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**Nonprofit Governance – A question of moral ownership? Findings from German
Nonprofit Organizations**

This paper proposal aims to present a new perspective on ongoing changes in the Third Sector and its organizations. These changes accrue from current turbulences in the organizational environment and they affect the organizations' Governance and Governing. It is to be asked what the consequences of such turbulent environments are for an organizations' Governance, the integration of volunteering and the interaction between the organizations stakeholders when governing the organization.

Third Sector organizations are confronted with ever increasingly complex demands that urge the organizations to improve their functionality by professional standards. On the other hand, they are the home of volunteering, of people active on the basis of shared commitment and being bound together by the wish to achieve one aim. It is the reason why the organizations were founded; peoples' commitment to it makes all who share in it participate in the "moral ownership" of the organization. Alas, this last-mentioned component is often underestimated when one speaks about Governance and the Governing of Nonprofit Organizations, though it surely impacts the way such an organization *is* governed and *how* its Governance changes over time. Governance in Nonprofit Organizations has to do both: It has to provide an organization with structures and processes that allow its proper functioning, especially in a difficult and changing environment, but simultaneously it has to allow the integration of volunteers and staff under the roof of a unifying "ownership". How can this bridge be spanned? Up to now, this issue has seldom been mentioned in publications concerning Governance in the Third Sector. A close look at this literature reveals an astonishing affinity of some authors describing Nonprofit Organization Governance to border volunteer integration and volunteer influence on the organization to a minimum. Volunteers are used to carry out low-level day-to-day work or on a higher level they may express their recommendations about the organizations' future on the board of directors. In both cases, paid staff is acquired to do the steering and governing of the organization. In practice, this can lead to a reaction of "kicking out the volunteers" entirely, used as a remedy to overcome organizational problems. What falls short in these cases is the above-mentioned "moral ownership". As a consequence, organizations of the Third Sector have sometimes become almost impossible to distinguish from private enterprises. But then, what would justify them to ask for state-support (concerning e.g.

tax regulations), support from the public (via donations) or the market (via sponsoring) or support through unpaid work?

To research this situation in Germany, a study is conducted at the Universities of Muenster and Dortmund: "Civic engagement and management". The research project consists of two parts and began initially in 2002. The current, second phase will be carried out from 2007 till June 2009. Its first focus is on Governance structures and processes in various organizations of the German Third Sector, namely in the fields of sports and culture. Its second focus is the management and integration of volunteering into the organization under increasing pressure. How do the organisations cope with it and are changes in their Governance to be discovered? The project contains a compound of research methods applied: in close cooperation with the participating organizations, case studies including document analysis and qualitative interviews will be carried out. Afterwards, a quantitative survey will open the view on the subjective estimations of paid staff and volunteers about their organization and herein shared values, its Governance and the management and inclusion of volunteering.

Against the above-mentioned understanding of Governance, Governing and the term of "moral ownership", first results of the study are to be presented and discussed. The value of the research projects results will lie in two fields: firstly, a comparison of Governance applications in several branches of the German Third Sector will be drawn. It will provide the academic community with a detailed insight into current structural changes in different organizational environments. Secondly, the attempt to specify the concept of "moral ownership" on the ground of shared commitment will open a new perspective for Third Sector research, raising the question of legitimacy from the stakeholder-angle and clearly demanding the inclusion of volunteers in the Governance and Governing of Nonprofit Organizations.

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