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How to Interconnect Universities with Nonprofit Organizations for Service-Learning: A German Approach

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This article aims to foster faculty understanding of civil society and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) as potential service-learning partners for universities. The authors describe the sociological and economic characteristics of civil society and NPOs in Germany, then offer proposals for how faculty at German universities can approach civil society organizations. The outcomes of these proposed approaches, the authors argue, are comparable and applicable to the NPO sector in other countries with developed civil societies. The presented strategies serve as inspirations for faculty and show the existing intertconnections between universities and civil society. The article may help universities to realize the potentials of service-learning collaboration with NPOs.

Keywords: nonprofit organization, Germany, nonprofit sector, civil society

Service-learning at universities is based on cooperation between universities and community partners. Since there is no term for *community partner* in the German language, it is typically said that university partners for service-learning are either *public bodies* or *nonprofit organizations* (NPOs). Public bodies are organizations such as public schools or hospitals, regional environmental authorities, or government-run cultural institutions, to name a few examples. Nonprofit organizations are private institutions that are not profit-oriented; common examples include company foundations, charitable associations, or not-for-profit cooperatives. Their purposes are many, including promoting physical and mental health, supporting underprivileged individuals, and protecting civil rights and liberties. Nonprofit organizations are the institutionalized entities of civil society and, therefore, are particularly suited for collaboration with universities within service-learning contexts. For that reason, this article focuses on NPOs. It presents the special characteristics of NPOs, with the aim of clarifying—particularly for faculty members—which organizations are appropriate partners for service-learning.

In Germany, there are 427 universities that enroll 2.7 million students (Destatis, 2016a, 2016b). An online survey published in 2013 showed that at 15% of these universities, service-learning had taken place (see Backhaus-Maul/Roth, 2013, p 19). At some universities, however, there is little knowledge about NPOs, meaning that NPOs are often underestimated in terms of their societal relevance, diversity, and the high demands related to their work. As a consequence of this lack of understanding, university faculty interested in service-learning may not know which NPOs are appropriate service-learning partners or how to access to them.

This article presents NPOs in the context of civil society. It describes the characteristics of NPOs and their fields of activity and aims to show that there are infinite points of contact between NPOs and the content of teaching and learning at universities. Furthermore, we wish to enable faculty staff to become adept at identifying NPOs and to distinguish them from other types of organizations. A scientific introduction to the concept of NPOs is followed by information about the role of NPOs in fostering values and creating employment opportunities in Germany. Indeed, it becomes clear that the nonprofit sector is of high societal and economic significance.

The article also demonstrated to faculty and other university staff how to gain access to NPOs via intermediary organizations and by scanning the environment of the university itself. The information and suggestions presented here are meant to support collaboration between universities and the nonprofit sector and thereby to support service-learning.

Civil Society and the Nonprofit Sector

The goal of civil society is to maintain and to promote social cohesion and environmental sustainability (Enquete-Kommission, 2002). Specifically, the concrete functions of civil society include the following:

- Apart from the state, civil society secures the rights of the individual, in particular liberty and property, through, for example, representation of interests and provision of services.
- In civil associations, individuals can practice democratic thought and action. Through engagement, civil society organizations practice social and political participation outside of politics.
- Organizations of civil society relieve the state and municipalities in relation to the fields of social services, inpatient healthcare, sports, culture, and leisure, creating conditions and opportunities for individual development (see Anheier, Priller, Seibel, & Zimmer, 2007; Kommission der Europäischen Gemeinschaften, 1997; Lauth & Merkel, 1997).

As these functions imply, the "doers" of civil society expose "violations of human rights or environmental degradations, aid victims of natural disasters, run hospitals and kindergartens, arrange soup kitchens, mark hiking trails or facilitate sports activities from aerobics to soccer" (Zimmer, 2012, author translation), as a few examples.

Such doers are bodies or individuals. They act voluntarily and thereby share a "certain normative minimum consensus … This is essentially based on the acknowledgement of the others (tolerance) and on the principle of fairness. The use of physical force is excluded. [Thus] civil society activities are, at least implicitly, always oriented towards democratization of the community" (Lauth & Merkel, 1997, pp. 16-18, author translation).

Civil activities of individuals are often linked to organizations of civil society (Enquete-Kommission, 2002). In the German language, there exist many terms for these activities (e.g., *civic*, *civil*, *social*, *societal*, *honorary*, or *voluntary engagement*), yet they express different perspectives and historically evolved concepts. In the social sciences and in the nonprofit sector, the term most often used is *civic engagement* (in German, there are actually two terms both translated as civic engagement: *zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement* and *bürgerschaftliches Engagement*). Civic engagement is defined as "a cooperative activity that is voluntary, not geared for a personal material gain and oriented towards common welfare. It takes place in the public space of civil society" (Enquete-Kommission, 2002). In Germany, about one third of the population is regularly engaged (Gensicke & Geiss, 2010).

Civil society consists of two elements: individual civic engagement and civil society organizations. Together these elements aim to maintain and to enhance coexistence and cohesion within (global) society. Civic action is always voluntary and can refer to all areas of life and society—for instance, sports, environment, education, culture, social issues, etc.

What are Nonprofit Organizations?

Organizations of civil society represent nuclei in which individual civic engagement develops and unfolds. In other words, these organizations have a special expertise for integrating individuals, who are non-members, into their activities. This is a helpful prerequisite for the collaboration between these individuals and universities within the context of service-learning. The characteristics, fields of actions, and the economic relevance of civil society organizations are presented in this section.

Organizations are groups of several individuals acting together in a goal-oriented manner. However, civil society organizations are different from other organizations because of the following characteristics, which correspond with the characteristics of civil society: Civil society organizations are voluntary organizations (i.e., no one is obligated to be a member); their activities are oriented toward common welfare; and they do not primarily serve interests of profit.

Figure 1 depicts different degrees of institutionalization of civil society organizations in Germany. The outer circle of the figure shows civil society as a whole, consisting of individual civic engagement and civil society organizations. The first inner circle shows only organizations of civil society, that is, unions of several individuals acting in accordance with the orientations of civil society. Not all of them are institutionalized; therefore, it is not possible to indicate their number. The second inner circle represents only for institutionalized organizations of civil society, which have a clear legal form and a formal structure. These organizations are referred to as nonprofit organizations. Their characteristics are presented in this chapter. In Germany, there exist approximately 615,000 NPOs, and the sum total of NPOs form the nonprofit sector. The most inner circle of the figure represents an even smaller share of civil society organizations. These NPOs are economically active to such an extent that their activities are included in national economic calculations. Some results of these statistics and their economic relevance are discussed later in this article.

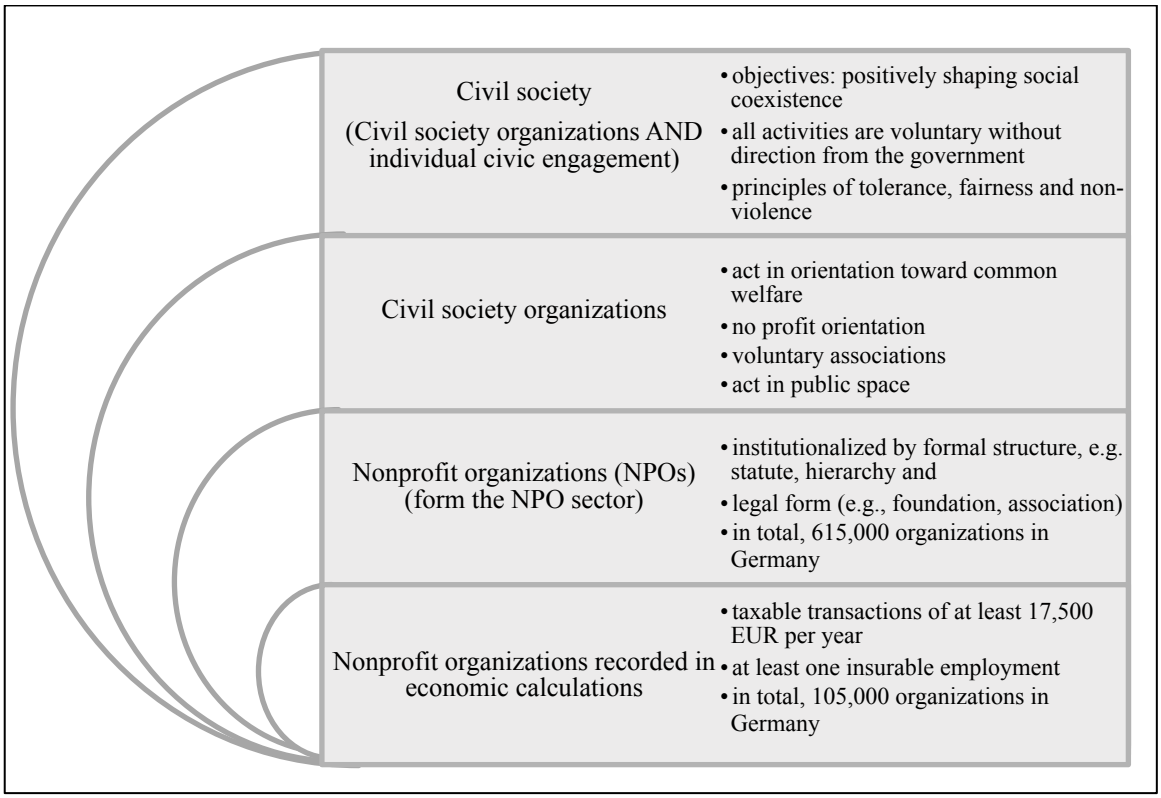

Figure 1. Organizations of civil society and their different degrees of institutionalization in Germany.

Due primarily to pragmatic considerations, we recommend that universities collaborate with institutionalized organizations of civil society, that is, with NPOs. We argue that NPOs are easier to identify because they are listed in directories and because their managing staffs are known by name. Additionally, it can be expected that they are more stable and are available for collaboration in the longer term. Some civil society organizations have permanent staff who facilitate communication and collaboration.

Until the 1980s, civil society organizations were not widely recognized; they were noticed selectively only, by politics and science. In the 1990s, however, that view changed with the release of findings of an international research project on civil society. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project proposed five essential features to identify and to analyze, within an international scope, long-term existing organizations of civil society (in contrast to spontaneous citizen initiatives and the like). Table 1 describes these five defining criteria. Organizations that exhibit these characteristics are defined as nonprofit organizations.

Table 1. Characteristics of Nonprofit Organizations According to the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (Salamon & Anheier, 1996, pp. 2-4)

Characteristic	Description
Organized (i.e., institutionalized to some extent)	NPOs have some degree of internal organizational structure; relative persistence of goals, structure, and activities; and meaningful organizational boundaries, i.e., some recognized difference between members and non-members. Purely ad hoc and temporary gatherings of people with no real structure or organizational identity are excluded.
Private (i.e., institutionally separate from government)	NPOs are not part of the apparatus of government. They have an institutional identity separate from that of the state, they are not an instrument of any unit of government, whether national or local, and therefore they do not exercise governmental authority. This does not mean that they may not receive significant government support or even that government officials cannot sit on their boards.
Self-governing (i.e., equipped to control their own activities)	NPOs must be self-governing. To meet this criteria, organizations must be in a position to control their own activities to a significant extent. This implies that they must have their own internal governance procedures and enjoy a meaningful degree of autonomy.
Non-profit-distributing (i.e., not returning profits generated to their owners or directors)	NPOs may accumulate profits in a given year, but the profits must be plowed back into the basic mission of the agency, not distributed to the organizations' owners, members, founders, or governing board. In this sense, NPOs are private organizations that do not exist primarily to generate profits, either directly or indirectly, and that are not primarily guided by commercial goals and considerations. This differentiates nonprofit organizations from the other component of the private sector—private businesses.
Voluntary (i.e., involving some meaningful degree of voluntary participation)	Voluntarism involves two different but related considerations: First, the organization must engage volunteers in its operations and management, either on its board or through the use of volunteer staff and voluntary contributions. Second, "voluntary" also carries the meaning of "non-compulsory." Organizations in which membership is required or otherwise stipulated by law would be excluded from the nonprofit sector. Similarly, "voluntary" implies that contributions of time (volunteering) and money (donations) as well as contributions in kind may not be required or enforced by law or otherwise be openly coerced.

To understand better the nature of NPOs, an examination of other spheres of society is helpful, namely organizations of the government and those of the market. Organizations run by the government are clearly differentiated from private NPOs. Organizations in the sphere of the market are private businesses. Like NPOs, they are run by individuals and they are independent from the government. The crucial difference between civil society organizations and companies is their target orientation. Businesses generate profits in order to distribute them to their owners, members, founders, or governing boards. The profits are distributed to a numerable group of natural persons. By contrast, the objective of NPOs is not to maximize profits but to achieve essential targets according to the NPO's mission. Thus, profits are redistributed inside the NPO (Zimmer, 2002). The term *nonprofit organization* derives from that orientation toward specific targets.

Fields of Action of Nonprofit Organizations

The characteristics of NPOs presented earlier provide information about the basic principles of their actions, but they do not explain the contents of their activities. Internationally, there exist several systems of classification and categorization for NPOs. In Germany, the ZiviZ-survey (ZiviZ stands for "civil society in numbers") is generally accepted. It is an initiative of various foundations for the scientific observation of developments in German civil society. According to the ZiviZ-survey, the activities of NPOs can be divided into 15 categories. Table 2 shows the percentage of NPOs active primarily in each category in Germany.

Table 2. Principal Fields of Action of NPOs (Krimmer & Priemer, 2013, p. 21)

Categories of Principal Activities of NPOs	Percentage of NPOs in Germany
Sports	25 %
Culture/Media	18 %
Education/Training	14 %
Social Services	8 %
Leisure/Sociability	8 %
Miscellaneous	6 %
Environment/Nature Conservation	3 %
Health Care	3 %
Civil Protection/Disaster Control	3 %
Churches/Religious Associations	3 %
Science/Research	2 %
Trade Associations/Professional Associations	2 %
Citizens Interests/Consumer Interests	2 %
International Solidarity	2 %
Common Supply Functions	1 %

In Germany, there are more than 600,000 NPOs. Around 150,000 organizations are active primarily in sports. The second most important area of activity is culture and media, with 18% of the organizations focusing on this area, followed by the field of education and training (14% of German NPOs).

While Table 2 shows the percentage of organizations active in the different fields, it says nothing about the number of people involved—the number of volunteers, professional employees, or the number of people reached by the activities. The following list presents more details about the types of activities and tasks within the 15 principle fields of action:

- Sports: all types of organizations in competitive sport and mass sport, and associations for the promotion of sport.
- Culture and media: artistically active units such as orchestras; art schools and music schools; sponsoring organizations of cultural facilities such as theatres; culture associations and local heritage clubs; cultural centres, etc.
- Education and training: sponsoring associations of institutions of school education and extracurricular education; sponsoring institutions of care facilities, kindergarten, etc.
- Social services: institutions of outpatient care and nursing; services for care and assistance like homes and social counselling; services of child and youth welfare; mutual aid groups.
- Leisure and sociability: associations for leisure and sociability such as automobile clubs, fan clubs, scouts, senior citizen clubs, carnival societies, allotment associations, etc.
- Environment and nature conservation: environmental organizations; associations and foundations for nature conservation and animal welfare; nature reserves and national parks.
- Health care: hospitals; emergency services; prevention and rehabilitation clinics; health counselling; providers of alternative medical treatment, and many more.
- Civil protection and disaster control: volunteer fire departments; rescue organizations.
- Churches and religious associations: confessional assocations; bible schools and koran schools; interreligious associations; sponsoring associations of churches and parishes.
- Science and research: research organizations and institutions and their sponsoring associations; foundations with particular research interests.
- Trade associations and professional associations: business and commercial associations; trade unions; professional associations and expert associations.

- Citizens interests and consumer interests: providers of counselling (e.g., tax advice, consumer protection); district work; volunteer agencies and many more.
- International solidarity: organizations of development cooperation and humanitarian aid in an international context.
- Common supply functions: housing cooperatives; suppliers of energy and water, etc.
- Organizations with miscellaneous functions: service clubs (e.g., rotary); neighbourhood organizations, etc.

This list of activities illustrates the numerous points of contact between university teaching and NPOs since civil society as well as science comprise practically all societal issues. Obviously, the whole range of civil society activities is not represented by NPOs at every university location, but on average there are seven associations per 1,000 inhabitants in Germany (Krimmer & Priemer, 2013).

Beyond the central work themes, similar tasks and questions are found across NPOs relating, for example, to public relations, acquisition of further funding, personnel, and volunteer management, computing and new media, sustainability, gender equality, business-related matters, and legal issues. Furthermore, many NPOs organize informational events and provide informational material regarding their work themes.

Service-learning-related collaboration between universities and NPOs can focus on the areas of activity listed earlier or on the cross-sectional tasks presented subsequently. Especially in NPOs with a core of permanent staff, there can be found numerous challenges that are as multi-faceted and as complex as in for-profit businesses. Thus, they offer many inspiring stimuli for learning and teaching.

Legal Forms of Nonprofit Organizations

The activities of a nonprofit organization are shaped by its mission but also by its legal form, which is a central aspect of institutionalization. Some civic society organizations initially exist informally and choose a legal form after a period of months or years. Others are founded as institutionalized NPOs. The choice of the legal form depends, among other things, on the organization's mission and its finance and employment structure. All these issues need to be taken into account when NPOs and universities begin to cooperate.

In Germany, there are four main legal forms for NPOs: the association, the foundation, the nonprofit limited company, and the cooperative. In German, the legal forms are commonly used, but the term *nonprofit organization* is less known. Therefore, the legal forms are often particularized for appointing NPOs in general (Anheier et al., 2007).

The most common legal form in the German nonprofit sector is the association (*Verein* in German); in fact, 94% of all German NPOs (roughly 580,000) are associations. Synonymous names in English include *voluntary union*, *voluntary organization*, or *common-interest association*. The activities are either directed internally, addressing an association's members, or externally to groups outside of an association. Most German associations rest solely upon voluntary structures with unpaid voluntary staff (Krimmer & Priemer, 2013).

The second most common legal form of NPOs is the foundation under civil law (*Stiftung bürgerlichen Rechts* in German). In Germany, there are around 17,000 registered foundations. They either operate in their field of mission (operative foundations) or they provide financial support to third parties (grant-making foundations). The funding as well as operative activities of foundations are based mainly on engagement without permanent paid staff (Krimmer & Priemer, 2013).

The nonprofit limited company is the third most common legal form of NPO in Germany (*gemeinnützige GmbH, gGmbh* in German). There are approximately 10,000 nonprofit limited companies in Germany. They provide services for external target groups and have a stronger economic orientation than foundations or associations. They are often subsidiaries of other NPOs. The proportion of volunteer staff in nonprofit limited companies is lower than in associations or foundations (Krimmer & Priemer, 2013).

The fourth legal form of NPOs in Germany is the (*Genossenschaft* in German). Like the limited company, cooperatives are more economicallu oriented, but they provide services to their members. Similar to nonprofit limited types, they have more paid staff than voluntary staff (Krimmer & Priemer, 2013)

Table 3 provides an overview of the four legal forms of NPOs in Germany and their numbers.

Table 3. Number of nonprofit organizations in Germany by legal form (Krimmer/Priemer, 2013, p. 82)

Nonprofit Organization	Number	Percentage
Associations	580,294	94 %
Foundations	17,352	3 %
Nonprofit limited companies	10,006	2 %
Cooperatives	8,502	1 %
Sum total of organizations	615,154	100 %

The German federal states provide a register for cooperatives and to some extent for associations (http://www.handelsregister.de), and the Association of German Foundations offers additional information about foundations, including a database search (http://www.stiftungen.org/de/service/stiftungssuche.html).

Financing of Nonprofit Organizations

Knowledge about NPOs' sources of financing improves the understanding of their particularities and functioning. In Germany, the four most common sources of financing are membership fees, self-obtained revenues, income from donations and sponsoring, and public funding.

Generally, for the entire German nonprofit sector (with 94% associations), membership fees are the most important source of financial support. About 41% of NPOs' incomes consist of membership fees, followed by self-obtained revenues, with a share of 27%. About one fifth of the financial resources of German NPOs come from donations and sponsorship, and about 10% comprise public funds. Other forms of revenues make up 2% of financing for the German nonprofit sector. Table 4 describes the different sources of financing for NPOs in Germany.

Table 4. Overview of German NPOs' Sources of Financing (Priemer, Labigne, & Krimmer, 2015, p. 15)

Source of finance	Percentage	Description
Membership fees	41 %	"Classic" fees for membership in associations and contributions from sponsoring memberships
Self-obtained revenues from economic activities	27 %	Entrance and course fees, sales proceeds Service charges and revenues from statutory social security and health insurance that are compensations for such as care services Asset earnings
Public funds	10 %	In the broadest sense all funds from the side of the state, i.e. from the national government, federal state or municipality received for example as grants, project funding, service mandate or cost reimbursement
Donations and sponsoring	20 %	Voluntary payments from individuals, foundations, funds, businesses or other organizations such as umbrella associations
Miscellaneous	2 %	Extra revenues like fines, inheritances or chargebacks from the previous year

The figures presented in Table 4 are average mean values for all NPOs. The financing mix is different in each NPO. Numerous organizations derive their funding solely from membership fees, whiel others receive most of their revenues through their operative activities. The different financing structures influence the functioning of the NPOs and can have an effect on the cooperation between an NPO and a university.

The annual budgets of NPOs vary greatly. More than half of German NPOs have less than 10,000 euros per year at their disposal. Yet, even (and especially) small organizations make important contributions to the community—for example, in district work. Universities and NPOs together can

acquire funding for creating cooperative activities, thereby allowing students to build competencies in this field. At the other extreme, there are huge NPOs that can expend tens of millions of euros in order to fulfill their tasks.

Economic Significance of the Nonprofit Sector

As stated earlier, nonprofit organizations are referred to collectively as the nonprofit sector (see Figure 1). To subsume the very heterogeneous group of NPOs under one common concept is a prerequisite for determining their collective influence—for example, estimating their economic relevance.

Currently, the latest findings about economically active NPOs in Germany date from the year 2007, when ZiviZ-survey researchers identified around 105,000 NPOs with annual taxable transactions of at least 17,500 euros and/or at least one insurable employment.

As shown earlier, more than half of German NPOs have annual taxable transactions less than 10,000 euros. These organizations are not considered in this article; thus, the overall economic relevance of NPOs is even higher than presented here.

Within the 105,000 economically active NPOs that we do consider in this article, there are 2.3 million employees in insurable employment and approximately 300,000 in minor employment (Rosenski, 2012). With regard to the total employment in Germany, roughly 9% of all insurable employments are in NPOs (Rosenski, 2012). The share of employment in the nonprofit sector differs regionally: In Berlin, it reaches the highest proportion, with 14% of total employment. In Hamburg, the employment in NPOs is only 7%, the lowest share in Germany.

Furthermore, it is worth examining more closely the value creation of the nonprofit sector. In 2007, the total gross value added in Germany was 2,181 billion euros; the gross value added of the nonprofit sector was 89 billion euros, thus contributing 4.1% to the total gross value added (Rosenski, 2012). The gross value added of the nonprofit sector equals that of the construction industry (4% of total gross value added) and of the German automobile industry (4.1% of total gross value added) (Rosenski, 2012).

Interim Conclusion: Various Points of Contact between University Teaching and Civil Society

The previous statements show that civil society is a relevant part of German society and its economy. Nearly every tenth employee in insurable employment works in the nonprofit sector. The statistically recorded economic significance of NPOs goes beyond 4% of the total gross value added, though the actual amount is arguably even greater because the activities of more than 500,000 organizations are excluded from these calculations.

Organizations of civil society act without direction from the government and outside of the profit orientations of individual persons. They are committed to the common good, and they are the nuclei of civic engagement for a major part of the population. Indeed, more than one third of the population—23 million citizens aged 14 years and older (Gensicke & Geiss, 2010)—participates in civic engagement.

The activities of civil society organizations cover all elements of society. There are many points of contact between the nonprofit sector and the scientific disciplines because of the great variety of tasks in NPOs. University teaching can take up their questions and challenges. Moreover, in dealing with these challenges, students can build different competencies. Additionally, students get to know the nonprofit sector as a prospective occupational field during their service-learning experience.

Access to Nonprofit Organizations for Universities

In Germany, some nonprofit organizations are well known, particularly those active at the national or international levels. However, the great majority of NPOs is not anchored in public awareness. People, includig faculty, often do not know much about the functioning of civil society organizations. They do not know how to find organizations that could serve as prospective partners for universities within service-learning. One of the reasons for this is because they do not have enough information about NPOs' activities and challenges and how students' competencies can grow when they deal with NPOs' issues.

In the following sections, we present how faculty can use support from well-networked intermediary organizations and how they can find links to civil society inside of the university. The advantage of these access strategies to civil society organizations is that they start in the local environment.

Access through Intermediary Organizations

In most German towns you can find either a volunteer agency or a community foundation. Both types of organization are NPOs; they are networked in the local nonprofit sector, and one of their main objectives is to strengthen local civil society. Therefore, they have the potential to take on an intermediary function between university and civil society.

Access through volunteer agencies. In Germany, the central aim of volunteer agencies (*Freiwilligenagentur* in German) is to promote the civic engagement of indivuals as well as of organizations of all kinds. That means that volunteer agencies bring together civil society organizations and people interested in volunteering. They network civil society organizations, public bodies, and private businesses (Bagfa Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen, 2012).

Volunteer agencies as a type of organization have been known in Germany since the 1980s when the first volunteer agency was founded. Today, there are about 500 volunteer agencies in Germany (Bagfa Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen, n.d.; Speck et al., 2012, p. 34).

The basic idea of volunteer agencies is to find people willing to volunteer and organizations willing to work with these volunteers. The volunteer agencies create so-called "volunteering profiles" along with the organizations seeking volunteers. These profiles describe certain tasks, including activities, target groups, and qualifications or conducive interests needed to fulfill the tasks. On the basis of these profiles, volunteer agencies advise citizens interested in volunteering, that is, in civic engagement. The counseling includes information about opportunities to volunteer and related issues such as insurance, reimbursement of expenses, bindingness of a voluntary activity, and so forth. Some volunteer agencies allow prospective volunteers to search online databases for volunteering profiles.

Volunteer agencies' second most important concern is to strengthen the local or regional structures of civic engagement. In this context, they offer training to prospective civicly engaged individuals as well as to full-time staff in the nonprofit sector. The agencies provide networking to organizations with similar or complementary needs or interests, and they pass along information about current developments among relevant stakeholders. Since the promotion of civic engagement requires a well-informed public, volunteer agencies engage in public relations and frequently host events.

In Germany, the mother organizations of volunteer agencies differ. One quarter of the agencies are either independent associations or part of welfare organizations. In other cases, municipalities or sponsoring networks run volunteer agencies. The catchment areas of German volunteer agencies range from rural areas to medium-sized towns to cities (Speck et al., 2012). (Contact information for a large part of volunteer agencies is available online at the site of the German umbrella organization for volunteer agencies: http://www.bagfa.de/freiwilligenagenturen.html.)

The tasks of volunteer agencies result in close linkages at the local and regional levels, and in relation to civic society organizations in all fields of action presented earlier. Volunteer agencies are aware of current developments within NPOs and the challenges they face. Potentially, they even know which NPOs are interested in or already active in cooperations with universities or scientific institutions.

Faculty interested in collaborating with local NPOs benefit from exchange with volunteer agencies. Specifically, faculty can gain an overview of the local nonprofit sector, and they can learn about those issues of civil society that are currently of high relevance or that are of increasing importance.

Access through community foundations. Another type of organization with the potential to play an intermediary role between a university and civil society is the community foundation (*Bürgerstiftung* in German). In Germany, foundations are bodies with their own assets. Their actions orientate toward a certain objective, the foundation goal. The earnings from the assets are used to fulfill the foundation goal, while the assets themselves remain untouched. Operative foundations

realize their own projects; grant-making foundations support the operative activities of third parties through grants. These third parties are either individuals or organizations with orientations that correspond with foundation goals (Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen, n.d.).

Community foundations represent a specific type of foundation with wide-ranging goals but limited to a certain geographical area. Thus, they support the community in that location or in that region and promote civic engagement there (Stiftung Aktive Bürgerschaft, 2010). Currently, there are nearly 400 community foundations in Germany, operating primarily in urbanized areas (Stiftung Aktive Bürgerschaft, 2015).

The German development of community foundations is quite dynamic. The first community foundations were founded in the 1990s. The federal states with the most community foundations are North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Wuerttemberg, and Lower Saxony. Only in the state of Saarland is there no community foundation (Initiative Bürgerstiftungen, 2015; Stiftung Aktive Bürgerschaft, 2015). There are two umbrella organizations for community foundations in Germany. Both provide online directories of community foundations (http://www.buergerstiftungen.org/de/ueber-buergerstiftungen/buergerstiftungssuche.html; http://www.aktive-buergerschaft.de/buergerstiftungen_alt/unsere_leistungen/buergerstiftungsfinder).

Community foundations can be as valuable contacts for university staff as volunteer agencies. They are well-networked in the region, and they know many NPOs as well as their current challenges. As a result, community foundations can offer a good overview of civil society at the university location, and they can support faculty networking. Faculty can receive advice from community foundations about how to start a service-learning cooperation with an NPO or they can even get active support from them during the preparation and realization of service-learning.

Access through University Bodies and Student Associations

Within the close environment of universities, there are activities and bodies that are close to civil society or that are even part of it. First, there are numerous student associations, and, second, there are administrative units with a transfer function from the university to its surrounding environment. Furthermore, university departments often have relations to NPOs but do not communicate that fact in a systematic manner.

Access through university bodies linked to civil society. At most universities in Germany, there are bodies with the task of supporting students as they transition into work life. These career services are linked to many regional employers such as businesses, public bodies, and NPOs. Additonally, there exist central or non-central offices for internships with networks similar to those of career services. Possibly the staff in these well-networked administrative units support faculty approaching organizations that seem to be suitable for a service-learning collaboration.

In practically every German university, there is an international office, whose tasks and offerings vary greatly among different universities. Faculty should find out if their international office has interconnections with migrant organizations or with (inter)cultural associations and how to connect with them.

In many universities, there are offices for the transfer of scientific knowledge into society and the economy. Their tasks include start-up support, to assist students founding businesses, to giving advice about patent law and to initiate cooperations between university and extramural organizations. Sometimes it is not easy to identify these transfer institutions because they have very different designations in German. However, because of the variety of their tasks, they can conceivably provide advice about opportunities for service-learning cooperation.

Finally, collegues from their own department or from other units within the university may have access to NPOs. The fields of activity of NPOs, as listed earlier, are subjects of research or of teaching in various scientific disciplines. It can be worthwhile to ask collegues with which NPOs they are familiar.

Access through student associations. In practically all German universities, there are student associations. Their engagement targets groups inside or outside the university. Probably the best known student associations are the bodies of student self-administration. In addition, there are many

student groups whose activities focus on objectives of general societal relevance. Their activities cover a wide range of issues, similar to the fields of activity shown earlier in Table 2. Some universities list their student associations on their websites; in other cases, it is necessary to ask the university administration for that information. Many student associations are officially recognized by their universities because they make use of their resources (e.g., seminar rooms for meetings, etc.).

Faculty may even ask their students if they volunteer or if they are interested in specific NPOs. This information can also serve as the starting point for a service-learning cooperation. Taking up students' experiences is a very valuable approach because it shows appreciation for the students' perspectives and therefore has the potential to motivate them.

Interim Conclusion: Numerous Ways of Access Exist

Several approaches open access to civil society organizations for faculty at German universities. Well-networked organizations, such as volunteer agencies or community foundations, can take on an intermediary role supporting faculty in their efforts to familiarize themselves with local civil society. At universities with diverse activities oriented toward civil society, one is very likely to find prospective partners for service-learning inside of the university, in central units, in departments, or among student initiatives. An appreciative strategy is to include students and their volunteering experiences in the search.

Volunteer agencies and community foundations not only know the local nonprofit sector, but their deep insights contribute to the quality of service-learning. Potentially, they can estimate the qualifications of the staff of local NPOs or determine if an organization has experience working with student volunteers, if it has collaborated with educational or scientific institutions yet, which challenges are typical in the field of action of a certain organization, etc. Such information is relevant to the preparation of a service-learning collaboration.

Conclusion: Service-Learning Requires Knowledge about Civil Society

Service-learning is a growing phenomenon in German universities. It is based on cooperation between universities and nonprofit organizations. Thus, it is increasing more important for universities to know and to understand NPOs. The presented description of the diversity and size of the nonprofit sector as well as the suggestions for creating points of contact have two functions: First, they provide pragmatic orientation and recommendations for action to faculty. Second, they expand university staff's knowledge about civil society and its organizations. This knowledge is a crucial prerequisite for (a) finding the best match, that is, the most suitable NPO for a particular service-learning idea, (b) reaching a partnership of equals, and (c) making full use of the cooperation's potential.

The German nonprofit sector introduced in this article is reflective of the nonprofit sector in other countries, and it shows that there is an international discussion about the characteristics of civil society and the nonprofit sector. The article proposes that university faculty should approach civil society and its organizations in a conscient and well-informed manner. With a better mutual understanding of universities and nonprofit organizations, the potential for successful service-learning—as measured by quality results of the service, learning outcomes, and individual commitment of all persons involved—grows. These are the motivators for doing service-learning.

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