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Proposal

The Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation on Environmental Grant Makers and their Beneficiaries



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i. Summary

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the influence of monitoring and evaluation on the working process between environmental grant makers and their beneficiaries, with focus on financial giving. Guided by the assumption that monitoring and evaluation may lead to an increase in efficiency on the one hand but also to a deprivation of innovation on the other, the key question then is: what works adequately for whom in what circumstances? Since most scientific research analyzes the benefits for grant makers, beneficiaries too would come to be in the focus of the dissertation. Therefore, this research work will deal with the goals and interests of donors, the coping strategies of beneficiaries, and the impact monitoring and evaluation will have on their work.

Building on databases from Germany and the United States, and an additional online-survey an overview of environmental grant makers and their usage of monitoring and evaluation will first be given. In the following course of the dissertation, different types of monitoring and evaluation instruments will be analyzed for their impact on donors and beneficiaries in selected case studies.

By answering the key questions, an attempt is made in the dissertation to provide evidence-based knowledge for the stakeholders of civil society initiated and supported environmental projects. The results would be useful for creating monitoring and evaluation arrangements that work for the grant maker and the beneficiary in the context of the project. Furthermore, some statements as to what professionalization through monitoring and evaluation means for the nonprofit sector will be provided through analyzing interviews with donors and beneficiaries.

I. Introduction

During the last years, environmental issues and their accountability have gotten into the public eye. Nonprofit organizations, which depend on public or private support, are more and more under pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness and document their outcomes in order to continue securing monetary support for their projects. Carol Fitz-Gibbon described it as the “age of indicators” (Fitz-Gibbons 2002), Melinda Tuan as the “culture of measuring” (Tuan 2004) and Joanne Carman as the “accountability movement” (Carman 2009b). Foundations and grant making public charities, whether endowed or fundraising, also stressed the importance of accountability and performance measuring (Carman, 2009a, Anheier & Hawkes, 2009; Rueegg-Stuerm, Lang, & Schnieper, 2005). Therefore, monitoring and evaluation do belong to the evidence-based policy of these nonprofits and their strategic adjustment.

One of the key questions for the evidence-based policy in the last decades was “What works?” Different forms of monitoring and evaluation methods were developed to make deliverables more effective and efficient, that the question “what works?” seems no longer adequate. As Gert Biesta asserted for the educational sector, the question of what works is no longer applicable (Biesta, 2005). Therefore, in the last years the question “what works” was adjusted to the specific circumstances of the object to be evaluated. The realistic evaluation demonstrated that the question of “what works for whom in what circumstances” was more applicable (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

This dissertation deals with environmental grant makers in the nonprofit-sector and it focuses on payments for ecosystem service (PES). PES as a specific form of willingness to pay for ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, groundwater, and air quality or biodiversity is suited for the research through its inherent economic concept and the need for evaluation for the fulfillment of its contracts. Foundations and grant making public charities (in the latter case: environmental grant makers) are conducting more and more formal evaluations of their work (Ostrower, 2006). For the environmental sector, this means that the deliverables must be accountable. However, accountability may cause some problems for nonprofits and even more when they try to realize innovations because environmental services are not always easily accountable. How can the nice view of untouched habitats be measured? In addition, what belongs to accountability? Is the participation of stakeholders an indicator for good practice, or is the outcome alone that matters, especially for nonprofits?

However beyond the problem of accountability, there seems to be a lack of knowledge as well regarding the influence monitoring and evaluation have on the providers of services.

Therefore the research will focus on three critical questions: 1) what types of environmental grant makers exist and what forms of monitoring and evaluation instruments do they use? 2) what strategies do beneficiaries use to cope with the requirements of monitoring and evaluation, how do these influence their processes in the projects and how do they respond to the donors' view on evaluation? 3) what influences do monitoring and evaluation instruments have on the innovation potentials and what is the effect of the influence on the achievements of objectives in the nonprofit sector?

Following Campbell's laws (Campbell 1979), the hypothesis is that monitoring and evaluation causes the deprivation of innovation that can result in the corruption of the intrinsic motivations in the environmental nonprofit sector, if the process of providers is orientated on the evaluation guidelines and not on the goals of the project.

The dissertation should produce evidence-based knowledge for the further development of monitoring and evaluation for nonprofits and provide verifiable statements regarding non-required effects on the providers of services. In order to be able to make valid statements a comparative study between the United State and Germany will be performed. A comparison is necessary for gaining knowledge that is independent of the socio-cultural background. Even though Germany and the United States seem to be very similar, there are differences in their history of grant making, in their usage and acceptance of monitoring and evaluation, all of which lead to different perspectives.

II. State of the art

Since the early 1970s, civil society - also known as the third sector between government and economics (Etzioni, 1973) – reclaimed potentially growing attention within the scientific and political community in the national as well as international debates. Until this day, the definitions of the John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP) are still fundamental for research on the nonprofit sector (Salamon & Anheier, 1992a, 1992b, 1997, 1998). Following the definitions of Salamon and Anheier, the nonprofits will be defined in this dissertation as organizations that share five basic characteristics. Nonprofit organizations shall be formal, private, nonprofit-distributing, self-governing, and voluntary (Salamon & Anheier 1992a).

A PES scheme as will be analyzed in the case studies is defined as “a voluntary, conditional agreement between at least one “seller” and one “buyer” over a well defined environmental

service – or land use presumed to produce that service” (Wunder et al. 2009). According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), “ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from ecosystems” (MA, 2005). The MA distinguishes ecosystem services according to the following classification: (1) Provisioning services: (such as food, fiber, fuel etc.) (2) Regulating services (climate regulation, flood control etc.) (3) Cultural services (recreation, inspiration etc.) and (4) Supporting services (soil formation, primary production, etc.) (Cox & Searle 2009). In this dissertation, a PES scheme is focused on ecosystem services that do not have quantifiable market values and are most often viewed as common goods. Therefore, the dissertation will be focused on the ecosystem services listed above as (3) and (4) as they are named in the MA.

In view of foundations, it must be recognized that a lot of scientific literature on foundations especially on foundation law and practice does exist. However, there is a lack of literature on environmental foundations and the spectrum of foundations differs widely. Different terms are used from country to country and exact definitions sometimes do not even exist within one country. The literature on monitoring and evaluation mainly deals with economic institutions, but in the last years, a rise in literature on the accountability and evaluation of nonprofit organizations occurred. The next sections provide a view on the state of the art in this field.

1. Foundations and public charities in Germany and the United States

Germany and the United States are different in their understanding of civil society. Both countries have different traditions in grant making. While both nations had a similar development in philanthropy in the 19th century (Adam 2004), the post-World War Two West German society took a special path towards modernity (Anheier & Seibel 1997). This special path can be seen in the German welfare system. While the system of the United States can be defined as a liberal welfare state, the German can be seen as a conservative one (Esping-Andersen 1990). This means that the German society and therefore the nonprofit sector are far more state-dominated than in the United States. Therefore, the United States has a less developed social insurance system; philanthropy is more important for the social living and is claimed more by the society. While in the United States the term philanthropy means doing something good for the society and the disadvantaged, the term “Mäzenatentum” or patronage, which is widely used in Germany, stands for supporting something good with one’s own interests. These differences lead to a different understanding of the work by foundations in these two countries.

The term foundation itself is not fixed by law in Germany as in the United States. In the United States, charitable institutions can be founded as private foundations or public charities. Foundations are generally non-operating foundations, which are built as charitable trusts. In order to get tax relief for a charitable private foundation, it is necessary to devote the mission of the foundation to a charitable cause. The exempt purposes for the charitable status in the USA are set in the internal revenue code section 501(c)(3). Unlike public charities, foundations have to obtain their money from a single source. Public Charities on the other hand can receive their money from different sources. Since the term foundation is not given exclusively to independent foundations, some public charities also carry the name foundation.

There are about 99,000 foundations, corporate donors, and grant making public charities registered in the United States (foundationcenter.org 2009). About 5.7% or about 5,550 grant makers support environmental issues. Thereof, about 61.5% are non-operating independent foundations, 14.8% community foundations, 9.4% public charities, 5.7% company sponsored foundations, 5.5% corporate giving programs, and 3.3% operating foundations¹.

In Germany, foundation means a generic term for institutions under private or public law. The prototype of a foundation today is the incorporated foundation under civil law, which is the traditional instrument for donating money continually for public purposes. The German civil codes §§ 80 to 88 are the basis for foundations, but there are also specific laws in each federal state. The charitable status of a foundation is statutory in the German tax code §52 Abs. 2 AO.

Besides the incorporated foundation under civil law, community and familiar foundations, trusts, foundations under canon law and associations exist as well. Valid data in Germany is only available for incorporated foundations. In Germany, about 23,500 foundations are listed in the record of the Association of German Foundations (BDS, 2008). About 2,600 of them claim that they support the environment and animals. However, only about 1,500 foundations actually have their focus on the environment.

Due to the different legal systems and therefore variation in the definition of foundations, a common framework for sorting and defining foundations is needed. The European Foundation Center (EFC) suggested a definition that covers the majority of the foundations in Europe. According to this definition, foundations (1) “are separately-constituted nonprofit bodies with their own reliable source of income, usually but not exclusively from an

¹ Data for American grant makers for the proposal is under construction. It is based on 1200 out of 5600 grant makers.

endowment or capital”, (2) “have their own governing board” and (3) “use their financial resources for educational, health-related, social, research-oriented, cultural, or other public benefit purposes either by making grants to third parties or operating their own programs and projects” (EFC 2005). The U.S. Foundation Center defines “a foundation as an entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust under state law, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations or institutions or to individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes. [...]. The most common distinguishing characteristic of a private foundation is that its funds come from one source, be it an individual, a family, or a corporation”(foundationcenter.org 2009).

For a more specific definition with focus on structure and operations, the definition by Anheier, used in a comparative study of foundations (Anheier 2001) can be used. Anheier defined a foundation as an asset with five specific characteristics. According to this definition, a foundation (1) is a non membership-based organization with “some degree of internal organizational structure, relative persistence of goals, structure and activities, and meaningful organizational boundaries”, (2) is a private entity, which is “‘nongovernmental’ in the sense of being structurally separate from public agencies”, (3) is a self-governing entity with its own internal governing process, (4) is a nonprofit-distributing entity, which is not guided by commercial goals and considerations and (5) serves a public purpose whether charitable or tax-exempt in the relevant laws of a country. (Hopt et al., 2009b 3-4)

Tab1: Comparison of definitions

Author	EFC	FC	Anheier
Definition			
Own source of income	(X)	X	
Own governing board	X		X
Usage of resources for public benefit	X	X	X
Private non-governmental entity			X
Nonprofit-distributing entity			X

In addition to this definition, differentiating factors exist among foundations. Two differentiating factors exist based on the activities and founders. The different types of activities are e.g. grant making, operating, and mixed foundations. The different types of founders are e.g. individuals, corporations, and government-sponsored or government-created foundations. The community foundation is a special type of foundation. In community foundation, a mix of the other types of founders is possible.

A consolidated view of all these factors indicates that the main differences between foundations in Germany and the United States can be found in the financial endowments of the foundations and in the need for a governing board. While in the United States non-endowed fundraising institutions are subordinated under the term public charities, in Germany the term foundation makes no distinction between fundraising and endowed foundations. Therefore, in this dissertation the term environmental grant makers will be used to include public charities in the analysis. Public charities are important for two reasons. The first is that the inclusion of public charities allows the comparative analysis between Germany and the United States through the integration of all German foundations. The second reason is that there may be some important differences in monitoring and evaluation between endowed and fundraising foundations as well as public charities, which should not be excluded. The differences associated with the governing board, which is necessary in Germany but not in the United States does not seem to be relevant. According to the initial analysis of about 1/3 of the American data, about 80% of the independent foundations and public charities have their own governing board and only about 20% are managed by a trustee.

2. Monitoring and evaluation by environmental grant makers

Although there is a lack of literature regarding monitoring and evaluation by environmental grant makers and rarely literature on measured effectiveness in the nonprofit sector (Forbes, 1998, Benjamin, 2007), there is however extensive literature on governmental evaluation and governance (Williamson, 1979; Lindblom, 1977). The theories of monitoring and evaluation by economic and nonprofit organizations can build the theoretical background for the key questions of this dissertation.

The characteristics of third sector monitoring and evaluation was increasingly shaped by the emergence of attention to organizational performance and the quest for evidence-based knowledge regarding the investment of public money (Ellis, 2009; Carman, 2009b). There are three main theories for the “accountability movement”. The agency theory suggests that

founders, either government or foundations, and nonprofit organizations inherently have different goals, interests, and motivations. Hence, monitoring and evaluation are simply a part of a contract that needs to be agreed upon by the principal (donor) and the agent (beneficiary). The consequence of the agency theory is that both donors and beneficiaries must spend time and resources mitigating the gap between their interests through the implementation of monitoring and evaluation (Van Slyke, 2007, Fitz-Gibbons, 2002; Ferris & Graddy, 1994). The agency theory seems to fit the hypothesis of this dissertation that monitoring and evaluation cause a deprivation of innovation and can corrupt the intrinsic motivation and veer it towards Campbell's laws.

Contrary to the agency theory, the theory of stewardship suggests that donors and beneficiaries have the same goals, similar interests, and an intrinsic motivation for working together. From this perspective, monitoring and evaluation are exchange mechanisms for improving the performance and the efficiency of both the donor and the beneficiary. The information that results from monitoring and evaluation can help increase the knowledge of good practice and may turn into a long-term relationship with high performance (Van Slyke, 2007; Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). Therefore, the theory of stewardship can be seen as a lookout for what monitoring and evaluation can gain for the nonprofit sector.

The third theory for the performance-based accountability system is the institutional theory. According to the institutional theory the organization's structure is shaped by the environment. Normative pressures in the environment force organizations to use conventional standards for monitoring and evaluation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Therefore, institutional theory can help gain knowledge in the processes of implementing monitoring and evaluation in nonprofit organizations. In the last 15 years, it seemed that the management of institutions and companies were headed toward strategic and organizational innovation. Therefore, cooperative strategies and competing for standards seemed to be some of the guidelines for strategic management (Grant, 2005). Reports on outcomes and other types of performance information were initiated by governmental and economic organizations that had made a demand for it. Foundations and other professional associations in the nonprofit sector have adopted this practice and followed their lead (Walker & Grossman, 1998).

Beyond a descriptive, exchange, and controlling function, evaluation can also have a performative impact (Miller & Hopwood, 1994). According to Campbell's Laws for social indicators, the evaluation determines what is relevant and important, calls all the attention to the indicators of the evaluation, and leaves the lack of interest for all the things that will not

be measured. "The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor" (Campbell, 1976, 49). Therefore, evaluation means more than the production of knowledge. It may coordinate the activities of the evaluated.

Although there is a lot of literature on accountability in the third sector, there seems to be a lack in scientific literature regarding the use of controlling and monitoring instruments as well as the skepticism towards greater professionalization, and the dilemmas of costs and bureaucratization. Most foundations think it is a privilege not to be accountable but some foundations also "recognized that the lack of accountability allowed for inefficiency and ineffectiveness" (Leat 2007, p. 109). In a study of the Charities Evaluation Service, some of the perceived benefits of monitoring and evaluation for the beneficiaries in the UK are listed. The top three benefits reported in that study are: (1) Being clear about the benefits of their work, (2) Learning about what is working well/effective practice and (3) Improving the end result for beneficiaries (Ellis, 2009, 4).

However, there seem to be different forms of evidence for the beneficiaries. The question of monitoring and controlling can also be an antagonism for modern foundations. Foundations need better awareness of contingency, if they want to succeed in their business. Otherwise, foundations are also characterized through innovation and risk taking that often conflicts with accountability. In this case - at least - it is not a question of efficiency and effectiveness if the failure of a supported social project is indeed a failure for the foundation. Maybe it is already worth the foundation spending its money for the chance of a social project succeeding.

III. Research Design and Methods

Using the realist evaluation circle, the research design includes the collection of environmental grant maker data from the United States and Germany, explorative expert talks, and in-depth interviews with donors and beneficiaries. More specifically, I intend to test the following hypotheses:

! Environmental grant makers implement monitoring and evaluation instruments in their work for various reasons. The role of monitoring and evaluation has become significant.

! Beneficiaries have developed different strategies to cope with monitoring and evaluation. These strategies exert influence on their work.

! Monitoring and evaluation instruments have different forms of evidence for donors and beneficiaries. Donors intend to reach their aims more effectively, for beneficiaries this means a deprivation of innovation.

Research Questions, Evidence and Methods

Building upon the framework of realistic evaluation by Tilley and Pawson (1997) and a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods, I will test these hypotheses by answering the three questions posed at the beginning:

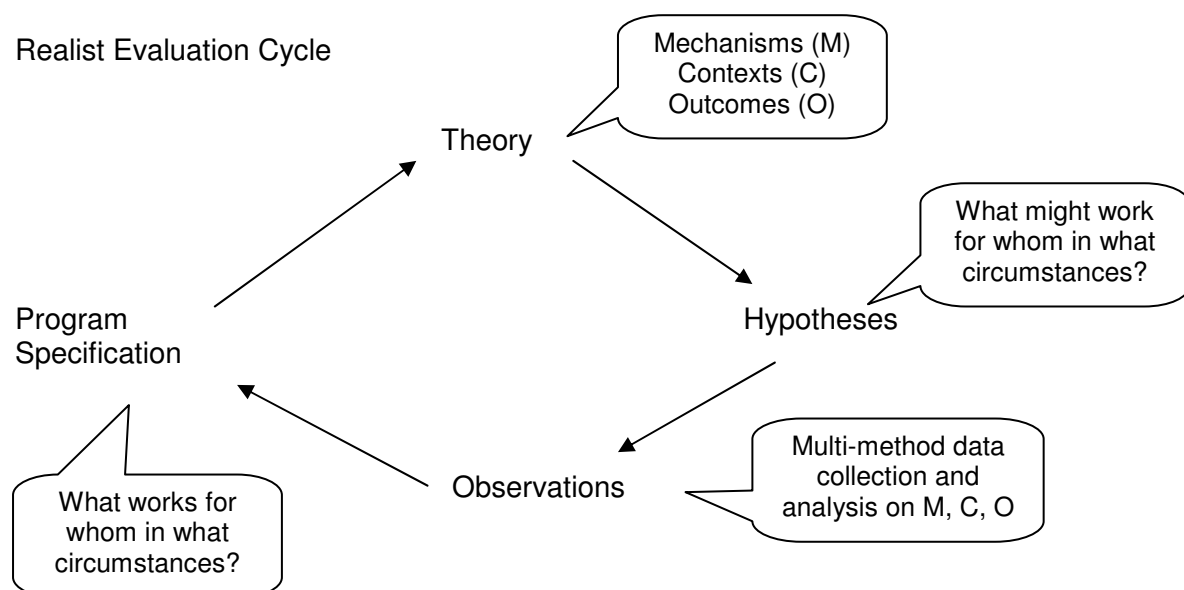
1) What types of environmental grant makers exist and what forms of monitoring and evaluation instruments do they use?

To answer this question the spectrum of environmental grant makers that use monitoring and controlling instruments will be listed. The list will be built through the analysis of the databases from Germany and the United States. The databases will be composed of data received from the U.S. Foundation Center, Guidestar U.S., the German Maecenata-Institute, and the Association of German Foundations. Environmental grant makers will be asked to take part in an online survey based on this data. Within the survey, different questions regarding the processes of monitoring and evaluation will give information on either the use of controlling instruments or the quality of the instruments used in Germany and the United States. After the survey a typology of the monitoring and evaluation instruments used by environmental grant makers in both comparison areas will be developed.

2) What strategies do beneficiaries use to cope with monitoring and evaluation and how do they react in response to donors' view on evaluation?

After the identification of environmental grant makers in Germany and the United States that use instruments of monitoring and controlling, the theoretical framework of realistic evaluation by Pawson and Tilley (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Tilley, 2000; Blamey & Mackenzie, 2007) will build the basis for the following case studies. According to the realist evaluation cycle, the research will begin with theoretical thoughts about the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation between the donors and the beneficiaries. The theories of agency and stewardship will build the theoretical background for this first step. An attempt to understand the nature of an environmental program should be made especially through dialogue with the program implementers. This means statements regarding the aim of the project, the nature of the landscape or the people at which it is aimed or the context should be worked out. The

next step is to map out a series of potential mini theories regarding the multiple mechanisms in the project and the different outcomes they might produce. Additional to the theoretical thoughts, talks with experts on evaluation will complete the list of mechanism possibilities. The other parts are identifying the contexts and the possible outcomes of monitoring and evaluation instruments used in the case studies by creating a quantitative and qualitative picture of the program in action. Therefore, the participatory observation and the interviews are necessary. Finally, the results of the case studies will be compared to verify the theories on monitoring and evaluation in order to understand the configuration within the different programs and to make statements on what works for whom in what circumstances.



Source: Pawson and Tilley (1997, p.85) moderate adjustments

With the help of the participatory observation (Bruyn, 1966) the context in which monitoring and evaluation is used will be analyzed. Therefore, some time will be spent in the selected projects, to gain knowledge on the daily procedures. Furthermore, the case studies will imply qualitative interviews with either donors or beneficiaries. The analysis of the interviews will contain different forms of content analysis. The objective hermeneutics method (Mann & Schweiger, 2009; Oevermann, 2002; Wagner, Lukassen, & Mahlendorf, 2010) will be used to analyze the main structural meaning of the beneficiaries by fulfilling the arrangements of monitoring and evaluation. The coping strategies of the beneficiaries with monitoring and controlling as the influence on their work will be deduced from the interviews.

3) What influences do monitoring and evaluation instruments have on the work processes between donors and their beneficiaries and what is the effect of the influence on the achievements of objectives in the nonprofit sector?

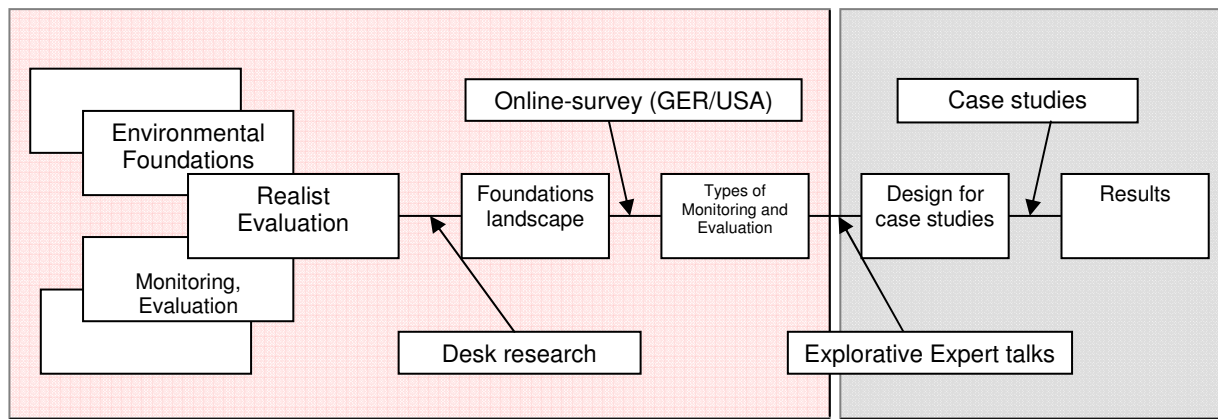
By making a hypothesis regarding the influences monitoring and evaluation will have on the donors as well as the beneficiaries, will set the design for the case studies. The interviews that will provide answers to the second question will also answer the third question. For the analysis the qualitative content analyses by Mayring (Mayring, 2000) will be used.

Together, the qualitative content analyses and the objective hermeneutics will provide answers to the question of the structures and the influences of controlling instruments. The theoretical assumption is based on the theories of agency and stewardship, and the thesis by Campbell. With the help of the interviews and observations, evidence-based statements on the impact of evaluation and monitoring on the nonprofit sector and statements on the tendencies of professionalization and their impact on the nonprofit sector will be made.

The number of projects that will be analyzed depends on the quality of the data, which will be acquired. The aim is to reach a theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for each main type of usage of monitoring and evaluation detected in the online survey. For answering these questions, the societal background and its influence on monitoring and controlling will be blanked out. The working process between donors and beneficiaries and its effectiveness are the aims of the dissertation. Therefore, a detailed discussion of the influence of society would be beyond the scope of this dissertation.

IV. Approach

The dissertation will be subdivided in two main sections. The first section gives an empirical view of the diffusion rate of monitoring and evaluation in foundations and public charities in Germany and the United States. Thereby different forms of monitoring and evaluation will be shown. They describe the context in which environmental grant makers operate in both countries. In order to get an in-depth view of the influence of monitoring and evaluation on the donor and the beneficiary, the second part is based on case studies. The goals of monitoring and coping strategies will also be defined.



The theoretical foundation of the dissertation will be laid in Chapter one. It will show the importance of nonprofit organizations for the environmental sector and the specifics of foundations and public charities in the field of nonprofits. In addition, a theoretical framework for monitoring and evaluation will be made. One of the dissertation goals is to gain empirically based information on the usage and the character of controlling instruments in environmental foundations and charities. Therefore, the second part of chapter one is about the empirical view of the spectrum of environmental foundations in Germany and the United States. Therefore, an overview of the diffusion rate of foundations and their usage of monitoring and evaluation will be given.

Chapter two deals with the methodological approach of the online survey and the results. The case studies will be chosen based on the evaluation of the online-survey that will be built from the datasets from Germany and the United states as seen in chapter two. Therefore, answers from foundations and public charities concerning monitoring and evaluation will be analyzed 1) to produce empirical data for the usage of monitoring and evaluation in foundations and public charities and 2) to find adequate cases for further research. With the help of the online survey different types of monitoring and evaluation instruments will be built for gaining knowledge on their usage by fundraising and endowed environmental grant makers.

Chapter three and four pertain to the case studies. While chapter four builds on the methodological approach of the case studies, the former sections cumulate in chapter five in the question of monitoring and evaluation by environmental grant makers. The typology built in the first chapters in addition to the structures and strategies will create a framework to give assured facts regarding the usage of assessment instruments. Within this chapter the influences, which monitoring and evaluation have on the beneficiaries, will be given. Therefore, the used instruments will be described and analyzed in the first part of this chapter. The focus will first be on the ex-ante instruments for monitoring. The results from the online-survey and the case studies will be put in the framework for the chapters before. The

ex-post instruments for the evaluation of supported projects will complete the analysis on the instruments. Finally, a different cluster of usage for the instruments will be built to give a better conclusion of the results of the dissertation.

The final chapter will discuss further research and gaps, which could not be filled. Additionally verifiable statements on the impact of monitoring and evaluation and on the further development of monitoring and evaluation in the nonprofit sector shall be given with consideration of expert opinions, which would be surveyed in explorative talks and case studies. For the completion of the dissertation, the conclusion will sum up the main results of the chapters before.

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VII. Schedule

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