

# Preface

The conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) held in July 2014 in Münster, Germany is the perfect occasion to present this anthology, a Festschrift in honor of Annette Zimmer. Annette Zimmer is not just celebrating her 60th birthday in September; she is also taking office as ISTR's president and serving as local organizer of the conference, which is attracting more than 600 researchers from all over the world in an interdisciplinary setting. This event can be considered as the peak of a research career that has been shaped by enormous academic diligence, impressive empirical performance and important contributions to a better understanding of civil society organizations in modern societies. This Festschrift picks up many aspects of Annette Zimmer's work and aims to enrich our knowledge about associations, her great passion.

Annette Zimmer has been Professor for German and European Social Policy and Comparative Politics at the University of Münster since 1996. Her work focuses on the development of civil society and its broad organizational spectrum that influences democratic societies. After finishing her doctoral studies at Heidelberg University in 1986, she was a visiting fellow at the Program on Nonprofit Organizations at Yale University for two years and there became a research associate on a project on foundations in the United States. In 1988 she moved back to Germany and held a postdoc position at Kassel University where she qualified as a professor with a study on associations from the perspective of third sector research. From 1995 to 2002, she—together with Eckhard Priller—led the German part of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Project. The research for both the habilitation and the comparative project ventured into uncharted terrain and became important milestones towards the establishment of empirical third sector research in German social sciences in the 1990s. Along with a small group of colleagues Annette Zimmer has been a pioneer in the field.

Although her research has encompassed all forms of third sector organizations—from foundations and cooperatives, to charities, interest groups, and public benefit corporations—her favorite object of research is associations, which she has analyzed in numerous qualitative and quantitative studies. Certainly, Annette Zimmer is *the* expert on German associational life today. Her textbook "Associations—bedrocks of democracy" (*"Vereine—Basiselement der Demokratie"*, first edition 1996, second edition 2007) is the authoritative book on the history and present of associations in Germany and has received broad attention.

However, Annette Zimmer's work is by no means dedicated just to gardeners, soccer players, nature lovers, and their sometimes rather peculiar behavior. During her time as a professor at University of Münster, she has continuously broadened her research focus. In addition to studies on the German third sector and public benefit organizations, Annette Zimmer has contributed to analyses of the role of civic engagement in Germany and Europe and the contribution of civil society organizations to the development of welfare provision in several policy fields. Among her most important research projects have been "Future of Civil Society", "Management of Civil Engagement", "Local Engagement Policy", "Cities as Laboratories of Innovative Governance in Europe and the USA" and most recently "Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion (WILCO)", funded by the European Commission. Furthermore, Annette Zimmer served as a director of the research groups on "European Civil Society and Multilevel Governance" (2005–2010) and on "Negotiating Processes of the Civil Society from the nineteenth Century to the Present—Germany and the Netherlands Compared" (2006–2011), Nineteenth based at University of Münster.

Along with the textbook on associations, Annette Zimmer has so far published 11 monographs and more than 150 articles in journals and edited volumes and has edited some 25 anthologies, among them "Strategy Mix for Nonprofit Organisations" (2004, with Christina Stecker), "Future of Civil Society" (2004, with Eckhard Priller), and "Third Sector Organizations Facing Turbulent Environments" (2010, with Adalbert Evers).

A central theme of Annette Zimmer's work has always been the practical application of her findings. In 2004, together with Gisela Clausen and Michael Vilain, she founded the Center for Nonprofit Management in Münster, a consultancy that focuses on third sector organizations and that developed the first university-level course on Nonprofit Management and Governance in Germany. Through the Center and in other ways, she has contributed significantly to the professionalization of nonprofit management, especially in Germany where the sector had been characterized by a rather amateurish governance of trial and error. Above all, Annette Zimmer is also a highly committed educator. By the time this volume went to press, she had supervised 19 doctoral dissertations, among them those of the editors of this *Festschrift*.

Over the years, Annette Zimmer's professional connections have spread throughout Germany and abroad, and many of her colleagues are also bound to her in friendship. Thus, it was easy to gather an illustrious circle of contributors for this anthology. All of the chapters focus on the challenges for associations and associating in the twenty-first century and have been influenced in some way by the work of Annette Zimmer. Special thanks go to all of the contributors for their assiduous work and, for the most part, punctuality. Without them, this *Festschrift* would not have been possible. It is only their kindness that has made working on a volume like this for so long so rewarding.

Furthermore, the editors of the volume would like to thank Jonas Geisel, Tarek Abdel Rahman, Teresa Krauss, and Regina List. Backed by her research expertise originating in the Johns Hopkins Project and further extended in many joint projects

together with Annette Zimmer, Regina List was much more than a language polisher for this book. Jonas Geisel did a wonderful job pulling the manuscript together. Tarek Abdel Rahman helped us smooth out the English language in several chapters. Finally, we thank Teresa Krauss from Springer Publishers who supported this book from the very beginning.

Last but not least we hope, of course, that Annette Zimmer will enjoy reading every single page of this book.

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Matthias Freise  
Thorsten Hallmann

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