voluntary activities have fallen from 27% to 24%, and informal voluntary activities from 23% to 21%. In this context, there are major differences between the language regions and the cantons.

Research on organisations/third sector

The Institute for Research on Management of Associations, Foundations and Cooperatives (VMI) in the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the University of Fribourg is strongly involved in this research sector. Concrete projects were and are, for example, the Swiss Founders Study (an empirical study on the motives and attitudes of Swiss founders), the VMI Salary Studies of 1991, 1996 and 2006 on the salaries of NPO managers, and the

³ The sponsors are the Swiss Society of Public Utility (SGG), Migros culture percentage and the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. The survey is scientifically supported by the Research Centre “Civil Society and Social Capital” at the University of Konstanz (directors: Markus Freitag, Isabelle Stadelmann-Steffen).

⁴ This module was used in 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2007, the next round being in 2010. It collects data on domestic work, care work and voluntary work (interview duration: 5 minutes).

national study on the third sector in Switzerland in the context of the international comparative Johns Hopkins Project (cf. Helmig et al. 2009).

The Centre for Philanthropy Studies (CEPS) at the University of Bern was established in 2008 on the initiative of the Association of Swiss Grantmaking Foundations (SwissFoundations). The CEPS sees itself as an interdisciplinary research and continuing education centre for the Swiss foundations sector. The research programme focuses on three areas: (1) Governance and legitimation of foundations, (2) Foundations – strategy, performance and potentials, (3) Philanthropy and social capital.⁵

Regular surveys on developments in the Swiss foundations sector are relatively new. The CEPS therefore continuously surveys, collects and updates indicators and key figures relating to the Swiss foundations sector.

Civic engagement of business enterprises

Voluntary activities of business enterprises have a long tradition in Switzerland. At the same time, it is critically noted as regards the status of research into this topic that the empirical data basis is so far inadequate in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Deficits have been identified regarding research into the prerequisites for, and the implementation and evaluation of, this form of voluntary activity. The network “Corporate Volunteering in Switzerland (corvo-schweiz.ch): Practice, Knowledge Transfer and Structural Recommendations” was launched in 2008 to close these gaps. The network is managed by the Center for Organisational and Occupational Sciences (ZOA) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH) and the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland. Its first activities were two online surveys:

- Voluntary engagement by business enterprises operating in Switzerland (concluded in March 2009). According to the results, roughly three-quarters of the enterprises support societal concerns in some form or other.
- Survey of nonprofit organisations in Switzerland: cooperation with business enterprises.

Research into participation/democracy/social capital

Despite the great importance of direct democracy for Switzerland, there are relatively few empirical studies on the societal prerequisites and effects of direct-democratic participation. Selected projects in this field of research deal with social integration and political participation (Institute for Political Science of the University of Bern), participation opportunities for the non-Swiss resident population (Institute for Social Anthropology of the University of Bern) and the role of religion in the civil society public (Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Fribourg).

In the framework of the “Size and Local Democracy” and “Swiss Worlds of Social Capital” research projects, supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation, a number of papers have been written on various aspects of social capital, e.g. empirical studies on the social capital existing in Switzerland – gauged, for example, by the extent of civic engagement – and on voluntary activity as social capital (cf. Bühlmann 2007).

⁵ Cf. <http://ceps.unibas.ch/forschung/projekte>.

4.3 Voluntary Activities Research in France

In France, voluntary activities research is particularly characterised by integration in, and tying in to, studies dealing with

- | Third sector and civil society organisations,
- | The social economy,
- | Forms of participatory democracy, and
- | Social capital.

Beyond this, numerous cross-sectional links between the individual research fields can be identified.

Voluntary activities research in France is widely distributed across many different institutions. Particular mention can be made in this context of the French National Institute of Statistics, the Centre for the Study of Social Movements (CEMS), the Research Centre for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions (CREDOC) and, above all, the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (IRIV). The latter engages in both basic and practice-oriented research, in contrast to which the other institutions primarily work in the field of basic research. One central institution that promotes voluntary activities through a variety of practice-oriented offerings (mediation, continuing education, public relations work) is the “France Bénévolat” organisation.

As in Germany, the projects and studies based in the research institutions and professional networks use different terms for voluntary activities in civil society. They include the expressions “engagement”, “participation”, “bénévolat” and “volontariat”. The last two, which translate as honorary office and voluntary work, are often used synonymously. Their common features are their voluntary nature, the absence of profit orientation and the organisational ties (cf. Halba 2003). It should be pointed out that informal voluntary activities – be it in social or family networks – is not part of the French definition of voluntary activities.

The term “bénévolat” is described as having a stronger ideological bias, but is felt to be appropriate for voluntary activities in associations. In contrast, “volontariat” is considered to tie in better internationally and is moreover used to denote voluntary service.

Third sector and civil society organisations

Associations are considered to be the principal organisational form of voluntary activities in France. In addition, there are initial approaches for examining foundations as philanthropic institutions.

In France, associations are attracting growing attention from both the scientific and the political angle. For instance, it is the task of the Minister for Health, Youth, Sport and Associations to address current issues relating to associations in France. In addition, the National Conference on Associations has been meeting regularly since 2002. Various studies on associations show that this is an established field of research, in which voluntary activity issues are firmly integrated.

An important start for recording voluntary activities in the third sector is the participation of France in the Johns Hopkins Project (JHP), coordinated by Edith Archambault. In contrast, the study “Associations in France. Weight, profiles and evolution. Public and private financing, paid employment and voluntary work, governance” provides far more recent information on the number of associations (1.1 million), the volunteers working there – 84% of the associations are borne exclusively by the activities of the 14.2 million volunteers – the spheres of work (the most associations are in the fields of sport, culture, leisure time and social life), the financing and the governance structures of the associations (cf. Tchernonong 2007).

In contrast to Germany, attributes relating to voluntary activities are also included in surveys by the National Institute for Statistics (Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques) in France. For instance, the survey covers honorary offices in associations, the respective activities, the time expended, the motivation and participation in the “Permanent Inquiry into the Living Conditions of Households (Variable Part): Association Life – Metropolitan France” (most recently in 2002).

Furthermore, there are studies on associations and voluntary activities in specific sectors (e.g. environment, church, housing) and on groups (e.g. young people). The central and future-relevant problems of associations, and of the volunteers working there, are considered to be the shortage of competent executive committee members and a lack of knowledge regarding the needs of associations.

Compared to associations, foundations have been less thoroughly examined in France. They are considered to be nonprofit institutions that arise through personal commitment and presuppose a culture of philanthropy. Growing attention has been paid to them in recent times, as also expressed in the growth of the foundations sector in France (cf. Fondation de France 2007). Of central scientific importance in this context is the “Observation de la Fondation de France”. This regular survey, initiated by the Fondation de France, provides information on the development of the foundations sector and donation activities.

The Centre Française des Fondations is a centre of competence for foundations. Its goal is to improve the level of knowledge relating to foundations and to report on current contributions and studies.

Social economy and voluntary activities

In France, the concept of the social economy is identical to that of the third sector (cf. Carrel 2008). It has a long tradition in French science. In this context, the individual research disciplines active here (political sciences, sociology, economics) do not primarily address the topic of voluntary activities. Rather, they focus on issues relating to work organisation, social demands on work, and the economy of human capital. One starting point for tying voluntary activities research into the concept of the social economy is research into cooperatives and associations.

In the framework of research into the social economy in France, the CEMS examines the relationship between informal exchange relationships and the state; the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Economic Sociology deals with the practices of an economy based on solidarity in the public sphere (2005).

Participatory democracy and voluntary activities

Participatory democracy, i.e. the participation of different players in political life, is largely realised via civil society players. In France, this idea is integrated in the concept of the social economy. However, research into the social economy there is characterised by focusing on the economic aspect, the social science debate on participatory democracy being limited to itself.

All in all, research into participatory democracy is very widespread in France. In this context, attention mainly centres on institutionally tied forms of voluntary political participation (cf. PUCA 2007). On the one hand, examination of the active individual and his or her motives and wishes in connection with voluntary activities is considered to be neglected. On the other hand, informal forms of participation relating to urban development have not been adequately studied.

Information on the scope of voluntary engagement in the framework of participatory democracy can be found, for example, in the “Citizenship Barometer” (last published in 2004) of the Association for Civism and Democracy.

Social capital and voluntary activities

It is not least the research by Pierre Bourdieu on social capital that gives this concept a prominent position in France. Different lines of research nowadays come together under the umbrella of social capital – also with reference to Robert Putnam – and, for example, address both formal voluntary activities in associations, as well as neighbourly networks. Important contributions on social capital have been made by Michel Lallement and Jean-Pierre Worms, who sees social capital in France as being in the process of changing.

4.4 Voluntary Activities Research in the Netherlands

Dutch voluntary activities research is characterised by

- I The broad definition of the term “voluntary activities”,
- I Studies relating to organisations,
- I Studies covering informal activities,
- I Tying-in with research into social capital, and
- I Studies on prospects and future trends in voluntary activities.

Central institutions engaging in research on the subject of voluntary activities are the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands (SCP) and the associated Institute for Social Research. Mention should also be made of the University of Tilburg, where

research into civil society and voluntary activities issues has been conducted for several years. The research is predominantly of a basic nature.

One important institution that provides advisory support for voluntary organisations and at the same time initiates various projects, e.g. for the promotion of informal care activities, is MOVISIE, the Netherlands centre for social development. The infrastructure providing practical support for voluntary activities is generally considered to be well developed.

Interpretations of the concept

There is a differentiated understanding of voluntary activities in the Netherlands that is usually translated into the English terms “volunteer work”, “volunteering” and “social participation”. On the one hand, the customary criteria used to describe voluntary activities apply. Thus, the activities are to be performed “without payment”, “for third parties” and “in an organisational framework”. On the other hand, organisational ties are not considered by the public to be essential, meaning that informal assistance activities are also seen as being part of voluntary activities. In addition, “volunteering” is taken to mean both active membership in associations or active participation in the community, which also includes donations, as well as unpaid work in the form of partly assigned activities (honorary office management), activities similar to an employment relationship (e.g. practical training) and short-term activities, e.g. helping out.

Research relating to organisations

Scientific analyses concerning voluntary activities relating to organisations convey comprehensive insight in the Netherlands, just as in other countries. One thorough survey of voluntary activities in civil society organisations, and of their nature in individual fields of voluntary activity, is “Landelijk verenig” by the SCP, for example. Depending on the survey, the number of people engaging in voluntary activities varies between 20% and 50%, a value between 25% and 30% being indicated as realistic (cf. Dekker/Brandesen 2006). More specific are studies like “Sport in the Netherlands” (2007), “Parents at School. Parental Involvement at School” (2002) and, likewise by the SCP, “Participation in Voluntary Associations: Relations with Resources, Personality and Political Values” (2005), which deal with fields of voluntary activity, the individual groups of players and the individual reasons for their voluntary activity.

The quantitative aspect of voluntary activities among the Dutch population is also surveyed by Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek). Both organised and non-organised activities are recorded here, and information provided on social contacts with neighbours, friends and acquaintances.

Research into informal activities

The importance of informal voluntary activities is not only reflected in the Dutch understanding of voluntary activity, but is also receiving increasing attention in the form of specific studies. Particularly worthy of mention in this respect is the intensive research

into informal activities in the care sector, e.g. “Informal Care” (2009) or “A Forward Study of Informal Care” (2007), by the SCP. This research analyses who helps whom to what extent, the experiences the people active here gain from their work, and what future informal care activities can expect against the backdrop of demographic change.

In addition to the combination of care and informal activities, there are numerous studies on social networks and neighbourly contacts. They examine the importance of, and the conditional factors for, neighbourly contacts and social networks (cf. Mollenhorst et al. 2005; Völker/Flap 2007, for example).

Social capital

In the Netherlands, as also in other countries, social capital is studied both at the individual level according to Bourdieu and from the group-related point of view according to Putnam. Voluntary activities as a whole are considered to be an essential contribution to forming social capital.

Some studies focus, for example, on such attributes as social trust and memberships in associations, on the basis of which social capital is described. In contrast, research into neighbourly and other social networks, as well as their importance for the formation of social capital, is not yet sufficiently developed.

Prospects and trends in voluntary activities research

Prognostics is one of the fields of study in the framework of voluntary activities research in the Netherlands (cf. Dekker/Brandesen 2006). The issue examined is the change, and the consequences of this change, from organised voluntary activities characterised by direct contact and exchange, to other forms of voluntary activities. Forms of voluntary activities whose presence is increasing are mail-based/virtual voluntary activities, voluntary activities described as unpaid work, donations and the voluntary activities of business enterprises. The formation of social capital is regarded as problematic in this context, although opportunities are also seen, e.g. in the form of more intensive integration of other cultures. Against this backdrop, greater attention should be paid to international comparisons on the subject of voluntary activities, these being under-represented in the Dutch research landscape.

The study “Volunteering up to 2015: A Forward Study” (2007) deserves special mention in connection with the Dutch forecasts concerning the development of voluntary activities. There, various surveys – e.g. European Value Studies (last conducted in 2008) and the Time Use Survey (last conducted in 2005) – are used as a basis for deriving future trends in voluntary activities up to the year 2015. Among other things, the respective voluntary activity quotas for individual years are calculated, and certain factors influencing the development of voluntary activities are analysed, such as demographic change, the change in household structures and growing multiculturalism.

4.5 Voluntary Activities Research in the United Kingdom

Voluntary activities research in the United Kingdom is characterised by a broad interpretation of voluntary activities and civil society, intensive examination of individual engagement and research into third sector and civil society organisations. The focus in this context is mainly on the topics of relations between the voluntary sector and the state, social capital, citizenship, evaluation and empirical recording. One characteristic attribute of British research is that it assumes a pioneering role compared to the other European countries as regards certain topics and issues. Important impulses and topics in connection with voluntary activities research came from the Anglo-American region in recent years (e.g. evaluation, measurement of the impact of voluntary activities, compact culture). The Deakin Commission already submitted a report on the future of the voluntary sector to the British Parliament as long ago as 1994.

Important impulses for voluntary activities research come from the Office of the Third Sector (OTS), which is part of the Cabinet Office and has been the strategic heart of the voluntary activities policy of the British government since 2006. The Third Sector Research Centre of Birmingham University is financed by the OTS (£10.25 million for 2008) and is the UK's leading research centre for voluntary activities. There are other research centres at the University of Middlesex and the University of Lincoln.

Broad interpretation of voluntary activities and civil society

Research in the United Kingdom is more or less based on a common definition, according to which voluntary engagement is taken to mean unpaid activities encompassing the donation of time and money. Voluntary activities benefit other individuals and groups, or also the environment. The interpretation of voluntary activities excludes close relatives, but includes informal voluntary activities in networks of neighbours and friends. In addition, British voluntary activities research focuses more clearly on organisations rather than research as in Germany. In this perspective, there is a broad interpretation of civil society that also includes universities, trade unions, consumer cooperative societies, mutual loan societies and mutual indemnity associations, for example.

Examination of individual engagement

Empirical research is also highly developed in the United Kingdom. At the level of individual surveys, there are a number of data sources that can be used to paint an accurate picture of voluntary engagement:

- The Citizenship Survey is a household survey of 10,000 adults and an additional 5,000 persons representing minorities and ethnic groups. The latest round of the survey took place in April 2007, having previously been conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2005.
- The new National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving asks adults about their voluntary activity and donation patterns.
- In 1997, the National Survey of Volunteering (NSV) determined a voluntary activity quota of 48% among the adult population in the United Kingdom.

- The General Household Survey (GHS) of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) provides annual data on voluntary engagement.
- The Time Use Survey of the ONS supplies data on informal voluntary activities, for example.

All in all, the picture of voluntary activities in the United Kingdom conveyed by the different surveys shows marked variations in the number of volunteers. In addition, the various surveys ask different questions at individual points in time of the survey.

Third sector and civil society organisations

The ONS finances the National Survey of Third Sector Organisations (NSTSO). Over 100,000 third sector organisations were written to in 2008, of which 48,939 (47%) completed and returned the questionnaire. The NSTSO additionally applies the “National Indicator 7”, which can be used to measure the contribution of local government action to improving the framework conditions for civil society organisations.

A good overview of the size, scope and dynamics of civil society initiatives and organisations is provided by the annual “UK Civil Society Almanac” of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). This Almanac, which was most recently published in 2009 with data for 2008, evaluates a number of data sources, including GuideStar Dataservices, the Office for National Statistics, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and Co-operatives, a young organisation of cooperative enterprises.

Based on this wide-ranging data, which is more organisation-related than in Germany, research in the United Kingdom has in recent years examined the changing relationship between the state and the third sector (cf. Kendall 2003). Also examined was the emerging contract culture that went hand-in-hand with the expansion of state financing and output-oriented financing.

Robert Putnam’s interpretation of social capital had a strong influence. For the United Kingdom, Peter Hall et al. (1999) were not able to confirm the decline diagnosed by Putnam for the USA. As research continued, the topic of social inequality originating from Bourdieu was linked to the concept of social capital. The ONS, in particular, has incorporated questions relating to social capital in its various surveys.

The NCVO likewise engages in continuous and detailed reporting on donations in the United Kingdom. The sum total of donations in 2007/2008 was £ 10.6 billion, this representing a slight increase since 2004. The NCVO has developed a foresight tool for the development of donations and fundraising under the conditions of the increasingly important Internet. On its website at www.3s4.org.uk, the NCVO provides foresight services for civil society organisations as a whole.

The “Social Return on Investment” (SROI) approach is being applied in the United Kingdom in an attempt to measure the social impacts of third sector projects and organisations. It is hoped that this approach will make it possible to more accurately determine the societal benefit of civil society organisations, i.e. to express them in the same way as economic indicators. This method for measuring social investments originates from the United States and recently began to be applied in European countries as well.

4.6 Voluntary Activities Research in Sweden and Norway

Voluntary activities research in Sweden and Norway is characterised by the specifically Scandinavian tradition of influential and comprehensive popular movements (farmers, fishermen, religious groups, teetotalers, fostering of language and customs, small shareholders, etc.). These popular movements and their strong organisations are losing importance in both countries. They are increasingly being superseded by civil society organisations. Consequently, voluntary activities research is still very weak in Sweden and Norway owing to the lack of tradition in this field.

Generally speaking, a transformation from interest-oriented to service-oriented organisations can be seen in the two countries, both among the organisations and as regards research (cf. Wijkström/Einarsson 2006). The decline in participatory and expressive elements, on the one hand, and the increase in service elements in civil society organisations, on the other, are also to do with the changes in the welfare state arrangements, particularly in Sweden.

The role of civil society organisations is discussed in four dimensions in voluntary activities research: **first**, as a school of democracy and **second** as the voice of interest groups and those marginalised. The tradition of popular movements continues in these two roles. The number of members in various organisations is still very high. However, the research arrives at different results, depending on the design of the study: individual surveys in Sweden determine a declining number of active players and officials (cf. Vogel/Amnå 2003), whereas surveys of organisations reveal an increase. **Third**, research into the service-providing function of civil society organisations is becoming more important owing to the changes in society. **Fourth**, there is additionally the resource-mobilising role that civil society organisations represent in order to achieve certain goals by means of donated time and money.

Research in both countries primarily concentrates on the last two dimensions, because the changing relationships between the state and society and alternatives to the welfare state can likewise be reflected in this way. This research also addresses the concepts of third sector research, especially in Norway. The trend towards providing services can be seen, for example, in the growing headcounts and expenditure of civil society organisations. All in all, there are still very few quantitative studies in this field, but it is already clear that the volume of services provided by civil society organisations has risen in recent years.

Research is also focusing more and more on the function of civil society organisations in mobilising resources. Studies in this connection examine the proportion, extent, distribution and transformation of voluntary work, and of donations. Also a subject of research is the emerging contract culture as the new structure of the relationship between the state and civil society.

4.7 International Research Networks and (Data) Projects (Selection)

Research networks

- I The oldest institution to be mentioned in this context is the **UN Research Institute for Social Development** (UNRISD; www.unrisd.org). One current focus of research is on civil society and social movements. The Institute's research work, and also its practical activities, are based on international cooperation with scientists and civil society activists.
- I The **International Society for Third Sector Research** (ISTR; www.istr.org) was founded in Baltimore (Maryland, USA) in 1992. It sees its task as being to promote research in the field of civil society, philanthropy and the third sector. A global network of scientists and other interested parties has been established to this end.
- I The **Center for Social Development** (CSD; <http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd>) is particularly devoted to supporting "asset building" (help to self-help) and other aid projects initiated by civil society ("civic service"). It has now developed into a research network spanning 17 countries.
- I The **Centre for Civil Society** (CCS) is an institution at the London School of Economics and sees itself as an internationally operating centre for research, analysis and discussion about and with civil society (www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS). One familiar project is the Global Civil Society Yearbook.
- I **Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy** (CID; www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/cid) existed from 2000 to 2004 and was a network of 14 European countries funded by the European Science Foundation. The result was an international comparative study on civil society, civic engagement and democracy.
- I The aim of the **European Migration Network** (EMN; www.bamf.de/SubSites/EMN) is, with the help of national contact points and in the medium term, to provide the bodies of the European Union, the Member States and also the general public with objective, reliable data and information comparable across Europe.
- I **Demos (Democracy in Europe and the Mobilization of Society)**; <http://demos.iue.it>) was a research network funded by the European Commission and Switzerland in the period from 2005 to 2008, in the framework of which globalisation-critical movements were to be studied in six European countries and at the European level.
- I **CINEFOGO (Civil Society and New Forms of Governance in Europe)**; www.cinefogo.org) is a network of over 200 scientists from 45 universities and public-law institutions in Europe. Germany was represented by the Universities of Giessen and Münster. The network, funded by the EU in the Sixth Framework Programme, began its work in 2005 and completed it in August 2009. The tasks of the network were research, education and the stimulation of public debates (<http://cinefogo.cuni.cz>).

Data projects

- | The **European Values Study** (EVS; www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu) is an international, empirical long-term study for which the European Values Study Foundation is responsible. Three rounds of the survey have been conducted to date: in 16 countries in 1981, in 29 countries in 1990 and in 33 countries in 1999. The survey also includes questions on voluntary work.
- | The **International Social Survey Programme** (ISSP; www.issp.org) is an international cooperation programme that conducts an annual joint survey on topics of relevance to the social sciences. Surveys in which voluntary activities played a role were, for example, conducted in 2008 on religion, in 2007 on leisure time and sport, and in 2001 on social networks and support systems.
- | The **European Social Survey** (ESS; www.europeansocialsurvey.org) is designed to promote comparative research in Europe. The project includes representative surveys of the population in all participating countries. In this context, a standard questionnaire on various problems of political and social life is used and supplemented by country-specific questions and changing focal topics. The ESS is designed as a time series, the surveys being held at two-year intervals. The focus of the first round was “Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy”.
- | The **Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe** (SHARE; www.share-project.org) creates a pan-European, interdisciplinary panel data record of persons over the age of 50. The aim is to obtain data on factors that determine the quality of life of older people. These factors also include activities in old age, such as honorary work, help for relatives, friends or neighbours, or care and support of a sick or disabled adult, these constituting a focus of the analyses in connection with the topic of voluntary activities and networks in old age.

Data and research networks

- | **CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation)**; www.civicus.org) is a network of civil society players, now from more than 90 countries. One of the best-known projects is the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society.
- | The **Center for Civil Studies** (CCSS; www.ccss.jhu.edu) at the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies in Baltimore has initiated significant research programmes in an international framework: Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP), UN Nonprofit Handbook, JHU/ILO Volunteer Measurement.

V.

Conclusions and Future Tasks for Voluntary Activities Research

The present results of research into the subject of voluntary activities clearly reveal that there are currently still significant gaps and deficits as regards knowledge and data relating to voluntary activities. Theoretically sound and empirically confirmed voluntary activities research yet has to be created. Corresponding data must reflect the current situation in voluntary activities and at the same time present a differentiated picture of developments and changes in voluntary activities. In this context, greater emphasis must be placed on surveying and analysing organisation-related data.

Future voluntary activities research must pay greater attention to the ratio of supply to demand in connection with voluntary services. The aspect of informal voluntary activities must also be taken into account in this context. Apart from studying the voluntary activities of specific groups of the population, e.g. those of young people, more consideration must be given to the changes in factors and conditions for the future nature of the voluntary activities culture. Moreover, the role of business enterprises, issues relating to the acknowledgement of voluntary activities, and the exploitation of existing voluntary activity potentials should be given more room in research.

To realise future research tasks, there is a need to significantly expand and methodologically qualify the system of indicators for realistically recording voluntary activities.

A forecasting system for voluntary activities must be developed in order to improve the advice given to policy-makers. Using quantitative and qualitative forecasting techniques, special attention must be paid to the complex framework conditions for voluntary activities (particularly demographic change, changing gender roles, changing values, changing media utilisation).

The necessary leap in quality in voluntary activities research cannot be restricted only to issues of data collection and empirical description. Since the subject matter of voluntary activities is highly diverse, research must become more interdisciplinary. The inadequate theoretical and conceptual foundations of the subject can be seen as being as one of the main reasons for the unsatisfactory state of knowledge regarding voluntary activities. The prevailing concepts of voluntary activity need to be critically examined in order to improve this situation. In further developing them, particular attention must be paid to the great complexity and dynamism of voluntary activities.

The lack of a generally valid definition and the diversity of the existing categories call for more extensive scientific clarification. The further development of the set of concepts must do justice to precise scientific demands and must enable new empirical operationalisations and a clearer empirical procedure.

As large-scale studies in empirical social research, the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement or the SOEP are far from being able to answer all the questions raised. One possibility for improving the data situation regarding voluntary activities is cooperation between research and official statistics. Specifically, thought must be given to including a corresponding programme of questions in the microcensus or to adding a separate module. At the level of civil society organisations and on the subject of the third sector, cooperation of this kind has already materialised in the framework of the “Civil Society in Figures” project.

A procedure of this kind cannot replace surveys like the Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement, nor it is intended to. Its specific information continues to be indispensable for voluntary activities research. Rather, a procedure of this kind would relieve corresponding surveys of part of the extensive study concept.

The current status of research and the future demands call for the intensification of basic research. Coordination of the different projects must be improved by establishing a research network. The establishment and expansion of a research network must lead to greater cooperation between scientists from different disciplines, to networking of research activities and to a long-term research programme.

Research promotion organisations must be sensitised, so that they support the topic by initiating programmes and projects. In addition, new forms of research promotion must be created in order to solve the tasks in hand. Research must be expanded by pooling resources from different sources (foundations, federal and Länder ministries, civil society organisations). Moreover, the creation of a separate fund on the basis of a research programme at the German Research Foundation (DFG) can have an important supporting function.

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