Editorial

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Staying the Course: Editorial Statement on the Future Direction of *Nonprofit Policy Forum*

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We are pleased to begin our tenure as Co-Editors-in-Chief of *Nonprofit Policy Forum* (NPF), seeking to build on the terrific legacy of Founding Editor Dennis Young and Founding Managing Editor Linda Serra who guided the journal from its first issue in 2010 through volume 12, issue 2 in July 2021.

1 Thematic Foci

At least in the near-term, we plan to continue to focus *NPF* on the major topics addressed in the journal's first decade (see Young 2021). As identified in Box 1, these topics include: 1) various dimensions of the government/nonprofit relationship comprising but not limited to: government funding of nonprofit service delivery, government regulation of the nonprofit sector, and nonprofit advocacy activities aimed at influencing government policy; 2) issues related to blurring sector boundaries such as: hybrid organizational forms, social enterprises, and social investment; 3) transnational non-governmental organizations and cross-national NGO/nonprofit issues; and 4) developments in particular policy fields (e.g., health, human services, arts) and their effects on nonprofits.

Specifically, we anticipate that the three pillars of government/nonprofit relations will remain the principal base of the journal's content. The first pillar—government financing and nonprofit provision of services—covers: general government/nonprofit relationship issues, both cooperative and contentious; national-level approaches and

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developments; collaborative governance mechanisms; and specific government/nonprofit partnerships at the local level (e.g., Almog-Bar 2017a; Carboni et al. 2017; Levy and Ketels 2021; Okuyama, Ishida, and Yamauchi 2010; Reuter, Wijkstrom, and von Essen 2012). Purchase-of-service contracting and its effects on nonprofits as well as grants and other tools that governments use to fund nonprofits, such as vouchers or reimbursements, are also important topics under this heading (e.g., Never and Westberg 2017; Saidel 2017; Thornton and Lacy 2019).

Box 1: *Nonprofit Policy Forum's* Main Topical Areas

1. Dimensions of Government/Nonprofit Relations
 - a. Financing and Provision of Services
 - government funding, including contracting and other government tools
 - collaborative governance arrangements
 - effects of government funding on nonprofits
 - complementary, supplementary & adversarial relations
 - b. Regulation and Accountability
 - analysis and evaluation of tax policies
 - impact of law and regulatory policies on nonprofits
 - self-regulation and accountability, sector infrastructure
 - reform needs and gaps in law and regulation (policy neglect)
 - effects of securitization on nonprofits
 - c. Advocacy and Consultation
 - policy advocacy and lobbying
 - civic engagement
 - political activism and voter mobilization
 - contributions to democratization
 - involvement in consultative bodies, task forces, etc.
 - social movement organizations and social change philanthropy
2. Social Enterprise and Sector Boundaries
 - a. Hybridity/hybridization
 - b. Social enterprise and entrepreneurship
 - c. Social finance and investment
 - d. Market environments and competition involving nonprofits and for-profits
3. INGOs and Global/Cross-national Issues
4. Developments in Policy Fields and Effects on Nonprofits

Relevant development affecting nonprofits in fields such as human services, health care, social justice, the environment, education, arts and culture, religion, international development, emergency management and homeland security, and philanthropy

Government regulation, as the second pillar, can be just as, and occasionally even more, important than funding policies. Tax policy steers nonprofits and philanthropy into

addressing various public policy priorities and undergirds the sector's financial viability (e.g., Duquette 2020; Grønbjerg and McGiverin-Bohan 2016; Rooney et al. 2020). But nonprofits are also affected by a broad range of non-fiscal laws and regulations concerning their establishment and operation (DeMattee 2019). Political regimes are changing globally, which has been leading to a regulatory closing of spaces for nonprofits and civil society more generally (e.g., Appe, Barragán, and Telch 2019; Herrold 2016; Katz and Gidron 2021; Simsa 2017, 2019). But the nature of nonprofit action has changed as well, creating significant need for the reform of legal frameworks that largely date to the last millennium. Also of interest here are gaps in government regulation and efforts at voluntary self-regulation to fill them, or accountability initiatives to bridge them (e.g., Anheier and Toepler 2019; Chikoto 2015; Mosley 2016; Prakash 2019).

While the first two pillars principally, though not exclusively, have the government structuring the contours of the government/nonprofit relationship, the third one—advocacy—has nonprofits attempting to influence government programs or policies. We define this pillar expansively with nonprofit lobbying and insider/outsider advocacy activities at the core (e.g., Abdel-Samad 2017; Almog-Bar 2017b; Guo and Saxton 2010; Lamothe and Lavastida 2020; Prentice 2018). However, we also consider other forms of social change efforts, political activism, and contributions to democratic practice, elections, and civic engagement as tasks of nonprofits and civil society that seem especially important today (e.g., Alexander and Fernandez 2021; Li and Zhang 2017; Mosley 2016; Saitgalina, Dicke, and Birungi 2020). Governments, on occasion, also invite input from nonprofits through various consultative bodies or mechanisms.

As shown in Table 1, these three pillars combined accounted for 60% of all published material in *NPF* (outside of editorials and book reviews) from the journal's beginning through the prior issue (12:2). Beyond these main areas of emphasis, the journal has traditionally featured a few additional topics closely related to nonprofit policy. In particular, the growth of social enterprise over the past three decades or so has had a profound impact on the evolution of nonprofit policy broadly conceived (e.g., Abramson and Billings 2019; Cooney et al. 2016). The social enterprise space encompasses a focus on the business operations of nonprofits with implications for the commercialization, marketization, or economization of the sector (Alexander and Fernandez 2021); the implications for nonprofits of operating in market environments with competition among nonprofits and between nonprofits and for-profits (e.g., Ashley 2014; Harrison and Thornton 2014; Seaman, Wilsker, and Young 2014); and the boundary-blurring and boundary-spanning hybridization of organizations and welfare regimes (e.g., Gidron 2010; Jönsson 2019; Toepler 2018). Hybridization, of course, also entails the development of new social finance and investment mechanisms to foster social innovation on both sides of the nonprofit/for-profit divide (e.g., Albertson et al. 2020; Ferris and Graddy 2020).

Table 1: Distribution of NPF articles by thematic focus, 2010–2021.

Government financing and collaboration	26%
Regulation and accountability	20%
Advocacy	14%
Social enterprise and sector boundaries	10%
INGOs and cross-national issues	10%
Policy field analyses	9%
Not elsewhere classified	9%

The analysis of nonprofit policy in inter- and trans-national perspectives, on the one hand, and from the vantage points of specific policy fields, on the other, are *NPF*'s third and fourth major foci. Transnational NGOs face significantly different policy environments than their domestically-focused counterparts, having to contend at times with conflicting policy environments in their various countries of operation. Government/nonprofit relationships may differ between levels of government within countries as well as between countries. In many non-Western countries, there are additional layers of government, specifically supra-national and foreign government interactions with local NGOs, to take into account in understanding government/nonprofit relations. United Nations' interventions (e.g., World Health Organization involvement in fighting infectious disease outbreaks in Africa) or foreign official donor agencies pursuing democratization strategies often result in different kinds of interactions with INGOs or local nonprofits than host governments have with these same organizations (e.g., Chikoto 2015; Khan 2016; Pallas and Sidel 2020; Prakash 2019; Shieh 2018). About four out of 10 articles published in *NPF* thus far (outside of editorials and book reviews) discuss various issues based on cases outside the U.S., and *NPF* will continue to welcome articles that offer inter- and trans-national perspectives.

Finally, exploring how different policies in different fields (e.g., arts, education, human services, environment) affect nonprofits will also continue to be an important interest of *NPF* (e.g., Haslam, Nesbit, and Christensen 2019; Henrekson et al. 2020; Smith and Phillips 2016; Wang and AbouAssi 2021). These impacts may depend on the constellation of intergovernmental relations, that is the relative importance that national, regional, and local governments play in shaping the respective policy field; field-specific regulatory and support needs; and the tools of government that are deployed in different fields (e.g., grants vs. contracts vs. vouchers).

2 Types of Submissions

Future issues of *NPF* will stay focused on academically-oriented, full-scale research articles, but we will also continue pursuing special features, alternating

among policy briefs, research reports, commentaries, case studies, interviews, and book reviews, as outlets for more applied work and venues for presenting novel policy ideas. Guidelines for these different kinds of articles follow:

- *Research Articles* (peer review, 5000–8000 words): Full, theoretical/conceptual and empirical research articles addressing: the effect of government policies and tools on nonprofits; nonprofit advocacy activities and their effect on policy; civil society and social movements seeking social change; other significant aspects of the government/nonprofit relationship; development and institutional contexts of social enterprise.
- *Research Notes* (peer review, 3000–4000 words): Research Notes are research-based, short articles presenting policy-relevant findings or suggesting novel policy approaches with a focus on informing academic debate on the topic. They may be more descriptive than analytical, or present novel ideas or concepts with limited data.
- *Policy Briefs* (peer review, 3000–4000 words): Policy Briefs present research-informed discussions of current policies and policy proposals with a focus on informing policy makers. They introduce a policy topic, provide an overview of relevant research, and either advocate for a position or lay out policy options with a recommendation.
- *Commentaries* (editorial review, 2000–3000 words): Research-informed, opinion-based discussion of contemporary policy developments, current debates in the field, or proposals for policy reform.
- *Case studies* (peer review, 2000–4000 words): Teaching cases or analytical case studies.
- *Interviews* (editorial review, 2000–4000 words): Interviews with leaders in the field reflecting on important nonprofit policy issues.
- *Book reviews* (editorial review, 2000–3000 words): Reviews of recently published books focused on nonprofits and public policy.

In addition to inviting individual submissions, we also welcome proposals for special issues of *NPF*. These proposals, and other suggestions and comments, can be emailed to us at E-mail: npf@gmu.edu.

3 Conclusion

Dennis and Linda laid an outstanding foundation for *NPF*, recognized with a second quartile ranking in the most recent Scopus-based Scimago Journal Ranking, and we expect to build on their legacy and help guide the journal from the Emerging Sources into the Social Science Citation Index.

The three of us very much look forward to working with our publisher; generous funders at the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), the Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, the Urban Institute, and our home base, the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University; editorial board members; authors; and reviewers as we begin an exciting second decade of *NPF*.

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Co-Editors-in-Chief
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