



## ISTR's Amsterdam Conference Report

ISTR's Thirteenth International Conference was held at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam from July 10-13, 2018, with 675 delegates from 58 countries. This year's conference theme was *Democracy and Legitimacy: The Role of the Third Sector in a Globalizing World*. As in the past, this conference was preceded by the ISTR PhD Seminar, which hosted 50 PhD students and 12 ISTR faculty for discussion, peer-mentoring, professional development and community building. We are grateful for the support of the staff of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Philanthropic Studies Department – Professor Theo Schuyt, Professor René Bekkers, Barry Hoolwerf, and Brigitte Schouten--for their outstanding work to organize a terrific conference.

The conference venue offered wide and open spaces with central coffee breaks, with large rooms that accommodated the entire conference and provided excellent meeting spaces. For the Opening Reception, VU hosted all participants in the main foyer of the university. The reception was well attended and many thanks to the University which provided a big screen to enable the conference participants to keep an eye on the coinciding World Cup Football match.

The Closing Gala was a magical event hosted at the famous Rijks Museum. Thanks to the generous support of the Postcode Lottery, ISTR conference participants were treated to private viewings of some of the museum's most famous pieces, wonderful food, drink, and dance.



Private viewing in the Rijks Gallery



Conference participants were also given tickets for canal tours by the External Affairs Office of the City of Amsterdam and many took advantage of this opportunity in the evenings after the conference sessions.

As in past years, the conference featured professional development workshops, regional network and affinity group meetings, a reception for participants in the **Mentoring Program**, plenary sessions, opening and closing receptions, and a Meet the Author book signing and sales event. Several conference sessions featured innovations.

## Sessions and Publications

The program included 124 paper sessions, 44 panels, 34 roundtables and 11 posters. The program and conference abstracts can be found on the **ISTR website** (users must be signed in to view full papers). Many papers presented are currently being submitted for Volume XI of the *ISTR Conference Working Paper Series* (the deadline is October 31) and we anticipate that some papers will be published in *Voluntas*. Publishing opportunities are described [here](#).

## Plenary Speakers

The opening plenary got off to a beautiful start with a musical performance by a very talented quartet of wind instrumentalists. The opening plenary included welcomes, award presentations, and a keynote plenary address. A



video of the entire opening plenary & keynote address is available by clicking [here](#).

### Opening Plenary Keynote

The plenary address was delivered by Donatella della Porta, Scuola Normale Superiore, and was entitled "Innovations from Below: Civil Society Beyond the Crisis." Background information about Professor Della Porta can be found on the conference blog by clicking [here](#). Her speech discussed how the long financial crisis brought about challenges for civil society organizations and forced them to address social and political emergencies with declining resources. Nevertheless, these troubled times also saw a resurgence of civil society organizations, with high capacity to build alternative knowledge and social innovations. Bridging literature from social movement studies and voluntary associations, this keynote singled out new visions and practices of solidarity.

### Closing Plenary Keynotes: "Transforming Democratic Contexts: Challenges for the Third Sector"

Natalie Fenton, University of London, shared interim findings from the Civil Society Futures (CSF) initiative, of which she is the research lead. CSF is an independent inquiry into civil society in England that considers how civil society can best prepare for the futures that may lie ahead. She discussed emergent social, political and economic strategies developed from new ways of thinking about how economic and social lives connect through attempts to put more power in the hands of more people.

Shih-Jung Hsu, National Chengchi University, Taiwan shared how his research and activism have overlapped. At the conference, Professor Hsu discussed land governance, land use policy, and Taiwan's sustainable development, and



*Professor Donatella della Porta*

the methods and practices of environmental and human rights NGOs in Taiwan, of which he has been an active participant. He described, with much emotion, his efforts to help farmers and local residents against land grabbing and forced eviction from the state. His recent book, *Land Justice*, has received the National Tripod Award 2017 from the Chinese Ministry of Culture.

More about our speakers is on our conference [BLOG](#).

### Dutch Days and Dutch Plenary

VU organized six roundtables focusing on issues facing civil society in The Netherlands and invited local foundation and civil society representatives to speak. The event provided opportunities for local third sector leaders to visit this part of the ISTR Conference and consider research perspectives on these issues of practice.

### Dutch Plenary: "Pluralism in the Polder: (Pre)conditions and progress"

These "Dutch Days" roundtables culminated in a plenary event pulling together the key messages from the "Dutch Days" roundtables reflecting on the relevance, advantages and shortcomings of this Dutch consensus based "Poldermodel," which can be described as "a pragmatic recognition of pluriformity" or "cooperation despite differences" between different societal actors. Does it provide opportunities for growth within civil society? Or does it hamper initiative? And what future for the 'poldermodel' in an era of increasing fragmentism? Following the roundtable, Professor René Bekkers of VU, provided a public lecture entitled "Values of Philanthropy."

### PhD Seminar

Fifty students from 18 countries participated in the 4th International PhD Seminar, which was organized by Faculty chairs, René Bekkers, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The



L/R: Lucas Meijis, Sara Kinsbergen, Theo Schuyt, Tymen van der Ploeg

Netherlands, and Pelle Åberg, Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College, Sweden. The students worked in both plenary and small group sessions, with 12 faculty working in pairs to oversee small groups of students.

Taco Brandsen, Radboud University, The Netherlands, gave the opening keynote about the history of the Dutch third sector, which set the groundwork for the current trends in the field. This engaging talk set the scene for many of the themes of third sector research that students would cover over the course of the seminar.

### Award Presentations

**Best Articles in *Voluntas* 2016 & 2017.** These articles will be open access and available to the public for August and September. Patricia Mendonça, University of São Paulo, and chair of this awards committee, presented the awards for both years.

**2016:** Abdulrazak Karriem, University of Western Cape Town, South Africa, and Lehn M. Benjamin, Indiana University, United States, for their article, "How Civil Society Organizations Foster Insurgent Citizenship: Lessons from the Brazilian Landless Movement," February 2016, Volume 27, Issue 1, pp 19-36.

**2017:** Jasmin Slootjes, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Thomas Kampen, University for Humanistic Studies, The Netherlands, for their article, "Is My Volunteer Job Not Real Work? The Experiences of Migrant Women with Finding Employment Through Volunteer Work," October 2017, Volume 28, Issue 5, pp 1900–1921.

The Emerging Scholar Dissertation Award was presented to Andrew Heiss, Brigham Young University, for his PhD thesis entitled *Amicable Contempt: The Strategic Balance between Dictators and International NGOs*. Tobias Jung, School of Management, University of St Andrews in Scotland and Chair of the Dissertation Award Committee, presented the award. Established



PhD students at dinner – Emma Taylor-Collins (UK) left and Afnan Koshak (USA) right

in 2006 by an anonymous donor, the award is given once every two years at the biennial ISTR conference to the author of the best dissertation in the field of comparative study of civil society organizations, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, and voluntarism and related issues. The winner this year was chosen from among 61 entries from 28 countries. You can read more about Andrew's PhD thesis [here](#).

The Selection Committee also acknowledges the merit and achievements of the two other finalists.

- Nora Derbal, Freie Universität Berlin, for her dissertation "Charity for the Poor in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1961–2015."

• Sara Compion, University of Kentucky, for her dissertation "Volunteering and Democratization In Southern Africa: A Structural And Cultural Analysis."

**Best Poster Award.** Stefan Toepler, George Mason University, and Publications Committee Chair, presented the award to Andre-Anne Parent, Stéphanie Tourillon-Gingras, and Christian Jetté, Université de Montréal for their poster *The Entre-Maisons Ahuntsic - A Collaborative Project at the Hearth of Low-rent Housing Units*. Click [here](#) to see the award-winning poster!

**3-Minute Thesis Award,** presented by Ruth Phillips, University of Sydney, Australia and President-Elect of ISTR, to Fanny Dethier for her presentation titled *Seeing Through NPOs*. This new competition for ISTR offered a light-hearted way for **ISTR PhD Seminar** students to practice the art of distilling their ideas down to the core questions and concerns in 3 minutes and one PowerPoint slide. A prize was awarded to the person who made

the case for their research in the most clear and compelling manner, and the winner made her presentation to the entire plenary. But besides the fun, the 3-minute thesis teaches important lessons –



Natalie Fenton

Shih-Jung Hsu

research should be designed to be useful, and in order to be useful (and in order to funded!) the users need to understand it and believe in it, sometimes in short order.

### Professional Development Workshops

This year, the ISTR Conference hosted 7 workshops, 5 of which were geared towards emerging scholars. The expanded workshops came at the suggestion of the PhD Seminar Alumni, who have formed their own group and maintain a [Facebook page](#) to keep in touch. The group collectively provided suggestions for relevant topics and speakers which were warmly received.

### Mentoring Program Reception

Now in its 3rd year, the ISTR **Mentoring Program** connects students and emerging scholars with senior scholars and practitioners to share career, publishing, and funding advice and professional and networking development. During conference years, partners are offered the opportunity to meet in person at a Mentoring Program Reception. This year, more than 60 mentor-mentee matches were made, and many of these had the chance to meet at the Mentoring Reception. ISTR staff have made a best effort to carefully make mentor-mentee matches based on research and career interests and have been delighted to hear that some of these relationships have been fruitful for both parties.

### Recent and New Conference Innovations

We maintained the roundtables innovation introduced in



*Mentoring Pair at work – Edward Dixon, UK (Mentee) and Monserrat Gonzalez, Mexico (Mentor)*

the Stockholm conference, which allows scholars and/or practitioners to discuss a “hot topic” without presenting elaborated papers. Thirty four roundtables were presented at this conference.

The **Conference Blog** was also continued this year and proved to be a great source for information about conference and also the civil society sector in The Netherlands. Several PhD students from VU contributed with blog posts to this end. We look forward to continuing and expanding the blog, including posting post-conference reflections and follow-up information.

ISTR worked with Core-Apps to develop and publish the conference app for both the Amsterdam and the 2020 conference in Montreal. This app pulls the information directly from our core system and automatically generates updates on schedule, and room updates. The app included the full text of abstracts, lists of authors, and allowed the user to search and sort presentations by session theme, type, and date. Data from Core-Apps tells us that the app was downloaded by the vast majority of conference participants and the My Schedule and My Favorites functions, which allowed participants to plan which sessions to attend in advance, were used heavily.

This year we also introduced daily newsletters, sent via the app and by email, providing conference participants with a 1-page overview of events planned for the next day.

### Evaluation

More than 200 participants completed the conference evaluation, which is an excellent response rate and provides a high confidence in the results. Seventy-nine percent

(79%) of respondents said the overall quality of the conference was "Excellent" or "Very good."

Sixty-six percent (66%) of conference evaluation respondents rated the paper/panel sessions as "Excellent" or "Very good." The comments also generally praised the session moderators, but the comments made clear that more guidance is needed to clarify the role of the moderator.

### Conference Support

The Conference would not have been possible without the support from generous funders and our host, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and the following sponsors:

Novamedia (Postcode Lotteries)  
Ministerie V&J  
Oranje Fonds  
Noaber Foundation  
Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds  
ABN AMRO  
Adessium Foundation  
Kansfonds  
Katholieke stichting ter bevordering van welzijnswerk  
Maatschappij van welstand  
Plan Nederland  
Stichting De Verre Bergen  
VSB Fonds  
VandenEnde Foundation  
Fonds Schiedam Vlaardingen e.o.  
The Urban Institute



With ongoing support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Springer Press.

In the spirit of voluntarism, the strong academic program was made possible by the scholarly contributions of 96 reviewers, the Academic Conference Committee, Awards Committees, and ISTR Board and we thank them for their continuing commitment and support for the Society!

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN MONTREAL,  
7-10 July, 2020!**

### Affinity Group and Regional Network Meetings

The ISTR Affinity Groups and Regional Networks held meetings at the ISTR Conference. Several new developments were announced. Click on the links below to read more about discussions in each group and to join the listserves for these networks.

#### Regional Networks

[Asia & the Pacific/East-Asia Network](#)  
[Africa](#)  
[Europe](#)  
[Latin America & the Caribbean](#)  
[CEE & Post-Soviet Countries](#)

#### Affinity Groups

[Research on Volunteering](#)  
[Gender](#)  
[Law and Regulation](#)  
[Teaching and Learning](#)

## ISTR Conferences Open New Research Connections & Opportunities

### Four Takeaways from 4 days at Amsterdam

By Dipendra K C, Assistant Dean for Academic and Student Affairs, School of Global Studies, Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus, Thailand

The 13th ISTR International Conference in Amsterdam was a very productive encounter for me. I had attended two Asia Pacific editions of the conference in Tokyo (2015) and Jakarta (2017). However, I was attending the international conference for the first time. I was not only new to the conference, but also Amsterdam was the first European city I had visited.

I left the Bangkok airport with a mixed feeling. While I was excited about the opportunity to meet some of the authors whom I had been following and reading for a long time, my heart was pounding with nervousness to present in front of distinguished academics of the sector. In this post, I highlight four takeaways from the conference.

**Learning:** Overall, the conference in Amsterdam was full of learning. Sessions were very insightful and very wide-ranging. I was able to attend roundtables discussing good practices in nonprofit education to emerging research areas in the third sector. It was wonderful to explore the diversity of interest and myriad aspects covering a wide range of topics concerning the Third Sector.

**Methodology Development:** One of the important personal learning takeaways from the conference was definitely the 'Building the Data Science Toolkit' session. It is always exciting to know that you are not only the one who is working on a certain research idea. Megan LePere-Schloop's work of using machine-learning to categorize NGOs in Ghana was identical to my efforts of to classify NGOs in Nepal. The only difference was she was using machine-learning while I was using a simple excel-based intervention. I realized the extent of my efforts could be streamlined using the emerging machine methodologies.

In addition, Brent Never's introductory tour to spatial methods helped me see the potential limitations of using simple linear regression on geospatial data. After attending the session, I ended up reanalyzing my own data overnight. The next day, I was able to sit with Brent again to compare the results from the old analysis to the newly-learned analysis.

**Mentoring Program:** The ISTR Secretariat connected me with my mentor, David O. Renz, from the University of Missouri -Kansas City. Dave and I were able to chat ex-



tensively on my career aspirations and the direction of my future research. Dave asked very crucial questions relating to my work and motivated me to explore further in my research. The mentorship session and additional two meals I had with Dave helped me learn a lot about his expertise and was able to see areas where I could ask for his guidance and support.

**Meetings and Networking:** The Amsterdam conference also allowed me to understand ISTR as an organization more clearly. It was wonderful seeing a very vibrant community of scholars and practitioners from all around the world and have the opportunity to get to know fellow ISTR members. In addition to the members meeting, several other breakout sessions, like the Storytelling Workshop and strategies to pursue a postdoctoral position professional development workshop were quite insightful.

In addition to meetings, I think one big takeaway from the conference is the ability to establish a network that is active beyond the conference. Earlier last week, I received feedback from Christopher Pallas about one of my working papers. It would have been impossible for such connections to happen without meetings like ISTR conference.

The 13th ISTR international conference has officially ended. However, the benefits of the conference are just beginning to materialize. I am starting my brand new mentorship relationship, am exploring new research areas, strengthening my methodological understanding, and most importantly, nurturing all the crucial connections initiated during the conference.

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Dipendra is currently pursuing his PhD at the National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand and recently published (2018), "Between Rhetoric and Action: Do NGOs Go Where They Are Needed?" VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-0024-9>

## Theorizing Volunteering for Development: How ISTR XII in Stockholm Sparked an Intercontinental Collaboration

At the XII ISTR Conference in Stockholm in 2016, Nichole Georgeou from Western Sydney University delivered her paper in a panel on theoretical frameworks in volunteering for development. Nichole spoke on '*Theorising international volunteering for development: civil society or market society?*' and was unpacking the conflation between development volunteer placements and volunteer tourism. During the questions, Benjamin Haas, from the University of Cologne, commented that using gift and reciprocity theory might be a useful method to advance theorising new trajectories of engagement in volunteering for and in development.

Nichole and Benjamin continued their discussions in a Swedish beer garden, and agreed to embark on an exciting theoretical project that aimed to understand current trends and new trajectories within volunteering for development, such as voluntourism, state funded youth volunteer programs and student volunteering. These new models blend state funding with neoliberal individualism, the non-profit sector and the for-profit sector, thus disrupting the traditional notion that volunteering occurs within civil society. Nichole and Benjamin presented the results of their collaboration at this year's ISTR XIII conference in Amsterdam with their paper '*Power, Exchange and Solidarity: Towards a (new) theoretical conceptualization of volunteering for development*'. Their paper sparked a lively and very fruitful academic debate and they are currently revising it with a view to publication this year.

Both Nichole and Benjamin appreciated the advan-

tages of writing a joint paper over such a vast distance. The distance and time factors actually facilitated the writing process as a late-night draft in one country became the first thing to do for the co-author who was starting a new day. They both worked on refining the synthesis of ideas through their joint collaboration and look forward to continuing their scholarly writing partnership across time and space. Their collaboration would not have been possible without ISTR XII in Stockholm (and a sunny Swedish beer garden).




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*Benjamin Haas is a Research Associate and PhD Candidate, University of Cologne, Germany*

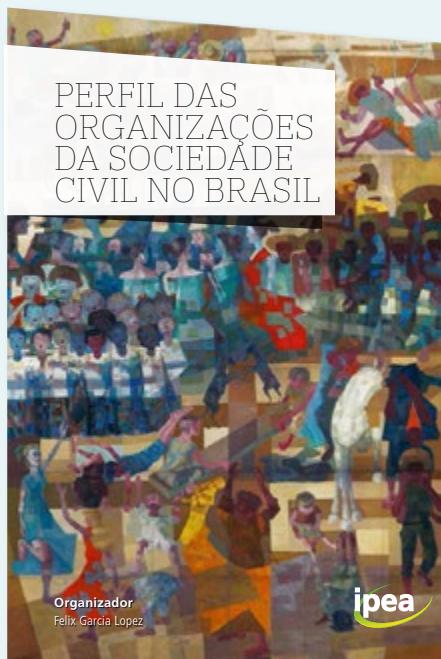
*Nichole Georgeou, PhD, is Director of the Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI) and Senior Lecturer, Humanitarian and Development Studies, Western Sydney University, Australia*

## Launch of the “Perfil das Organizações da Sociedade Civil no Brasil” (Profile of Civil Society Organizations in Brazil)

The publication, “Perfil das Organizações da Sociedade Civil no Brasil” (Profile of Civil Society Organizations in Brazil), published by the Institute of Applied Economic Research – IPEA, was launched on 16 August 2018, at the auditorium of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in São Paulo. Three ISTR members were part of the advisory group to support the data analysis: Aline Gonçalves Souza, Lais Vanessa de Carvalho Figueiredo Lopes and Patricia Maria E. Mendonça.

The study shows that there were approximately 820,000 CSOs in Brazil in 2016. Most of them are concentrated in two areas: advocacy and development (41.3%) and religion (25.4%). There is a great capacity for action of CSOs with practically all Brazilian municipalities having at least one CSO. The survey also shows that most organizations are small, with no formal work links. Formal job posts show a higher percentage of professionals with higher education than the national average. The negative point is the presence of gender, race and disability inequalities, similar to those found in other sectors.

The low number of formal professional links may provide clues for future research to better investigate the role of volunteer work in these organizations. Brazil is part of a group of countries that has undertaken to regularly



measure the extent of voluntary work and the economic contribution that this practice brings to the production of national wealth before the International Labor Organization.

The IPEA publication also mentions a decrease in federal public resources received by Brazilian CSOs. At the same event, the working paper “Economic Sustainability of Civil Society Organizations: Challenges of the Current

Brazilian Legal Environment” was presented by researchers Aline Gonçalves de Souza and Eduardo Pannunzio. This paper is about private financing for organizations, producing complementary analysis to the trends captured from the IPEA research.

The “Perfil das Organizações da Sociedade Civil no Brasil” connects with a collaborative electronic site, the “Mapa das Organizações da Sociedade Civil no Brasil” (Map of Civil Society Organizations), which seeks to integrate databases of states and municipalities, as well as encourages self-reporting of information by CSOs.

These and other highlights were discussed at the launch event of the survey. Publications can be accessed at:

“Perfil das Organizações da Sociedade Civil no Brasil”- IPEA

<https://bit.ly/2sHVStP>

“Sustentabilidade Econômica das Organizações da Sociedade Civil: desafios do ambiente jurídico brasileiro atual” - FGV Direito SP

<http://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/dspace/handle/10438/24576>

## Publishing Opportunities

### ISTR Conference Working Papers Series/*Voluntas*

Following the excellent contributions at the ISTR Amsterdam conference, we are very pleased to provide opportunities for publication through ISTR:

- Submit your papers to ISTR Conference Working Papers Series. Papers are due by October 31, 2018. Please submit to [Secretariat@istr.org](mailto:Secretariat@istr.org). All papers will be reviewed by a small committee (this is not a blind review) and posted on the ISTR website by December 15, 2018. The ISTR Working Papers Series can be found at <http://www.istr.org/WPSeries>.

- Submit your work for publication in *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, ISTR's official academic and scholarly journal. *Voluntas* is a high quality journal with dynamic leadership interested in publishing work that spans the globe on the third sector, civil society, nonprofits, philanthropy, social economy, the voluntary sector and other topics in our field. Details on submitting your manuscripts are available at:



[http://www.istr.org/?Voluntas\\_Notes](http://www.istr.org/?Voluntas_Notes) (*Voluntas* of course also welcomes contributions from authors around the world who did not present at the ISTR conference.)

- Please note that papers can be submitted to BOTH the Working Papers Series as well as to *Voluntas*.

Guidelines on paper formatting can be found [here](#).



### New Email addresses for ISTR, Inc.

**Secretariat:** [Secretariat@istr.org](mailto:Secretariat@istr.org)

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**Listserves will be migrating from jhu.edu shortly.  
Details will follow.**

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