Editorial

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One of my favorite old movies is “Around the World in Eighty Days”, a tale of intrepid travel in various modes of transportation. This issue is expansive in a similar way: it offers studies of public policy as it affects nonprofits in widely scattered parts of the world, and it applies a spectrum of methodologies from theory to statistical modeling to case study analysis. As a cluster, the articles here add to our knowledge of the circumstances where government can enlist nonprofits to effectively promote policy objectives, and of how nonprofits can cope with the challenges of operating in regimes threatened or subsumed by authoritarianism and populism.

The first paper, by Jeremy Thornton and Jesse Lecy, applies transactions cost economics to examine government contracting. The authors find that nonprofits can be an attractive alternative to “cost-plus” contracting with for-profit firms, avoiding costly “gold-plating” behavior when contracts are complex and cannot be completely specified.

The next two papers focus on nonprofit operations in authoritarian and populist regimes. Ruth Simsa examines the experience of Austria and how the gradual process of authoritarian politics evolves in a developed democratic country. In particular, she explains how civil society is targeted, pre-empted and overpowered through rhetoric, restrictions and policy changes. The paper offers lessons and warnings for other democratic countries.

Traveling south and west to Latin America for our third paper, Susan Appe, Daniel Berrigan and Fabian Telch study the coping and adaptive strategies of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ecuador under the left-wing authoritarian, populist presidency of Rafael Correa between 2007 and 2017. These researchers find that various levels of federation and networking arrangements allowed CSOs to focus and unite around common goals, build the capacity of civil society, and develop communications channels with government. The latter two papers highlight the ominous and growing challenges to democratic processes and civil society in today's world and why we need to better understand how the relationships between government and nonprofits are changing.

The fourth paper by Alyson Haslam and Rebecca Nesbitt studies the impact of nonprofits at the community level on an important policy concern in public health. By coupling data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the U.S., the authors are able to discern small but significant impacts of community-based, health-related nonprofits on reducing obesity, especially in urban areas.

Our last research paper, by Jayne Jonsson, takes us back to Europe to re-examine a basic, policy-relevant concern about nonprofit organizations that serve as contractors for government services or compete with private (business) sector service providers. Characterizing these nonprofits as “hybrids” that must navigate the tensions between market success and mission impact, the author examines the experience of a venerable nonprofit provider organization in Sweden. Through this case study, the author offers a new conceptual perspective, arguing that hybrids can fail to maintain a desired balance of mission and market goals, and tend to give way to the ideological orientations of organizational decision-makers who tip the balance one way or another. As for our first paper here, implications follow for policymakers wishing to implement social goals through the mechanism of government contracts.

Our feature in this issue is a review by Brent Never of a new book by China Brotsky, Sarah Eisinger and Diane-Vinokur-Kaplan on new nonprofit centers that offer shared space, allowing nonprofits to co-locate in one place. These centers help nonprofits to reduce costs, coordinate their programming, and become more effective through collaboration and better infrastructure. As Never indicates, such centers parallel larger trends towards flexible and dynamic office space for workers in the modern economy. Policy-related issues include both the efficacy with which nonprofit service providers can work, and the efficiency with which scarce space is allocated in urban communities.

I hope you enjoy this wide-ranging issue of *Nonprofit Policy Forum*. Finally, another piece of good news for NPF readers, authors and supporters: NPF is now indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ);

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see <https://doaj.org/toc/2154-3348>. This will further enhance the journal's visibility, accessibility, usage and impact. Thanks to all who have made this possible.

Enjoy the issue!

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Editor

References

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Around_the_World_in_80_Days_\(1956_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Around_the_World_in_80_Days_(1956_film))