

Between Food Rescue and Political Representation.
An Organizational Analysis of Tafel Deutschland e.V.

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Summary

The Tafel Deutschland, the biggest German foodbank movement, has received very little attention in academic research. The existing research is focused on the outcome of Tafel Deutschland work locally and sees the national organization as a black box. Its internal structure and decision-making processes have so far hardly been considered in research. The aim of this dissertation is to open this black box and investigate the organisational set up, aim and the political identity of the organization. The research is approached in three steps: The first step aimed to find a field entry through the organizational history and to identify the structure of the Tafel, its relevant organizational units and stakeholders. The Tafel Germany started their work as a local charitable institution. The Berlin born idea of donating surplus food to the underprivileged quickly found nationwide interest. Based on the current work, the development of the Tafel shows a path dependency for the creation of a stable organizational structure.

How exactly this organization functions internally was the focus of the second step of the research, which was focused on the organizational structure and communication channels. At first the formal organization of the Tafel movement was analyzed by showing the adaption of

the statutes, its mission statement and its preamble, followed by the evaluation of the organizational structure based on interviews from Tafel officials. The findings characterize the Tafel as an elusive and atypical organization. The third step focused on the ability of the foodbank movement to be a political stakeholder and contribute to the political representation. In summary, the study focused on the Tafel's internal understanding of the political landscape, the political representation of charitable foodbanks' interests as well as its relationship and influence within politics.

The results of this study paint a multifaceted picture of the state of food banks in Germany. The Tafel is an established social-political player that is firmly anchored in the German social system. The analysis of the system shows clearly that the Tafel theoretically has the basic attributes to be a political player and thus represent the political interests of its local member organization and their customers. They pursue relatively clear political goals and have the resources to achieve their aim. Their current organizational standing is an advantage to push the foodbank agenda and be involved in the political decision-making process, however, some additional steps are still needed to cultivate these existing capabilities and opportunities into effective lobbying.