



**The Third Sector and Sustainable Social Change:  
New Frontiers for Research**

**Call for Contributions**

**8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the  
International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> EMES-ISTR European Conference  
in partnership with the Cinefogo Network of Excellence**

**Barcelona, Spain**

July 9-12, 2008

In the last two decades the world's diverse economies and societies have undergone historical transformations of unprecedented breadth and depth. This new world stage has generated special concern among governments and diverse civil society actors on the kinds of social change that are occurring and the impact that change is having. In Europe, demands and increases in the provision of public goods have achieved some degree of efficiency and equity, but in other regions of the world many peoples' basic needs are not being satisfied by states or market mechanisms.

Although the Third Sector has shown significant advances in attaining more just and inclusive societies, there remain enormous practical and theoretical challenges that demand multi-disciplinary approaches and new strategic alliances among those engaged in development.

What lessons emerge from a review of the conceptual paradigms under which Third Sector organizations operate? How can experiences and initiatives accumulated across many decades help to catalyze sustainable social change? To what degree does government regulation and international aid obstruct or promote the performance of civil society organizations? Is the strengthening of social capital necessary in order to have a greater impact on the populations with which the Third Sector works?

Is it possible to achieve sustainable social change through social enterprise or social entrepreneurship? What do these new concepts really mean in theory and practice? What transformations are necessary in the structure and operations of civil society organizations, in order for them to be more efficient, democratic and transparent? How does the crisis of the Welfare State affect the performance of the Third Sector?

The exchange of experiences and findings among scholars and practitioners will help to define the new frontiers of research on the Third Sector.

ISTR's 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Barcelona offers an excellent opportunity for discussing these and related questions, with both academic rigor and empirical foundations. Within a partnership between ISTR and the EMES European Research Network, the conference will also put a special emphasis on European debates and contributions related to social enterprises and the Third Sector while placing them in a worldwide context. The Cinefogo Network of Excellence will also strongly contribute through its research program on civil society and new forms of governance in Europe.

Papers are invited on any of the following sub themes:

**Evaluating the performance and accountability of the Third Sector:** Third Sector organizations are increasingly operating in market or quasi-market environments. As a result, they often are requested to provide specific information on the ways they behave and produce as well as on their costs and achievements. Does this induce organizational changes within these entities? Which tools are being or should be designed to capture their socio-economic performance? How do Third Sector organizations implement accountability practices?

**Social economy and solidarity-based economy: Alternative approaches to the Third Sector:** In some regions and countries, the concepts of "social economy" or "solidarity-based economy" seem best suited to encompass the Third Sector. Which are the strengths and limits of approaches placing more emphasis on the

empowerment of groups and territories and being less strict as to constraints on the distribution of surpluses? Is this question particularly relevant for developing countries? What kinds of new dynamics do these concepts try to apprehend? Which roles do cooperatives play in this perspective?

**Management and governance of the Third Sector: Theoretical and applied approaches:** Improving managerial skills within Third Sector organizations is now a permanent challenge. Many countries are also seeking new ways to allow the involvement of such organizations in the provision and governance of personal services. To what extent can traditional management models and tools be adapted to these organizations? At a macro, meso and micro-level, what are the emerging governance models of Third Sector organizations? How do they involve their various stakeholders?

**Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise:** The term "social enterprise" has been gaining relevance in the last decade. At the same time, various meanings of social entrepreneurship have been proposed. How can these conceptual frameworks be compared? What kinds of approaches are being developed outside North American and Western European countries? Do specific theories really emerge? Which empirical works are being undertaken to test hypotheses?

**Corporate Social Responsibility and the Third Sector:** Third Sector organizations and traditional (for-profit) enterprises have developed a dialogue that has been evolving over time. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this interaction? How does the crucial role of corporate foundations and strategic philanthropy affect the sector?

**Gender and the Third Sector:** Gender discrimination remains as a central issue in some regions of the world. How much progress has the Third Sector made in various countries and regions in reducing gender discrimination in society and in its own ranks? How effective is the Third Sector in reducing gender discrimination and strengthening the status of women in government and donor policies? What are the recent innovations in gender-oriented programming?

**Global civil society and democratic cultures:** It is commonplace to consider that a vibrant civil society entails the flourishing of democratic values and norms. Is civil society, in its national, regional and global contexts, effectively contributing to democratic and participatory political cultures? What are the recent developments and innovations in transnational civil society work and research? Is there a useful role for global civil society under our current international circumstances?

**Conflict resolution and the Third Sector:** In many regions, the Third Sector has played an intermediary and crucial role in solving conflicts of different nature. Is the Third Sector proving effective at assisting in conflict resolution at local, national, and regional levels? What roles is the Third Sector playing in conflict resolution in particularly difficult conflicts– as in the Middle East, Iraq, Sri Lanka, and other areas? Is the Third Sector providing any theoretical innovations in conflict resolution that should be discussed more widely? Do innovations in conflict resolution that originate in government, the business sector or international organizations provide valuable lessons for the work of the Third Sector?

**Government regulation, counter-terrorism, foreign aid, and other constraints:** At national and regional levels, is government regulation of the Third Sector

strengthening, or are regulatory barriers gradually being reduced? What is the impact of counter-terrorism regulation on the activities of the Third Sector in various countries? Is counter-terrorism regulation having a real effect on advocacy and human rights activities, or is it largely a tool "in reserve," without substantial current effects? Is the counter-terrorism policy agenda affecting bilateral foreign aid policies and budgets, in specific terms, and if so, how is that affecting the Third Sector, both in aid recipient countries and in donor countries? Are new forms of philanthropy affecting or constraining the Third Sector or are they spurring the sector toward greater productivity and accountability?

**The Welfare State, liberalization, neo-liberal policies, and the Third Sector:**

How have changes in the welfare state affected the Third Sector in recent years? Is the Third Sector providing effective policy analysis and policy contributions to discussions and debates on the role of the Welfare State? How do liberal or neo-liberal policies affect the Third Sector? If alterations to the Welfare State and the strengthening of neo-liberal policies are occurring worldwide, as many indicate, is there a transnational or global role for civil society in these debates and in ameliorating the effects of some of these policies?

**Volunteering and social capital:** Citizen participation and voluntary action have been gaining momentum as societies change and globalization sets in. How important are these activities and roles in strengthening civil society and how do they contribute to the development process? How is volunteering understood in different parts of the world? How do citizens continue to participate in setting public policies towards equality, and poverty reduction? What are the relationships between voluntary participation and social capital and how do they play out in different contexts? What is the true impact of social capital on development and citizen empowerment?

**Philanthropy and the Third Sector:** The issues of impact, transparency, accountability and efficiency in the distribution of resources will mark the future of philanthropy around the globe. What can we say about the development of organized philanthropy? How is giving perceived in all levels of society? What mechanisms are in place and which organizational changes need to be considered for Third Sector organizations to be more efficient? Where does philanthropy add value to the development process? What strategic investments can advance systemic change and leverage existing assets? How can the field of philanthropy address the issues of impact, transparency, accountability and efficiency in the distribution of resources?

**Other dimensions:** Beyond those already identified, submissions of relevance to the Third Sector and sustainable social change will be considered.

For the purposes of this conference, the Third Sector is broadly defined, including for example: NGOs, non-profit organizations, voluntary associations, social economy organizations, community organizations, self-help and mutual organizations, civil society organizations, unions, religious organizations and co-operatives. Contributions are also welcome which discuss civic participation, community development and citizenship, and the application of research-based knowledge to policy and practice.

ISTR and the EMES Network are keen to encourage contributions from all countries and disciplines, as well as contributions from practitioners carrying out research in and with the sector. Comparative papers and panels covering more than one country will be particularly welcome. A limited number of scholarships and subsidies will be

available for researchers from the developing world. Several scholarships and subsidies will also be reserved for post-graduate students from any part of the world.

Contributions may take the form of a paper, a panel or a poster. Please indicate your choice of presentation. Abstracts are invited in English, French or Spanish. To be considered for review, an abstract must reach the following minimum standards: (1) There must be a working title that clearly identifies the conference theme being addressed; (2) The abstract should (a) summarize the argument of the paper; (b) locate the issue within a wider literature; (c) indicate its relevance to an international audience; and (d) establish its empirical and/or theoretical or practical base; and (3) The abstract should be approximately 500 words in length, but no less than 400 or more than 700 words. Abstracts not meeting these requirements will be returned to the author.

**A Panel submission** is a proposal for a coordinated set of papers (usually 3 or 4 in number) all dealing with 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. Panel coordinators must complete and include the Panel Presenter Information Sheet found on the back of this page with the abstracts.

**A Poster proposal** is an alternative to presenting a full research paper. Please indicate your preference for this form of presentation. 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.)

All submissions satisfying the basic requirements (paper, poster or panel) will be subject to a blind review by three independent reviewers who will not have knowledge of the name of the author or of other reviewers. Only those papers of sufficient academic quality will be accepted.

Following the conference, selected papers will be reviewed for publication in the *ISTR Conference Working Papers Series* or as *EMES Working Papers* to be published shortly after the conference. Authors will also have the opportunity 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.

**Paper and poster abstracts MUST be submitted utilizing the online submission service.** To submit your abstract using this service, go to the ISTR website—[www.istr.org/conferences/barcelona](http://www.istr.org/conferences/barcelona)—and follow the link for **Submit an Abstract**.

**Panel proposals must be submitted by mail or fax;** the on-line service is not equipped to handle multiple-paper submissions. To submit your panel abstracts by mail, send four (4) copies of the abstracts, along with the Presenter Information Sheet, to: ISTR Conference Abstract, 559 Wyman Park Building, 3400 N. Charles Street,

Baltimore, MD 21218-2688 USA. ISTR will also accept panel proposals by fax: 1-410-516-4870. **Please use only one (1) method of submitting your panel proposal.**

Authors will be advised by the end of January 2008 whether their abstract has been accepted. Authors are requested to confirm their participation in the conference by April 18, 2008, and will have an opportunity to submit an extended abstract for inclusion in the conference abstract volume by that date. **ALL PRESENTERS MUST REGISTER. AT LEAST ONE AUTHOR PER SUBMISSION MUST REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE BY APRIL 18, 2008, TO HAVE THEIR PRESENTATION SCHEDULED IN THE CONFERENCE PROGRAM.** The completed paper should be submitted to the session chair/discussant by June 6, 2008, to allow adequate time to read the paper. You will be notified with the name of your session chair/discussant and where to send your paper.

Questions? Phone: 1-410-516-4678; fax: 1-410-516-4870; e-mail: Margery Daniels, [istr@jhu.edu](mailto:istr@jhu.edu), Donna Jakuta [donna.jakuta@jhu.edu](mailto:donna.jakuta@jhu.edu), or Rocio Nogales, [info@emes.net](mailto:info@emes.net); [www.istr.org](http://www.istr.org), [www.emes.net](http://www.emes.net)

**The deadline for abstract submissions is October 15, 2007.**