The Praxis of Civil Society. Associational Life, the Politics of Civility, and Public affairs in the Weimar Republic

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Research interests

• Civil Society
  ◦ Civil society is an answer to the tension between private interest and the common good.

• International (cross-border) philanthropy

→ Weimar Republic: Paradigmatic case of the failure of a liberal democracy
Research Funding

- The Dickinson-Stone-Ilchman Fellowship for Graduate Education
- IU-OVPIA Free University of Berlin Exchange
- Rockefeller Archive Center Grant-in-aid
- Max Kade Institute Fellowship
Literature and methodology

Civil society studies, the failure of Weimar, and the praxis of civil society
Literature gaps

• Civil society studies
  ◦ Problem to bridge the gap between theoretical and empirical investigation of civil society

• Failure of the Weimar Republic
  ◦ Historical investigations of the collapse of the Weimar Republic are not informed by civil society theory
The Praxis of Civil Society

- **Public Sphere (Jürgen Habermas):** The civil society debate is concerned with the ways modern individuals (that is, economically and politically independent individuals) can participate in public affairs and still identify with the common good.

- **Civility (Edward Shils):** Civil society is an open public sphere outside state boundaries that, by institutionalizing and thus mediating between competing interests, allows individuals to participate in debates over the common good without being constrained by primordial (family, clan-based, or tribal) or sectarian ties.

- **The social function of conflict (Lewis Coser):** In order to effectively support democracy, civil society is based on and recognizes conflict.
Approach/Methodology

- Notion of “crisis” (Föllmer & Graf 2005; Graf 2010; Graf & Föllmer 2012)

- Intellectual history and in-between figures (Müller 2011)

- German School of Politics

- Ernst Jäckh circle
  - Periodization dates and democratization (Capoccia & Ziblatt 2010)

- (Heinrich von Gleichen, the June-Club, and the Political Course)
  - Asymmetric comparison (Kocka 1999)
## Sources

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<td>• Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage</td>
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Four arguments

1. Limits of a Tocquevillian notion of civil society.
   ✓ During World War One, voluntary associations were unable to bridge the socio-political conflicts that were fragmenting German society.

2. The "politics of civility" as the foundational block of civil society
   ✓ By providing practical knowledge, courses in public affairs could free Germans from the blinders of ideologies and instill in them an ethos that would help viewing the political enemy as an opponent with an equal right to participate in the political process.

3. Limits of international philanthropy
   ✓ Asymmetries developed between American ideals of democracy and the realities of the German political culture.

4. Weakness of civil society
   ✓ Civil society as the recognition of conflicts and differences paved the way to new concepts, which appeared able to overcome the social tensions of a modern society by emphasizing pre-political or extra-political notions of unity and homogeneity.
Tocqueville’s Limits

Associational life and sociability during World War One
1. All the usual trivial matters appear at once of little value, and the hidden life of the whole lifts itself in the high. Also our party disputes become meaningless as long as the state has to be defended. Now we have no time for self-righteousness and vanity. We are all one party, namely a sacred, determined nation. The confessions shake hands, class struggles are postponed, old wounds are forgotten, until we once again have time for internal disputes, unless by themselves they are swept away in the stream of the general experience. Now it is really: Germany, Germany above all, above all in the world!” Friedrich Naumann, “Der Krieg” (1914)

2. “The air seemed electrically charged. At the time, almost everyone was driven by a kind of natural force to the liberating exchange of ideas with like-minded.” (Paul M. Rühlmann 1928)

3. “In this room everyone is introduced to everyone.” (Minutes, December 2, 1915)

4. “to provide ... men of all ranks and professions with no party distinction the opportunity of an unrestrained intercourse, free of prejudices, and hence carry the spirit of the unity of 1914 in the years of peace” (German Society 1914).

5. “special interest of the individual, of the political parties, of the religious confessions, of the professions, ranks and classes improperly pushes back the sense of commonality and aggravate the communal work” (Free Patriotic Union).

6. “remained isolated in their scriptoria and offices and therefore without influence.” (1917)
1. “it is necessary to, so to say, outbid the zest for conquest fixated on Belgium. It is necessary to show a different image to the people’s fantasy, which is alluring enough to distract the thought of Belgium.” (Hans Delbrück to Rudolf von Valentini, June 6, 1917)

2. “It appeared not appropriate to involve the government in an official and clear way in the foundation of an association whose goals surpass the content of our current negotiations with Austria and Hungary” (Friedrich von Payer to Walter Schotte, July 15, 1918)

3. “members of nations that aim to destroy Germany and Germanness and have brought the terrible emergency upon our Fatherland” (Paul Graf Hoensbroech, Jan 1918)

4. “we again have among us sharp and profound party juxtapositions, and out of these contrasts has been born our Volksbund” (Friedrich Meinecke, November 1917)

5. “A state, which has to conduct a war with a mass army of 12 percent of the population, has also to base its domestic policies on the masses” (Friedrich Meinecke, November 22, 1917).

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### Radicalization and associational fragmentation

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<td>- Berlin Democratic Club</td>
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The Politics of Civility

The German School of Politics and Public Affairs
1. “the coming time lays ahead of us all like a wide fog, in which bright and dark areas wrestle. Such a palpitating fogginess has something beautiful and intoxicating, conjures hope, expectations, [and] duties in a strange greatness” (Friedrich Naumann 1918).

2. “Free self-activity and free cooperation is the solution of our days and the material needs of the coming times, in which the state will have all too little means for the material support of spiritual interests, make it doubly necessary that the willingness to make sacrifices and the voluntary activities of individual members of the nation create establishments and institutions dedicated to the higher education of German men and women” (Bill Drews 1921).
The School of Politics and the “Politics of Civility”

### The Politics of Civility

“Knowledge without will, must remain unproductive; will without knowledge, may become productive. A will that grows wild imbrutes, foams, destroys like a torrent; also the assassin’s misdeed refers to the “best will” [besten Willen], to the “best intention.” ... Then: even will needs and requires knowledge: ... A knowledge of facts, without illusions and sympathies, clear and hard, impartial and incorruptible, judicious and farsighted; free of the nonsense of slogans, free of the absurdity of prejudices, free of the anomaly and degeneracy of all “ism”; a knowledge of the relationships of events, of the connection of the present with the past and with the future” (Jäckh 1923).

### Issues

- The Politics of Civility and Überparteilichkeit
- Public affairs and objective knowledge
- Cooperation with state agencies

1. “In actual political life ... an opponent ... is degraded into a caricature in our propaganda, and is divested of all that is living in him. What is needed is a chivalrous attitude, and it is particularly called for in the political life of the present day. For the parliamentary system is senseless and barren of results unless the opposition is recognized from inner conviction and equal rights are accorded to it” (Haas 1927).

2. “attitude of correct distance,” which is “the inner freedom ... is nothing else than the freedom I have won toward myself, my ideas, and my passion.” (Haas 1927).

3. “The calm, objective debate will be the best way to distinguish positive and arguable arguments from mere ill-considered moods and perceptions, on which to a large extent is based their [the enemies of the democratic state] cool attitude. To prepare such an arena for the peaceful competition of opinions and to create through this competition new commonalities between us and those still hesitant and vacillating, this I consider the practical goal of our conference” (Meinecke 1926).

4. “the position of the responsible citizen who stands at the center of the stream of events and is called to act” vs. “the distance of survey-like scientific observations” (DHfP WS 20/21).

5. “the education of men and women who are willing and able to judge objectively [and] act bravely wherever work and social duty may place them” (Heuss 1921).
Trans-national Philanthropy

Rockefeller philanthropic institutions, national internationalism, and research
# U.S. Philanthropic Institutions

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<td>Foundations and the institutional matrix (Zunz 1998).</td>
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Internationalism and research

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<td>• National internationalism.</td>
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<td>◦ The French Ecole Libre</td>
<td>◦ ”It must be stressed that the establishment of the “Academic Department” would not have been possible without the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, .... Precisely for this department, however, expenditures accrue from faculties’ payroll ... and extra expenses, which amount to the Rockefeller Foundation’s contribution over the past two years” (DHFP 1927/28).</td>
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<td>◦ Europe’s interconnectedness and the “New Germany” (Ernst Jäckh).</td>
<td>◦ Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>◦ Cultural policy as cultural diplomacy (Carl H. Becker).</td>
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<td>◦ ”an important tool for the restoration of the German state” (Heuss 1921) and Internationalism as “means” (Haas 1931)</td>
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The Limits of Civility

Party Politics, Philanthropy, and Public Funds
Philanthropy, party politics, and bi-partisanship

- “After the collapse [of 1918], the establishment of this School was regarded as a valuable experiment for which a number of private individuals provided considerable resources. With the success of the experiment, the usual opinion developed in the circles that had financially supported the School that it would be now the task of Reich and state [that is, Prussia] to take over the expenses of the institution” (DHfP 1928).

- Philanthropy and Public funds

- Board of Trustees

- Bi-partisanship and the PK
  - (Research and foreign affairs)

- (Abraham Lincoln Foundation, Stresemann Memorial Foundation, Peace Academy)
The Withering of Civil Society

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<td>• Überparteilichkeit as equal presence of (or distance from) political parties</td>
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<td>• Art. 49 and the Reich President</td>
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<td>• “eliminate” parliamentary democracy “for a short time” in order to resist the combined pressures of National Socialism and bolshevism (Jäckh 1932).</td>
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<td>• “there is the fact that the political situation has so developed that we have now to win over and convince only one more political party, viz. the National Socialists. We have been successful to date in convincing each party [sic] as it came into power of the scientific importance of our work. We shall be equally successful with the Hitler Party if we can work with concentrated power” (Jäckh 1933).</td>
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<td>• “independently on whether this Germany is called a first, second, or third one, I am decided even now to serve our common Fatherland and the German nation” (Jäckh 1933).</td>
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1. “Education by facts and responsibility to a new spirit is a characteristic feature of the majority in the new Germany, among leaders and among the people” (Jäckh 1927).

2. “The ‘deed’ ... loses its suggestive power if entombed in manifests and speeches, in statutes and brochures” (Heuss 1926).

3. “conservative” in the sense of “a government aiming at conserving, consolidating, fortifying the existing state, the republic” (Jäckh 1932).

4. a choice between “the non-working Democratic Parliament and the still unshaken Democratic authority of the President-elect” (Wolfers 1932)
Conclusions

• Praxis of civil society (or civil society in action)

• Paradoxical modernity of civil society

• The limits of civil society: “social homogeneity” or “us-consciousness”

• Militant Democracy

• Internationalism and transnational philanthropy
Future research direction

Conclusions and research outputs
Research directions

- **Articles under review**
  2) "The Paradoxical Modernity of Civil Society: the Weimar Republic, Democracy, and Social Homogeneity. (Voluntarism)

- **Philanthropy for International Peace: Edwin Ginn and Andrew Carnegie**
  - 2011 ARNOVA Conference, Toronto (Canada)

- **Two articles on Ernst Jükh**
  1) The "Organizer": Ernst Jükh and associational life in war, republic, and exile. (German Politics and Society)
  2) Conceptualizing Global Civil Society: Nationalist goals of International Studies Programs. (*International Studies Review*)

- **Revising dissertation in a book**
  - Broaden the perspective to include an analysis of Robert Bosch’s philanthropy.

- **New contemporary book project**
  - 2008 and 2010 ISPR International Conferences.
  - *Voluntas, vol. 24, no. 2 (2013).*