

## **The Funding of Minority Organizations in Schleswig-Holstein: A Source of Empowerment?**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper analyses the relationship between minority empowerment and the funding schemes available to minority organizations using the example of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, on the border between Germany and Denmark. This is done through an examination of the organizational network available to the Danish minority in the region and the state funding structures available to these organizations, as well as through interviews with representatives of the two major organizations of the minority. I will argue that the existence of institutional funding on the one hand and empowering minority organizations on the other reinforce each other and that therefore the establishment of an institutional funding system for minority organizations can have an empowering effect on national minorities. Additionally, I will identify the central elements of the funding scheme at hand and discuss their influence on the empowerment process of the minority.*

**Keywords:** Minorities, funding, empowerment, German-Danish border region, Schleswig-Holstein, minority issues, Danish minority

The funding of minority organizations is an issue that tends to spark heated debates and often leads to entrenched positions and hard feelings at opposite ends of the negotiation table. Nonetheless, it has so far rarely incited research (Cârstocea, 2014). This may be due on one hand to the lack of information that is available from both the states and minorities involved, and on the other to a lack of motivation and methodology to gain the necessary information on the side of the researchers. This paper argues that despite these obstacles there are good reasons to research the funding of minority organizations as it can pose a source of

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empowerment for minority communities, not only in the amounts of money provided but also in the way in which funding schemes are structured. The example of the Danish minority in Germany's northernmost federal state, Schleswig-Holstein<sup>1</sup>, is one which has been used as a model in academic literature on minority issues countless times and may therefore have somewhat lost its appeal to researchers. However, with the shift of paradigm in minority research over recent years away from advocacy and protection towards issues of empowerment (Malloy, 2005, 2010, 2014; Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014; Banducci, Donovan & Karp, 2004; Henrard, 2005), the research of this particular minority setting is gaining in significance once again. As the study of settings in which empowerment occurs is one way of gaining an increased understanding of empowerment (Rappaport, 1981: 15), studying minorities that contribute to society and influence policies concerned with their affairs can give us an idea of how processes of empowerment can be triggered and advanced in other cases. The Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein is generally regarded as quite advanced in its empowerment process (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014: 89; Teebken & Christiansen, 2001: 43; Kühl, 2004: 575; Schaefer-Rolffs & Schnapp, 2013: 4), thus providing a setting worth studying in order to understand minority empowerment processes.

Leaning on definitions of empowerment from the field of community psychology as provided by Rappaport (1981, 1987), Zimmerman (2000), and Sadan (1997), minority empowerment can be defined as a process of transition in a minority community from a situation of powerlessness to a position of relative power and control over community affairs, including the authority, ability, and self-perception to influence the environment in the community's favour and thus become an agent of its own change. It aims at the enhancement of the choices that can be made by the community, increased access to resources and information, and finally the institutionalization of this change and thus independence from helping systems. The change intended by processes of empowerment affects the relations within the community, between the community and the individual, between the community and its environment, between organizations within the community, and between the organizations of the community and the institutions of the broader society and works in consideration of them. The activities and responsibilities in and for this process are mutually held between the state authorities and the minority communities or their representative organizations. The organizational structure available to the minority community, strengthening the community within and representing it to the outside in political as well as civic terms, thus makes for an integral part of minority empowerment.

The Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein is generally perceived to be in a favourable position in the society, economy and politics of the region, in good part due to its strong organizational network (Kühl, 2005: 78-79; Minderheitensekretariat, n.d.; Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014). A competence analysis of 2007 even pointed out that the institutions and organizations of the minorities<sup>2</sup> contribute to the linguistic, economic, political, and cultural profile of the state of Schleswig-Holstein (European Academy, 2007). The first section of this paper therefore describes the network of organizations available to the Danish minority, arguing that it is in an advanced position in its empowerment process precisely (partly) because of this organizational network. The following section is used to describe the funding scheme that is available to the minority organizations and how they are making use of it. The focus of this section is on public funding, as this is one of the ways in which public authorities exert their influence and measure support. It will be argued that not only the amount of money provided for the activities of the organizations but also the way in which the funds are being made available have an influence on the empowerment of the minority communities represented through the organizations. The third section will extend this argument into a more general setting and provide a discussion of elements within the funding schemes for minority organizations that might have a significant influence on the empowerment of minority communities.

## **1. The minority organizations network in Schleswig-Holstein**

The Danish minority has been defined as a national minority since the plebiscites of 1920, held in order to define the border between Germany and Denmark. While Danes and Germans had been living with relatively little nationalistic tensions alongside each other in their autonomous region under the King of Denmark for centuries, the 19th century marked a period of conflict and rising nationalisms culminating in several wars and the establishment of national borders (Lars N. Henningsen, 2011: 11-48; Teebken & Christiansen, 2001: 14-23). The two groups understood each other as different national groups with corresponding loyalties, and the re-definition of the border following the plebiscites left members of each group on the respective other state's territory. An understanding of the groups as national minorities thus developed, which led to the formation of organizations concerned specifically with their affairs soon after the drawing of the border. These organizations have developed, evolved and multiplied over time and today an extensive network of various organizations is available to both minorities (Teebken & Christiansen, 2001: 14-23). The Danish minority in

Schleswig-Holstein lives alongside the German majority population but also two other minorities: The Frisian ethnic group and the Sinti and Roma. Both these groups are recognized minorities, enjoying special protection and promotion through the Schleswig-Holstein state constitution (Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament, 2014: Article 6). These groups are, however, not part of this study and will therefore not be considered in more detail.

In his work Schaefer-Rolffs (2014: 93-99) draws a direct connection between the organizational framework available to the Danish minority and the advanced position in the empowerment process that it enjoys, and points out that those organizations run by members of the minority themselves enjoy a larger degree of trust than those that are not. Accordingly, he concludes that real empowering effects are only reached by organizations that are run by the minority, as opposed to organizations or institutions initiated and run by the government or members of the majority population. While one could argue that those political institutions and instruments still work for the minority and in the case at hand proved to be a quite effective tool of representation, the process of empowerment is by definition a process involving the minority in an active way. Thus organizations can only add to the empowerment process if they include the minority and put its members in charge of tasks and activities. Accordingly, all institutions and activities not including members of the minority need to be seen as mere protection and advocacy. Therefore they fall outside the scope of consideration of this paper and will be described only briefly at the end of this section.

The Danish minority organizations and associations are tied together under the umbrella of the *sydslesvigske samråd* (Southern Schleswig Council), coordinating issues of common interests of the Danish library, church, school association, health service, newspaper, central cultural organization, political party, youth association and the Frisian Association (sydslesvigske samråd, n.d.). The samråd is a conglomerate of equal peers in which questions of common interest are discussed, but decisions are not binding for the partnering organizations. It does not have a hierarchical structure and defined decision-making processes, nor does it have command over funds (sydslesvigske samråd, n.d.; living diversity, 2014). The main cultural organization of the Danish minority, and umbrella organization of 24 other cultural associations, is the *Sydslesvigsk Forening* (SSF, South Schleswig Association). It is organized in local chapters, each with their own secretary, and while primarily being a cultural organization it also advocates for minority issues and represents minority interests in political contexts. It was founded soon after the final revision

of borders between Germany and Denmark, in 1920 (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014: 90; Sydslesvigsk Forening, n.d.).

Alongside the SSF there is a large number of other cultural associations available to the Danish minority such as Dansk Centralbibliotek for Sydslesvig (Danish Library for Sydslesvig), Borgerforeningen Flensburg (Citizen Association Flensburg), Den slesvigske Kvindeforening (Women association of Slesvig), and Flensburg Journalistforening (Journalist association Flensburg). Additionally, the *Dansk Sundhedstjeneste for Sydslesvig* (Danish Health Service for South Schleswig) provides the members of the Danish minority with social and health services in addition to the public system (Koch, 2015; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2014: 16-18).

The Danish minority also runs a youth association, called *Sydslesvigsk danske Ungdomsforeninger* (SdU, South Schleswig Danish Youth Association), responsible for all youth work within the community and sponsor of a number of sporting clubs, youth organizations, and activity centres (Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig, n.d.). Additionally, the minority runs its own political party, the *Siidschleswigscher Wählerverband* (SSW, South Schleswig Voters Association). The SSW is another main recipient of public funds among the minority organizations and due to its exemption from the normal 5% threshold in state elections represented in the state parliament for several years. Since 2012 the SSW forms part of the governing coalition in the state of Schleswig-Holstein (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014: 91; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2014: 16-18).

Finally, the minority also runs a school association called *Dansk Skoleforening for Sydslesvig* (Danish School Association). It is responsible for the schools and nurseries of the minorities, in which the language of instruction is Danish. The minority schools have the status of private schools but enjoy special provisions concerning their funding, providing them with subsidies from the educational funds of Schleswig-Holstein. The minority schools issue diplomas equivalent to public schools and their syllabi must meet the national standards (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014: 90; Teebken & Christiansen, 2001: 77-79; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2014: 16-18).

Through their activities, these organizations create opportunities for the members of the minority to participate in and contribute to the cultural life of the region, the civic organizational diversity, the sporting life, political decision making processes, the linguistic profile and the economic cross-border activities of the region. They thus offer opportunities

to interact with and shape the environment of the community in order to create a favourable atmosphere of co-existence and co-operation. Additionally, the organizations create forums for members of the minority to meet and discuss their struggles and issues, form and recreate structures, enjoy culture, share experiences of differentness from the majority, formulate political and economic interests and standpoints and thus help create a common identity and nurture the group's culture. They strengthen the internal cohesion and the self-esteem of the group and offer platforms for individual members to assume leadership roles among their peers, advancing their individual empowerment processes and thus creating reservoirs of future empowerment. In short, they support and enable the empowerment process of the community.

In addition to the organizations set up and run by the minority itself, there are a number of institutions that were initiated by the authorities of the host and kin-state of the minority. In most cases they function as liaison institutions and political representations. These institutions include the *Beauftragter für Fragen der Minderheiten und Kultur des Landes Schleswig-Holstein* (Commissioner for Minorities and Culture of Schleswig-Holstein) at the state level, the *Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Aussiedlerfragen und Nationale Minderheiten* (Commissioner of the Federal Government for German and National Minorities), the *Beratender Ausschuss für Fragen der dänischen Minderheit beim Bundesministerium des Innern* (Advisory Committee for Questions Regarding the Danish Minority in the Ministry of the Interior) at the federal level, and *danske generalkonsulat* (Danish Consulate General) as well as the *Udvalget vedrørende danske kulturelle anliggender in Sydslesvig* (Committee concerning Danish Cultural Activities in South Schleswig) with the Danish parliament (Schaefer-Rolffs, 2014: 91-93; Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2014: 59-62).

While these bodies do contribute to the empowerment of the minority in that they represent its interests and thus help shape the community's environment, they do not put the minority itself in charge. They act as bodies of protection and advocacy from the outside but do not add to the internal dimension of the empowerment process. They are therefore left out of the further considerations of this paper.

## **2. Minority funding in Schleswig-Holstein**

In order to be able to function as the catalysts of empowerment they are understood to be, minority organizations need funds. While in this particular case study the members of the minority are generally perceived as equal to their majority peers in socio-economic terms, this is not a typical situation for minorities across Europe. Many minorities are economically and socially marginalized and struggle for subsistence, which precludes them from raising the funds for their activities among themselves. Additionally, especially in the case of small communities such as the Danish minority, the funds that can be raised within the community are limited and often times do not cover the costs for administration and activities of organizations. Many states provide some funding to minority organizations, in order to enable them to do work in and for their community and thus support its empowerment process. The funding schemes available for minority organizations reach across a plethora of possibilities and, while the money provided does of course provide the organizations with possibilities to work for their communities, the structure of the funding schemes may have an even larger impact than the amount (provided that the amount of funding is sufficient to operate at all) (Cârstocea, 2014). In accordance with this consideration, this section is dedicated to a detailed description of the funding scheme available to the Danish minority organizations in Schleswig-Holstein and the analysis of the impact of their structure on the empowerment process of the minority in question.

The central recipients of public funds on behalf of the Danish minority are the school association and the SSF as the community's main cultural organization. Other organizations receiving funds directly from German public authorities include the Danish library and the youth association SdU. Other cultural associations and organizations are funded through the subsidies of the SSF (Jens Christiansen, Interview April 23, 2015). The main focus of this section will be therefore on the SSF and the school association as the two central recipients of public funding.

The SSF generated a total income of €5,567,750 in 2013 and is calculating a budget of €5,327,183 for 2015. Of the 2015 budget, 9.1% of the income is provided by the state authorities of Schleswig-Holstein, 2.2% by local authorities, 60.8% by the Danish Ministry of Education, 1.3% by the Danish Ministry of Culture, and 26.7% of the budget are generated through other sources (Sydslesvig Forening, 2015: 5). The largest share of the funds is institutionalized, reaching 80%-90% of the annual budget. The amounts provided are negotiated on a yearly basis, starting usually around mid-year. It is worth noting that the German Federal Government does not extend institutionalized financial support to the SSF,

but rather offers the opportunity to apply for project funding, especially in relation to construction and maintenance of buildings. These project applications are generally confirmed in due time before the project's beginning and in many cases extend over a period of more than a year (Jens Christiansen, Interview April 23, 2015). Accordingly, time and capacity-consuming project applications do not have to be compiled every year for funds issued by the Ministry of the Interior (Jens Christiansen, Interview April 23, 2015).

According to SSF Secretary General Jens Christiansen, the current funding structure of the SSF is a great advantage for the minority as it provides the organizations working for it with the possibility to decide for themselves how to best use their funds, instead of them being bound to specific projects. Not only do they thus have the possibility to employ an extensive staff in order to be in close contact with the members of the minority, but they can also initiate own projects as they deem fit for the minority. One example of this practice is the annual meeting of the minority, organized by the SSF. This event has a longstanding tradition and is seen as a cornerstone of cultural life in the minority. It is used to inform the community about new political developments, and to bring the members of the minority together to nurture Danish culture and language as well as the feeling of belonging to the community (Jens Christiansen, Interview April 23, 2015). In this sense the annual meeting is central to the community's identity and without institutionalized funding it would be doubtful if it could be held every year, as a project application might be rejected. In contrast to this, one of the association's institutions, the Danevirke Museum, is funded purely on project basis and funding applications have to be filed on a regular basis. Christiansen refers to this as "hard work" without which running the museum would not be possible. Due to this funding structure the staff at the museum is confronted with great insecurity, and an institution serving the education of the public about German-Danish history is constantly in danger of closing (Jens Christiansen, Interview April 23, 2015).

The SSF consists of the General Secretariat as well as local associations, working in the municipalities with Danish population in Schleswig-Holstein. Additionally, several smaller cultural associations are part of the SSF network and funded through the subsidies received by SSF. The SSF thus also functions as a distributor of the funds granted to the Danish minority by the state of Schleswig-Holstein. On the one hand, this structure means that organizations are available to the members of the community locally and close by, making it easy for members to address them and express support or dislike of the policies and activities of the associations (Jens Christiansen, Interview April 23, 2015). On the other hand

this means that it may be difficult to pool the interests of the various organizations and to speak with one voice when it comes to political and public debate. However, while different organizations are available to the minority members, they are dependent on the SSF when it comes to funding. This leads to the question of whether the funding scheme in place fosters democratic structures within the minority in which real opposition to the major cultural organization is possible, or if it potentially creates a tendency for smaller organizations to agree with the SSF's standpoint despite opposition by its members, due to their dependency on the funds distributed by SSF. The strong democratic traditions inherent to the Danish culture, along with a respective comment of the Secretary General in the interview conducted for this paper, indicate that opposition is taken by local SSF branches as well as other associations of the network and that democratic structures among the organizational network of the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein are maintained and nurtured. However, a funding scheme in which one organization functions as the distributor of public funds potentially limits the democratic effects of an existing broad organizational network, as it creates dependencies which might silence oppositional voices.

The Danish school association generated an income of €107,658,000 in 2014, of which 48.9% were subsidies from the Danish government, 34.3% were subsidies from the education funds of Schleswig-Holstein (Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig: 6) and 26.8% were generated through fees paid by parents, municipalities and other sources (Ilka Börnsen and Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015). As education is dealt with on state level in Germany, the federal government does not regularly subsidize the Danish schools in Schleswig-Holstein. However, between 2010 and 2012, the Schleswig-Holstein government implemented severe cuts in the funding of the minority schools, parts of which were compensated by the federal government (Kühl, 2010). The Danish school association receives the subsidies for the minority schools according to the expected overall number of pupils for a year. The funding is issued in monthly payments in order to match the expense structures of the organization (Ilka Börnsen and Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015). The funding from the Schleswig-Holstein state government is provided in the form of a pupil expense ratio, on an equal level to that of a pupil in a public school.<sup>3</sup> The equality of funding between the Danish minority schools and German public schools was integrated into the Schleswig-Holstein state constitution in 2014 (Schleswig-Holstein State Constitution, 2014: Article 12). The largest part of the funding of the school association is institutionalized and stable, providing the organization with a long-

term perspective in its activities (Ilka Börnsen and Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015).

The current funding structure of the Danish school association is key for its ability to provide the children of the Danish minority with education in their native language. As education is a permanent activity rather than a project, it is necessary for the operator of schools and childcare facilities to rely on funding for more than just the next defined period. Institutionalized funding with stable amounts is the only way to ensure quality education enabling minority youths to compete with their majority peers (Ilka Börnsen, Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015). So far, the Danish school association has needed project funding from public funds only for construction and renovation works, however from 2017 these expenses will also be covered by a standardized subsidy through the Schleswig-Holstein payments (Ilka Börnsen, Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015). In comparison to a funding structure which is mainly based on project-funding, this structure means a relatively light administrative effort, allowing the organization to direct its resources towards the original purpose of the organization: to run and administer the educational system of the minority. Due to the constitutionalization of the funding equality of Danish schools and its further embedding in law, the amounts to be expected and the issuing procedures of the funds are very transparent for the school association (Ilka Börnsen, Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015).

The school association is required by law to publish yearly reports about funding sources and expenditure, making them available to its funders, its constituting community and the broader public. Additionally, the Schleswig-Holstein state authorities regularly review the legal use of funds. According to the financial officers of the Danish school association this auditing is very time consuming and thus takes away from the administrative ease of the general funding structure, especially as the process is required both for the Danish public funds received<sup>4</sup> as well as the German public funds. While the process is understood as a necessity in order to guarantee transparency to the taxpayer, it still binds resources that are needed for other tasks, causing delays and other issues. A considerable bureaucratic burden is also connected to the share of funds that is provided by the municipalities for the operation of the kindergartens. Extensive reports on expenditure are requested for these funds, and the administrative effort to access the respective funds are larger than for other funds (Ilka Börnsen, Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015). As

pointed out above, these measures aim to provide transparency for the way in which public funds are used. However, the purpose of the financial support of the state to minority organizations would of course be defeated if the administrative burden connected to accessing the funds and auditing procedures reached a point at which more staff and time is devoted to these administrative tasks than to the original purpose of the organization itself. While this does not seem to be the case in the setting at hand, it could be a potential pitfall in the design of public funding processes.

The current funding structure for the school association of the Danish minority is recurring and seems to be stable in its legal groundwork. However, the constitutional dimension of the funding of minority schools has been introduced only recently, and even with the current structure there is a remaining degree of risk for the minority. While the funding is calculated according to the calendar year, the school year goes from August to July and does thus not match the financial year. Accordingly, at the time the school year is being planned, including pupil numbers, staff needed, etc. the beginning of the financial year is still several months away. This does not normally pose a problem in any way, however in 2010 when the subsidies to minority schools were reduced this also started with the respective next financial year, with the school year already planned according to the budget that was originally expected. The cuts thus hit the school association in the middle of the school year, leaving it with little chance to adapt its expenses in time (Ilka Börnsen, Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015). The constitutionalization of the equality in funding of education has dramatically increased the stability of the funding since, and the likelihood of a repetition of these events can be deemed small; however, the occurrence has left the minority with a bitter aftertaste and a very clear picture of the insecurities stemming from the way in which public funding is provided to its organizations. Additionally, even though the introduction of the equality in funding to the state constitution makes it much more difficult to make changes to the current arrangement, it is not a guarantee that they will go untouched in the future. In this case the problem remains that the planning unit of the organization, i.e. the school year, is not aligned with the financial year.

The above account of the public funding scheme for the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein paints the picture of a stable, reliable and institutionalized system which enables the two main organizations of the community to provide constant and reliable services to their constituency, make their own decisions concerning the activities they want to conduct or support, and represent the community's interest in the respective forums. The

structures and procedures of the funding scheme seem transparent, and both amounts and legal conditions are known in advance to the organizations and transparency of the organizations' expenditure is demanded. This enables the constituency of the organizations to make educated decisions concerning their support for the organizations at hand. However, the funding scheme in place might foster undemocratic organizational structures within the minority by channelling large parts of the funds through SSF. Additionally, the administrative effort connected to expenditure reporting might grow into a burden to the organizations, keeping them from their actually intended work. Nevertheless, the interviews conducted with representatives of both organizations make clear that the structure of the public funding scheme available to the organizations of the minority is the key to their ability to operate at all as well as in the specific ways they do.

### **3. Minority empowerment and funding**

In the case of the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein, there seem to be four main elements in the structure of the public funding scheme that exert a noticeable influence on their work. These include:

- Stability of funds and institutionalization of procedures
- Transparency of the funding scheme as well as the use of funds
- Administrative burden
- Funding channels

While the study of one individual case naturally does not allow for generalizations, it is still possible to derive core elements that can inform future research and inspire discussion. Accordingly, I do not claim this list to be exhaustive or universal, but rather understand it as an indication for future research. For this purpose I will discuss each element in detail in a more general perspective, considering especially possible tensions between them.

The stability of funds and institutionalization of procedures is manifested in the case of the SSF in yearly negotiations regarding the amounts of funds available to the minority, starting around the same time each year and including the same actors. For the school association the subsidies for the schools depend on the number of pupils registered and are thus known as soon as school registration closes, rendering negotiations unnecessary and providing the school association with prior knowledge about the exact amount of money provided to them. This arrangement is fixed in the constitution of the state, making sudden

changes to this system rather unlikely. In a contrasting model, the funding could be purely project based, with a budget for minority related or even general cultural projects to apply to. In this case the organizations would have to plan their activities as projects and apply for funding for each project, making it impossible to know how much money will be available to the organization at any time and which projects would be possible to realize. Staff contracts would therefore have to be limited to the period of an approved project and even very relevant and important activities might not be realized because they do not get the necessary funding. Permanent services such as health and counselling services or education would be very difficult to provide under these circumstances. Such a funding scheme would thus translate into a large degree of insecurity for the minority community as well as staff members of minority organizations, and would constitute a method of censorship of activities through the government. In contrast, the funding scheme at hand provides the organizations with the possibility to be a permanent partner, service deliverer, and employer for the community as well as with the freedom to make their own decisions concerning their activities, allowing them to tailor them to the needs of the minority. However, as pointed out earlier in this paper and demonstrated by the 2010-2012 funding crisis of the Danish minority schools, even a system perceived as stable may be vulnerable to economic fluctuation. One way to ensure that minority organizations are not hit harder by economic crisis than other publicly funded bodies could be to set a fixed share of the public budget aside for them. Such a fixed share would guarantee greater financial stability than a system that includes yearly negotiations. Additionally, embedding financial agreements in law or even in the constitution, as in the case of the Danish school association, further protects the financial standing of the minority.

The transparency of procedures is closely interconnected with the stability and institutionalization of funding in this case. As the procedures are the same every year, the organizations know when to expect negotiations and payments as well as how negotiations are conducted. In case of the school association the constitutionalization of the pupil expense ratio increased transparency again and provides the organization not only with knowledge of how to access funds, but also what amount of funding to expect. In a case in which the procedures and requirements to access funds are unknown to the minority organizations, they will face insecurity concerning their activity planning and might end up using their resources ineffectively because energy and effort are used to find out how to go about funding negotiations or might even be invested in negotiating with the wrong actors. This could be

especially severe in a funding scheme that is largely based on project funding. If organizations do not know where to apply for funding, which documents and forms are needed, or if they are eligible for specific funds at all, their resources might be wasted in drafting unsuccessful applications. Knowledge of the relevant information in order to draft successful applications or lead successful negotiations for funding can therefore be decisive in the performance of a minority organization and thus for its contribution to the empowerment process of the community.

To demand transparency of expenditure is a general feature of public funding in Germany. All publicly funded institutions and organizations have to publish a financial report laying out how funds were generated and used. This measure aims to prevent corruption and fraud, but it also enables the constituency of an organization to decide whether or not to support an organization in the future. This is especially important in the case of minorities, as in their case funding is often extremely limited and wasteful, corrupt or other fraudulent behaviour would drain those resources even further. Such behaviour therefore has the potential to severely harm or even halt or prevent the empowerment process in that it decreases the ability of the organization to act in the best interest of its constituency. In addition to potentially revealing fraud and corruption, mechanisms of transparency on the spending end also enable the members of the minority to grant or withdraw their support to an organization based on an evaluation of the way in which it spends its money. Furthermore, minority organizations do not only have a vital role in the internal dimension of the empowerment process of the minority but also represent the minority towards the majority population. Ongoing fraud and corruption will therefore not only harm the reputation of the organization but will likely fall back on the reputation of the community as a whole. Being involved in a corruption scandal can thus harm the empowerment process of the minority in that it creates a negative image of the community and thus influences the environment of the community in a negative way.

The administrative burden connected to public funding is an issue that might be problematic not only for minority organizations but other publicly funded organizations as well. This might especially affect small organizations, as they have fewer resources to reserve for administrative work connected to funds. In extreme cases, organizations might be unable to carry out the activity for which funding is requested due to an excessive amount of paper work. In the case of the Danish minority, the administrative effort is mainly connected to financial auditions and, while being troublesome at times does not generally impede the work

of the two major organizations. However, a funding scheme in which funds are mainly issued on project basis might create a considerable amount of administrative work not only due to financial auditions, but also in the application process for funds. The latter is also connected to the transparency of procedures as the administrative work can be handled in an effective and efficient way only if the application requirements and details are known to the organization prior to starting the process. Accordingly, an opaque funding application process potentially adds to the administrative effort of an organization. Another aspect that might add to the administrative burden of an organization are expenditure transparency mechanisms as discussed in the previous paragraph. While this type of transparency can contribute considerably to the empowerment of a minority, it can just as well slow it down if it increases the administrative burden of the minority organizations in an unfeasible way. This aspect affects the empowerment process of a minority in that an organization spending the largest part of its energy and effort on administrative tasks is unlikely to be able to meaningfully work for or represent the community.

Large parts of the funds for the Danish minority are channelled through the SSF as the minority's main cultural organization. I have pointed out earlier that this has the potential to create undemocratic organizational structures within the minority as it puts the SSF in a position of power over the smaller organizations that are funded through this channel. These organizations as well as individual members of the organizations might therefore refrain from opposing certain positions or activities of the SSF out of a fear of losing funds. Such an occurrence would silence sections of the minority and exclude them from debate and identity building, thus hindering the empowerment process. Additionally, if funds are focussed on a small number of relatively large and established organizations, it might be difficult for new organizations to form and gain a foothold in the community, as they lack funds for meaningful activities. However, there is a likelihood of sections of the minority not feeling represented by the established organizations or of a new organization having more relevant activities planned than the established one(s). In both such cases empowerment could be compromised. At the same time, a very large network of diversified organizations could unnecessarily drain the funds that are available to the minority, rendering the share provided to each organization too small to be able to act as a catalyst of empowerment.

Additionally, this aspect touches upon the sources of funding that are being made available to the minority organizations. In the case at hand, the institutionalized public funding through the state and municipal authorities of Schleswig-Holstein are only one

channel through which the organizations can access funds. They are also allowed to make use of public funds from the Danish government, create their own income through membership fees, accept donations, and apply for project funds. This structure enables them on the one hand to access overall larger amounts of funds, and on the other to diversify the risk of dependence. The importance of this factor became especially apparent in the 2010-2012 funding crisis of the minority schools, in which eventually the federal government of Germany paid compensations to the school association to keep the schools operative (Kühl, 2010). Furthermore, the yearly budgets of both the school association and the SSF are heavily subsidized by Danish public funds, reaching 48.9% and 60.1% respectively (Sydslesvigsk Foreningen, 2015: 5; Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig: 6). These percentages are high enough to conclude that without this support, large parts of the work of both organizations could not be sustained any longer. A multiplicity of funding sources therefore potentially advances the empowerment in that it provides the minority with essential additional funds as well as increased financial stability. However, an extensive number of funding sources, especially involving two different legal systems, might also impede the transparency of income generation, as well as increase the administrative burden for the organization. While preparing the documents for one financial audition is already a considerable amount of work, having to do it for two different auditing systems at once as in the case of the Danish minority organizations (Ilka Börnsen, Olaf Runz, Dansk Skoleforeningen i Sydslesvig, Interview May 5, 2015) increases the administrative workload substantially.

As pointed out in the beginning of this section, the elements discussed here do not comprise what I believe to be an exhaustive list. It is likely that different aspects influence other settings, and clearly the overall structure of society and the position of the minority in society influence many details of the funding schemes themselves. Nonetheless, these elements seem to be influential in the specific setting of the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein and might thus be a starting point for future research concerning the relationship between minority empowerment and minority funding schemes.

## Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of the minority organizations supporting the empowerment of the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein and the public funding scheme available to these organizations. The funding scheme currently in place for this purpose provides the

organizations of the minority with the possibility to provide constant and reliable services to the community as well as the freedom to decide on their own how to operate in the best interest of their community, thus offering ways to participate in and contribute to public life in the region, to formulate and develop a group identity and nurture the minority's own culture and language. In this sense it does contribute to the empowerment process of the community. Four central elements shape this funding scheme and were identified to have an impact on the work of the organizations with, in, and for the minority:

- Stability of funds and institutionalization of procedures
- Transparency of the funding scheme as well as of the use of funds
- Administrative burden
- Funding channels

These elements could be a first point of consideration for future research concerning the relationship between the empowerment of minority communities and the structure of public funding schemes for minority organizations. Of course the present case study is limited and the results therefore hardly allow for a generalization, however, it does open up a number of questions that could inspire and inform future research on the matter, such as: What other types of funding schemes are being used by states to support their minorities? Which elements are central in these? How can the impact of individual elements of funding schemes be measured? And, most importantly, how can information about these funding schemes be accessed?

The case study used in this paper was a comparatively simple one to carry out, as the organizations of the Danish minority are generally open about their affairs and a certain degree of transparency concerning their finances is legally required. Accordingly, large parts of the information are available online and the missing details concerning technicalities were discussed rather openly in the interviews. However, this is not exemplary for minorities and their finances, making it extremely difficult to get information about numbers and structures in some cases. This will likely be and remain the main obstacle to research in this field, necessitating creative approaches to methodology.

While this small study is only a first step in collecting data and offering a first analysis of how public funding schemes can be shaped as well how this might influence the work of minority organizations, future research might show whether the considerations of

this paper are applicable and what other elements of funding schemes influence the empowerment potential of minority organizations for their communities.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The federal states of Germany enjoy a large degree of autonomy in a number of areas of law-making as well as in financial matters. Each state therefore has its own constitution and budget, and a large share of the legal protection and financial support concerning national minorities are affairs of the state rather than the federal government.

<sup>2</sup> The study includes not only the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein but also the German minority in Denmark, as well as the Frisian ethnic group and the Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein.

<sup>3</sup> Danish minority schools are not part of the public education system, but are private schools. Under Schleswig-Holstein state school law private schools are normally subsidised with a pupil expense ratio of 80% of that of public schools.

<sup>4</sup> The respective financial auditing is carried out by Danish authorities.

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