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Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 2013 42: 495 originally published online 3 April 2013

DOI: 10.1177/0899764013482046

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly
42(3) 495–516

DOI: 10.1177/0899764013482046
nvsq.sagepub.com
SAGE

The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Social Welfare Systems: A comparison of France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom

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Abstract

In recent decades, the changing roles of voluntary organizations in the European welfare states have been a focus of interest. In some countries a specific group of organizations put under the policy spotlight is faith-based organizations. This article undertakes a historical-institutionalist analysis of faith-based organizations in France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The article explores the contemporary social welfare roles of faith-based organizations in these countries through studying the institutionalization of religion and the voluntary sector in the sphere of social welfare since the time of national revolutions. The comparative analysis shows that neither the extent of change in the position of faith-based organizations in social welfare, nor the main mechanisms triggering change, is the same for the different welfare states.

Keywords

faith-based organizations, comparative social policy, religion and welfare, European welfare states, voluntary sector

In recent decades there has been increasing emphasis on the role of voluntary organizations—also referred as civil society associations, third sector organizations, and

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nonprofit organizations—in social welfare. Highly related to the transformations of the welfare states and the increasing emphasis on governance, possible roles and responsibilities of the voluntary sector are under the spotlight of governments and political parties in various countries. One group of organizations that especially came to the foreground in some countries are faith-based organizations (FBOs). In this article I study FBOs working in social welfare in four European countries, namely France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. To cover the variety across the four countries, I define an FBO broadly as any kind of faith-related voluntary association (including churches, mosques, synagogues, and congregations) engaging in social welfare by providing social services, policy consultation, and advocacy. The focus is on FBOs that provide a broad range of social welfare services and use their influence in policy making for the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, children, migrants or any other socially excluded group.

The rise in policy interest in FBOs began in the United States in the 1980s with the Reagan administration's announcement that religious organizations were more effective in the provision of social welfare than both state agencies and secular voluntary associations. The popular use of the concept of *charitable choice* as an important part of the comprehensive welfare reform in 1996 was another step in making social welfare provision accessible to religious associations (Carlson-Thies & Skillen, 1996; Nagel, 2006). This opening has been taken further by the *compassionate conservatism* initiative of the Bush government after 2001. Similarly in the United Kingdom, Thatcher's ideals of "rolling back the frontiers of the state" and creating "active citizens" (Billis & Harris, 1992) resulted in an expansion of the voluntary sector. In the last decades, both New Labour and the Conservative Party have shown great interest in FBOs as partners in social policy, and encouraged them to participate at many levels of social policy making and implementation (Harris, Rochester, & Halfpenny, 2001, p. 93). As these developments demonstrate, the significance of FBOs in social policy has increased in the United States and the United Kingdom over the last two to three decades. Maybe not as obvious as in the cases of the United States and United Kingdom, but changes took place in the position of FBOs in various European countries during the same period (Dierckx, Vranken, & Kerstens, 2009; Göçmen, 2011).

In relation to their changing position in social welfare and the rise of policy interest in nonstate social welfare providers, FBOs have become a new area of interest to scholars of social policy, the voluntary sector, and urban studies. For example, in the past decade there has been an increasing number of studies on the capability and effectiveness of FBOs in areas such as social work, social capital, and social cohesion (Campbell & Glunt, 2006; Chapman & Lowndes, 2008; Cnaan, Boddie, Handy, Yancey, & Scheinder, 2002; Cnaan, Wineburg, & Boddie, 1999; Dinham, 2009; Dinham, Furbey, & Lowndes, 2009; Fridolfsson, Elander, Granberg, & Amma, 2009; Harris, Halfpenny, & Rochester, 2003; Harris, Hutchison, & Cairns, 2005; Jürgen Friedrichs & Klöckner, 2009; Monsma, 2000; Montagne-Villette, Hardill, & Lebeau, 2011; Rochester, Bissett, & Singh, 2007; Schneider, 1999; Sider & Unruh, 2004; Smith, 2004; Unruh & Sider, 2005). These studies address the practicality of organizations in raising the well-being of citizens, solving social problems, or contributing to

social integration and cohesion. However, this growing literature does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the reasons behind the changing position of FBOs in social welfare in various countries. This article aims to fill this gap by focusing on the historical dynamics of institutional change behind the changing position of FBOs in social welfare.

In this article, I focus on four countries (France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) to present the existing variety in the realm of European social welfare. The United Kingdom and Sweden are cases in which there is growing policy interest in FBOs, accompanied by a change in their position in social welfare. In comparison, the cases of France and Germany are cases with relative stability with regard to the position and role of FBOs. By taking a historical institutional approach, and using process tracing as the main methodology, the article studies change in the position of FBOs in each of the countries as an outcome of changes in the institutionalized position of the voluntary sector and/or religion in social welfare. A historical institutional analysis generally begins with an empirically observed phenomenon and systematically analyses concrete historical processes over time to explain this phenomenon (Mahoney, 2004, 2007; Thelen, 1999). Process tracing, as a method, analyses developmental pathways by suggesting that "institutions continue to evolve in response to changing environmental conditions and ongoing political maneuvering but in ways that are constrained by past trajectories" (Thelen, 1999, p. 387). The empirically observed phenomenon in our case is the changing positions of FBOs in social welfare, and the aim is to explain these changes by tracing the processes of institutional change in state–society and state–religion relations since the time of national revolutions.

Religion, Social Policy, and Faith-based Organizations

Scholars of welfare mixes approach suggest that many European welfare states are going through a period of transformation in which the voluntary sector has become an important provider in social welfare since the 1980s (Abrahamson, 1999; Baines, Hardill, & Wilson, 2011; Bode, 2006; Evers & Wintersberger, 1988; Hogg & Baines, 2011). Recent studies on welfare governance also put emphasis on the changing role of private and voluntary providers in social policy (Bode, 2006; Daly, 2003). However neither of these literatures pays special attention to religious or faith-based organizations. On the other hand, the very few studies that question the reasons behind the increasing interest in FBOs argue that welfare state retrenchments or restructuring are the main reasons for this rise. They point at macro mechanisms such as globalization, neoliberalization, and socioeconomic changes for the transformations in the configurations of European welfare states (Dierckx et al., 2009). I agree that the contemporary rise in the interest in FBOs is surely an outcome of the neoliberal turn of the European welfare states; yet, as the existing variety in the literature suggests, this explanation does not help us understand what is happening in single countries. The neoliberal turn of the welfare state refers to the transformations of social welfare as a result of increasing disorganization. Disorganization, as described by Streeck, "denotes a decline in centralized control and authoritative coordination in favor of dispersed competition

and spontaneous, market-like aggregation of competing preferences and individualized decisions" (Streeck, 2009, p. 96). In very general terms, in the realm of social welfare these transformations triggered changes in the established positions of the state, the voluntary sector, and the private sectors in social welfare provisioning. What is missing in the existing studies on FBOs is an attention to how existing institutional structures in different countries filter these dynamics of neoliberalism. Following a historical-institutionalist approach (Schmidt, 2009; Streeck, 2011; Streeck & Kathleen, 2005), to explain change or stability in the contemporary position of FBOs in various welfare states, one needs to study their historical roots and the existing institutional structures that facilitate or hinder the presence of religious institutions in social welfare.

The organizations that are labeled as FBOs today can be seen as the historical continuation of religious charities rooted in the dominant Christian traditions of these countries and non-Christian FBOs created to serve their coreligionists, such as Jewish social welfare organizations and systems. Religiously motivated forms of provisioning by churches, congregations, and charity organizations were important during the period before the establishment of the modern welfare state. The role of religion in social welfare was challenged at the end of the 19th century as a result of the rise of the nation-state (Gould, 1999). The building of nation-states in this century resulted in direct competition between national governments and churches for the hearts and minds of people (Morgan, 2002, p. 124). Catholic Europe in particular was the stage for the fiercest of these conflicts. As Kalyvas demonstrates,

> Catholic Europe became the scene of unbridgeable conflict between those who are determined to limit or abolish the ancient church's rights and influence and those who saw damnation, temporal as well as eternal, in a divorcement of church and state. (Kalyvas, 1996, p. 172)

The society-specific characteristic of the resolution of the conflict is an important but generally ignored factor in explaining the existing variety in welfare states.

The role of the state–church cleavage in shaping the European welfare states has been neglected until recently. Manow and Van Kersbergen (2009) point out the functionalist ways in which the welfare state researchers (Berger, 1990; Flora, 1983; Heidenheimer, 1983) made a causal connection between the decline of religion on one hand and the rise of Protestantism and the development of the welfare state on the other (Manow & Van Kersbergen, 2009, pp. 13-17). Nevertheless, they also argue that these theories, despite their interpretation of religion as a structural variable, were important in making a first attempt to emphasize religious cleavages in a society as a factor in defining the type of welfare state. In their edited volume on *Religion, Class Coalitions and the Welfare State* (2009) Manow and Van Kersbergen provide a historical answer to the variety of welfare states by emphasizing that the state–church cleavage has been as important as the capital–labor cleavage in the formation of different welfare states in Europe. In addition to being a decisive factor for the types of welfare states, the society-specific characteristic of how this conflict was resolved in

the early 20th century has also been crucial in defining the fate of religious institutions in each welfare state. In countries where the state–religion conflict has been resolved in the victory of the state, religion was either completely excluded from social welfare or its presence was significantly curtailed. In contrast, in the countries where there was no conflict, or a peaceful resolution of this conflict was possible, religion became an institutionalized partner of social welfare provisioning.

Following a historical institutionalist approach in light of the recent literature on religion and the welfare state, the first variable that needs to be studied is the *institutionalization of religion* in each nation state, which focuses on society-specific trajectories of change in state–religion relationships. Here, I follow scholars who point to the period of nation-state formation in which the historical conflict between the state and the church emerged in terms of social welfare provisions (Morgan, 2002, Van Kersbergen & Manow, 2009). In this regard, I first look at whether religion has ever been a cleavage in these countries and whether and how the position of religion has changed in the political sphere, especially during the post-1980s. In addition to the state–religion establishment, the *institutionalization of the voluntary sector* in each welfare state is the second variable necessary for a fuller understanding of the contemporary change or stability in the position of FBOs. As demonstrated by the literatures on welfare mixes, voluntary organizations, and the third sector, the roles voluntary organizations historically played in many welfare states are different. Therefore this second variable focuses on the society-specific trajectories of change in state–society relationships and on the transformation of the role of the state regarding social welfare provision. The second variable is highly related to the first one, yet for the sake of analysis it will be discussed separately in this article.

Faith-based Organizations in the United Kingdom, Sweden, France, and Germany

The changing positions of FBOs in the social welfare realms of four European countries are analyzed in this section. As the study of the cases will demonstrate, the characteristics of change and the dynamics behind this change differ from one case to another. The case studies have been selected to present the existing variety in Europe both in terms of welfare regimes and state–religion relationships. The variety along the welfare regimes is defined on welfare typologies (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Ferrera, 1996). By focusing on various degrees of stratification and decommodification achieved by social policies, and different weights of state, market, and family in social policy, Esping-Andersen (1990) categorized welfare states in three main groups: liberal, corporatist-conservative, and social democratic/Scandinavian. Liberal welfare states with their modest social benefits based on means testing result in a minimum level of decommodification and order of stratification. Social rights are attached to class and status in the corporatist-conservative welfare states, and church and family play crucial roles. Finally, social democratic welfare states provide all the citizens with universal rights, which results in a crowding out of the market and family. The variety

along the state–religion relationships is defined based on other works in religion and politics literature (Barbier, 1995; Minkenberg, 2003; Robbers, 2005), on a scale between cooperation/nonseparation (liberal) and competition/separation (authoritarian). The four cases chosen for this study are the United Kingdom, a liberal welfare state, with a single state church; France, a conservative corporatist or a Southern European welfare state with a strict separation between state and religion; Germany, a conservative-corporatist welfare state with a dual state church; and Sweden, a Scandinavian welfare state with a single state church, which has been recently disestablished.

The main claim is that the changing position of FBOs in each country is contingent on the amount of change or stability in the institutionalized position of religion and the voluntary sector. Table 1 (below) summarizes the overall argument concerning the most significant institutional changes in one of these arenas as the reason behind relative stability or change in the position of FBOs in the selected countries. Sweden and the United Kingdom are the two cases where there is an increasing policy interest in FBOs accompanied by a change in their position in social welfare, whereas France and Germany are the cases with relative stability in the position of FBOs in social welfare and this position is not very pronounced.

Table 1. Factors Determining the Contemporary Position of FBOs in Social Welfare Arena.

Mechanism driving—change / Degree of change	Institutionalization of religion	Institutionalization of voluntary sector
Relative change	Sweden	United Kingdom
Relative stability	France	Germany

The Changing Position of the Voluntary Sector in the United Kingdom

In different classifications of varieties in state–church relations, the United Kingdom has been categorized as being nonlaicist by Barbier (1995), as a state church system by Robbers (2005), and as having a close relationship between state power and church by Minkenberg (2003). Historically, religious organizations worked in partnership with the state to provide for those in need in the United Kingdom. The nation state formation period saw no hostile relationship between the religious forces and the liberal ones as it had been the case in some continental welfare states like France. In contrast, religious forces have been part of the supporter groups for liberalization and, in exchange for this support, liberals assured programs for their religiously motivated supporters (Bentley, 1987, p. 15; Breuilly, 1992; De Ruggiero, 1959; Gould, 1999). This peaceful settlement in state–religion relations during the period of nation-state formation and the state's relatively tolerant approach toward different faiths resulted

in the establishment of a balance between religious and secular agencies in the early 20th century (McLeod, 1996). The evolution of the social policy sphere was also one of a gradual secularization and formalization of the voluntary organizations (Kendall & Knapp, 1993). The role of churches and other forms of religious organizations have not been institutionalized as main partners of social provision as it has been in the case in of Germany. Yet, they were also not excluded from social welfare as it has been in the case of France. As a result, the United Kingdom has kept alive its long tradition of charity as a support to the state provision of social welfare, up to the present day (Fraser, 1973; Jones, 2000; Kramer, 1981; Thane, 1978).

The increasing policy interest in FBOs in the last decades is an outcome of the major transformations taking place in the social welfare realm of the country. Emerging ideologies in the post-1980s gave increasing importance to individual freedoms and a lesser role to state intervention in the economy. As the state redefined its new role in social welfare as a steerer of social welfare provision, voluntary associations moved from the periphery to the center (Billis & Harris, 1992; Harris et al., 2001; Johnson, 1992). The shifts in social welfare, encouraging moves away from the state as the primary agency for social insurance, mainly turned the focus to the voluntary sector as the oldest actor in social assistance. Different approaches emphasizing the responsibilities of citizens and the importance of having plural actors in social welfare gained significance. Scholars interpret the name change of the National Council of Social Service to the National Council for Voluntary Organizations in 1980 as signaling a major shift (Harris et al., 2001). The voluntary sector was no longer seen as complementary or supporting the state as the main provider, which had been the case in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. From the late 1970s onward, voluntary organizations became the main provider in many areas of social policy.

I interpret contemporary transformations in the welfare state as the main reason for the increasing policy interest in FBOs in the United Kingdom. Faith-based organizations such as churches and religious charities have always played an important role in social welfare provisioning in the United Kingdom. Yet in recent decades there has been a rise of political interest in them accompanied by a growth in their significance in shaping social policy. Scholars refer to the increasing engagement between local governments and health services and voluntary and community associations in the delivery of public services (Hogg & Baines). Similarly, scholars point to the growing cross-party interest in religious organizations in the United Kingdom, especially in the past two decades (Harris et al., 2003). The launch of the Conservative Party's social policy initiative "Renewing One Nation" was a groundbreaking event, mentioning faith groups as innovators in solving persistent social problems and creating "compassionate communities" (Harris et al., 2001). One can argue that since the 1980s a new social policy consensus has arisen, characterized by an emphasis on voluntary actors—especially religious ones—as one of the main providers of social welfare. Following the Conservative Party, the New Labour government of Tony Blair also showed great interest in the capacity of faith-based organizations in contributing to social welfare, providing social provision, and regenerating communities (Harris et al., 2003; Philpot, 2001).

The increasing interest in the competence of FBOs as partners in policy making and implementation should be assessed in light of neoliberal reforms. In a period when the welfare state experienced financial problems, existing FBO resources became attractive to the governments in power. Various scholars have pointed out how governments made use of these religious organizations to support their platform of social welfare and cohesion. In the words of Dinham and Lowndes,

> Since the mid-1990s and from 1997 in particular, governments have identified the potential for building on the traditional service role of faith bodies (for instance in education, housing, fostering and adaptation) and extending this into new areas (including urban and rural regeneration, community safety, childcare and health promotion). (Dinham & Lowndes, 2009, p. 5)

The potential of FBOs to support "hard-to-reach groups" and provide customer-tailored services has occasioned significant scholarly interest.

The contemporary voluntary sector in the United Kingdom is populated with FBOs associated with primary religions in the society. The Church of England occupies a symbolic position in contemporary FBOs scene in line with its historical position, whereas a variety of FBOs supported by the Catholic and Evangelical communities work to alleviate poverty and to provide food and shelter for the homeless. FBOs such as Christians Against Poverty, New Frontiers, The Salvation Army, Jesus Army, and Church Army are some of the main Evangelical ones that work in the areas of poverty, food provisioning, elderly care, child care, and homelessness. Some Catholic ones working in similar areas of social welfare are St. Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Children's Rescue Society, and St. Josephs Society. Apart from Christian FBOs, the number of local, national, and international FBOs supported by the Jewish community has also significantly increased after the 1980s (Harris et al., 2005). Some examples are Jewish Care and the Federation of Jewish Services.

The presence of culturally diverse migrant groups has also triggered a surge of new FBOs in the United Kingdom. Muslim FBOs belonging to regional and local networks, and mosques also gained importance as providers of social welfare. They cater to Muslim communities in different localities providing services such as education, employment, counseling advice, and asylum advice (Cloke, Williams, & Thomas, 2011). Local FBOs such as North London Muslim Housing Association (est. 1986); East London Mosque and Muslim Centre (est. in 1985 and 2004); the Muslim Welfare House (est. 1975) are some examples that specifically focus on the Muslim communities at different localities (Cloke, Williams, & Thomas, 2011). Other faith groups, such as Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, are also part of the diversity that marks the FBO sector in the United Kingdom. This multiplicity in the FBO sector demonstrates a strong tradition of charitable work in the United Kingdom.

The presence of FBOs in social welfare is not new in the United Kingdom. What is changing is their relations with the government and local authorities. Similar to other forms of voluntary associations, FBOs have been "encouraged to participate in policy consultations, to compete for governmental funding, to purchase service contracts

with local and health authorities, to boost the number of active volunteers in local communities and to provide innovative responses to intractable problems" (Harris et al., 2003, p. 95). Their services also expanded due to increasing funding available from central and local governments (Cloke et al., 2011). As the studies on the voluntary sector demonstrate, by the end of the 1980s, the state became the largest contributor of philanthropic action; 43% of the total funding of the top 200 funding charities came from local or national governments (Prochaska, 1998, p. 4).

In conclusion, in the United Kingdom, the rise of policy interest in FBOs is mainly an outcome of the transformations in social welfare in the post 1980s, which resulted in shifts in the roles of the state and voluntary associations in social welfare provisioning and which broadened the window of opportunity for the FBOs to undertake roles in social welfare.

The Transformation of the State–Religion Alliance in Sweden

Sweden represents one end of the scale concerning separation, openness, and the regulation of state–church relations in Europe, while France represents the opposite end (Minkenberg, 2003). The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden and the state remained one and indivisible for over three centuries, which resulted in the lack of conflict in the social policy sphere. The transfer of most of the social services—such as education, health, and care—from the Church to the state took place in the early stages of welfare state development. As Morgan argues, "the collaborative and relatively non-conflictual relationship between the established church and the state in Sweden, as in other Nordic countries precluded the formation of religious cleavages around religion" (Morgan, 2002, p. 132). The Church, despite having a prominent presence in the area of provisions in pre-20th century, could not play a significant role as an alternative to state action in the period after (Anderson, 2009). The Church of Sweden did not become a part of the voluntary sector, either; instead, the state had a strict control and administrative power on the church in assigning it a range of services in social welfare (Bäckström, Beckman, & Pettersson, 2004, p. 47). As a result, in comparison to state–church conflict or cooperation having an important shaping power in the social welfare arena in the cases of France and Germany, in the case of Sweden the lack of a cleavage on this axis resulted in the minor role of religion in social welfare. In consequence, the historical specificities of the state–church relations in Sweden resulted in the establishment of a Scandinavian welfare state that did not incorporate churches or religious voluntary organizations as social policy providers.

The unity of the state and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden came to an end on January 1, 2000. The Church of Sweden now has the same status as institutions of other beliefs in the country such as Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism. Since 1998, all of these communities have the right to register and get their share of church taxes collected by the state as a portion of income tax. Bäckström argues that

> During the period 1862-2000, the church has developed from being an official, unifying and integral part of society where it enjoyed a religious monopoly into a semi-official organization which competes with others in the sphere of beliefs and views of life, within what may be described as a deregulated, religious market economy. (Bäckström et al., 2004, p. 51)

This disestablishment of the state–church resulted in the liberalization of the authoritarian and regulative framework, which has dominated relations between the state, the Church, and citizens over centuries. Lundsröm and Wijkström define the period after the 1970s as one of the new social movements and a growing welfare mix in Sweden (Lundström & Wijkström, 1995). In consequence, the current situation is one where the Swedish state tries to maintain equal distance from all faith communities, but also "keen to keep some control at arm's length." (Fridolfsson et al., 2009). What we see here is a shift in the institutionalized relation between the state and the church to establish a more inclusive social structure for believers other than those from the Evangelical Lutheran church. I claim that the change in the institutionalization of religion is the main explanatory factor behind the changing position of FBOs in Sweden.

While the shift in state–religion relations has been a major one, there has been little change in the redistributive and universal characteristics of the Scandinavian welfare state. Unlike in the United Kingdom and Germany, the Swedish welfare state did not incorporate voluntary organizations into social welfare as social service providers. Instead, voluntary organizations have mainly played a role as democratic agents undertaking action in advocacy and representation (Klausen & Selle, 1996). The nonsocialist government between 1976 and 1982 saw rising interest in a potential role for the voluntary sector as a social provider. This resulted in an important legislative change introduced in the last decade: the agreement made between the government and voluntary organizations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, which resulted in the recognition of what is called "idea-based organizations." This included FBOs (Elander & Fridolfsson, 2011). The implementation of this agreement to recognize and reinforce the role of idea-based voluntary organizations in 2007 was the first step toward opening a space for FBOs in the social sphere. Following this, official registration of FBOs, the distribution of government grants, and assistance provided in collecting their membership fees can be seen as the evidence of rising interest in FBOs (Fridolfsson et al., 2009).

Contemporary FBOs in Sweden are organizations associated with major religions in the society. Due to the disestablishment of the state church, the status of the Church of Sweden has been equalized with that of other FBOs. This transformation in state–religion relations triggered an important change in the position of FBOs in Swedish social welfare. Currently, the Protestant-free churches and immigrant and non-Protestant faith communities such as Jewish (the Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities), Muslims (the Swedish Muslim Federation and the United Islamic Communities of Sweden), and Buddhists (the Buddhist Cooperative Council of Sweden) are the FBOs in Sweden (Elander & Fridolfsson, 2011). The main FBOs are registered as congregations. Currently there are around 40 of them rooted in different faith traditions entitled to financial support from the Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith

Communities (SST, 2012). Each congregation has many umbrella associations and local FBOs. Legislative changes that guarantee state recognition and financial support to associations of different faiths resulted in their increasing presence in social welfare. For example, the United Islamic Congregations in Sweden, established in 1974 with five member organizations, currently organizes 54 local FBOs with more than 500 member organizations (Elander & Fridolfsson, 2011, p. 43).

As research on FBOs in Sweden demonstrates, FBOs play crucial roles as political actors by pushing government action in social welfare, advocating citizens' rights, and bringing to the forefront important social issues related to social welfare (Elander & Fridolfsson, 2011). In addition to their political actions, most FBOs provide cash support, temporary housing, and food provisioning for people in extreme need and nonmaterial services either to help the beneficiaries access social welfare services from the local government, or to provide them with spiritual support (Elander & Fridolfsson, 2011, pp. 9-10). Research shows that cooperation between local governments and FBOs became a trend during the last decade—though limited to the larger cities (Fridolfsson et al., 2009, p. 181). The main sources of FBOs' funding are subsidies from local and central governments (Boli, 1991; Lundström, 1996).

The findings demonstrate that there have been ongoing changes both in the position of FBOs in social welfare provisioning and in the internal composition of the FBO sector in Sweden. Unlike the case of the United Kingdom, the catalyst for these changes in Sweden is a shift in institutionalized religion. The recent disestablishment of the state church and the ensuing legislation created an environment that facilitated and encouraged the establishment and growth of FBOs in Sweden.

The Steady Position of the Voluntary Sector in Germany

In classifications of state–church relations, Germany is generally placed halfway between France and the United Kingdom. While the French case is marked by a high degree of contradiction and separation and the British by nonseparation, Germany is classified as a system of common tasks (Robbers, 2005), and as semilaicist (Barbier, 1995). Germany, having been composed of the Protestant Kingdom of Prussia and the Catholic Empire of Austria, remained politically as well as religiously divided for centuries. The conflict between the two denominations—Catholicism and Protestantism—marked the political and social history of the country more than the conflict between the state and the churches. The solution was the systemic integration of churches into the social welfare system during the time of nation-state formation. Caritas and Diakonie, as the largest umbrella organizations of the German social welfare system, have been the most important examples of this division. These associations were already founded in the German Empire, and subsequently became umbrella associations in the early years of the Weimer Republic (Sachsse, 1996). The acceptance of both of these associations as counterparts by the state bridged religious division between Catholics and Protestants in German social welfare policy (Zimmer, 1999, p. 41). Although conflicts existed between these three main actors of social policy, a rupture of bonds never occurred as in France, for example.

Deutscher Caritas Verband (Catholic, est. 1897) and *Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Lutheran, est. 1833) are the representatives of two main Churches that have been the most important providers of social welfare for centuries. At present, they are still the largest actors in health services and social work. Caritas is the biggest employer in the social service sector with more than 6,000 centers and institutions and 520,000 professionals (Caritas, 2012). Similarly, Diakonie, consisting of 36 churches and more than 6,000 facilities, employs more than 450,000 people (Diakonie, 2012). The scope of these organizations includes health care, elderly care, centers for migrants, the homeless, the disabled, and rescue services. The main income of both of the organizations is self-earned income, which is highly regulated by the German social security system.

This pluralistic power setting and the absence of notable conflicts between the state and the main churches resulted in the rise of the corporatist structure of the welfare state, which included religious institutions as main providers in social policy. As Anheier suggests, "Organized religion, almost exclusively the Catholic and the Protestant Churches, maintain the largest and politically most protected presence in the third sector and are, historically, its most important part" (Anheier, 1990, p. 329). To safeguard the presence of lower level organizational structures in social provisioning, the Catholic Church developed the principle of subsidiarity in the first half of the 20th century. McIlroy explains the major characteristics of subsidiarity by quoting Pius XI, who proclaimed that "it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can achieve by their own initiative and give it to the community; decisions should be taken at the lowest level possible which is compatible with good government" (McIlroy, 2003, p. 739). The principle was included in most of the legislation introduced between 1950 and 1975, for example, the Social Code, the Federal Social Assistance Act, and the Youth Welfare Act, which resulted in the emergence of a highly protected, state-financed system of assistance delivery by autonomous nonprofit organizations. This legislative structure resulted in the establishment of a well-developed voluntary sector and of a cooperative structure between voluntary organizations and the state.

The institutionalized position of the voluntary sector in social welfare is quite stable in Germany. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the diversity of the voluntary sector (Evers & Strünck, 2002). The previous structure of social policy provision saw local governments and welfare associations under umbrella organizations as the main providers. After the 1990s, this situation changed as a result of the flourishing of self-help groups and their official recognition as service providers (Bönker & Wollmann, 1996, p. 454). The increasing religious diversity of the population has also made it harder for the state to adhere to the established social welfare system, which privileged the two denominations and their main umbrella organizations. From the 1990s onward, traditional welfare associations from the two denominations lost some of their privileges in the area of social provision. A reorganization of the corporatist structure of social welfare was inevitable to meet the needs of the increasing number of diverse groups. Until a couple of years ago, organizations involved in public welfare were obliged to belong to one of the six umbrella organizations to gain tax

exemptions or receive government funds. Today, public funding is no longer restricted to the main umbrella organizations. The recent abolishing of this rule created an environment of competition between new voluntary organizations, such as self-help groups and FBOs, and the older more traditional ones. This has resulted in a restructuring of the social services. Some scholars describe these changes as the replacement of the old corporatist structures with more pluralist ones (Bönker & Wollmann, 1996).

The Muslim community is the largest faith-based community after the Catholics and Protestants in Germany as a result of waves of migration after World War II. The largest FBOs of the Muslim faith were established after the 1980s. The Islamic Council (IR-est.1986), Central Council of Muslims (ZMD-est.1994), and the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religions (DITIB-est.1982) may be considered the leading umbrella organizations. The ZMD and IR run regional and local Islamic centers and associations, whereas the DITIB, established by the Turkish government, runs mosques and more than 800 associations in Germany. All of the Islamic FBOs of the umbrella organizations just mentioned provide social, cultural, educational, and religious services. They play important roles in helping the integration of their communities into Germany society. Social welfare services are part of their pursuits, but not the major ones due to the broad coverage of the German social welfare system. The main sources of funding for FBOs are government and EU subsidies, private donations, membership fees, income from property and welfare stamps, and income from closing liabilities (Friedrichs & Klöckner, 2011).

As the evidence suggests, voluntary organizations have long been fundamental partners in social welfare provisioning in Germany. The established constitutional positions of the Catholic and the Protestant churches are also still in place. Yet the well-established connections between the state and the umbrella organizations representing the main faiths are undergoing transformation as the state has begun to be interested in various faith organizations, especially the Muslim ones, to enable their integration into the system. Seen in this, Catholic and Protestant organizations are no longer the exclusive domain or privileged partners in social welfare; they have to compete with other religious groups to access public funds. These recent transformations have opened a space for increasing plurality of FBOs in Germany. Yet this is happening in the framework of the historical institutional structures that positioned voluntary associations as institutionalized partners in social welfare provisioning.

The Stability of the State–Religion Separation in France

France is a country characterized by laicism, that is, a strict separation between state and church. The roots of this strict separation can be traced back to 19th-century France. France in the 19th century is often presented as consisting of two conflicting worlds: one resolutely monarchist, proclerical, and reactionary and the other just as determinedly revolutionary, anticlerical, and republican (Morgan, 2002, p. 35). This major cleavage in the social and political life of the country resulted in a power struggle between Catholics and anticlericalists on who was to have the greater influence over state, community, and the family (Morgan, 2002, p. 38). Social welfare provision,

as one of the crucial areas for guaranteeing influence over society, was at the center of the secularization reforms of the early 20th century. In the postrevolution period and in the separation of the state and the church in 1905, the Catholic Church's social welfare activities were limited, its charitable organizations were closed down, and properties were nationalized (Archambault, 2001; Bahle, 2003). One of the main reasons for this was early replacement of the Church by the central government in hospitals, asylums, and schools. Palier and Manow name this process of secularization as "Consolidating the Nation through the 'Laïcisation de la Protection Sociale'; by giving examples of how the entire debates of social policy—such as schooling, child and family policy and social assistance—were dominated by the state–church cleavage" (Palier & Manow, 2009, pp. 150-151). This laicist tradition of the French welfare state, which stayed stable since the early 20th century to today, can be seen as the main reason hindering the rise of FBOs in France.

The second characteristic that defined French welfare state in addition to laicism was *etatism*. The ideal of solidarity emerged around the concept of nation resulted in rejection of any intermediary organizations between the state and its citizens. Rather than perceiving intermediary organizations as a sphere of citizen activism and an indicator of pluralism of democracy, the French had a historical mistrust toward voluntary associations. Archambault describes this rejection of any third party between the state and citizen as an outcome of the Rousseauian concept of state: "No one is allowed to incite citizens to have an intermediary interest-between their own and the state's, to separate them from the Nation by spirit of cooperation." (Archambault, 1993, p. 2). This tradition has continued into the post–World War II period. Centralization was one of the aims of the newly established welfare state. The newly established system of social welfare in 1945 excluded nonprofit organizations from managing institutions, such as hospitals, orphanages, old people's homes, and long-term emergency shelters (Ullman, 1998, p. 52). These organizations came under the sponsorship of the state and functioned as part of the state. The principle of subsidiarity that was crucial in organizing the social policy arena in Germany was not influential in France. As Archambault argues, the consequence of French *etatism* was "a reverse subsidiarity principle: the nonprofit sector, whether religious or secular, dealt with public concerns that the state neglected, outside the scope of state provision" (Archambault, 2001, p. 206).

It was only after the late 1970s and 1980s that the *etatist* political structures in France went through major transformations. In her study of the nonprofit sector in France, Archambault maintains that since 1965 there has been a rapid increase in the "associative" factor of the nonprofit sector (Archambault, 1993, p. 3). In Ullman's explanation, delegating some functions of social assistance to voluntary organizations was a part of an effort to democratize and expand social welfare structures (Ullman, 1998). When the Socialist Party came to power in the 1980s, two important changes in social policy enabled the growth of partnerships between the state, cooperatives, and foundations. The first policy change was the socialist government's Decentralization Law of 1982, which put an end to France's tradition of centralization (Moore, 2001). As an outcome of decentralization, a great number of social care tasks shifted from

central authorities to local departments and had a significant impact on the nonprofit sector. According to Bahle, this "renaissance of the non-profit sector" has resulted in a system of "local corporatism" in the area of social services in France since the mid-1980s (Bahle, 2003, p. 12). The second change was the introduction of the Minimum Income of the Poor Act (RIM) in 1989, which also paved the way for the increasing prominence of voluntary organizations. The act made the state the main provider of funds and resources, and made local government agencies and voluntary organizations the implementers. These steps taken to decentralize the French welfare state opened up the space for the development of voluntary organizations in the last decades.

In addition to the decentralization of the welfare state, legal changes in the laws regulating voluntary organizations also opened up a new window of opportunity for the FBOs. Scholars especially point out the legal changes introduced in 1981 that made the establishment of migrant associations easier (Montagne-Villette et al., 2011). These changes were crucial in facilitating the establishment of Islamic FBOs and independent mosques (Montagne-Villette et al., 2011). The cultural diversity of the voluntary sector increased significantly after the establishment of this law (Archambault, 2001). The state's approach toward religious institutions also changed in the last decades. The secretary general of *Secours Catholique*—the largest Catholic charity in France—recently disclosed the state's hostility toward his organization and other charities prior to the changes in the 1980s (Ullmann, 1998, p. 53).

The composition of the voluntary sector (especially in terms of cultural diversity) and its relations with the central and local governments changed as an outcome of the legislative reforms during the post-1980s period. Currently, secular voluntary associations such as *Secours Populaire* and *Restaux du Coeur* (est. 1983) fill an important gap in social welfare, especially in alleviating poverty and helping people in urgent situations. The most important faith-based social welfare provider is *Secours Catholique*, a Catholic charity organization established in 1946. The role of the organization in social welfare increased after 2008. It established partnerships with other institutions providing social services at the local level and also began to take part in the materialization of the R.S.A. (Solidarity Income of Activity; Barou, 2011). The Protestant churches working with the *Federation Entraide Protestante* (French Protestant Federation) represent the second largest religious community in France (*Federation Entraide Protestante* [FEP], 2012). The *Federation Entraide Protestante* and its member associations such as CIMADE, CAPS, and *Diaconat Protestant*, are active in helping the poor, the elderly, children, and the handicapped. They also support migrants and defend their human rights at the local level (Barou, 2011).

In comparison to the historical presence of Catholic and Protestant FBOs in France, the increasing number of Muslim FBOs is a new development. The French Council of Muslim Faith founded in 2003 is the official representative of all Muslim organizations in France. One of the important members of the Council is the Union of Islamic Organizations of France established in 1983, a federation of 15 organizations and has connections to more than 200 mosques in France. The union's objective is "to respond to religious, cultural, educational, social and humanitarian needs of the Muslims of France" (UOIF, 2012). *Secours Islamique de France* (est. 1992) is an important FBO

that provides support for the most vulnerable: the poor, the elderly, the homeless, and orphans (Islamique, 2012) As demonstrated by research done on Islamic charities, *Secours Islamique* works very closely with the state agencies in social welfare provisions, (Montagne-Villette et al., 2011, p. 413). Unlike in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Sweden, in France there is no specific classification of FBOs. Therefore in their relations with the state they are not considered as a specific group. Similar to any other voluntary association, therefore, FBOs can also apply for public funds from the *Fonds d'action sociale* as well as from local authorities for cultural and social activities, as long as their values are in line with the republican ones.

As Moore argues, "France has come full circle from banning nonprofit entities in 1791 to currently recognizing and working with social economy organizations to help deliver social welfare services" (Moore, 2001, p. 711). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to talk about a specific policy interest in FBOs, or a significant rise in their presence in the social welfare arena. I claim that the main reason behind the relative stability of the position of FBOs in the voluntary sector in general and the social welfare sphere in particular is the laïcist tradition in France, which encumbered the rise of religion in the public sphere.

Conclusion

This historical comparative study explores the mechanisms behind the relative stability or change in the position of FBOs in the social welfare realms of four European countries: France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. This analysis demonstrates that pointing out macro dynamics such as neoliberalization as bringing about the same changes in various welfare states does not provide us with an understanding of the existing variety across Europe. By drawing attention to the importance of established institutional structures in filtering the effects of macro-level shifts such as neoliberalization, the article demonstrates that the historical specificities of individual countries need to be taken into consideration to arrive at a better understanding of the current position of FBOs in the social welfare realm in each county. Diverse trajectories of institutional change in the role of voluntary sector and religion in different welfare states are defined as the two causal factors for the changing positions of FBOs in the social welfare.

The article's comparative part reveals that different trajectories of state–religion interaction and welfare state development have resulted in either marginalization or internalization of religious institutions in various welfare states. The historical analysis of the four cases, demonstrates that the contemporary position of FBOs in various welfare states can be explained in relation to either change or stability in the institutionalization of religion and the voluntary sector in their social welfare realms. In the case of the United Kingdom, the increasing policy interest in FBOs was triggered by the state's decision to encourage further participation of voluntary organizations in social policy. The changing role of the voluntary sector in social welfare in the post-1980s and the discursive and material support given to FBOs resulted in the growth of their social policy significance. In Sweden, the disentanglement of state–church unity

was the main factor creating space for the growth of various religious communities. Although the organization of social welfare provisioning remained quite stable, the liberalization of state–religion relations triggered the increasing presence of FBOs in the Swedish social welfare sector. In Germany, some changes have been introduced in the established position of the two denominations in the welfare state to respond to the increasing religious diversity of the society, resulting in the increasing diversity of FBOs in the voluntary sector. Yet the institutionalized position of FBOs in social welfare is relatively stable. Finally, in France, a process of decentralization and democratization in social welfare has been taking place in recent decades, which resulted in an increase in the role of both secular and faith-based associations in social provisioning. Nevertheless, the historical separation of church and state and the strict laicist tradition in France still prove to inhibit the rise of FBOs.

This article is an exploratory attempt to understand the contemporary changes in the position of FBOs in the social welfare realms of four European countries. Due to the broad temporal and spatial coverage, there are limitations to the explanatory power of the study for single countries. Yet the positive aspects of the comparative framework—highlighting new developments in social welfare governance and various institutional, political, and social dynamics behind the increasing significance of the voluntary sector in social welfare—are by far more important than the shortcomings. Different trajectories of relative change or continuity in the four case studies show the existing variety of the positions of FBOs in the social welfare realm as well as the historical and institutional reasons behind this variety. In-depth studies of the contemporary position of FBOs in single cases should be undertaken in further research.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the editor and three anonymous referees for their helpful comments and suggestions on the earlier versions of the article. I would like to thank both institutions for their support.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This article draws on research I have completed during my doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships at the Max Planck Institute for the Study Societies and Boğaziçi University Social Policy Forum.

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