

## **Organisational Hybridity: Different Development and Impact Patterns of Welfare Associations on Markets and Society**

Welfare associations (Wohlfahrtsverbände) are organisations with specific characteristics and with several functions. On the one hand, they are service providers through their member institutions and, on the other hand, they are interest associations for social groups that are considered socially disadvantaged. They can thus be described as multifunctional organisations operating simultaneously in different environments.

The socio-political upheavals in Germany in the mid-1990s are intended to show that the multifunctionality of welfare associations leads to contrasting patterns of development, which in turn have different effects on the environment.

A hybridity approach shows that welfare associations are a polycentric acting network and are thus able to react to different environments. While individual organisations of the network react in some environments according to isomorphic patterns and copy organisational models, they develop at the same time individually and innovative in other environments, which is understood as polymorphic development. The extent to which welfare associations act isomorphically or polymorphically depends on the (un-)certainty of the environment in which they operate.

Two different directions of effect between welfare associations and their environment can be derived from this: While their development is determined within the framework of isomorphic patterns in uncertain environments (markets), they develop innovatively and are able to shape socio-political structures in certain environments. They have an effect on the structures surrounding them.

The shaping potential of welfare associations is reflected along their impact on society (e.g. poverty policy). In the sociopolitical system, welfare associations have created a new form of corporatism, that I define as "confrontational corporatism", which, unlike its predecessors, is no longer characterized by cooperative coexistence, but by opposition between politics and welfare associations. Central to this is that this confrontational attitude can avoid destabilizing the socio-political system through social forces. Welfare associations become (again) a quasi-non-governmental organization (QUANGO).