

ISTR Emerging Scholar Dissertation Award Winner 2016

In 2016 the Selection Committee received 40 submissions from 23 countries around the world. This is a significant increase from 23 submissions from 11 countries in 2014. The dissertations express the growing interest in the study of third sector and civil society organizations. Young and competent scholars join scholars around the world in an effort to better understanding the roles and function of voluntary nonprofit organization in different aspects of their activities. Together young and established scholars contribute to the positioning of the study of these organizations at the frontier of science.

The ISTR Emerging Scholar Dissertation Award is presented biennially for a Ph.d dissertation completed or defended in the two years (July 1st 2014 and June 30th 2015) preceding the award. The award recognizes an outstanding dissertation that contributes to the field of comparative study of civil society organizations, nonprofit organizations, grassroots organizations, philanthropy, voluntarism and other related areas of interest concerning in the growing role and importance of these organizations in the modern states. Special attention is giving to the potential of the dissertation to influence new thinking on Third Sector organizations and related fields, to the methodology applied in the research, to the contribution of the dissertation to the theory and practice of Third Sector organizations and to the unique added value the dissertation has for the advancement of the study of Third Sector and Civil Society Organizations.

Selection Committee members, Hillel Schmid, Chair (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), Marc Jegers (Vrije University Brussels, Belgium), Ola Segnestam Larsson (Ersta Skondal University College, Sweden), Paula Chies Schommer (Santa Catarina State University, Brazil), and Li Yang, Beijing Normal University, China) were most impressed with the excellent dissertations submitted. Members of the committee reported that reviewing the dissertations was an intrinsic reward enriching their experience and knowledge.

After considering the merits and unique contribution of the 40 dissertations the majority of the Committee members reached the decision to grant the ISTR

Emerging Scholar Dissertation Award to Allison Youatt Schnable, Ph.D Princeton University, Sociology, 2015 for her excellent and outstanding dissertation entitled "Do-It-Yourself Aid: The Emergence Of American Grassroots Development Organizations".

The study focuses on American-based international non-governmental organizations founded by amateurs with a personal tie to the developing country, and supported with volunteer labor and individual donations. The individuals who launch these organizations typically are middle-class college graduates, but have no training or professional experience in international development. Instead of being shaped by the norms of the professional aid field, these organizations are defined by the personal relations and skills of the people who found them. The organizations investigated are voluntary organizations shaped not just by the high organization modernity but also by an emphasis on the expressive role of nonprofit action. In sum, the author claims that personal relationships are critical to the establishment, maintenance and influence of grassroots international non-governmental organizations rather than the professionalization of these organizations.

The dissertation combines three research methods: quantitative analysis of IRS records, fieldwork and interviews in Africa and the United States, and topic modeling (algorithm-based text analysis) of an original database of all known websites for international relief, development, and human rights organizations registered with the IRS in 2011. This project provides new descriptive data on the locations, project sectors, and targeted recipients of grassroots international non-governmental organizations.

Following the presentation of the findings the author shows that globalization offers a tenuous opening for nonprofit organizations to bypass the isomorphic pressures of professionalization, and counter world society theory's over-emphasis on rational values in NGOs by showing that expressive objectives play a crucial role in motivating and structuring these groups. Finally, the author describes the potential contributions of these groups to development, but argues that they fail to overcome the pitfalls of larger development organizations-NGOs

can not “shrink” themselves out of the challenges of accountability and sustainability.

The dissertation combines and integrates sociological, anthropological and organizational aspects which demand high investment on behalf of the author who spend time in different countries in Africa in which the study has been executed. No doubt it's a demanding effort on behalf of the author which requires high motivation and capabilities of adaption and understanding of new and unknown cultures which the author coped successfully and shares her deep insights with the professional and academic community. The dissertation has a unique contribution to the study of nonprofit and non-governmental organizations in international perspective, thus enriching our knowledge and understanding the added value of these organizations to countries and societies.

For all these reason the Selection Committee decided to grant the 2016 Emerging Scholar Dissertation Award to Allison Youatt Schnable. Good Luck.