Editorial

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The research papers in this first issue of volume 8 are testament to the integral and intimate relationships between the associations and nonprofit corporations that constitute civil society and the policymaking and service delivery functions of government. Never has such interdependence been stronger or more important than it is now, in an age of populism and social unrest when political participation and the effectiveness of public services hold the key to future stability and prosperity. Our five research papers provide several insights to guide future thinking about this complex nexus.

The first paper, by Hui Li and Jiashen Zhang, investigates the impacts of membership in civic associations on political participation in the U.S. The paper, grounded in theory of social capital and based on analysis of U.S. survey data, yields both insights and puzzles. No relationship is found between citizens' degrees of association participation and their voting behavior. However, the intensity of their involvement in an association is a predictor of both informal and formal political activity, while their scope of involvement as reflected in the number of association affiliations affects only formal activity.

The second paper, by Nives Dolšak, analyzes volunteer participation in a local NGO's environmental clean-up efforts in 192 districts in Slovenia. Again, the nature of participation is rooted in social capital. In particular, forms of social capital that entail greater face to face interaction associated with religion are found to positively influence participation rates. This result is notable since it suggests that deeply grounded religious social capital underwrites public participation even in countries with a legacy of communist rule.

The third paper, by Ekaterina Ivanova and Michaela Neumayr, more explicitly explores the roles of associations in a contemporary, formerly communist, transitional society, Russia itself. The authors confirm that most business and professional associations are multifunctional – engaging in various combinations of policy advocacy, community building and service delivery. Importantly, policy advocacy is found to be the most common function for all categories of

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associations studied, suggesting a special role for these associations in a transitioning democracy. Within the realm of policy advocacy, business associations and unions are found to focus more specifically on direct advocacy with government, while professional associations give greater emphasis to advocacy addressed to the general public.

Given the foregoing pervasive political activity and advocacy-involvement of nonprofit associations in democratic and transitioning societies, it is opportune that the fourth paper by Dyana Mason offers a new way to measure the ideological orientations of civil society organization leaders. The paper applies Item Response Theory (IRT) methodology to gauge the political views of nonprofit leaders in California. These leaders are found to be more moderate or centrist in their views than California state legislators but also notably varied by field of service. The IRT measurement tool suggests the possibility that the alignment between nonprofit organization leaders' political orientations and those of their stakeholder groups and government sponsors can be gauged, perhaps allowing research to illuminate the degree to which such alignment influences the effectiveness with which nonprofits can affect changes in public policy.

The fifth paper, by Fredrik Andersson, shifts our attention from advocacy to the service interface between the nonprofit sector and government, asking how public policies and regulations influence the level of entrepreneurial activity associated with private delivery of a government financed service – in this case, public education in the city of Milwaukee. The paper analyzes the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, i. e., school voucher program, in that Midwestern U.S. city. The article specifically examines the rates at which entrepreneurs have attempted, and succeeded or failed, in founding nonprofit voucher schools, over the twenty-five year period of 1991 through 2015, a period characterized by distinct changes in the constraining regulations governing the program. This rich case analysis clearly demonstrates how government, intentionally or not, can influence the supply of privately provided services through policies that encourage, discourage or otherwise shape the requirements for entrepreneurial initiative in the social economy. This bears on an important policy dilemma – how to ensure quality and success of those entrepreneurial initiatives while avoiding the chilling effects of regulation.

Related both to education and policy advocacy, this issue is rounded out with a review by John Tyler of Megan Tompkins-Stange's new book *Policy Patrons*, which focuses on the role of four major U.S. foundations in informing education policy in the U.S. Tyler critically assesses the book's examination of the tensions between elite private foundations and grassroots democracy in the shaping of public policy.

I hope you enjoy the issue.