Greetings from sunny England and also Australia, which is now cooling down! Welcome to the Spring/Autumn 2023 edition of the ISTR PhD Seminar Alumni Newsletter. For those reading the newsletter for the first time, we are Elaine and Lesley and together we co-edit this newsletter from opposite ends of the world with a marvelous crew of co-editors who are all alumni of the ISTR PhD Seminars.

This newsletter aims to keep our growing alumni network informed about the work and stories of colleagues who research and working in the third sector, as well as keep everyone up to date on developments in the field of third sector research. We do this by highlighting relevant research projects, books, publications, share stories from our PhD seminar alumni network, as well as more experienced ISTR members. We also offer advice on researching and working in research in the third sector.

In this edition: Shiqi and Ali interview ISTR PhD Alumni, Dr. Allison Youatt Schnable and Mercy Kibe, who share their ISTR journeys with us and the value the ISTR network brings to the development of their research careers. Rachel and Jessica speak to Prof. Helen Liu of the National University of Taiwan, who shares tips and advice on developing a career in third sector research. In their column, Elaine and Azam interview two PhD seminar alumni who are working in Australia and Jamaica—Dr. Alexandra Williamson from Queensland University of Technology and Dr. Edward Dixon from The University of West Indies. Finally, Ana and Azam help us to seek out opportunities for papers, conferences, and funding across the globe.

We hope to better understand your needs and invite you to participate in our online survey for the ISTR PhD seminar alumni, if you have not done so already.

A key theme of this issue is the important role and support the ISTR Network provides for researchers, especially those still developing their careers across the world. If you would like to continue to be part of this network and to have the opportunity to join the 2024 main conference and regional conferences, you can join ISTR via this link: https://www.istr.org/page/Membership. Memberships last for 2–4 years and provide access to all ISTR’s resources, seminars, and special conference rates. Discounts are available for students.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we look forward to hearing from you.
Publication of “VOLUNTAS Virtual Issue – Social Enterprise”

Research focusing on social enterprise has become a frequent and popular topic in nonprofit and civil society scholarship. This virtual issue of VOLUNTAS presents a curated collection of landmark social enterprise articles, put together by five guest editors, published in VOLUNTAS since the inaugural issue of the journal.

Read the special issue @ https://link.springer.com/collections/iejaecjiif.

ISTR’s Members-Only Working Paper Features

ISTR has created the ISTR Working Paper Features as a designed publication opportunity for ISTR members, particularly advanced stage PhD students, early career academics, and pracademics, to present fresh-from-the-field works, innovative thought pieces, theoretical reviews, and more; and to use this space as an important steppingstone for further development of scholarship and research collaboration. All submissions will be reviewed by two ISTR academic members from relevant sub-fields.

- Deadline for submission: August 5, 2023

Read the call for submissions @ ISTR Working Paper Features - www.istr.org.

ISTR’s Members-Only Seminar Series on “The Future of Third Sector Research”

This seminar series builds on the special sessions organized during ISTR’s 15th International Conference in Montreal, which were designed to reflect on the impact of Lester M. Salamon’s research on the development of the field of Third Sector Studies. Participants are encouraged to read the suggested readings prior to each seminar.

Get more information @ https://www.istr.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1725452&group=.

Save the Date: 16th ISTR international conference in Antwerp, Belgium in July 2024

- PhD seminar: July 14–16, 2024
- Main Conference: July 16–19, 2024

Stay up to date with calls for contributions and apply to attend the PhD Seminar @ https://www.istr.org/page/ISTR2024.

Save the Date: ISTR Latin America and the Caribbean regional conference in São Paulo, Brazil in October 2023

- PhD seminar: October 7–8, 2023
- Main Conference: October 9–11, 2023

Read the calls for contributions and apply to attend the PhD Seminar @ https://www.istr.org/page/2023LatAm.

Contribute to the newsletter!

Please email the co-editors if you are an ISTR PhD seminar alumnus (from whichever year) and would like to serve as a contributing editor for the column on Jobs Board & Advice.

Please email the contributing editors of the respective columns if you are an ISTR PhD seminar alumnus and have a story to share. You can also nominate a current ISTR member or an ISTR PhD seminar alumnus to be featured in the newsletter.
Alumni Spotlight: stories from the field

By Ali Baker Hamoudi & Shiqi Peng

This column is all about our alumni—who they are, what they have done, where they have been, and where they are now. Each issue will feature interviews with alumni with practitioner and academic backgrounds who work in different fields and across different geographic regions. Featured alumni will share their experiences as ISTR members, attending the ISTR PhD seminars, and their career pathways. By sharing these stories, we hope our readers can benefit from the wealth of experiences that the ISTR PhD seminar alumni network offers.

Why We Give Back to the ISTR Community:
A Chat with Two PhD Seminar Alum from 2012 and 2021

In this column, we speak to two of our active ISTR PhD alums who were inspired to give back to the ISTR community.

Dr. Allison Youatt Schnable is an Associate Professor at the O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. She is a member of the Board of Directors for ISTR and participated in the first international PhD seminar in Siena in 2012.

Mercy Kibe is a PhD candidate at the Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya. She joined the virtual ISTR PhD seminar in 2021. Besides being a PhD candidate, she has over 15 years’ experience as a practitioner. Her research concerns the influence of human capital development on the innovative capabilities of faith-based universities in Nairobi. She is also the contributing editor of the “Dear Faculty / Practitioner” column of our ISTR PhD Seminar Alumni newsletter.

Below, they speak to us about how the ISTR conferences and PhD seminars helped to support their research and profession and why they choose to contribute to the ISTR community.

Could you share with us your most memorable memories and experiences at the ISTR PhD Seminars and how they have impacted on your academic career?

Allison:

I was part of the first ISTR PhD Seminar in Siena, Italy, in 2012. Though it was the first PhD Seminar, I didn’t realize it because it ran so well! The intellectual atmosphere was great. ISTR has always taken pains to have conferences in interesting and lovely places. When you are a PhD student, really grinding on your research, and you feel like you’ve been working so hard, it is great to be able to come together with these other people and have interesting conversations in a beautiful place like Siena. It was just gorgeous and uplifting.

It was a really nice experience because I got to know other PhD students who were working on similar topics. I didn’t know a lot of other people who were working in the third sector. The feedback on my project was important, but I think the most important thing was coming into the organization and attending the conference for the first time. Philanthropy in the nonprofit sector is a bit of a niche field. It cuts across disciplines, but many PhD students in third-sector studies are in disciplinary departments, so it can be hard to find the interlocutors.

Coming to ISTR, I started to get the sense that this is a more coherent intellectual field, and I could not have gotten that without coming to the conference. Orienting yourself in an intellectual field and getting to know your audience is hugely important as a graduate student. Also, the participants gain a sense of camaraderie.

The PhD seminar group, in my case, dissolved a little, but it pulled me into the field and the organization for subsequent generations. When I came back four years later, in 2016, I had two pivotal conversations at that conference. The conversations gave me some ideas that pushed me toward how I was re-framing my dissertation for a book. It just gave me the momentum to take what was the dissertation and move it into a finished, published, and scholarly product.

In brief, the encouragement I received on my project and the sense that I had found my academic tribe. I think that’s one of the big tasks in the early phase of an academic career to sort of find your intellectual tribe, and I felt like at that conference I had, and that was probably the most important thing that came from it.
Mercy:

I joined the virtual PhD Seminar in 2021. I really appreciated such groups because they helped me to grow, especially in how to write my thesis. This is the first time that I’m writing a thesis. I think it is a class for my journey so far. Surprisingly enough, the most impressive part is that our group from the PhD seminar is still active. We used to meet monthly, but nowadays, we meet every three months. It is still very active. For every meeting, one person will organize and lead the meeting. When we meet, the faculty will be there to guide us. Participants present where they are in their papers, what challenges they are facing, or what advice they are seeking. The faculty guides us to the relevant research. Without this motivation, I can tell you I would still be in chapter one. So, it has helped to push me forward.

What motivated you to contribute to the ISTR community?

Mercy:

Actually, it’s about my interests. When I saw the call to become a contributing editor for the ISTR PhD Seminar Alumni newsletter, I told myself, ‘why not give myself for that service?’ I teach at the Tangaza University College, an international university, and there are students from French-speaking countries, so they find it difficult to write in English. Quite a number of students bring me their writing. So, I’ve just been doing it out of passion.

There’s a column that I contribute to in this newsletter, which is entitled “Dear Faculty / Practitioner”. I collect queries from students like yourself. For example, I’ll come asking you a question concerning challenges in your dissertation writing. Then once you give me the query or the challenge, I share it with ISTR members around the world, and they provide their input. I edit their replies and put them into the column. So, it’s passion and interest.

Another thing is just the feeling of giving back to us here—giving back to ISTR. Because whatever they give to us is much more, so much you cannot pay for it. So, you feel like I would like to give back to ISTR by giving back my time to different things that they offer out there.

Allison:

One of my PhD advisors, Professor Stanley N. Katz, was one of the founding members of ISTR in 1992. When I started working with him as a PhD student, one of the first things he said was: “You need to join ISTR; you need to go to the conference.” After the PhD Seminar and a couple of conferences, the encouragement of getting the Dissertation Prize in 2016, and the example of my PhD mentor, someone said to me, “Would you think about standing for the board?” I just wanted to continue to feed the organization and build it up. Our ability to do what we do rests on people like you and me being on the board, putting together a newsletter, or working on the PhD Seminar. It is the kind of generous service of everyone in ISTR that makes it work right. The Secretariat could not do it on their own. I think all of us contributing to one another scholarly life that makes this work.

What advice or suggestions would you give to PhD students and researchers in the early stages of their studies and career, respectively?

Allison:

I think one suggestion is to learn what the criteria are for advancement in whatever sort of job you have. If it’s a tenure-track job, what kind of university you are, what sort of department, even if you know what it is they want, will be tremendously important. You need to figure out what you are going to be evaluated on. Different places have different expectations. In some places, they expect a book. In some places, they want just a couple of brilliant articles in top journals. Some places care more about the number of articles rather than where they are published. Of course, in practitioner fields, it’s entirely different. So, if you must pivot to devote your efforts there, do that. It’s just being realistic and place specific.

At the same time, you still have to maintain your networks more broadly in the fields and maintain your professional relationships, partly because those are the people who will continue to be your peer reviewers, who will review your articles, your books, and your tenure dossier, but also because that’s where a lot of the professional joy comes in. What we’re doing is having conversations with each other. Now we have Zoom—it’s much easier to be in touch than 11 years ago. So, you have to maintain those conversation partners. We support each other, and it’s where we really learn. Overall, I think those are kind of the competing pressures of an early career, figuring out how to
succeed or what it takes to succeed in a specific place. You are all, at the same time, maintaining a sense of professional community.

Mercy:

Some suggestions I had asked in our group related to assistance with publications. Another support is meeting after conferences. At the PhD seminars, we are typically distributed into groups. So, my suggestion is probably there should be a follow-up after 1 or 2 years to see where they have reached with each other. Now, with my group, we have seven alumni, but I’m not sure where the other 100 alumni went. So, if there’s that coming together again as a group of PhD candidates to know who has graduated, who is where and at what point, it helps to motivate.

Note from the column’s contributing editors: Please get in touch with us if you would like to share your experience about how attending the ISTR PhD seminars and being part of the PhD seminar alumni community have benefitted your research or career. We look forward to amplifying your voices!
The Interconnectedness of Academia: An Interview with Professor Helen Liu

We had the privilege of speaking with Helen Liu, a Professor in the Department of Political Science and the Graduate Institute of Public Affairs at the National Taiwan University. Helen received a PhD in public administration from Indiana University-Bloomington in 2009 and a BA in economics from the University of Texas. She has maintained an active commitment to supporting early career researchers in the field of third sector studies, with her continued work with both ISTR and ARNOVA. Helen’s work focuses on interorganizational networks, social service provisions, collaborative government, crowdsourcing adaptation, and nonprofit management, and she has published extensively in these fields.

On a personal level, Rachel (one of the contributing editors for this column) has benefited greatly from Helen’s support and insight, since they first met when Helen, alongside Dr. Megan Paull of Murdoch University in Australia, mentored the 2021 ISTR PhD Seminar Group Rachel participated in. Since then, Helen and Megan have graciously donated their time, keeping this ISTR PhD Seminar group connected through virtual meetings every few months with an open and supportive exchange of experiences and insights.

Helen agreed to chat with us and share her experiences working as a third sector and public administration scholar in East Asia, how technology facilitates the inter-connectedness of academia, and the importance of developing meaningful networks early in one’s studies and career.

What challenges did you face when pursuing an academic career in Taiwan?

This first main challenge is the cost associated with physically connecting to the international research community. In Taiwan, after COVID, the monetary cost to fly abroad has doubled, while grants to attend conferences have not increased. I used to attend two to three conferences abroad per year. Now I can attend one. This makes it difficult to physically connect with the international research community, which results in fewer opportunities to network and form meaningful research relationships. And this is particularly detrimental to young scholars just starting out.

Second, I have experienced challenges in publishing local case studies in international or American-based journals. In the public administration field, journal reviewers often ask what implication a Taiwan-based case study has for other parts of the world or, in other words, what is the relevance to other parts of the world? In contrast, I did not have this same issue while studying in the United States and focusing on American case studies, as reviewers in general seem more familiar with a North American context.

How did you overcome these challenges?

It is important to attend regional conferences, such as the ISTR Asia Pacific conferences, whenever possible as they are more accessible geographically, which lowers the financial cost. Also, collaborating and publishing with international scholars can expand your research perspective while demonstrating that your research is relevant in other contexts and countries. For example, I collaborated with international scholars to engage in a comparative study of multimedia learning and education, which was later published as part of a special issue on the topic.

How have you used, or avoided, social media as a professional tool along your career path?

I use social media primarily for keeping in touch with family and friends and have not used it much as a professional tool. That being said, I encourage young scholars to use more of it along their career paths. I think participating in podcasts is a great idea. You can also connect a lecture posted on YouTube to your Twitter account, and Twitter in general can be effective for promoting your conference presentations.

What advice would you offer to early career scholars pursuing an academic career in East Asia?
Attend reputable academic research association conferences when you can to form collaborations and to advance your research networks. Also, actively participate in PhD workshops and mentoring programs and foster these relationships. Senior scholars put a lot of time into designing these programs, so get the most out of them! They are designed to help students along their career paths. Take our ISTR PhD Group from 2021, for example – we are still in touch with each other, almost two years since our first online meeting, by meeting virtually every few months.

**Note from the column’s contributing editors:** Please email us if you are an ISTR PhD seminar alum or a current ISTR member working in academia, the private sector, or the third sector, and would like to be featured. You can also nominate another ISTR PhD seminar alum or a current ISTR member to be featured in this column.
Opportunities for Collaboration & Calls for Papers/Applications

By Anna Reggiardo & Nur Azam Anuarul Perai

Have you always wanted to find collaborators to publish a journal article, work on a report detailing best practices, or apply for grants? Would you like to collaborate with other ISTR PhD seminar alumni to write a manuscript, submit grant applications, find guest speakers, or organize a symposium or workshop? Use our column as a resource to find collaborators! This column will list opportunities for our ISTR PhD seminar alumni to connect and collaborate with academic scholars and practitioners/professionals working in the third sector or researching the third sector and its activities.

Calls for Papers and Applications

1. Call for Papers: 14th EIASM workshop on the challenges of managing the third sector, Aberdeen, UK, June 22–23
   Deadline for abstract submission: April 24, 2023
   The workshop organisers are particularly interested in the results of accounting, managerial, economic, policy and inter-disciplinary approaches that explore the contemporary challenges in managing third sector organisations during times of crisis. The best papers qualifying for submission to a Special Issue of Financial Accountability and Management.
   Further details can be retrieved from https://www.eiasm.org/frontoffice/event_announcement.asp?event_id=1666.

2. Call for Papers: Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing
   Deadline for abstract submission: April 30, 2023
   Deadline for manuscript submission: September 30, 2023
   Special issue: Attracting younger generations for a more diverse range of philanthropists
   Co-editors of this special issue:
   - Claire van Teunenbroek, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands
   - Walter Wymer, University of Lethbridge, Canada, walter.wymer@uleth.ca
   - Ljiljana Najev Čačija, Faculty of Economics, Business and Tourism, University of Split, Croatia
   Suggested topics:
   Attracting and activating a more diverse range of philanthropists relates to several fields and questions. In this special, we focus on attracting younger generations (i.e., Generation Y, Z and Alpha), since they are underrepresented among the current group of philanthropists (Bekkers & Van Teunenbroek, 2020, 2022; Koczanski & Rosen, 2019). While generation Alpha is too young to make monetary contributions, considering their philanthropic citizenship is essential if we want to include them in the future (Body & Hogg, 2019; Body, Lau, & Josephidou, 2020). We welcome papers focusing on giving and asking for money, time (volunteering and knowledge sharing), blood and organs. Considering the increasing diversity among philanthropists, topics can include, but are not limited to, the following:
   - What are the differences between younger and older generations in terms of their preferences for giving? Like the chance of giving, donation amounts, formal versus informal giving and donor loyalty? Also, the type of goals they support (like religious goals versus environmental goals).
   - What are the giving mechanisms supporting giving behaviour by younger generations, and why are they impacting their behaviour? Do they differ from before-defined mechanisms, or are some more profound?
   - How to ‘modernize’ existing ways to attract younger generations, and why are they effective? For example, using a specific nudge or communication style.
   - Should younger generations be approached differently than their generational predecessors while soliciting them to give?
   - What innovations and new technologies are needed to attract younger generations and ‘modernize’ the field of philanthropy?
• What do younger generations expect from philanthropic organizations, and how would this impact the field of philanthropy (anticipated changes)? Consider, for instance, a higher need for quality signals and impact reports.
• Considering philanthropic organizations, what organizational changes are needed to support the preferences of younger generations?

For more information: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/pb-assets/Young%20philanthropists%20Call%20for%20papers%20special%20issue_JPM-1675699718543.pdf.

3. Call for Application: Action, Difference, and Change in Local Civil Society, Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK, September 12–13, 2023

Deadline for abstract submission: May 8, 2023

Community is the nourishing antidote to the individualised life. While loneliness and isolation can be alleviated by long-distance phone and video calls, the value of local, in-person connections cannot be overstated. National or local government interventions like the levelling up programme, community wealth building projects such as the ‘Preston model’, and calls to build ‘15-minute neighbourhoods’, alongside the establishment of think tanks and a renewed media focus on regional inequalities and town-led development, show that there is a groundswell of attention towards how the local needs investment, capacity, and freedom to thrive.

Civil society, stretching from large formal organisations to informal everyday action and activism, needs to be part of these conversations. The Covid-19 pandemic showed, and continues to show, the central value of local voluntary action and the (re-)emergence of and interest in mutual aid. Within the voluntary sector, strong local infrastructure enables communities to influence decision-making, builds partnerships and networks, and encourages volunteering opportunities. When support is accessible locally, individuals and communities can prosper, but we know that what this action looks like differs across localities, partly driven by inequalities and structures, with diverse approaches to engaging those in need and policy practitioners in different places.

Critically, we can also ask whether local or regional voluntary sectors are truly helping put power, resources and decision-making into the hands of local communities, and what role local groups have in transformation and empowerment at the community level. Co-production has become central to how many in civil society think, but what does that mean in different areas, and what does enriching co-production look like? Similarly, small and medium-sized charities have been shown to be a vital part of everyday life in local communities, with research demonstrating the value of these organisations in enabling people to get by, especially at a time of inter-locking crises. Local voluntary action has multiple diverse histories that can tell us about how to tackle the problems of today and the future.

This conference invites participants to explore these issues. The Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference 2023 is organised by the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN), in partnership with Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS), and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

More information and the full call can be found writing at: vsvrconference@gmail.com, or you visiting the conference website: https://www.vssn.org.uk/vsvr-2023/.

4. Call for Contribution: ISTR 13th Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference, Civil Society in Times of Democratic Reconstruction and Climate Crisis, São Paulo, Brazil, October 9–11, 2023

Deadline for abstract submission: 22nd May 2023

Proposals by researchers, activists, and professionals in the sector focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean are invited in response to the general focus of the conference, as they relate to the many, diverse, and interconnected thematic areas that are characteristic of third sector research.

In your submission, you will be asked to identify one of the themes listed below.

1. Civil Society, Social Movements, and Uncivil Groups
2. Institutions and Regulation of Civil Society: Transparency and Accountability
3. Management and Sustainability of Civil Society Organizations
4. Socio-state relations: Old and New Forms of Civil Society Participation in Public Policies and Collaborative Governance, Collaborations, and Conflicts
5. Social Innovation, Social Impact, and Co-Production
6. Civil Society in the Face of Climate and Environmental Crises
7. Civil Society and the Confrontation of Racial and Gender Inequalities and the Promotion of Diversity and Equity
Fellowship Opportunity: Research on Women’s Philanthropy, Women’s Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

Accepting applications through to May 31, 2023

Applications are currently being accepted for the Debra Mesch Doctoral Fellowship for Research on Women’s Philanthropy. The one-year, $5,000 fellowship supports doctoral dissertation research and writing that contributes to an understanding of women’s philanthropy or gender differences in philanthropic behavior.

Ph.D. candidates from accredited graduate schools who have successfully completed their coursework and defended their dissertation proposal are encouraged to apply. The application deadline for the 2023 fellowship is May 31.

The Debra Mesch Doctoral Fellowship for Research on Women’s Philanthropy advances research to expand the base of knowledge on women’s philanthropy. Since 2009, the fellowship has supported emerging scholars in a range of academic disciplines, such as philanthropic studies, nonprofit management, higher education, economics, history, anthropology and religious studies.

Previous fellowship recipients have studied diverse topics, including Jewish women’s philanthropy and social change, women’s philanthropy initiatives at higher education institutions, the gender composition of nonprofit boards, and the history of gospel rescue missions.

Last year’s fellowship recipient, Anaïs Faurt of Rutgers University, is examining the history of child protection across five former French colonial territories between 1945 and 1989. By exploring who counted as a victim of war and whose child was worth saving, Faurt highlights the intersecting roles of gender and race in determining who should give and receive aid.

Details of the fellowship and application process can be found at: https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/admissions/financial-aid-scholarships/dissertation-fellowship/wpi-fellowship/index.html.

Call for application: Latin America and the Caribbean Regional PhD Seminar, São Paulo, Brazil, October 7-8, 2023

Deadline: June 15, 2023

Overview

The ISTR PhD Seminar is open to all enrolled doctoral students doing research in the field of third sector and civil society, across the different regions of the world, and at all stages of their doctoral studies. Past participants in ISTR International and Regional PhD Seminars are welcome to apply. ISTR covers the cost of accommodation during the seminar and most meals.

Doctoral students will engage with senior scholars and peers in extensive intellectual and methodological discussion on their doctoral research, discuss the main theories and developments in the field, reflect upon publication and career strategies, and network within the international ISTR research community. While rigorous and serious, the PhD Seminar is also a supportive and affirming – and dare we say fun – experience for many who enjoy interacting with other students and faculty in the field and hearing the different perspectives they have to offer.

Key Activities in the PhD Seminar

Central to the PhD Seminar are the small group sessions: each student is allotted time to discuss their doctoral research with and obtain feedback from peers and faculty in the group. Students do not prepare papers for the PhD Seminar. The PhD Seminar also offers opening and closing plenary sessions and at least one professional development session with presentations by leading scholars in the field. Additionally, the PhD Seminar will feature the 3-Minute Thesis Competition (voluntary). The winner will be awarded a monetary prize and their presentation will be featured at the International Conference.

For further information about eligibility and selection criteria: https://www.istr.org/page/PhDSeminar.
7. Fellowship Opportunity: The German Chancellor Fellowship for Tomorrow’s Leaders

**Deadline: October 15, 2023**

**Recommended Period of Sponsorship: October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025**

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation grants up to 50 German Chancellor Fellowships to prospective leaders from Brazil, China, India, South Africa and the USA – irrespective of their field of work. Together with a German host and mentor of their choice, fellows conduct a socially relevant project they have developed independently.

Due to the war in Ukraine, the German Chancellor Fellowship for prospective leaders is still not open to applicants from the Russian Federation this year.

**Fellowship benefits**

- A monthly fellowship of €2,000, €2,300 or €2,600, depending on the applicant’s qualifications
- Flexible timing: 12-month fellowship between 1 August 2024 – 31 March 2026
- Individual mentoring during the stay in Germany
- Additional financial support such as mobility allowance, subsidies towards insurances, family benefits and support towards travel expenses
- Intensive preparatory German course and further language support
- Joint programme events with an opportunity to meet the German Chancellor, and an invitation to a study tour of Germany
- The chance to actively participate in a vibrant network and cooperate in peer groups
- Extensive alumni sponsorship, particularly to help sustain contact with collaborative partners in Germany during the fellow’s entire professional career

**Application requirements**

- The applicant must be a national of Brazil, People’s Republic of China, India, South Africa or the United States.
- Bachelor’s or equivalent academic degree completed less than twelve years before the beginning of the fellowship.
- A mentoring agreement from the host in Germany.
- A project plan which candidates must draw up independently and coordinate with their host.
- Initial proven **leadership experience**.

**Application**

Further information, a list of all application requirements and a link to the online application form are available at [www.humboldt-foundation.de/youngleaders](http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/youngleaders).

**Advice and contact**

Questions regarding the German Chancellor Fellowship Programme can be directed to [info@avh.de](mailto:info@avh.de). Examples of projects conducted can be found on this [website](http://www.humboldt-foundation.de/youngleaders). The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany is the patron of this fellowship programme.

**Note from the column’s contributing editors:** Please email us if you are an ISTR PhD seminar alum or a current ISTR member and would like to find collaborators for projects related to the third sector and its activities. Do also contact us if you want to disseminate a call for papers or grant applications, especially if it is aimed at PhD students or early career researchers 3–5 years post-PhD, and we will publish the information in the next issue of the newsletter.
Studying the Third Sector: methods, theories, and insights

By Elaine Xu & Nur Azam Anuarul Perai

Promote your third sector research and evaluation reports, journal articles, book chapters, or doctoral theses in this column, which will primarily showcase the works of our ISTR PhD seminar alumni. If you have developed tools or created resources to study the third sector and its activities, you are also welcome to promote them. Write to us if you would like to be part of our column’s Q&A on the methodological, legal, and ethical aspects related to studying the third sector.

Q&A with Dr. Alexandra Williamson
(ISTR PhD Seminar Alum 2018, Amsterdam)

In this Q&A with our ISTR PhD seminar alum, we speak to Dr. Alexandra Williamson from the Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (ACPNS) at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). She shares with us about the challenges of seeking funding and obtaining reliable data and emphasizes the importance for researchers to build relationships with third-sector organizations.

What projects or publications are you currently working on?

My current interest is place-based giving (PBG), especially through community foundations, a type of philanthropic funder. Over time, this research program may offer evidence-driven solutions with a place-based lens to help funders and communities tackle complex issues – from housing to the environment to inequity, etc. I have a couple of small research projects in this space in partnership with Canadian colleagues.

I also have several projects/publications with QUT School of Accountancy colleagues, e.g., nonprofit remuneration and disclosures by charities. It is a joy to be working with my three research students to disseminate their research in journals. I have two remaining papers I’m trying to publish from my own 2019 PhD. In total, I’m working on four small research projects and have 10 journal articles in my publication pipeline.

What challenges or dilemmas did you face when researching the third sector or its activities?

One ongoing challenge is finding people to engage and work with whose research interests overlap and complement mine. ‘Finding your tribe’ and learning to collaborate with a wider group of researchers and professionals in your field is vital to your early post-doc years. PhD life is individual (and sometimes lonely) and you generally only collaborate with your supervisors. So being able to research and write with ‘new’ colleagues is exciting, but can also be fraught. I’ve found researchers I enjoy undertaking projects with, but who are not a good fit with my writing processes/style. Likewise, I have colleagues who are not interested in undertaking research projects, but who are great co-authors on literature review or conceptual papers. This all takes time and trial to figure out. Given there are fewer third sector researchers than those focused on corporate or public contexts, ‘finding your tribe’ can pose a dilemma, yet collaborations can grow your capacity and impacts.

Are the challenges and dilemmas you face unique to the third sector?

Two key issues I see in third sector research are access to large-scale and other research funding and obtaining good data. Multiple structural challenges make it hard to secure competitive funding, starting from justifying the sector’s importance (including within our institutions) through to the comparative scarcity of established researchers with the track record to lead large research teams. Third sector researchers struggle sometimes as well to convince our sector that research adds value and deserves investment. Reliable data sources on our sector, and particularly its sub-sectors, are also limited in some countries, and time and privacy concerns can make research participation hard to achieve. This all can mean fragmented smaller, shorter, leaner funded research projects.
How did you overcome these challenges and dilemmas in your projects or publications on the third sector? Did you have to adapt or revise your methodological approaches or conceptual/analytical frameworks?

As an Australian researcher, a big hurdle in my field of philanthropy is the dominance of research situated in the U.S., and this may be similar for other third sector researchers. U.S.-sited research is fascinating and valuable, but legal, regulatory, cultural and historical differences influence how much can be learned and how to build upon it. This has led me to constantly seek out newly published research in my field, both from the U.S. and across the globe, to understand a broader range of contexts. Part of doing this has been using Twitter to highlight the work of many authors (yes, including my own), and I am striving to build the field, my networks and research dissemination. I try to take philanthropic research out to practitioners and other academics and interest is slowly but steadily growing.

How would you describe the impact of your research on the third sector or those working in the third sector? Could you share some examples with us?

I hope that the major impact of my research will be to make people think differently, and through different lenses regarding their work in the third sector. I try to communicate about my research through multiple channels, such as social media, blog posts, newsletters, and monthly columns, to reach both academic and practitioner audiences. But there are things I don’t want to do—any live media, for instance. And I think that’s okay—no-one has to share their work in every way, but it is important to share it in multiple ways of your choosing.

When you put research findings into the public domain, you can never be sure about their impact—the who, what, when, where, and why questions. Impact is not necessarily punctual and often takes a long while to show up!

An example of pathways to impact is a conceptual paper that I co-authored with my long-term UK colleague, Dr. Diana Leat, during the early days of the COVID pandemic in 2020. I think it’s easy to overlook the option of shorter, conceptual papers when you are an early career researcher.

This paper explores philanthropic foundations as intermediaries. How does understanding foundations’ intermediary roles change their work? With the paper, we hope to make grant makers and foundation leaders ask different questions. We identify 14 intermediary roles, which are grouped under four themes. We gave the paper what we hoped was a memorable and interesting title: “Playing piggy(bank) in the middle: Philanthropic foundations’ roles as intermediaries”.

Once the paper was published (in 2021, in the Australian Journal of Public Administration), I promoted it on Twitter and LinkedIn. I was then asked by the peak national body for grant-making trusts and foundations, Philanthropy Australia, to write a blog post about it. I counter-offered with the suggestion that my blog post be followed by two further posts written by philanthropic sector professionals, responding to the article and discussing their specific foundations’ intermediary roles. This created more interaction with the research paper, and valuable practical examples for readers of the roles in question.

A month later, I was at an event with another philanthropic sector colleague, who told me that she had used the paper and its list of intermediary roles as the template for a fruitful discussion with her board of trustees during a strategic planning meeting. The board decided that there were some roles that they had no interest in playing, but others that they would plan to expand in the future. This was exactly how Diana and I hoped the paper might be used in practice.

What advice would you offer researchers who are studying the third sector and its activities?

This is a tricky question, as the process of building an academic career is very individualized, and your goals reflect your life-stage and values outside academia and your research interests. Third sector researchers have certain advantages though—there is such a diversity of topics and research designs to consider, and a real richness in the data that has yet to be explored and examined. In particular, cross-country comparisons are a fascinating design that I’m hoping to engage with more of in the future. It’s easy to assume that you need large, quantitative datasets to achieve this, but valuable insights can be gained from mixed-methods and qualitative research. Publishing in academic journals is also very individual, and the best advice I have received is to have two publication tracks—one focused on the highest-ranked and most prestigious journals, and another focused on practitioner interaction in your third sector discipline. I also aim for at least one blog post or website mention for each of my academic journal articles published.

I think it’s vital for all researchers, but in particular early career researchers, to reach out to third sector organizations and suggest ways to interact with research. This increases impact (although remember that impact may manifest much later than expected or hoped). Importantly, it also demonstrates to your colleagues that you can generate discussions about your research and promote its relevance to improved outcomes in practice. This has the benefit of role-modeling for others, as well as building
your reputation as being pro-active and a great research partner. Many funders prize evidence of impact as an indicator of your research being worthy of investment.

Good research faces a double test—boosting the body of knowledge, and contributing to practice, policy and culture. Research and practice interact through participation, case studies, insights, data access, reference groups and other kinds of partnership activities. Sometimes academic publication approaches don’t readily allow for practitioner access and that is why I am committed to taking messages and links out through multiple channels - so that research becomes part of conversations and change in the third sector.

Alexandra is a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies (ACPNS) in the Faculty of Business & Law at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Her research focuses on philanthropic foundations, accountability, and place-based giving. Before joining academia in 2011, she had 14 years involvement in philanthropic foundations and grantmaking. She can be contacted on Twitter (@DrAKWilliamson), by email (a3.williamson@qut.edu.au), and via LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/in/williamsonalexandra/).

Q&A with Dr. Edward Dixon
(ISTR PhD Seminar Alum 2018, Amsterdam)

In our next Q&A, we speak to Dr. Edward Dixon, a Lecturer in Social Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurship at the School of Business and Management, The University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus, Antigua and Barbuda.

What projects or publications are you currently working on?

I am currently working on two projects that have relevance to the third sector. The first explores Corporate Social Responsibility reporting by companies listed on the Eastern Caribbean Stock Exchange. One aim of my research is to highlight the perceived impact and value placed on the contribution of the third sector actors to the national and regional development agenda by private, social, and governmental actors in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The second examines the potential impact of social procurement in the selected countries in the English-speaking Caribbean. Much has been said about the potential impact of Social Enterprises in different spheres of national development. Unlike in mature jurisdictions, the policies have largely lagged behind practice around the need for a facilitative policy environment to aid their sustainability and inclusion into the local economy. The research examines current legislative provisions for public procurement and seeks to identify ways in which the implementation of government policies, through social procurement, could become a vehicle through which these entities become further embedded in formal economic activities through the provision of goods and services and the potential challenges to achieving same.

What challenges or dilemmas did you face when researching the third sector and its activities, or when using your research to influence and create an impact in the third sector?

For me, the issue has always been about getting to and finding ways to give agency to traditionally hard-to-reach populations; the ‘existential challenges’ working in a resource-constraint environment; constantly being reminded of the duty of care I have to NGO beneficiaries and to avoid undue exposure of the beneficiaries. As a researcher, it is important to remain mindful of balancing the beneficiaries’ propensity to share the appreciation of an intervention with the possibility of ‘consultation fatigue’.

It is also important to understand the ‘Politics’ and ‘politics’ of the third sector in Small Island Development States. Negotiating access to what can often be a ‘politicised’ space is difficult for researchers. I benefited significantly from previously having worked in the sector and use this knowledge and contact to facilitate some amount of access. There is also a cultural component to this as well, because people will talk to those they identify with and with whom there are no communications barriers. There is, therefore, the need for data protection protocols to be developed to safeguard the data collected from research participants.

Are these challenges and dilemmas unique to the third sector?

I do not think that these challenges and dilemmas are germane to the third sector or those of developing countries or emerging markets. They are, however, magnified because of the small and intimate nature of these societies, where the proximity and affiliations are very difficult to conceal. If we subscribe to the view that the third sector is a microcosm of the wider society, then
there are likely to be similarities across the main sectors in the country, particularly Developing Countries. Formal and informal networking relations are integral to being able to transact business and they permeate the whole society.

**Could you share an example or two about how you overcame some of these challenges and in your projects or publications on the third sector? Did you have to adapt or revise your methodological approaches or conceptual/analytical frameworks?**

I am wary of research processes that are more concerned with the unilateral extraction of information than a mutually beneficial process for all involved. I ensured that the agency of the research participants was foremost in the research’s design project.

There is a high level of mistrust of local and international researchers in some sections of the third sector, which is partly due to a lack of perceived control that research participants have over their involvement in the research process. This is particularly true in how the impact of the research is often shared, or not shared. I revised aspects of the narrative over how information flows went as well as being less demanding of their time, especially when research is peripheral to their daily operations, and their desire to survive is often at the forefront of their minds.

I also ensure that the participants were comfortable and have the opportunity to ask questions prior to the engagement. My participants were also presented with a copy of the interview questions beforehand and the transcripts after to provide context or clarification to the information they have shared.

**What advice would you offer researchers who are studying the third sector and its activities?**

One of the most important lessons that I have learned since making my foray into research is that the research participants are the center of the research and not the researcher!

Preserving and highlighting the agency of your research participants should be a key component of our research. Time and other constraints can limit what we think is possible, but the mainstream research approach tends to divide the ‘researched’ and the ‘researcher’ into a transactional exchange. This exchange often benefits the researcher at the expense of the researched. Researchers, and especially budding researchers, should be conscious of the role they have in dispelling this narrative of the lack of agency in the research process. I also suggest that we consider conducting activist research, which engages the researcher in an examination of their ‘positionality’ in relations to the people and organizations they research. This should be a frank and empathetic exercise that is aimed at identifying potential conflicts that may not be immediately apparent in our deliberations.

And finally, it is important to be 100% transparent with your research participants to gain and to retain their trust.

Edward Dixon holds a PhD from Goldsmiths, University of London. He has work experience in the broad areas of civil society and sustainable development. His research interests include Social and Solidarity Economy, Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, and Corporate Philanthropy. He has an interest in applied social research, research design, and qualitative data analysis. He can be contacted by email (edward.dixon@uwi.edu) and also via his LinkedIn page (https://www.linkedin.com/in/edward-dixon-9714b536/).

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Founded in 1992, the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR) is a major international association promoting research and education in the fields of civil society, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector. ISTR is an organization committed to building a global community of scholars and interested others dedicated to the creation, discussion, and advancement of knowledge pertaining to the third sector and its impact on human and planetary well-being and development internationally. As an organization, ISTR is recognized and respected for its global vision, its commitment to excellence, its collaborative approach, and the values of diversity and pluralism with which it pursues its mission.

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ISTR aims to nurture early career third-sector researchers and practitioners through targeted mentorship and investment in their development. We also present the biennial Emerging Scholar Dissertation Award to dissertations contributing to the comparative study of civil society organizations, philanthropy, voluntarism, non-governmental organizations, and related issues. Through the PhD seminars and mentoring program, we support young scholars and practitioners who examine the role and functions of third sector organizations in their countries and communities. We know our efforts will bear fruit in the social, humanitarian, policy, scientific, and cultural spheres. We hope that our PhD seminar alumni will continue engaging with the ISTR network, become lifelong members of ISTR, and build the field of third sector studies.

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- **ISTR Latin America and the Caribbean** [publishes a monthly newsletter, available online]
- **ISTR Europe and Neighbors**
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