Book Review

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The Nonprofit World – Civil Society and the Rise of the Nonprofit Sector by John Casey, Kumarian Press, 2016

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DOI 10.1515/npf-2016-0016

What are the policy implications of nonprofit organisations playing a greater role both in national affairs and across the globe? This is the question posed in a broad ranging book by John Casey that covers nonprofits from the industrialized democracies of the North to the emerging voices of the South. It is an immense challenge that is well met. The author charts the rise of contemporary nonprofits, with special attention to American influences, state–nonprofit relations and emerging social enterprise, followed by an in depth analysis of international nonprofits. He completes his survey with a discussion of emerging policy issues: the economic, cultural and social nonprofit voice of the South; the jostling of government and business at the nonprofit boundaries; and megatrends such as technological disruption, ageing populations in the North, and emerging middle classes in the South, all of which he considers bode well for future growth in the nonprofit sector. Some readers will think the final chapter too brief and wish for further policy discussion of the impact of international issues such as the rise of mega-foundation nonprofits; climate change and international environmental organisations; terrorism and societal upheavals in the Middle East. These have the potential for profound impacts on the nonprofit actors involved.

This book appears to be directed at both the student and the researcher. As a student text matched to the appropriate course, the book will be a useful resource. The appropriate course would be one that deals with international nonprofit organisations, but the book should be considered as an item for any reference or reading list of introductory nonprofit studies courses. Its value lies not only in being about nonprofit organisations across the globe – it is written from the perspective of the author who has lived and worked on a number of continents and can appreciate the biases inherent in American and northern discourses. The result is a nicely balanced, cosmopolitan discourse that may challenge students who have experienced only one dominant cultural frame of reference.

The early chapters provide a methodical and comprehensive introduction to the nonprofit sector, its definitions, history, definitional frameworks and measures. The second part deals more specifically with national nonprofit sectors

around the globe as well as those nonprofits that operate internationally, ranging over a broad array of topics including historical comparisons, national comparative research and classifications. The last part of the book dives deeper into the work of international nonprofit organisations, covering their advocacy, governance, leadership and management as well as their interaction with other sectors.

It is the second part of the book that should find its way into the reading lists of generalist nonprofit courses that seek to expose and challenge a domestic student's view of the world of nonprofit organisations. The frequent tables and example boxes will maintain the interest of a student while also providing a rich layer of contemporary knowledge about the topics under discussion. Each topic is adequately supported by well chosen references. Whilst the ken of the book is broad and touches on most sector issues, a further edition might consider the profound implications of terrorism for national and domestic nonprofits, and the rise of international philanthropy through mega-foundations. Both of these contemporary issues are changing the nature of the nonprofit world.

For the seasoned researcher the second half of the book offers material that will be valuable. International nonprofit scholarly materials usually focus on a small subset of large, high profile humanitarian and advocacy organisations, but John Casey takes a broader view, including small and micro-organisations. Particularly interesting treatment is given to the for profit and government sectors in relation to international nonprofit organisations by examining their roles in resourcing aid.

Funding: The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is a major sponsor of Nonprofit Policy Forum, underwriting its open access to the public. Other sponsors include the Levin College at Cleveland State University and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. This special issue was funded through a grant by the Kresge Foundation to ARNOVA.