Hybridity as the ‘latest state of the art’ within third sector research?

Christina Rentzsch, M.A.

Paper presented at the 4th ECPR Graduate Conference
Bremen, Germany, 4-6 July 2012

Work in progress (first draft, comments very welcomed)
Please do not cite without permission

ABSTRACT

Changing environments of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and the trend towards hybridity within third sector research is the focal point of this paper and presents the background of my dissertational thesis. The paper brings together different thoughts on hybridity and raises questions concerning the specific challenges NPOs are increasingly facing. The paper also offers a positive perspective on the concept of hybridity and wants to highlight the chances that are hybrid organizations inherent.

I would like to thank Steven Rathgeb Smith for his insights and discussion about hybridity and hybrid organizations during a workshop he conducted on hybridity and innovation at the University of Münster in June 2012.

1 Christina Rentzsch, PhD student at the Graduate School of Politics, University of Münster (Institute of Political Science). Scharnhorstraße 100, 48151 Münster, Germany. Email: christina.rentzsch@uni-muenster.de
1. Introduction

1.1 Changing environments for the third sector and NPOs in Germany

At the macro level there exists next to the state and the market a third, societal sphere that acts according to an own specific logic: the third sector. Particularly with regard to the relationships between the third and the other two sectors one has to indicate that the third sector cannot be construed as a static and clear-cut entity. Conversely, one has to view it as a “dynamic, continuously changing social process that cannot be conceptualized in isolation, but rather dependent on the dissociation of the other two sectors” (Birkhölzer 2005: 72, translation by author).

Common features of all third sector organizations are for instance a distinctive legal structure, their not-for-profit orientation or their independence from the state sector. Another trait that is common to all of them is their involvement with civil society, particularly the high proportion of volunteers and volunteer work (Zimmer 2007: 180). The logic of action for third sector organizations is based on the principle of solidarity, even though it is not precisely clear, how this principle can be identified (Birkhölzer et al. 2005: 10).

As opposed to that, state ascribed organizations are characterized by a logic of action that is oriented at the production of welfare services whereas the market’s logic of action is profit-oriented. Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are ascribed to the third sector and are multifunctionally aligned, because they fulfill various functions. They operate in different contexts, a feature that is specific for them (Zimmer/Priller 2005: 20ff.). Besides the state, market and families NPOs appear as autonomous actors within the political system, specifically in the field of welfare production, such as childcare or home care of the sick and elderly. Furthermore, NPOs take over the task of advocacy: As a voice for individuals or groups they bundle interests and articulate them to third parties. Only through this advocacy function (Jenkins 2006) are NPOs able to raise attention to underrepresented interests as well as raise the awareness of decision makers. Finally,

---

2 Because the differentiation between the three sectors is more of analytical nature the term intermediate sector (Evers 1995), voluntary sector, philanthropic sector and others are used. Especially the term intermediate sector expresses the idea that there do not exist static sectorial boundaries between the three sectors and that this area can be characterized as extremely permeable. For this paper the term third sectors is going to be used, since it represents the most common term which premises are widely known (cf. Brandsen et al. 2005:750).
they represent a place for social integration and by that occupy the role of “an intermediary between individuals and society” (Zimmer/Priller 2005: 23, translation by author).

With regard to their multifunctional orientation another feature of NPOs is their common public interest, which is particularly in Germany historically founded by the affinity to the state (Anheier 1998: 351f.; Anheier/Priller et al. 1997: 20f.; Liebig/Rauschenbach 2010: 261f.). Common public interest however is only one of the three principles that are historically immanent in the German third sector and that are still guaranteed until today; the remaining two being self-administration and subsidiarity. Whereas the principle of self-administration strengthens the autonomous character of NPOs, the principle of subsidiary describes the fact that “the state only takes over the functions that the private sector cannot take over” (Anheier 1998: 357, translation by author). This policy has been established with special regard to the production of welfare services, which is why the six biggest welfare organizations benefit from an extraordinary, economic position (Anheier/Priller et al. 1997: 21). In other NPOs, for instance from the fields of culture or sport, the principle of subsidiarity does not apply, therefore one can speak of a de facto bisection of the third sector (Zimmer 1997: 78ff.).

Besides all these above mentioned specifics, there are other characteristics NPOs have, that differentiate them from for-profit organizations or state institutions. That brings certain consequences along and gives NPOs a special position. Specifically, the division in full-time paid and volunteer staff (von Eckardstein/Zauner 2007: 274) as well as a combination of different financial resources (Littich 2007: 329) are distinctive characteristics that directly influence the organization’s work. Based on these specific features NPOs face specific challenges (Horak/Heimerl 2007: 169f.): As mentioned before NPOs combine various forms of funding, typically membership fees, donations or public money (taxes). As an immediate result they are faced with an intensified pressure of legitimation towards their sponsors, who want be notified of the organization’s expenditures. The consequences that derive from that are the submission to norms of efficiency, the conduct of evaluations or monitoring processes, which frame ad structure in turn the organization’s work.
Finally, features of civil society are a solid part within third sector organizations as well. These organizations are seen essentially as the type of organization in which the concept of civil society is manifested. This development becomes obvious considering the increasing relevance of volunteer work (Liebig/Rauschenbach 2010: 265). The division of the staff structure in full-time paid and volunteer workers becomes increasingly problematic: on the one hand NPOs rely on volunteers and their work contribution. They also have become part of their organizational culture. On the other hand regular volunteer work in general has become less appealing to people. As a consequence, a competition for the fewer volunteers has started among the NPOs.

Another problem NPOs are confronted with is their capacity to perpetuate the organization's work in the face of decreasing public funding as a consequence of a worsening financial situation of the state and local authorities. Therefore they are not only facing changing external framework conditions but also a reframing from inside takes place “that find its expression in a modification of the work portfolio, the organizational identity and the administrative routines” (Zimmer/Priller 1997: 252, translation by author). As a consequence NPOs have to look for new funding strategies and resources and integrate them in the organizational structure.

All things considered it becomes obvious that the environment of NPOs is not just changing; a strong drift towards the market and its strategies can be identified. This market orientation seems to result in a growing professionalization of the organizations: efficiency, competition, rivalry and cost reduction are modern characteristics of ‘new public management’ that force NPOs increasingly into the market (Evers/Zimmer 2010: 9). Another aspect of this trend appears to be a more professionalized communication: The organization’s ideas and ideologies are marketed in an active and communicative way in order to cope with citizen’s decreasing interest and commitment of volunteer work.

Besides the intra-organizational adoption of economic principles NPOs also starts to behave as autonomous market actor. Especially within the social service system in Germany this development appears. In respect of that NPOs are asked to develop and establish (new) strategies how to deal with these challenges, in order being able to position themselves strategically as independent actors in an environment of competition.
1.2 Hybridity as a logical consequence of changing environments for NPOs?

As described above, NPOs can be identified as a specific type of organization for them traditional settings have continuously changed and will keep changing in the future (Smith 2010: 1 f.). Because of their organizational characteristics they face particular challenges and have, as a consequence, to establish specific strategies in order to deal with these.

That directs the focus to the basic question of this paper, namely whether the concept of hybridity and furthermore the emergence of hybrid organizations can be seen as a consequence of generally changing settings for NPOs. The meaning of hybridity in this context is the combination of different organizational principles that originally can be assigned predominantly to one of the other two sectors, the ‘state’ and the ‘market’, but are now congregated in another type of organization (Evers/Ewert 2010: 103). With regard to changing settings for NPOs hybridization can be seen “as a strategic management tool” that “represents a reaction to NPM” (Smith 2010: 2). Particularly the state’s and market’s failure to resolve current problems lets new or adjusted organized actors appear on the screen (Zimmer 2007: 188). Hybrid organizations can be one of them.

Secondly, hybridity can be conceptualized not only as a consequence of changing environments that NPOs and organizations of the third sector have to react and adapt to. Furthermore hybrid structures can be seen as a specific characteristic of NPOs that allows them to handle changing conditions even better than state or market sector organizations. Especially the essential combination of different organizational principles proves to be advantageous and allows them to react more flexible and without being tied to one specific logic of action. Thus, hybrid structures seem to present a positive asset for NPOs and organizations of the third sector.

The following chapter will dwell on the concept of hybridity more in-depth and explain in what contexts hybridity can be conceptualized and which its implications are. Part 2 will have a closer look at the consequences as well as the advantages and disadvantages of hybridization that can be found in the literature. By doing so it will lead to part 3 which raises the question whether hybrid organizations are better prepared to deal with
change than organizations that only act on the basis of one logic. The last part will finally draw some conclusions and return to the basic question whether hybridity can be seen as the latest state of the art.

2. The concept of hybridity and its implications

The concept of hybridity is well known in a variety of disciplines, from linguistics, cultural studies and technology to biology. Although in each disciplinary context hybridity means something different in detail, a basic definition is common to all of them, “a mixture of essentially contradictory and conflicting elements” (Brandsen/Karré 2011: 828).

In this paper, the concept of hybridity applies to the meso, the organizational level. Hybridity, together with hybrid organizations, appears as a multidimensional concept that is discussed within different contexts: Whereas some works focus more on the aspects of public administration and link them to the concept of governance and new public management (“hybrid administration”, Christensen/Lægreid 2010: 407f.), others, such as authors having a background in organizational research, take hybrid intra-organizational structures on the meso level itself into consideration as will be described in the following part. Yet these present only the two main theoretical frameworks of conceptualizing hybridity. As Skelcher (2012) points out, the concept of hybridity can be conceived as well in the context of “economic, managerial, archetype, and institutional theory” (ibid. 5).

Here the question arises, whether and to what extent the concept of hybridization and hybrid organizations themselves essentially link both levels to each other: public administration is increasingly based on the idea of various actors working together so that hybridization can be understood as a specific concept of governance; this type of changing governance however is reflected in an increase of various forms of hybrid organizations that have been established in the field of public administration and, as I will explore later, especially in the third sector.

---

3 In the following the terms hybrids, hybridity or hybridization are used in an identically and with respect to the organizational concept.
This paper will take up on these two approaches and is going to examine in more detail what their basic implications and assumptions are. As it is going to be pointed out, a differentiation between these two fields will not be without difficulty, because the concept of hybridization lacks at some levels a clear-cut definition. Furthermore, the two research domains of public administration and the third sector overlap at many levels so that most aspects can be applied to both fields. However, from an analytical perspective it is possible to examine some useful aspects and tie them specifically to hybrid NPOs.

2.1 Hybridity and hybrid organizations in the context of public administration

With regard to public administration line if the concept, three main developments can be identified that laid ground for a continuous, increasing interest in the concept of hybridity and the emergence of hybrid organizations. Firstly, since the 1980s there have been various reforms of the public sector, mainly focusing on the invention of new public management structures (Brandsen/Karré 2011: 827). Secondly, because of the paradigmatic change “from government to governance” (Zimmer 2010: 203f.) old arrangements of governance were considered from a new perspective. And thirdly, the rise of a worldwide neoliberal perspective has led to a rethinking of the provision of social services and as a consequence brought the third sector to the fore (Zimmer 2010: 206). Therefore, “[o]ne could say that hybridity is a typical public administration phenomenon” (Brandsen et al. 2005b: 3) even though hybrid organizations only recently found their way into public administration research (Brandsen/Karré 2012: 827).

Talking about hybridity and hybrid organizations in the context of public administration means that “policy designs involve the interaction of government, business, civil society, and not-for-profits” (Skelcher 2012: 2). And additionally, “how these interactions are [organizational, C.R.] structured” (ibid: 3). Within the public administrative literature hybridity is usually linked to aspects of “organization, management and governance” (ibid: 3) and implies furthermore the perspective of a three sector model based on the sectors market, state and civil society (= third sector). Yet traditional mechanisms that have been linked to this model have continuously changed and resulted in the rise of hybrid organizations: While the market focused on the logic of competition and profit,
the state was essentially the main provider of social and welfare services whereas the third sector was associated with advocacy. Particularly, the relationship between the state and the third sector has changed in recent decades. The state and its institutions is not the main provider of social services anymore and transfer some of its own responsibility onto third sector organizations (Billies 2010: 29). A broader definition of hybridity has been established in public administration that understands it basically as an institutionalization resulting in organizational co-operations, such as public-private-partnerships and others. Hybrid organizations are therefore seen as “heterogeneous arrangements, characterized by mixtures of pure and incongruous origins, (ideal)types, “cultures,” “coordination mechanisms,” “rationalities,” or “action logics.” (Brandsen et al. 2005a: 750). Against this background it becomes explicit why the concept of hybridity raises new aspects such as “accountability, control, and legitimacy” (Brandsen/Karré 2012: 827).

Public administrative literature has mainly recurred to critical aspects of hybridity and hybrids: hybrid organizations are seen as a strategic “instrument of public policy” and can be designed “as an alternative of the traditional model of politically-controlled governance” (Skelcher 2012: 4). Through this shift old arrangements are challenged. Understanding hybridity as a positive development one could see that working together in a strategic network (public private partnerships are nothing else) could also result in support and discharge, for instance regarding the provision of social services or others such as “economic development activities and research and development programs” (Emmert/Crow 1987:1).

One gets the impression that literature on public administration indeed often recurs to the concept of hybridity but mainly focuses on how it changes organizations in a negative way instead of presenting the positive aspects of interpenetrating mechanisms. Also, there is no final consensus on how hybridity and hybrid organizations can be defined. Hybrids have to be seen in the context of their research domains because they generate individual implications and foci of interests.

2.2 Hybridity and hybrid organizations in the context of third sector research
As explained briefly in the previous chapter, hybrids have become a dominant focus within public administration research looking at specific aspects such as how hybrids alter traditional structures of governance or arrangements of public-private partnerships. Although there has been a great deal of empirical studies that supports the idea of hybrids being accepted as new forms of organizations in public management, a negative connotation based on the risks that are also implied by the term (Brandsen et al. 2005b: 5). The appearance of hybrid organizations is slightly dissimilar in the context of the third sector. However, both research areas agree on an increase of hybrid organizations.

Apart from the three main origins why hybrid organizations have emerged, Zimmer further suggests hybrids have become a focal point of research interest, because of the general failure of state’s and market’s ability for solving societal problems. Additionally, the emergence of hybrids proceeded differently in various countries. That development can be affiliated to the fact that the sectors state, market and third are based on different traditional interrelations. In Germany for instance NPOs are traditionally assigned to the state whereas, as the name already states, in the Anglo-American third sector research, the common differentiation runs along the continuum profit resp. non-profit (Badelt 2007: 5). These traditions have in turn influenced how hybrids are established (Brandsen/Karré 2011).

Hybridization in the third sector can by definition be described as a process of interconnecting different organizational principles that have originally been assigned to one of the three sectors but now congregate in one single organization (Evers/Ewert 2010: 103). Evers has applied this idea of hybrid organizations to the provision of social services (2005). His basic assumption is that social services are provided not only by the public sector but by a mix of public (state) and private actors as well as specific social welfare organizations and further organizations of the third sector. He also integrates private households and families in this “welfare mix” and by this takes into account that especially families are in a large part responsible for home care of elderly, children or disabled people (Evers/Rauch/Stitz 2002: 15ff.). He also points out that there have been powerful changes of three main traditional strands regarding the social welfare states in Europe that have finally lead towards the expansion of hybrids: firstly, the state has forfeited its dominant position in the system of social service provision; secondly, as a
consequence other mechanisms have taken the place of former governance principles which have become evident particularly through the growth of new public management instruments. Thirdly, the role of civil society, once a strong actor within the social service system, has been weakened, so that the third sector and its organizations had to rearrange and rethink traditional structures (Evers 2005: 739ff.).

Following this, hybridization in organizations is understood as process that takes place with different levels of intensity and can be observed on three dimensions: resources, goals and steering mechanisms. Whereas the mix of resources is often primarily understood as monetary funding (public, private or civic), it also includes volunteer work. The dimension of hybrid goals can refer either to more idealistic (such as equal access to social services), market related (such as efficiency aspects) or ‘societal based’ goals (such as improvement of living conditions for a specific interest group). Finally, the dimension of steering mechanisms takes the various actors involved on different levels into account (Evers/Rauch/Stitz: 21f.; Evers 2005: 742). These three dimensions together dissolve in the organization’s culture and style of action, depending on the type of organizations: Whereas in state based organizations the more bureaucratic and hierarchic style is typical, civil organizations are “less distant and professionalized” (ibid: 22, translation by author).

In addition to the three dimensions of hybridization Evers identified, Brandsen, van de Donk and Putters construed, based on earlier work of Zijderveld and Pestoff, the third sector itself as “hybrid domain” (2005: 751). That hybrid area is based on three “idealtypical or ‘pure’ domains of society” (ibid: 751) namely state, market and community and organizations located in this area therefore evolve basically as hybrid organizations. These organizations can be distinguished in four different types which have in common, that they act on the basis of multiple logics of action and are “in one way or another caring organizations, providing services or goods with a ‘dual’ public (collective) and private (individual) nature” (ibid: 751). This model demonstrates that the third sector and its organizations is more of an analytical frame that is not to be understood as an entity with cleat cut boundaries. Furthermore, as the model of Brandsen, van de Donk and Putters shows, not only the third sector but also the organizations that are assigned to it are basically fuzzy and difficult to grasp (ibid: 753).
This “fuzziness” can correspondingly be seen as an essential implication of the concept of hybridity and hybrid organizations.

Finally, Karré (2011) as well tries to cluster the different kinds of third sector organizations but on the particular “continuum between agency and enterprise” (ibid: 3). By that he tries to overcome the more traditional way of organizing hybrids within the range of two poles but on the basis of a single dimension. Instead Karré provides ten different sub-dimensions clustered in three groups that locate hybrids between these two poles: structure and activities, strategy and culture as well as governance and politics (Karré 2011: 3).

Third sector and public administration research differ not fundamentally. They complement each other, intertwine and conceptualize hybrids in a similar way. Yet differences between nations’ interpretations of hybridity have to be taken into account since they reflect the material differences in historical developments. For instance, third sector research in the US is based on the assumption that boundaries between sectors are still crucial whereas European researchers are in favor of the idea that they are more permeable. Based on the model of the European welfare state integrating third sector organizations in the service production is also widely spread. It is therefore understandable why hybridity in European research is seen more as a “cross-cutting” issue (Brandsen et al. 2005b: 6).

3. Discussion

Discussing the consequences that result from hybridization in third sector organizations and the question if hybrids are better prepared in solving societal problems basically depends on whether one takes on a negative or positive stance on hybridity. As Brandsen and Karré resume, “hybrid organizations are the road to disaster” (2011: 829). By that they refer to a recurring assumption in the literature: hybridization almost exclusively leads to negative consequences that organizations “suffer” (ibid.) from.
In the following I will therefore weigh the assets and drawbacks of hybridization that are dominant in the literature and discuss the question if hybrids are better prepared to face changing environments.

Whereas the sectors market and state have their own logics, the specific of third sector organizations is that they combine different elements (cf. ibid: 21). They are also characterized by „multifunctionality“ (cf. the figure of Zimmer/Priller 2007: 23) fulfilling not only one task but several. One can therefore assume that these organizations face special challenges.

Understanding hybridization as a process which is based on the idea that sector’s boundaries overlap continuously one can assume that this is going to have an internal impact for the organization, their mission, their funding or their goals (Zimmer 2007; Schulz 2010). Evers, Rauch und Stitz (2002) have stressed this connection by analyzing how hybridity impacted the general orientation of the organization.

Changing internal structures raise the question of external organizational consequences, such as re-arrangements of relationships to other sectors or a different public perception of the organization. Thus, hybridity simultaneously function internally as well as externally and therefore a double perception of hybridity can be identified, a differentiation seems to be necessary. Assumed is that hybridization is primarily to be seen as an intra-organizational process, Externally, organizations are influenced by explicit verbalized expectations of stakeholders (Anheier 1998: 351; Birkhölzer 2005: 72; Zimmer/Priller 2007). It might also be at this point that organizations develop the idea of a “necessity” to change their structures mostly autonomously (Liebig/ Rauschenbach 2010: 274).

But what consequences might that be in specific? Brandsen and Karré roughly identify three types of negative “risks” hybrid organizations are facing: financial, cultural and political risks (Brandsen/Karré 2011: 829ff.). By using the term “risk” it becomes evident, as mentioned before, that there does obviously exist a more negative view on hybridity in the literature. These “risks” seem to be ascribed to hybrid organizations by others and do not really represent consequences for the organization itself yet even more so for other actors.
However, the discussion of financial risks is concentrated on organizations that are state-funded. Two major points of criticism can be highlighted: firstly, in competition with private organizations (for instance in providing social services) they can benefit from cross-subsidization. Funding can also be used for commercial activities whereas for-profit organizations have to pass these costs on to the consumer. Also, it is assumed that non profit organization use state funding as a ‘fallback system’. They consider financial risks similar to private actors but simultaneously accept that failures have to be accounted for the state or the taxpayers. Both aspects are derived from “a neo-classical perspective” (ibid: 829) so that the ultimate result can only be the distortion of the market.

With regard to cultural risks the argumentation is also based on two aspects: hybridization leads to the loss of the organization’s ideology and general orientation since they get replaced “by a profit motive” (ibid: 830). The second argument is based on the idea that hybrid organizations only “remain stable if they have one dominant culture” (ibid: 830). Combining more than one culture would result in a destabilization of the organization per se. Specifically, with these two arguments one can anticipate that there exists a perspective that is characterized by prejudices and normative views. Not only has it remained unclear what the “profit motive” should encompass, it seems also difficult to decide what a pure form of organizational culture defines.

The third group of risks Brandsen and Karré extracted from the literature refers to political risks. Here, hybridization is basically made responsible for a “loss of control” of the political leaders of the organization that increasingly replaced by managers and management strategies.

All in all the impression is created, that hybridity in NPOs is exclusively linked to difficulties, complications and negative consequences. It appears to be interesting, that all aspects mentioned in Brandsen’s and Karré’s analysis usually apply and can be ascribed to organizations of the market sector. In particular the aspect of ‘the state has to offer public money that hybrid organizations are going to waste’ and the aspect of changing governance structures match the raising neoliberal perspective that has been observed for the last couple of decades.
Furthermore, one gets the impression that based on the analyzed arguments Brandsen and Karré found in the literature, hybridization emerges without having a chance of influencing and controlling this process. In this line of argument organizations seem to be at the mercy of hybridization developments without considering that they make individual decisions and establish them over a certain time horizon.

Further consequences of hybridization, as Smith points out, can be recognized. He sees the problem that hybrids might lose their connection to the ‘soul’ of the organization, namely to its members, volunteers and other stakeholders that are involved with them. When with hybridity several changes go along that are not comprehensible, members might lose trust in the organization and its mission. Smith therefore talks about the problem of a ‘mission drift’.

He also sees complications concerning dependency and leadership issues. Hybridity means combining different sectorial logics that might replace or re-arrange established structures. Moreover this process might lead to complications with the organization’s leaders and aspects such as what mission the organization wants to fulfill, which goals they want to pursue or how these are going to be communicated to the core of the organization become relevant. In general, as Smith states, hybrids can experience intra-organizational tensions that can be of different nature and bring up various consequences. But one can argue that the leadership issues are not specific to hybrid organizations per se, it can rather occur in every form of organization and bring similar complications to the table.

These negative arguments considered, one seems to be left answering the question whether hybrids are better prepared for dealing with changing environments with a clear “no”. I would like to argue in favor of hybrids and hybridization, nevertheless acknowledging arguments that highlight the challenges that come along with hybridization. As opposed to other scholars that criticize hybrids, the arguments I will get briefly into are generally based on a more positive attitude towards the concept of hybrid organizations.

Generally, hybrids are not primarily better in dealing with changing environments. But they are better prepared to react to changing contexts since they already have continuously learned to adapt to specific conditions. They have learned as well to use the advantages of different sectors to build a new sphere they can perform in. NPOs are
aware of the complications that occur with the process of hybridization; presuming the process of has been somewhat reflected. There might also be another differentiation necessary since in the discussion on hybridity there is no adequate distinction whether organizations have decided independently if they want to implement hybrid structures or if that process is imposed upon them by others.

However this decision has been made, hybridization can also be seen as chance. Drawing on other sector’s mechanisms offers the opportunity of building up networks and future partnerships. During this process NPOs can convince potentially new actors and stakeholders from their organization's mission, ideals and ideas and get them onboard for future support. The argument I would like to stress is that the process towards hybridization could also be understood as a general changing process that organizations underlie every now and then. Furthermore, this can be used by organizations to position themselves in another direction and to re-negotiate their ideas – internally as well as externally.

As some critics give the impression, hybrids are functioning only under a lot of pressure and tension; one can argue that this is likewise a normal situation in other organizations. The important dictate within change processes should be transparency towards everyone that is involved in the organization's mission. If an organization is honest about new developments and explains why decisions have been made, employees, volunteers and other stakeholders might be in favor of this and trust the organization’s leader.

4. Conclusion

This paper gave an overview of the different aspects of the concept of hybridity, the process of hybridization and hybrid organizations. It should have become clear that there is a growing literature on conceptional as well as empirical research, especially within the context of third sector research; yet the discussion about organizational hybridity and the process of hybridization at the macro level has just started. For instance, there should be further work on the definition of hybrid organizations. Up until today it is not conclusive, what exactly can be understood as a hybrid organization and what its opposite, a non-hybrid organization, would encompass. Additionally, when
hybridization is comprehended as a process, what constitutes the starting point for this process? Could there have been a pure form of an organization or a type of governance that now has become hybrid? (Skelcher, 2011: 2)

In that context a bunch of additional questions occur, that position the concept of hybridity in a broader perspective: How can the trend towards a market logic be described more precisely and what attributes to this trend? Here, in particular the self-understanding of NPOs plays a decisive role and whether NPOs define themselves increasingly as social entrepreneurs. If so, then it becomes relevant how a self-conception can influence individual organizational structures. Aspects of employment and working conditions appear in this context as well. The question is how the relation of forms of employment changes, such as full-time and paid work as opposed to volunteer work, precarious work, the relation of male and female employment etc. Also, which complications do employment modifications bring along for the functionality of NPOs? What are the consequences in turn for external stakeholders and for the organization's members? How do these changes shape existing but also future relationships with the organization's environment? And finally: to what extent are NPOs still able to fulfill their task of being a voice for certain interests and groups?

In the debate about an increasing professionalization of organizations, one may ask, what societal role third sector organizations are going to take on in the future and in what direction the relation between state, market and third sector is going to move. Since traditional mechanisms and logics of action cannot be ascribed to one single sector anymore co-operations between several sector actors are necessary. The process of hybridization is therefore going to move forward in the future and will increasingly concern issues of the distribution of power, governance and leadership (Bauer 1998: 53).

By raising these overarching questions I come back to the central question of this paper: hybrid organizations are the state of the art within third sector research. In a complex world hybridity is a logic consequence of changing environments and thus reflects contemporary organizational structures. Therefore further research developments should stress the opportunities and the positive aspects of the concept of hybridity, considering also the complications that might occur. In this perspective, there is no 'going beyond' the idea of hybrid organizations, at least for the foreseeable future.
References


Evers, Adalbert/Zimmer, Annette (2010): How do Third Sector Organizations Deal with Change?


2. Aufl. VS Verlag (GWV).