GOVERNMENT–NONPROFIT RELATIONS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: EVOLUTION, THEMES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

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SUMMARY
This overview article for the Symposium on Government–Nonprofit Relations in Comparative Perspective summarizes our current understanding of government–nonprofit relations, addresses several themes emerging from the collective papers and Symposium discussions, and discusses new and evolving trends in government–nonprofit relations. The review of government–nonprofit relations encompasses governance models and their incorporation of nonprofits, sector failures and their contribution to government–nonprofit relationships, and cross-sectoral analytic frameworks. Themes addressed include the material and normative benefits sought through nonprofits; various features of government–nonprofit interactions, including their increasing range and multiple facets, the impact of origins, relationship dynamism, and impacts; and what is public and what is private. The article concludes with the identification of selected new and evolving trends, including the influence of information technology on organizational structures and processes, the rise of supranational spheres of government–nonprofit interaction, the continuing tension between cooperation and identity maintenance, and simultaneous global lesson sharing and an emphasis on local-level problem-solving, where nonprofits are viewed as a means to maintaining continuity and redefining community. The article situates our understanding of government–nonprofit relations in a comparative perspective that accounts for dominant global paradigms, increasing interdependence among actors and nations, and evolving models of governance at all levels. Copyright © 2002 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION
In today’s world, what the state, the market and the nonprofit sector can and should do are topics that lie at the heart of discourse on societal governance at all levels. Public debate draws upon, and is frequently polarized by, stereotypes and prejudices. Governments are seen as monolithic, intrusive, clumsy and bloated; critics call for downsizing, contracting out and business-like practices. Markets are perceived to allocate resources most effectively and to provide least-cost solutions most responsively. However, some view markets as hard-edged and uncaring, favouring private over societal interests. Nonprofits are considered softer and kind hearted, able to mobilize voluntary effort, linked to communities, and values driven. These popular stereotypes often provoke calls for changes that favour one sector over the others, and underestimate the extent to which the three sectors interact.

A deeper view of the governance landscape exposes the connections and linkages among all three sectors, and emphasizes not simply their differences but their interrelationships. The focus of this Symposium is on government–nonprofit relations, a topic of increasing interest around the world. Our interest is in moving beyond stereotypes and overly simple prescriptions to enhance understanding of how governments and nonprofits interact, and whether their interactions provide responsive, accountable and efficient solutions to societal problems that no single sector can address independently. This consideration involves more than just public service delivery arrangements. It raises questions of democracy, citizenship, representation, equity, and values that concern the appropriate boundary between state and society. It also raises issues of trade-offs. For example, in some cases contracting between governments and nonprofits has lowered costs of service provision (an efficiency gain), but

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by shifting production to non-unionized providers outside the public sector it has weakened organized labour (thereby contributing to increasing the power of government).

The Symposium assembles a diversity of experience and ideas related to the topic. The papers are diverse both in their spatial context—local, national and supranational levels in Africa, Central Asia, France, Europe and the United States; and in their substantive focus—governance, urban services, economic development, health sector reform, Internet advocacy, and other social policies and programmes. Each draws on different bodies of literature and practice, confirming the multidisciplinary nature of this field of inquiry and affording opportunities to examine these specific contributions in light of government–nonprofit relations more generally.

This overview article both sets the scene and discusses some common themes and issues. It is organized in two parts. Part I summarizes our current understanding of government–nonprofit relations. It reviews governance models and their incorporation of nonprofits; discusses how government, market and voluntary sector failures have contributed to new types of government–nonprofit relationships; and presents selected cross-sectoral analytic frameworks. As a field of study and an arena for action, government–nonprofit relations are both complex and chaotic. Much remains ill defined, and no comprehensive theory exists to describe the complexity or integrate various concepts.

Part II addresses several themes emerging from the collective papers and Symposium discussions. While the Symposium does not resolve these themes, the papers (individually and collectively) contribute new ideas and perspectives to the associated debates, seeking, in the words of two of the participants, to ‘inject order into chaos’ (Brainard and Siplon). Some of the questions addressed are long-standing, continuously evolving ones, such as: what do we seek from the nonprofit sector, and, by extension, has this changed over time? And what is public and what is private? Other questions focus on contemporary applications; for example, how do governments and nonprofits interact today, and with what results? What are the new factors influencing government–nonprofit relations? The article concludes with implications for current theory and practice of government–nonprofit relations and suggests directions for continuing inquiry.

MODELS, FRAMEWORKS, AND CONCEPTS

Government–nonprofit relations have been examined from multiple angles. Most fundamentally, a significant amount of effort has gone into defining and describing the nonprofit sector and how it relates to the state in various countries around the world, in an effort to clarify the key elements of the sector and to allow for meaningful comparison (Salamon and Anheier, 1997). A major feature of the sector is its diversity, both within and across countries. This diversity can affect the potential comparative advantages and roles of governments and nonprofits, as well as their relationships. It also raises caveats for the generalizability of conclusions regarding how government–nonprofit relations should be structured and what outcomes can be expected. However, despite these problems, the theory and the practice regarding government–nonprofit relations have contributed to clarifying concepts, nuancing analyses and theories, documenting experience, and drawing conclusions. The following selective review discusses evolving governance models, theories on sector failures and comparative frameworks.

Governance and the nonprofit sector

Around the world interest in cooperation between state and non-state actors has grown appreciably over the past several decades. There is wide recognition that societal problems cannot be solved by governments acting on their own, nor can markets be relied upon as the sole alternative to the state. As James (1989), McCarthy et al. (1992) and, more recently, Salamon and Anheier (1997) document, there is a growing role for the nonprofit sector, which is distinct from the state and the market but is connected to both in myriad ways. Identifying and understanding these connections are important to help meet the challenges confronting both rich and poor countries (D. Brinkerhoff, 1999). As Salamon (1994) points out, government–nonprofit interaction will increase significantly in the twenty-first century.

These connections are also reflected in the current interest in governance rather than government. Governance does not merely include the actions of government, but extends beyond government to address the role of citizens,
both individually and organized in various forms of association, and the way groups and communities within society organize to make and implement decisions on matters of general concern. There is a dominant paradigm for governance arrangements, as evidenced by re-engineering in the United States (Gore, 1993); the concepts of pluralism and partnership of the new public management in the United Kingdom (Ferlie et al., 1996); the prominence of the New Zealand model of the new public management (Boston et al., 1996); and the importation of similar models into international donor policy and programmes for developing countries (see, for example, Laking, 1999; Wallis and Dollery, 2001). This paradigm favours a governance framework where market forces are relied upon to solve most societal problems, and therefore pushes for a lean, efficient government whose main role is to support private and voluntary action with a minimum of regulation and interference. Thus the dominant, controlling state gives way to the facilitator, partner state.

Generally, implementation of this governance paradigm includes reform efforts to increase accountability, transparency and responsiveness (democratic governance); to make the policy process more effective (more rational and equitable); and to maximize delivery of high-quality services (e.g., separation of financing and provision). These new governance arrangements have significantly increased intergovernmental and cross-sectoral relationships. Some of these lead to new vertical intergovernmental relations, policies and programmes; for example, involving federal, state and local governments in the United States (Radin and Romzek, 1996); and regions, departments and boroughs in France (see Mizrahi-Tchernonog, 1992). Others extend beyond the public sector to link with the private and nonprofit sectors. As a function of these intersectoral linkages, new horizontal relationships among the public, private and nonprofit sectors have emerged. Some of the most innovative arrangements occur at the local level, for example, neighbourhood councils in the state of California (Musso, 1999), and welfare provision in the boroughs of France (Mizrahi-Tchernonog, 1992).

Nonprofits are playing a much more prominent role in public life and the sector’s growth has expanded accordingly. Nonprofits have long been noted in the United States for their ability to address specialized needs (see, for example, Kramer, 1981; Douglas, 1987). This capacity to serve the needs of particular groups in society, as well as individuals, through more comprehensive, holistic approaches is increasingly recognized in Europe as well. Identifying a growing risk of social exclusion in both Western and Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe has called for inclusive partnerships with civil society actors and local public authorities. These partnerships are intended to address the needs of migrants, the disabled and mothers with young children (e.g., health, education, housing, welfare and employment) (Conseil de l’Europe, 1998). As part of their poverty reduction efforts, Western European countries have introduced broad-based local participatory partnerships to address area-specific problems on a coordinated and consensual basis (European Commission, 2000; Silver, 2000). Similar participatory partnerships are pursued in the United States, for example, through the Economic Empowerment Zones.

Government–nonprofit relations as a response to sector failures

The rationale for nonprofit participation, and for government–nonprofit relations more generally, derives from a number of failures associated with each sector; these include market and contract failures, government failure, voluntary failure and even political failure. Most of the failure arguments concentrate on government–nonprofit relations in the context of public service delivery. Theories of the nonprofit sector have long supported their service delivery role. Economic models suggest that nonprofits fill gaps left by standardized service packages (responding to government and market failures), resulting in a greater diversity and customization of services (Weisbrod, 1975), increased competition, and greater efficiency (Hansmann, 1987). From another perspective, nonprofits are seen as more trustworthy than government and private service providers, thus solving principal–agent problems related to contract failure (see Mansbridge, 1998; Douglas, 1987; Lipsky and Smith, 1989–1990).
Such models support a third-party government solution to what some perceive as the excessive growth of the welfare state (see Salamon, 1987, 1989), where the private sector—including nonprofits—is considered a more efficient and effective service deliverer.\(^4\) One reason for this efficiency is that nonprofits face fewer requirements for equity and accountability than government service providers, and hence are less bureaucratic and more flexible (see Douglas, 1987).

On the other hand, the nonprofit sector has also been criticized. Two widely recognized frameworks have articulated nonprofits’ weaknesses and greatly informed theories of the sector. Kramer (1981, p. 265) identifies four characteristic vulnerabilities: (1) institutionalization, or ‘a process of creeping formalization’; (2) goal deflection, or the displacement of ends by means, such as fundraising; (3) minority rule, in which NGOs reflect their philanthropic origins rather than their clientele; and (4) ineffectuality. Similarly, Salamon (1987) outlines four voluntary failures: (1) philanthropic insufficiency, rooted in NGOs’ limited scale and resources; (2) philanthropic particularism, reflecting NGOs’ choice of clientele and projects; (3) philanthropic paternalism, where those who control the most resources are able to control community priorities; and (4) philanthropic amateurism.

These voluntary failures parallel market and government failures. In other words, each sector is subject to particular failings that contribute to or detract from its logical selection as an appropriate service provider. The contrasts between the government and nonprofit sectors are highlighted in a comparison of the third-party government model, and Salamon’s voluntary failure framework (Salamon, 1987). In the first instance, nonprofits are presumed to be more efficient, flexible, personal, and higher quality, more holistic service providers; whereas government is viewed as a wasteful, generic (‘one-size-fits-all’), impersonal, inflexible and fragmented service provider. According to the model of voluntary failure, on the other hand, government’s potential advantages as a service provider become evident. Government is in principle more reliable, equitable and democratic, legally mandated and professional.

While these theories inform our understanding of the potential strengths and weaknesses of these service providers, they do not apply universally. For example, some nonprofits’ increasing sophistication and capacity, as well as their internal democratization and client focus, make stereotypes based on voluntary failure less applicable as we enter the twenty-first century (see, for example, Hulme and Edwards, 1997). Further, governments’ efficiency–equity trade-offs are not necessarily inevitable (see James and Birdsall, 1992). However, these theories’ underlying assumptions and generalizations do inform public policy.

Despite their implicit incorporation of responsiveness to citizens, these theories mainly emphasize nonprofits’ service delivery, rather than more political roles. Indeed, analyses of government–nonprofit relations focus largely on service delivery solutions. This is the primary emphasis of the new public management discussed above. Such models can be criticized precisely because this narrow instrumental focus favours efficiency and effectiveness outcomes at the expense of other societal values (e.g., equity, fairness, community). Service beneficiaries want to be more than customers; they want to retain their role as citizens (see, for example, Ferlie et al., 1996). We argue that examination of government–nonprofit relations should include attention both to the service delivery (project/programme) and the advocacy (policy, representation) sides of the equation. In this sense, we can also discuss government–nonprofit relations as a response to political failure.\(^5\) Nonprofits can represent the interests of weak and marginalized groups as intermediaries, or build social capital among these groups to enable them to command more responsiveness from government agencies directly. Cross-sectoral frameworks address both dimensions to varying degrees.

Cross-sectoral frameworks

Several frameworks have been developed to differentiate various types of intergovernmental and cross-sectoral relationships. Coston (1998), for example, develops a macro-framework that enables a rapid assessment of the

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\(^4\)Under third-party government, the government shares a substantial degree of discretion over the operation of government programmes with third-party implementers; i.e., government raises resources and sets societal priorities, and private business or nonprofit organizations organize the production of goods and services (Salamon, 1989).

\(^5\)Political failure refers to a variant of the principal–agent problem in institutional economics, where government agents are insufficiently responsive to citizens or their elected representatives (principals).
general state of government–nonprofit relations at the national level. Relationship types include: repression, rivalry and competition (where government resists institutional pluralism); and cooperation, complementarity and collaboration (where government accepts institutional pluralism). Coston acknowledges that these types can be identified on a case-by-case basis, particular to specific nonprofit organizations and government agencies, or policy areas. Her framework helps to clarify the relationship between the availability of political and policy space and what roles nonprofits can fulfil. For example, where government–nonprofit relations are characterized by repression and rivalry, the options for nonprofit policy advocacy and challenges to the state on behalf of excluded groups will be limited.

Like Coston, Najam (2000) develops a model that incorporates the potential for both service delivery and advocacy. He argues that relationship types are determined by the strategic interests of both governments and NGOs, not solely by contextual factors or government initiative. By extension, relationship types are based on an examination of respective ends and means. His four C’s model is comprised of the following relationship types: cooperation, where government and NGOs share similar ends and means; confrontation, where both ends and means are dissimilar; complementarity, where the ends are similar, but the means differ; and co-optation, where governments and NGOs pursue similar means, but towards different ends.

Emphasizing service delivery, Gidron et al. (1992) specifically examine government–nonprofit relations in terms of social welfare systems. They identify four models: (1) government dominant, where government is both the principal funder and deliverer of human services; (2) third sector dominant, where the primary responsibility for both financing and delivering human services is left to the nonprofit sector; (3) dual, where government and nonprofits operate in distinct spheres, with little interaction; and (4) collaborative, where the two sectors operate with a high level of overlap, with government typically providing financing, and nonprofits emphasizing service delivery. They further distinguish these latter two models according to the degree to which nonprofits have discretion in service delivery. This leads to the vendor variant, where nonprofits function as agents of the state; and the partnership variant, where nonprofit organizations enjoy a significant degree of discretion in the operation of public programmes.

Young (2000) takes a multi-layered approach to understanding government–nonprofit relations. He distinguishes three alternative views: (1) nonprofits operate independently as supplements to government, (2) they work as complements to government in a partnership relationship, or (3) they are engaged in an adversarial relationship of mutual accountability with government. His historical review of the United States and subsequent comparative study of the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel and Japan supports the notion that all three views can emerge sequentially as the nonprofit sector evolves, and they can coexist in multiple layers at any one point in time. He concludes that no single lens is sufficient to provide a full understanding of government–nonprofit relations in a particular country and the relative emphasis and operationalization of each of these three views will vary in each case.

Such frameworks seek to encapsulate the complexity inherent in the variety and contexts of relationships, while still enhancing our understanding of options and possibilities. The latter are also informed by driving concepts particular to specific nation states. In the United States, for example, the heavy emphasis in reengineering is on devolving service provision by contracting out to the private and nonprofit sectors. European governance models have also pursued service provision through these sectors, but following neo-corporatist ‘dirigiste’ principles through which the state plays a much stronger managerial role.

COMPARING GOVERNMENT–NONPROFIT RELATIONS: THEMES FROM THE SYMPOSIUM

Building on our current understanding of, and analytic perspectives on, government–nonprofit relations, the contributions to the Symposium shed light on several questions of interest to scholars, policy-makers and practitioners:

- What do we seek from the nonprofit sector?
- What features emerge from a finer-grained and more comprehensive picture of government–nonprofit relations?
- What is public, what is private, and where do nonprofits fit?
Symposium participants did not begin with these questions; rather they emerged as themes from the particular perspectives of the individual papers, and from the comparative discussion and search for patterns during the Symposium meetings. The following amplifies these questions, and highlights key points from the various contributions that address them.

What do we seek from the nonprofit sector?

What we seek from the nonprofit sector depends largely on who is doing the seeking, and who is initiating government–nonprofit relations. The terrain in which nonprofits operate has substantially grown in complexity, particularly in the last two decades. The nonprofit sector originated to serve particular interests and memberships independent of the state. As long as this remained the focus, nonprofits had relatively straightforward accountability and responsiveness requirements, centring primarily on beneficiaries and/or members, and individual donors. These stakeholders seek not only tangible benefits, such as particular services, but values-based ones as well. For individual donors, for example, supporting a nonprofit represents an expression of their values and priorities, whether these be of a religious, humanitarian or political nature.

The general terrain has not changed, though these accountability requirements now compete with several others as the range of nonprofits’ stakeholders has significantly expanded, especially in light of changing government–nonprofit relations. The value and contribution of nonprofits are now assessed not only by beneficiaries, members and individual donors, but by government, the media and the general public as well. As nonprofits have entered into cooperative relations with government, sometimes as contracted service deliverers, they have faced the challenge of balancing the associated benefits with remaining accountable to their primary constituents (i.e., beneficiaries and members), who may and often do have conflicting expectations. This tension is particularly highlighted when examining the balance between nonprofits’ government–sanctioned service delivery roles and their traditional political roles—ranging from representation to advocacy to radical political mobilization. The articles in this Symposium reveal the nature of what is sought from the nonprofit sector and identify and highlight tensions between nonprofits’ material and values-based benefits, accountability to various stakeholders, and service delivery and political roles. They reveal the complexity of the nonprofit terrain, distinguishing among various types and sub-groups of nonprofits and demonstrating how these variances influence the government–nonprofit relationship.

Jennifer Brinkerhoff’s article presents a framework for understanding partnerships between governments and nonprofits. She distinguishes partnership from other relationship types according to two defining dimensions: the maintenance of government’s and the nonprofits’ organization identity, and mutuality (e.g., in decision making, resource and responsibility sharing and accountability). Relationship types are dynamic and encompass partnership, contracting, extension and co-optation or gradual absorption. Within partnerships, advantages of nonprofits are sought for a number of reasons, ranging from a pragmatic emphasis on the effective and efficient attainment of mutually determined ends, to a more normative emphasis on values-based approaches to the means to reach those ends. Together, these contributions of partnerships—both pragmatic and normative means and ends—are believed to produce a value-added beyond that which each actor could produce alone. While difficult to articulate on a case-by-case basis, these synergies are the ultimate aim of partnership work.

Bouget and Prouteau examine government–nonprofit relations at the supranational level, examining the case of the Directives on Equal Treatment and Anti-Discrimination of the European Union (EU). This case demonstrates nonprofits’ role in securing new and reformed policy, based on the values and beliefs of their stakeholders. Here, nonprofits played a fundamental role in advocating for policy that in some cases far surpassed the directives from their national bases. Supranational networks among nonprofits and nonprofit associations addressing racism at the national levels were formed to lobby the EU. At the national level, these nonprofits act as watchdogs of both governments, noting the flawed policies and implementation in their home countries, as well as citizens, where national movements (such as ‘SOS Racisme’ in France) emerged in response to xenophobic sentiments. At

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6Douglas (1987) cites the legal definition of charities in English common law in the seventeenth century as establishing the basis for the nonprofit sector’s independence from church and state. For more on the historical evolution of the nonprofit sector, see also Hammack (2001).
the supranational level, nonprofits initiated their own policy formulation. The Starting Line Group proposed a directive in 1998 in response to the absence of a coherent EU policy on combating racism, and subsequently stimulated policy debates on related proposals throughout the European Union. Once Directives were adopted in 2000, the Starting Line Group disbanded. The national constituencies of these nonprofits expected them to express their values and belief in equality and human rights, as well as produce tangible policy outcomes.

Goldsmith also addresses nonprofits’ contribution to advocacy and representation, in addition to the provision of member services, in his analysis of business associations in Africa. Here again, nonprofits are perceived as important watchdogs, expected to improve governance, while at the same time representing private efforts to organize in pursuit of special interests. With respect to members, he finds that business associations in Africa are somewhat effective in providing information and policy updates to members, and in building social capital (the ability to trust and work cooperatively with others) among member firms. In this sense, international donors who fund these associations expect them to serve public as well as private interests. In addition to promoting economic growth, the associations are expected to improve governance; presumably these benefits will extend to policies and services beyond the particular business interests of association members. Donors also tend to support the notion that social capital even in limited circles is an important resource from which social capital within the broader society can emerge.

Derick Brinkerhoff examines a donor- and government-initiated effort to facilitate nonprofits in support of service delivery, looking at Family Group Practice Associations (FGPAs) in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Family Group Practices (FGPs) for primary care service delivery were created as part of a broader health sector reform and privatization effort. FGPAs were created to support FGPs, specifically as vehicles for receiving material, financial, technical and training support, as well as a means for FGPs to organize themselves to represent their views, concerns and needs to government officials. From the government perspective, FGPAs were created to facilitate an effective alternative service delivery mechanism; this includes a self-regulation role, where FGPAs set quality-of-care standards, monitor performance and accredit health care providers. On the one hand, government sought efficiency and outreach capacity that it lacked; on the other hand, newly privatized health providers sought a mechanism for voice vis-à-vis government.

Brainard and Siplon compare radical and traditional health advocacy nonprofits and examine the implications of their use of the Internet for providing member benefits and relating with government. They find that the Internet has enhanced the ability to expand and intensify solidary member benefits (e.g., a sense of belonging to a particular community), since geography has become inconsequential, and anonymity facilitates communications about sensitive health issues. Furthermore, the Internet affords opportunities to meet very specialized needs of members, not only directly through the nonprofit’s activities, but also from member to member. However, the Internet has also highlighted the tensions nonprofits can face in maintaining responsiveness to multiple, sometimes contradictory stakeholders, especially with the expanded transparency the Internet affords. Brainard and Siplon confirm the need to produce a range of benefits to deal with conflicting demands and expectations, and they examine how the choice of missions and strategies of individual nonprofits have impacts on nonprofit relations with government.

Warin’s article examines the nonprofit sector in France, focusing on associations involved in policy implementation and advocacy in combating social exclusion. Here, nonprofits are viewed as particularly advantaged at reaching out to excluded populations and either linking them to available public services or delivering specialized services that address their needs. Warin traces the evolution of government relations with associations from parallel service delivery, to contracting, to becoming advocates and mediating structures for socially excluded populations in formal policy processes. The associations’ constituents look to them to represent their interests; the general public trusts that the associations represent values and morals that legitimate their role as representatives and mediators; and, more pragmatically in terms of their service delivery role, public officials hold expectations that their policy proposals are correct given their specialized expertise. Warin notes that associations with religious origins take a values-based approach to social exclusion, which leads them to focus on the ‘moral’ needs of excluded populations, such as self-esteem and escape from the psychological culture of poverty and exclusion. Secular associations, on the other hand, take a rights-based approach, helping their constituencies obtain the
services to which they have a legal right, and lobbying public agencies forcefully to remove barriers and increase access.

Finally, Musso et al.’s article looks at faith organizations (FOs). Like the social urgency government–nonprofit collaboration in France, the city of Los Angeles is looking to FOs to reach out to socially excluded groups in order to engage them in the neighbourhood council movement. FOs are targeted due to their historical contributions to political organizing in urban areas of the United States. City officials view FOs from an instrumental perspective. Not only are they logical conduits of information and outreach and for identifying existing community leaders, they also hold potential for engaging and expanding social capital, including the establishment of trust and credibility, and commitment to collective endeavours. The authors delineate a range of FO resources, including organizational and cognitive/emotional, and distinguish among the types of FOs that will be most likely to engage in the community organizing process in support of neighbourhood councils. One important dimension is whether or not the FO is ‘this-worldly’ or ‘other-worldly’. This determines the FO’s general orientation and values, which may or may not prioritize civic engagement. Another dimension is the FO’s membership orientation, whether it is civic or sanctuary oriented. This dimension influences the priority to engage in issues that extend beyond its congregation, and also whether or not the FO is likely to take an interest-group approach, or a coalition-building strategy. Thus, the type of FO will determine the nature of its relationship to the local political structure and government administration, ranging from no relationship at all, advocacy to the neighbourhood councils once they are formed, or direct engagement and organizing in support of establishing neighbourhood councils and their by-laws.

Whether implicitly or explicitly, each of the papers confirms that the instrumentalist/efficiency-oriented view of government–nonprofit relations as promoted by the dominant governance paradigm rarely explains the full extent of a particular relationship. Increasingly, government–nonprofit relations are adding or emphasizing values, and a social capital and civic engagement orientation. This orientation reflects nonprofits’ organization identity, particularly their commitment to specified constituencies, and also suggests that economically instrumental relationships alone are insufficient to negotiate the demands of an increasingly diverse, urbanized, global and technologically sophisticated population. The values emphasis, social capital creation and civic engagement orientation are also instrumental, as a means to social and political objectives, as well as economic efficiency.

**Features of government–nonprofit interactions**

The descriptions above illustrate the vast range of government–nonprofit relationships and their complexity. However, they also suggest some features of government–nonprofit relations that help to paint a finer-grained and more comprehensive picture of the nature of these interactions.

**The increasing range and multiple facets of government–nonprofit relations**

The Symposium confirms what nonprofit scholars have documented around the world: that there is a greater number and variety of relationships and greater complexity than is often recognized. In the industrialized world, and in developing and transitioning countries, governments look to nonprofits as well as the private sector to address needs and fill service gaps. The benefits of institutional pluralism are widely recognized, although as Goldsmith’s and D. Brinkerhoff’s articles illustrate, developing and transitioning country governments in some cases remain suspicious of nonprofits, particularly when they engage in actions that are perceived to challenge the state or constitute potential sources of countervailing political power. Thus, government repression, rivalry and adversarial relationships with the nonprofit sector have not disappeared.

One of the most frequently cited forms of government–nonprofit interaction is partnership. J. Brinkerhoff refines our understanding of partnerships. She argues that partnership rhetoric is overused, devaluing the essence of what partnership is, as well as clouding the analytic use of the term. By identifying partnership’s defining dimensions and value-added, she categorizes partnership relationships in terms of the degree of mutuality in partners’ objectives, and the extent to which they retain their distinct organizational identities. Using these two dimensions, she contrasts partnership with other relationship types, including contracting, extension and gradual absorption or co-optation. Applying this framework to the case of French associations working on social exclusion, for example,
reveals that the nature of the government–nonprofit relationship encompasses both partnership (for policy formulation) and contracting (for service delivery) (Warin). In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan the FGPA–government relationship can be seen at present to be extension or co-optation, with partnership more of a potential for the future (D. Brinkerhoff).

Many of the articles demonstrate that government–nonprofit relations today can encompass simultaneously service delivery, policy advocacy and constituency/beneficiary empowerment. Some earlier analyses of nonprofit roles envisaged a continuum of roles from service delivery to advocacy to empowerment along which nonprofits moved, gradually replacing one role with another (see, for example, Korten, 1990). While it is obviously the case that particular nonprofits can and do specialize in one role or another, the Symposium highlighted instances of individual nonprofits fulfilling multiple roles, for example, social urgency associations in France (Warin) and anti-discrimination associations working simultaneously at the national and EU levels (Bouget and Prouteau). Another example comes from Africa, where Goldsmith notes that relations between business associations and governments can be potentially cooperative as well as adversarial. Governments can improve efficiency and effectiveness if they have feedback on policy implications for the business sector and the economy that the associations can provide. This can assist governments in ensuring progress towards broader economic growth priorities. At the same time, the relationship may be adversarial, where business associations seek to enhance accountability and actively lobby for regulatory reform.

The Symposium identified another feature associated with the complexity of government–nonprofit relations besides the pursuit of multiple, simultaneous objectives. This relates to how nonprofits structure themselves to interact with governments. We refer here to structural and procedural isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This means that as nonprofits enter into relationships with government, they increasingly organize themselves to mirror and imitate characteristics of how their public sector counterparts operate and are structured. Sometimes this isomorphism is a function of traditional versus more radical objectives, where nonprofits pursuing more traditional paths exhibit higher degrees of similarity with their client/funders, as is illustrated by Brainard and Siplon’s analysis of health sector Internet-based nonprofits.

In other situations, isomorphism emerges as a function of nonprofits’ search for the best way to interact with government both for purposes of attracting resources and achieving influence. The well-recognized trend toward increased professionalization in the nonprofit sector exemplifies this situation (see, for example, Hulme and Edwards, 1997; Bush, 1992; Van der Heijden, 1987). Among the Symposium articles, a good illustration is Warin’s analysis of how social urgency associations consciously pursued a policy influence strategy based on informal connections with political elites, thereby closely mirroring the informal nature of the French senior-level policy process. In Bouget and Prouteau’s EU case, the anti-discrimination nonprofits’ decision to organize into associations of associations effectively mirrored the national and supranational structures that they needed to interact with. Similarly, in Central Asia, the FGPA sought to create national federations in anticipation of interacting with government at multiple levels as health sector reform progressed (D. Brinkerhoff). The Los Angeles neighbourhood council case illustrates the absence of cross-sectoral isomorphism; FOs whose objectives were ‘other-worldly’ tended to be less willing or able to fulfil the function the city wanted them to, in part because the way they operated did not match with local government (Musso et al.).

The impact of origins
Collectively the articles demonstrate how the origins of the government–nonprofit relationship can influence the nature of the interactions between the two. When governments initiate relations with nonprofits, the interaction patterns tend to be top-down and to focus on nonprofits’ role as service providers. When nonprofits are the initiators, interactions tend to be bottom-up with an emphasis on policy advocacy and constituency empowerment. As noted above, some of the articles present cases where nonprofits are engaged in service delivery, advocacy and empowerment simultaneously; thus the patterns that characterize the original interactions can evolve quickly, and in some circumstances it may be difficult to determine which sector has led the process. J. Brinkerhoff’s framework helps to clarify the link between origins and interaction patterns, with a focus on partnerships. In principle,
partnerships are mutually determined, but one sector may be the primary initiator; together the partners determine and agree on the relationship parameters and roles, and there is presumed mutual dependency.

While nonprofits are often presumed to be the initiators in policy advocacy interaction, the articles on France and the EU demonstrate how government can take the lead in establishing formal consultations with nonprofits (Warin, and Bouget and Prouteau). This pattern is consistent with the corporatist approach to state–society interaction common in much of Europe, where the government formally designates groups as ‘social and economic partners’ (see, for example, Salamon and Anheier, 1998; Ullman, 1998). In the France and EU cases, nonprofits still did much to pave the way for their participation. In France, Warin emphasizes associations’ preparation for such policy dialogue, including defining their sphere of expertise, establishing credibility as specialists and representatives of the targeted population, and demonstrating these capacities through the delivery of contracted services with the government. In the case of the EU anti-discrimination directives, associations of nonprofits were highly proactive in preparing for their invitation into the policy debate by drafting their own policy proposal (Bouget and Prouteau). Thus, while government–nonprofit relations in some cases starts as top-down, they may quickly evolve to include bottom-up elements as well.

Bottom-up advocacy is also illustrated by the Internet-based health nonprofits (Brainard and Siplon). However, in this instance the relationship is more complex. Radical nonprofits are more directed at government policy that establishes the rights of people who are afflicted with particular diseases, and sets parameters for their quality of life. More traditional nonprofits, on the other hand, lobby for financial resources in support of research to find a cure. These nonprofits are dependent on government for its research support and, therefore, must tread carefully in any criticism of current policy and programmes. In this sense, the more traditional nonprofits might be seen to have cooperative relations with government, while radical nonprofits maintain an adversarial relationship.

Several of the articles demonstrate donor and/or government initiation of the government–nonprofit relationship. Both Goldsmith and D. Brinkerhoff describe international donor-funded efforts undertaken, and/or sanctioned, by national governments. In both instances, the roles for nonprofits were determined a priori as part of project design. The government actors appeared most interested in the nonprofits’ potential contributions to health care service delivery (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and to private sector investment (Africa), and were less comfortable with the expected advocacy roles of the targeted nonprofits. The donors, on the other hand, were interested as well in how new government–nonprofit interactions could contribute to democratization. The Central Asia case illustrates the tensions the FGPAs face in clarifying their identity and autonomy, knowing that they are subject to government’s power.

These articles, along with the case of Los Angeles’ neighbourhood councils (Musso et al.), illustrate a top-down origin of the government–nonprofit relationship, with the expectation that implementation will follow from the bottom up. Under these circumstances, the initiator (whether a donor or a government) must not only assess the capacity of targeted nonprofits, but in some instances may also have to build it. In such cases, mutual dependency may be more clear, if the benefits of the proposed relationship are a priority for the targeted nonprofit. This remains to be seen with the FOs in Los Angeles. This implies that donor- and government-initiated relationships must provide strong incentives for the nonprofits to engage with government, and/or they will need to cultivate demand and capacity.

**Relationship dynamism**

The papers confirm the dynamism of government–nonprofit relationships. This suggests that ‘snapshot’ efforts to characterize government–nonprofit relations can quickly become outdated as relationships evolve and change. Several of the articles demonstrate a circular process of engagement, feedback, adjustment and re-engagement. This dynamism is clearly shown in Warin’s description of the evolution of social urgency nonprofits, particularly secular associations, and public officials. This evolution begins even prior to actual intersectoral engagement. In response to perceived opportunities to engage with government for service delivery, social urgency associations strategize to be recognized as specialists in reaching particular disadvantaged groups. Once selected for contracted services, the associations tend to become more involved in policy dialogues. Here, they participate in formal
decision-making processes with respect to specific programmes and policies. Through this engagement, association representatives may cultivate personal relationships with government officials, enabling them to informally lobby as well. On the government side, in response to the dramatic increase in contracting with associations, there is now a movement to enforce more formal accountability mechanisms, including outcome and financial reporting.

Bouget and Prouteau’s description of the advocacy process for the EU Directives on Equal Treatment and Anti-Discrimination parallels the evolutionary and iterative process in the social urgency policy arena. The sector itself adapted to opportunities in the policy environment and nonprofits own moral priorities. Nonprofits organized themselves into broader associations of nonprofits at the national and supranational levels in order to push for the Directives. Associations perceived the potential for greater impact and scope of such Directives at the EU level; once passed, the Directives would support the national-level nonprofits in their efforts to improve rights within their respective countries. These associations of nonprofits, such as the Starting Line Group, initiated their own policy formulation process and proceeded to lobby and participate in formal EU policy work.

**Impacts of government–nonprofit relations**

Government–nonprofit relations have significant actual and potential impacts in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery, the quality and responsiveness of public policies, the degree of social exclusion, the expression of public values and the building of social capital. These contributions may represent incremental, policy-specific improvements (for example, more efficient and targeted welfare services in a local municipality) and/or broader societal change over time (for example, redefinition of state–citizen interaction, or more democratic governance). Each of the Symposium articles describes the activities of specific nonprofit and government actors, but also addresses issues of broader qualitative social change. This is certainly the hope for FOs in Los Angeles, where their involvement in neighbourhood councils is intended to give effect to a multicultural society where the disadvantaged can participate politically and economically. In France, social urgency associations similarly seek to reform social relations on a national scale, bringing an end to social exclusion. For FGPAs in Central Asia and business associations in Africa, the expected long-term impacts include better governance and more open market economies. While associations of human rights associations in the EU targeted a one-time policy objective and then disbanded, their broader aim is for lasting impact on human rights throughout Europe.

Obviously, desired and desirable outcomes from government–nonprofit interaction, both incremental/short-term and systemic/long-term, are by no means assured. In fact, how relations are structured and operationalized can sometimes inhibit the achievement of intended impacts. This is most notable with respect to issues of organization identity and effectiveness.\(^7\) J. Brinkerhoff points out that partnerships will not attain their desired efficiency, effectiveness and value-added if the organization identity of all of the partners is not maintained. A major rationale for government–nonprofit relations, whether through partnership or other means, is to tap the unique advantages these organizations have to offer. If their identity, the basis for their contributions, wanes over time, those benefits will be lost.

FGPAs in Central Asia, and to some extent business associations in Africa, are still struggling to establish their identity. As entities created by the initiative of others (i.e., donors and government) with associated incentives to follow their creators’ lead, these nonprofits face the challenge of defining their core constituents and developing their unique comparative advantages as nonprofits. On the other hand, links to government can provide incentives to nonprofits to refine their organization identity and specialization. For example, Warin’s discussion of social urgency associations in France shows how competition among nonprofits for policy influence and service delivery contracts has motivated them to develop distinctive identities and competencies.

Related to the impact of government–nonprofit relations on the identities of the respective actors, the literature notes a blurring between the sectors as they increasingly interact (see, for example, Weisbrod, 1997, 1998). In the

\(^7\)Smith (1999, pp. 187–188) confirms that government–nonprofit relations impact the operations of nonprofits, but stresses that specific impacts are mediated by the type of service provided, the nonprofit’s degree of professionalization, the nonprofit’s origin and mission, and other characteristics of the government–nonprofit relationship.
international development arena, nonprofits’ fears about sector blurring as a result of closer relations with government are nicely captured in the subtitle to Hulme and Edwards (1997): ‘too close for comfort?’ Several of the Symposium articles address the blurring issue. In the case of the Internet-based health nonprofits, the radical organizations criticized the more traditional ones for being indistinguishable from the public-sector health establishment (Brainard and Siplon). A similar concern arose with the social urgency associations in France, where some of the actors expressed reservations about being so closely associated with the state through service contracting, preferring to emphasize their advocacy and empowerment objectives, which encouraged a clearer distinction between them and the government (Warin). In Los Angeles, the FOs’ uneasiness with being involved with city government reflects a concern that closer links to the state may compromise their raison d’être and core values, particularly vis-à-vis their constituents (Musso et al.).

Another aspect of sector blurring is between nonprofits and the private sector. Particularly for nonprofits engaged in health and social service delivery, the distinction between nonprofit and private is seen by some as little more than a question of legal tax status. This kind of blurring arises in the France social urgency case driven by impending changes in public procurement and contracting regulations that would treat nonprofits and private firms identically as service contractors. Here, the notion of distinctive identities is inherently linked to conceptions of public and private, discussed below.

What is public, what is private?

Government–nonprofit relations both address and further complicate the divide between public and private. Salamon and Anheier (1997) note a general acceptance of the framework of market and state, public and private, in dividing the spheres of social life, despite the diversity of institutional reality across nations. Adding a third, nonprofit, sector ‘muddies the waters’. The third sector encompasses a wide range of entities—including service provider organizations, religious organizations, membership organizations and social clubs—whose unifying definition is what they are not, as opposed to what they are. However, there is a near-universal assumption that nonprofits in one way or another serve the ‘public good’. Associating this ambiguous actor with government complicates what is already a disputed territory of public versus private.

Interpretation regarding what and how government–nonprofit relations contribute to the public versus the private good hinges in part upon social and political cultures (see Calhoun, 1998). The papers in this Symposium address government–nonprofit relations in the context of a variety of cultures, each with differing boundaries between public and private and with particular consequences for governance. The pluralist governance model, which characterizes the United States, operates on the assumption that the public good is an aggregation of private interests. This approach legitimizes lobbying actions of all kinds, assuming that no single interest will capture the state. In this model, nonprofits are private actors, separate from government. In the corporatist governance models common to Europe and much of the rest of the world, the state takes the lead in defining the public interest, albeit in partnership with selected societal actors. Traditionally, these social partners consist primarily of labour unions and employers associations; increasingly they encompass nonprofits representing other, previously excluded societal groups as well. Thus in this model, nonprofits, while still private in the sense of being organizationally distinct from government, become actors with a clear public mandate and function.

The Symposium articles point out that under both pluralist and corporatist governance models, a key function of government–nonprofit relations is to serve as a bridge between the public and the private good. For example, government–nonprofit relations can redress political failures by mobilizing and aggregating private interests around a range of public goods, such as human rights (Bouget and Poutreau, Brainard and Siplon), community solidarity and multiculturalism (Musso et al.), wider access to health and social services (D. Brinkerhoff, Warin, Goddeeris and Weisbrod (1999) examine the conversion phenomenon, where health provider organizations in the United States intentionally convert from one sector to another. Among US political scientists, there are many who challenge this assumption. See Lowi (1979). Silver (1998, p. 141), comparing the United States and France, notes the differences in public–private boundaries that derive from political culture: ‘In the U.S., ‘community’ is conceived as part of the private sphere, whereas in France, ‘civic’ life is an expression of the national community and hence, is deemed public’.

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Brainard and Siplon), and improved government responsiveness and accountability (Goldsmith). However, the relative balance between nonprofits’ promotion of public or private interests is open to debate.\(^{11}\) As Goldsmith points out in the case of business associations in Africa, there is still a concern that promoting such advocacy efforts risks state capture by private interests despite the public benefits to be derived from a policy framework more conducive to private sector investment, with more accountable and responsive public officials.

Other articles pick up the theme of the danger of state capture by nonprofits and the creation of ‘iron triangles’ (Lowi, 1979). For example in the United States, do the lobbying efforts of traditional health nonprofits capture resources for disease research that would be better served addressing broader public interests (Brainard and Siplon)? Warin’s analysis points out the role of cross-sectoral policy elites among the social urgency associations in France and their political counterparts, where informal lobbying through personal relations bypassed more formal policy-making structures and made the distinction between public and private difficult to determine.

Thus, interpretations of what public and private mean, and where one ends and the other begins, greatly influence how we interpret government–nonprofit relationships. We judge them according to our related values as either furthering the public interest or promoting capture by private interests. More subtly, these distinctions influence whether or not such relationships are viewed as a means to public ends, or as an end in and of themselves. While much attention regarding government–nonprofit relations has focused on service delivery, the Symposium contributions note that these intersectoral relationships also address a broader definition of public goods, such as democratic values, representation, citizenship, social capital, a sense of belonging (solidarity), community values and social integration. In examining this wide array of public goods, the various articles assert the importance for analysts of government–nonprofit relations to keep the question posed by Calhoun (1998, p. 21) firmly in view: ‘Which public, whose good?’

NEW AND EVOLVING TRENDS

The papers in this Symposium highlight several new and evolving trends. Some of these are introduced above, and have already received much attention in the literature and practice of government–nonprofit relations. The papers confirm the continuing blurring between the sectors; an expanded range and intensifying pressures of nonprofits’ many stakeholders; the sometimes contradictory, sometimes simultaneous demand for values-based as well as material benefits; and the tension between nonprofits’ service delivery and political roles. Among the new trends addressed is the influence of information technology on organizational structures and processes. Brainard and Siplon demonstrate that information technology has changed the way nonprofits relate to their own constituents as well as with each other, and these changed relationships in turn impact their relationships with government.

The rise of supranational spheres of government–nonprofit interaction represents another trend. The simultaneous interaction of governments and nonprofits at multiple levels has encouraged both parallel structures and varying degrees of isomorphism. This parallelism and isomorphism facilitate reciprocal interplay between national and supranational relations, as Bouget and Prouteau’s analysis of associations at the EU and national European levels shows, where policy decisions at one level affect outcomes at both lower and higher levels.

The phenomenon of isomorphism also highlights the tension between cooperation and identity maintenance. On the one hand, Brainard and Siplon note a significant degree of isomorphism with traditional health advocacy nonprofits seeking substantial support from government to the point that they were criticized as being indistinguishable from their funders. On the other hand, J. Brinkerhoff notes that organization identity maintenance is a defining feature of partnership, which implies that there may be limits to the benefits to be derived from isomorphism. However, Warin’s analysis of social urgency nonprofits in France demonstrates that nonprofits can evolve towards isomorphism while still maintaining organization identity within the context of some roles (i.e., policy formulation) potentially more than others (i.e., contracted service delivery). Further, Bouget and Prouteau clarify that

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\(^{11}\) In her review of nonprofits’ advocacy activities, Reid (1999, p. 291) states that nonprofits may seek to ‘instill their group’s perceptions of the common good into wider notions of the public good or public interests’. On the other hand, nonprofits are increasingly facing the same public scrutiny as other interest groups, leading to proposals for reform of regulations pertaining to nonprofit advocacy.
isomorphism can also be used as a tool for influence, consistent with and potentially reinforcing of nonprofits’ organization identity.

There is a growing consensus regarding governance paradigms, as well as a more general increase in the sharing of policy ideas, both within and across nations. The neighbourhood council movement in Los Angeles, for example, borrowed the policy idea from efforts in other U.S. cities. At the global level, the conceptions of FGPAs in Central Asia and business associations in Africa derive from experience and beliefs elsewhere in the world, particularly with respect to the beneficial functions of a vibrant civil society in the promotion of democratic governance.

At the same time, local-level problem solving is emphasized, from both instrumental and normative perspectives. This encompasses the bottom-up search for solutions exemplified by the neighbourhood council movement in Los Angeles, as well as the expectation that top-down policy will be implemented from the bottom up, for example French social urgency policy (Warin). At the supranational level, this combined emphasis on joining bottom-up with top-down is reflected in the tension between globalisation and devolution—or, as some have called it, ‘glocalization’—and an associated questioning of structural borders. In this context, nonprofits are viewed as a means to maintaining continuity and redefining community. This is evident, for example, in their participation in combating social exclusion in France (Warin), their support of community and specifically neighbourhood councils as a means to deterring secession from the city of Los Angeles (Musso et al.), and in the solidarity they foster through the Internet (Brainard and Siplon).

The Symposium confirms Young’s (2000) contention of simultaneity in government–nonprofit relations. However, where Young approaches this at the sectoral, national level, the articles in this Symposium demonstrate that individual nonprofits maintain a range of government relationships simultaneously. This range includes simultaneous cooperative and adversarial relations, in pursuit of one or more concurrent objectives related to service delivery, policy advocacy and community empowerment.

Finally, the diverse motivations of the nonprofit sector to engage with government, and vice versa, assure that government–nonprofit relations will take many forms. From the nonprofit side, these relationships can be driven, for example, by philosophy and values—e.g., secular versus religious associations in France (Warin), and various orientations of FOs in Los Angeles (Musso et al.)—as well as what they seek from government and its potential import to their mission—e.g., traditional health advocacy nonprofits (Brainard and Siplon). On the government side, important drivers are the need to extend service delivery, and to use public resources efficiently and effectively, although philosophy and values can motivate public sector actors as well. The papers suggest that nonprofits’ contributions of values, social capital and civic engagement may become increasingly important in a globalizing and technological world. The combination of these drivers is likely to be dynamic, with one taking precedence over the others as contexts, priorities and the relative balance among diverse stakeholders change.

The complexity of government–nonprofit relations is not likely to diminish. Indeed, this Symposium confirms both an increase in that complexity and a higher degree of its recognition. Government–nonprofit relations theory and practice are contributing to a deeper understanding of these relationships, including what drives them, what features are possible and potentially desirable to particular actors, and what their implications are for a variety of stakeholders. Not only does the Symposium confirm these lessons theoretically, it situates our understanding of government–nonprofit relations in a comparative perspective that accounts for dominant global paradigms, increasing interdependence among actors and nations, and evolving models of governance at all levels. As the features of these phenomena change so, too, must government–nonprofit relations theory and practice learn and adapt. This Symposium is one among many comparative efforts that seek to refine our understanding of government–nonprofit relations in a changing world.

REFERENCES


12For a detailed discussion of devolution and its impact on nonprofits, see De Vita (1999).


