CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Sixteenth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research

ANTWERP, BELGIUM
16-19 July 2024

Crisis After Crisis After …: What About the Third Sector?

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: 30 OCTOBER 2023

This notice serves to invite interested parties to submit abstracts for contributions to the 16th International Conference to be held in Antwerp, Belgium, from 16-19 July 2024.

On ISTR
The International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) was founded in 1992 as a global community of scholars, policymakers, and Third-Sector leaders dedicated to creating, discussing, and advancing knowledge about the Third Sector and its impact on civil society, public policy, and local communities.

Following the tradition of the ISTR conferences, 'Third Sector' is broadly defined as an umbrella concept, encompassing non-governmental organizations, non-profit organizations, voluntary associations, social economy organizations and enterprises, community organizations, self-help and mutual organizations, foundations, philanthropic and charitable organizations, and other local and global civil society forms such as social movements and (virtual) networks, social forums, unions, religious organizations, co-operatives, and voluntary organizations.

The ISTR 2024 Conference: Crisis After Crisis After …: What about the Third Sector?
From the first ISTR conference in 1994 (Pécs, Hungary) onwards, different themes have appeared on the Third Sector research agenda, some of which disappeared quickly, while others remained. Examples of the latter are, at the macro-level, issues of legitimacy, inequality, democracy, and at the micro-level, organizational aspects, volunteering, or philanthropic behavior. However, these traditional research topics have been and are complemented as a response to emerging global and local phenomena generating substantial turbulence all over the world. Salient examples are the current refugee crises on all continents, the (post-)pandemic, (civil) wars, etc.

Over the last decade, the world has been hit by consecutive crises both at the global and local levels. In almost all of them, the Third Sector plays a critical role in solving different problems caused by these crises. This context explains the focus of ISTR’s Sixteenth Conference (Antwerp, 2024) on the role and position of the Third Sector in times of crisis and conflict, which are frequently marked by increasing inequalities and challenges to democracy and participatory governance.

Further, the Third Sector plays a crucial role in the pursuit of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for which it might also be engaged by governments and for-profit firms to establish goal-oriented networks and cooperations. This requires particular attention as it is evident that the Covid-19 pandemic has at least ‘slightly derailed’ SDG efforts.
Finally, citizen participation in governance at all levels is under threat in times of crisis. A strong Third Sector is needed to respond in those environments facing the rise of more authoritarian regimes. In all civic spaces, Third Sector organizations have a role to protect and improve citizen participation in governance. This requires standing up to subtle and not so subtle limitations on freedoms of expression, assembly and association, and also fully embracing opportunities enabled by innovations in digital technology.

These considerations result in the following list of conference themes:

1. The role and position of the Third Sector during crises and conflicts
2. The Third Sector, sustainable development, climate change, and climate justice
3. Social work, social innovations, and activism in the pursuit of human rights, social justice, equity and diversity
4. Measuring Third Sector output and impact
5. Third Sector organizations and civil society under different political regimes and contexts: role and regulations
6. Populism and the Third Sector
7. Local and global philanthropy and voluntarism
8. Social entrepreneurship, management, leadership, and governance of Third Sector organizations
9. Hybridity, networks, virtual space, digitization, and the Third Sector
10. Uni/multidisciplinary Third Sector theory
11. Teaching on the Third Sector
12. Special Conference Theme - The Impact of New Public Management on the Third Sector: Comparative and Critical Case Studies (see note below)
13. Other Third Sector related topics

Paper, poster, panel and roundtable proposals from around the world reflecting work that is theoretical as well as empirical, unidisciplinary as well as multidisciplinary, and pertaining to all continents, will be welcomed.

**Special Conference Theme - The Impact of New Public Management on the Third Sector: Comparative and Critical Case Studies**

The Belgian Conference Local Host Committee is organizing a special conference theme. This call welcomes country specific case studies as well as cross-country comparisons on how nonprofit marketization propelled by New Public Management-like policies impact the role, value and position of nonprofit organizations. Their aim is to foster debate between different scholars at the intersection between different disciplines such as nonprofit studies, social work, public administration, economy and sociology. They are particularly interested in contributions that focus on how particular characteristics at the welfare state and/or organizational level are buffering or intermediating the impact of NPM on nonprofit organizations.

Submissions to this theme will be reviewed separately. Abstracts that are not deemed a good fit will be automatically considered for inclusion in the full conference. Please see the full call for contributions at the end of this document for more detail.
General Information

Forms of Participation: Papers, Panels, Roundtable (or another innovative format), and Posters
Please indicate your choice of presentation when you submit your abstract.

Abstract Submissions
To be considered for review, an abstract of not more than 500 words (not including references) must include:

- A working title.
- A statement of the empirical or theoretical concern.
- A short summary locating the concern within a wider literature.
- A concise account of the empirical or theoretical methodological approach.
- The main arguments of the paper and an indication of the supporting evidence.
- A statement of the main conclusions and their relevance to an international audience.

*The exception to the above are submissions made to our innovative content and format type. Please see note below for more information.*

References are not included in the 500-word count. Abstracts not meeting these requirements will be declined by the ISTR Conference Committee. Sample abstracts are available for review on our conference web page. Please note: Abstracts will be accepted in English.

Submissions for Panels, Papers and Posters
All panel, papers and poster proposals for the Conference must be submitted using ISTR’s online submission service. You will be required to choose one of the conference themes which best fits your abstract.

To submit your abstract, go to www.istr.org/ISTR2024 and follow the link for ‘Submit a Proposal.’

Special Note on Panel Submissions
A panel submission is a proposal for a coordinated set of papers (usually 3 or 4 in number) on a particular topic or issue. Please note that panel proposals require an abstract identifying and justifying the theme of the panel as well as a full abstract for each panel paper. Panel proposals that do not include full abstracts and author information for each paper will not be considered. The person submitting the panel proposal must be willing to act as the panel coordinator and ensure that all proposed paper presenters commit to attending the conference.

Please note that papers which are part of a submitted panel cannot be submitted separately as an individual submission. If the submission is submitted twice by the same author it will be rejected.

Special Note on Posters and Poster Submissions
A poster proposal is an alternative to presenting a full research paper. New researchers in particular are invited to share work-in-progress by means of a poster. This is an opportunity to display a poster about completed and/or ongoing research. Posters will be displayed throughout the conference and a designated session will be scheduled in which participants can meet with authors to discuss their work. Full instructions on poster formats will be provided to those accepted for presentation.

Special Note on Roundtable and Innovative Content and Format Submissions
Roundtables encourage discussion and interaction among delegates. The roundtable format offers short (max. 10 minute) presentations around a common theme, with ample time for discussion. Proposals should include details on the theme or topic of discussion and its relevance, along with the
names of the organizers/participants. Roundtables typically include no more than five (5) presenters. Please describe what each presenter is expected to contribute.

Innovative content and formats for presentation are invited. Innovative in this context refers to both the content and presentation approach. Innovative content may include field notes, movies, demonstrations, trainings, etc. To propose innovative content or a new session format, please provide a description of the content and format and how the session will function. Then provide a description of the topic(s), its relevance to the Third Sector, and the names of the organizers/presenters. Please describe how each presenter is expected to contribute. These will be reviewed separately and may be limited to the capacity and equipment available at the conference venue.

Review of Submissions
All submissions will be subject to a blind review by at least two independent reviewers. Authors will be advised by the end of January 2024 whether their abstract has been accepted. If you are willing to serve as a reviewer, please contact the ISTR Secretariat.

The following review criteria will be graded:

- Is the topic related to the conference themes?
- Is the topic relevant to an international audience?
- Is there a clearly articulated research question?
- Are the theories and concepts that inform the research clearly articulated?
- Are these supported by relevant literature?
- Is the research methodology and design (empirical or theoretical approach) clearly articulated?
- Are the key theoretical and/or empirical findings summarized?

ONCE ACCEPTED, ALL AUTHORS INCLUDING ALL PANELISTS MUST REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE BY MARCH 18, 2024 TO HAVE THEIR PRESENTATION SCHEDULED IN THE CONFERENCE PROGRAM.

Final paper submissions
Guidance for paper drafting, poster design and printing, and presentation advice will be available on the conference website. The completed paper must be uploaded to the conference abstract submission site and also sent to the session moderator by June 7, 2024, to provide adequate time for participants and moderators to read the paper and to allow for a more fulsome discussion. If you are willing to serve as a moderator, please contact the ISTR Secretariat.

Post-Conference Publication and Working Paper Opportunities
Following the conference, authors are invited to revise their papers in the light of conference feedback with an eye to an appropriate submission to Voluntas, the peer-reviewed official journal of ISTR, or any other journals in the field. Publication decisions are the sole discretion of such journals and ISTR does not participate in the editorial decisions on such submissions.

Authors can also submit their papers to be reviewed for selection for publication in the ISTR Conference Working Papers Series to be published after the conference on the ISTR website.

Conference Co-Chairs
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Questions?
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Detailed information on travel arrangements, accommodations, and the conference schedule will be available on the conference website: www.istr.org/ISTR2024
Attachment 1: Special Conference Theme

Call for papers: The impact of new public management on the third sector: interdisciplinary, comparative and critical case studies

By now, consensus has been reached that the emergence of the New Public Management paradigm fundamentally changed the meaning, place and functioning of nonprofit organizations in present day society (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016). Coined by Salamon (1993) as the marketization of welfare, NPM essentially positioned competitive contracting and performance-based control at the heart of the public-nonprofit relationship (Bode, 2006). However, evidence is lacking on how factors at the level of the welfare state or nonprofit organizations influence the extent to which and how new public management and marketization impacts the way nonprofit organizations pursue their mission. In this call for papers, we welcome country specific case studies that provide an elaborate perspective on the impact of NPM-like policies on the governance of nonprofit organizations and their professionals. Our aim is to foster an interdisciplinary scholarly debate on how specific welfare state, organizational- level characteristics and practices adopted by social work professionals are at play when focusing on how NPM impacts the advocacy role of nonprofit organizations, their service delivery (quality), and the extent to which they are becoming business-like.

At first sight, universal trends are at play and nonprofit organizations are dealing with the same challenges regardless of the specific welfare state context. For example, there is the implicit notion that nonprofit marketization is on the rise, and gradually becoming omnipresent in society. Although criticized by some (e.g., Brown, 2018; Child, 2010), this idea is often voiced in introductory sections of nonprofit studies. Some go so far to argue that nonprofit marketization induces convergence between different welfare state types (Henriksen, Smith, & Zimmer, 2011). Other studies, however, are critical about the idea of a so-called universal welfare state. These studies often elaborate on country specific characteristics and show that different institutional contexts should be taken into account while investigating changes in how current welfare state trends are influencing the position of nonprofit organizations (for instance, compare: Brown, 2018; Suykens, Maier, Meyer, & Verschuere, 2022; Vaceková, Valentinov, & Nemec, 2017; Yu & Chen, 2018). For example, in neo-corporatist welfare regimes, characterized by a strong relationship between state and (privileged) civil society actors, marketization and NPM are more slowly developed compared to the typical liberal welfare regimes such as the US or UK (Bode, 2011; Suykens, De Rynck, & Verschuere, 2020).

Additionally, at the organizational level and the level of professionals, the response of nonprofit organizations may vary from passive compliance to active resistance (Oliver, 1991; Raeymaeckers & Cools, 2022). Despite the fact that marketization and NPM-like policies are widely criticized as a force that pushes NPOs away from their social values and their critical role in relation with the government, other studies have proof that NPOs are perfectly capable to combine several social and market logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Battilana, Sengul, Paché, & Model, 2015). These studies emphasize the capacity of NPOs to decouple, avoid or even openly defy governmental pressures (Raeymaeckers & Cools, 2022).

This call for papers welcomes country specific case studies as well as cross-country comparisons on how NPM-like policies impact the role, value and position of nonprofit organizations. We are interested in contributions that focus on how particular characteristics at the welfare state and/or organizational level are buffering or intermediating the impact of NPM on nonprofit organizations. As these topics are studied from different approaches such as social work, sociology, nonprofit studies, public administration and economy our aim is to foster discussions between different theoretical, conceptual and methodological perspectives.
Questions to be addressed may include, but are not limited to, topics related to country specific tendencies of nonprofit organizations becoming business-like, shrinking spaces, advocacy activities and strategies, service delivery and strategies of resistance developed by organizations or social workers to resist NPM policies of the government. We are also interested in the perspective of policy makers and social work professionals on these matters.

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References


