What are the policy implications of nonprofit organisations playing a greater role both in national affairs and across the globe? This is the question posed in a broad ranging book by John Casey that covers nonprofits from the industrialized democracies of the North to the emerging voices of the South. It is an immense challenge that is well met. The author charts the rise of contemporary nonprofits, with special attention to American influences, state–nonprofit relations and emerging social enterprise, followed by an in depth analysis of international nonprofits. He completes his survey with a discussion of emerging policy issues: the economic, cultural and social nonprofit voice of the South; the jostling of government and business at the nonprofit boundaries; and megatrends such as technological disruption, ageing populations in the North, and emerging middle classes in the South, all of which he considers bode well for future growth in the nonprofit sector. Some readers will think the final chapter too brief and wish for further policy discussion of the impact of international issues such as the rise of mega-foundation nonprofits; climate change and international environmental organisations; terrorism and societal upheavals in the Middle East. These have the potential for profound impacts on the nonprofit actors involved.

This book appears to be directed at both the student and the researcher. As a student text matched to the appropriate course, the book will be a useful resource. The appropriate course would be one that deals with international nonprofit organisations, but the book should be considered as an item for any reference or reading list of introductory nonprofit studies courses. Its value lies not only in being about nonprofit organisations across the globe – it is written from the perspective of the author who has lived and worked on a number of continents and can appreciate the biases inherent in American and northern discourses. The result is a nicely balanced, cosmopolitan discourse that may challenge students who have experienced only one dominant cultural frame of reference.

The early chapters provide a methodical and comprehensive introduction to the nonprofit sector, its definitions, history, definitional frameworks and measures. The second part deals more specifically with national nonprofit sectors.
around the globe as well as those nonprofits that operate internationally, ranging over a broad array of topics including historical comparisons, national comparative research and classifications. The last part of the book dives deeper into the work of international nonprofit organisations, covering their advocacy, governance, leadership and management as well as their interaction with other sectors.

It is the second part of the book that should find its way into the reading lists of generalist nonprofit courses that seek to expose and challenge a domestic student’s view of the world of nonprofit organisations. The frequent tables and example boxes will maintain the interest of a student while also providing a rich layer of contemporary knowledge about the topics under discussion. Each topic is adequately supported by well chosen references. Whilst the ken of the book is broad and touches on most sector issues, a further edition might consider the profound implications of terrorism for national and domestic nonprofits, and the rise of international philanthropy through mega-foundations. Both of these contemporary issues are changing the nature of the nonprofit world.

For the seasoned researcher the second half of the book offers material that will be valuable. International nonprofit scholarly materials usually focus on a small subset of large, high profile humanitarian and advocacy organisations, but John Casey takes a broader view, including small and micro-organisations. Particularly interesting treatment is given to the for profit and government sectors in relation to international nonprofit organisations by examining their roles in resourcing aid.

**Funding:** The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is a major sponsor of Nonprofit Policy Forum, underwriting its open access to the public. Other sponsors include the Levin College at Cleveland State University and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. This special issue was funded through a grant by the Kresge Foundation to ARNOVA.
Just as nonprofit organizations traverse the traditional boundaries that separate the public, private, and social sectors, John Casey’s book *The Nonprofit World: Civil Society and the Rise of the Nonprofit Sector* boldly crosses disciplinary lines. Casey’s treatise on the changing structure and function of the nonprofit sector in a globalizing world draws on theories and empirical insights from a variety of disciplines such as political science, economics, sociology, history, and philosophy. Fashioned after Michael O’Neill’s (2002) conceptualization of the United States as the “Nonprofit Nation,” Casey presents readers with a framework for understanding the ever-evolving “Nonprofit World.” The adaptation of the nonprofit sector to an increasingly interconnected global community has resulted in the expansion of the sector’s size and political agency. Nonprofit organizations and their workers, volunteers, and staff are responsible for delivering services to a variety of stakeholders, while having immense policy-making potential. The increasing numbers of nonprofit organizations in civil societies around the globe have created new challenges for nonprofit organizations that have a direct impact on their ethos, their management, and the efficacy of their organizational structures.

The main objective of this book is to explore effects throughout the world of nonprofit organizations on public policy, government, and civil society. The secondary objective of this book is to investigate the effects of globalization on nonprofit organizations themselves. Through the use of illustrative case studies and illuminating typologies, Casey convincingly contends that the increased presence of nonprofit organizations in nations around the world has influenced both government institutions and nonprofit organizations. The book is written in an engaging and unpretentious tone that makes it appropriate for academic and practitioner audiences alike. Casey’s thorough examination of the direct and indirect effects of nonprofits on civil society in a variety of cultural and political contexts provides an insightful analysis that is both encompassing and meticulous.

The beginning of the book introduces the global importance of nonprofits, defines important terms, and traces the history and evolution of the nonprofit sector. It focuses on the evolution of nonprofits at the domestic (or national) level. Casey draws on examples from nations around the world to trace the history of nonprofits in domestic settings.
guide his analysis, Casey adopts the definition of “nonprofit” that is used by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project and the United Nations—a nonprofit is institutionalized, private (independent from government), self-governing and self-controlled, not profit distributing, and noncompulsory in membership (Salamon 1996).

Casey raises important questions about which groups have definitional standing when he asks readers what types of organizations should be considered legitimate nonprofits? For example, should informal organizations that share the mission, goals, and structure of nonprofits but lack the legal standing be considered nonprofits? Around the world, such informal groups have been experiencing growth in the 21st century. Informal groups often provide more accessible paths to achieving group goals than formal nonprofits. Casey asserts that in the aggregate, informal associations and unincorporated organizations may have more social, economic, and political impact than formally constituted nonprofit organizations (p. 33).

When defining important terms such as “civil society” and “third sector,” Casey is attuned to cultural context. He repeatedly explains that the jargon and the conceptual foundations underlying nonprofit theory and management are highly dependent on historical, social, economic, political, and cultural context. To illustrate the centrality of cultural context to any examination of nonprofits, Casey draws on many examples of how nonprofits function in different time periods and locations. In one example, he profiles Saideh Ghods, the founder of MAHAK, an Iranian nonprofit that raises money for children with cancer. Due to her gender and the cultural context in which she was operating, Ghods faced many challenges when she was forming MAHAK. She had to adapt to these challenges and find creative ways to promote her mission of bringing exceptional cancer treatment to children in Iran (p. 19). Casey’s use of examples and case studies throughout the book helps reinforce the importance of including cultural context in any serious analysis of the role and function of nonprofits in civil society.

Casey also identifies the growing global prevalence of the American model of nonprofit management and structure. Although India is the nation with the largest number of formal nonprofit organizations, the United States is the nation where nonprofit organizations possess the most economic power, political power, and professionalization in its nonprofit sector (p. 132). The American model is characterized by its entrepreneurial spirit, public trust, powerful industry advocates, and skilled workforce (p. 137). Many nations use the American model as a template to shape both individual nonprofit organizations and the structure of nonprofit sectors (p. 138). Casey also observes that due to different cultural contexts around the globe, the American model will not become a uniform method for designing and implementing nonprofit services (p. 143).

The second part of the book shifts to a discussion of the evolution of the nonprofit sector at the international level. There are many nonprofit organizations that operate globally, transcending national boundaries. There are also many international “hybrid” organizations that use the legal structure of nonprofits to promote international dialogues by working in concert with foundations, celebrities, heads of state, and other influential stakeholders (p. 168). Nonprofit organizations have adapted and increased their international operations to address a changing, globalizing world. As they do so, they are able to promote international cooperation and the fluid movement of
information, capital, and labor. As trust in governments across the world wanes, nonprofits are increasingly being viewed by members of civil society as the new protectors and facilitators of public goods (p. 176).

Casey ably deconstructs the positive and negative aspects of living in a globalized world where international nonprofits have strong functional utility. In this regard, Casey notes that nonprofits with more resources are often seen as appropriately representing civil society. These larger, more resourceful nonprofits have more agency than smaller nonprofits with fewer resources. Although the smaller nonprofits might make similar claims to representing the true needs of civil society, their voices get submerged in the international dialogues that are dominated by larger nonprofits (p. 188).

This section of the book also contains a partial investigation of ethics and equity in the international nonprofit sector. Casey asks readers whether it possible for nonprofits from the Economic North to produce meaningful work in the Economic South without being neocolonialist and imposing external values? (p. 228). Casey does an adequate job of outlining different ideological perspectives on these questions but he does not provide any indication of his own opinion on such crucial issues.

The book concludes with an appeal to readers to closely observe the changing dynamics of legitimacy for nonprofit organizations. As the nonprofit sector continues to grow and incorporate entrepreneurial structures, debates over decentralization, organizational integrity, and efficient service delivery will continue. In addition, nonprofit observers should pay close attention to the growth of the nonprofit sector in the global economic south. Casey raises important ethical and pragmatic questions regarding the effects of nonprofits in the Economic North on nonprofits in the Economic South. Although it may appear that the Global Economic South is experiencing an increase in the development of grassroots nonprofit organizations, Casey explains that there are still significant institutional barriers in many countries in the Global Economic South that present challenges for the workers, volunteers, and staff of grassroots nonprofits (p. 298). Casey reiterates the importance of acknowledging historical and cultural context when evaluating changes in the nonprofit sector. His focus on individual perspectives and cultural relativism throughout the book reminds readers that despite its flaws and transformations, the nonprofit sector is grounded in the human desire to improve civil society.

References


Reviewer Biography

Elizabeth Rowen is a doctoral student in political science at Claremont Graduate University. She holds a master of arts degree from Claremont Graduate University and a bachelor of arts degree from Occidental College. Her research interests include homelessness, housing policy, and identity politics. She has worked for nonprofit organizations such as the Homeless Action Committee (Albany, NY) and Foothill Family Shelter (Upland, CA).
Discourses on nonprofit and civil society are timely and raising their importance as the awareness on the significance of democracy has been on the rise. Although some scholars debate the positioning of civil society and democracy, the majority is in agreement that the civil society has developed the nonprofit world or vice versa. Nonprofit organizations and civil society are the core of the Third Sector, in addition to the other two sectors, namely The State and The Market. Jon Casey’s *The Nonprofit World* is also departing from the centrality of nonprofitness in the framework of the Third Sector.

This book provides a comprehensive picture of the nonprofit world, showing the role and impact of this specific world, with a wide spectrum of nonprofits. Its comprehensiveness, rich examples, and deep analysis are the fruit of long experience of its author, John Casey, who has worked with nonprofit organizations around the world, as well as of his research and teaching on nonprofit organizations at the School of Public Affairs at Baruch College, City University of New York.

The book aims “to help readers understand the full breadth and depth of the nonprofit world in which domestic and international nonprofits are increasingly influential.” It analyzes the evolution of the nonprofit sector “in the broader context of domestic and global public affairs.” It argues that the sector is on the rising trend, in most countries. With examples of various case studies of nonprofit organizations around the world, with statistics, surveys, indexes, and databases, enriched with historical accounts and scholars’ assessments, the author’s argument is strong and
difficult to repudiate. The global perspective of this book helps enrich and frame many case studies and country studies.

The book arrangement is tailored in stages, from domestic to the country level and to international nonprofit organizations, by thematic issues relevant to each context. Introduction to the nonprofit world, including its thorough definitions, concepts, and debates is found in chapters 1 and 2. The next chapters describe the evolution of the sector (Chapter 3), comparing national nonprofit sectors (Chapter 4), the globalization of ideas (Chapter 5), internationalization (Chapter 6), how international nonprofits work (Chapter 7 and 8), and a concluding chapter on emerging trends (Chapter 9). In addition to many helpful classifications, such as nonprofits (p. 30) and international nonprofits (p. 189), and a global perspective of nonprofits, this book interestingly points out different historical traditions and cultures that influence the development of the nonprofit sector at country level (Chapter 4). It shows determinants of differences in nonprofits that range from peculiar political and social contexts, economic contexts, regulatory and institutional environments, and other social-cultural norms. These determine the legitimacy, structures, and functions of nonprofit organizations.

Casey is aware of an unintended shortfall of the book, namely a bias towards “industrialized democracies that dominate internationalization” (p. 13) of the nonprofits, and tried his best to also refer to various nonprofit organizations beyond that area. One region that usually left behind but in this book receives fair attention is the Middle East. There are short case studies referred to this region, for example in box 2.2 on a female CEO of a nonprofit in Iran, box 9.1 on the Hassan II Foundation, and box 4.5 to include civil society in Saudi Arabia. Although it is disappointing to find there is no case study from Southeast Asian countries, this is understandable due to the limited published English sources on nonprofits from this region, as explained in the introduction. The book is in line with its objective to provide a “global” picture of nonprofits and examine the trends of “thousands of smaller, little-known organizations that have an impact on people’s daily lives”, in addition to the prominent, giant nonprofit organizations. Readers will enjoy case studies’ boxes scattered along the chapters, debates, and new ideas on nonprofits and the extensive bibliographies that all reflex the complexities of the nonprofit sector.

The title of the book and the first paragraph of the preface may lead readers to think that this book is a kind of module relevant specifically for students. This assumption is totally wrong. This book is relevant to anyone doing research on the nonprofit sector, civil society, philanthropy, NGOs, and other related themes connected to this world. Its comprehensive breadth and depth make this book one among the academic references on the nonprofit sector.
Every month or so, I get together with other folks who work in national non-profits in a laid-back office in Montreal’s Plateau neighbourhood for an evening picnic. It is not just any picnic, but one where we intentionally come together to talk about the big picture. Daily work in the non-profit sector is busy, and we don’t often have time to ask questions like, “What is the sector, anyway?” But at these picnics, over baguettes and beer, we make space for them.

What actually constitutes and bounds the third sector is one of the many big picture questions addressed by John Casey in *The Nonprofit World*. It is a textbook in its epic scope and careful treatment of concepts and terminology, theories of non-profit sector evolution, cross-national comparisons, and examples from around the world. I admit I do not usually read textbooks. Each time I cracked this book, though, I got the same giddy feeling as when I arrive at our monthly picnic. We so rarely get to zoom out this far.

*The Nonprofit World* takes as its starting point the rapid growth in the number of non-profit organizations and their increasing influence on society since the 1970s. The first chapters of the book explore the characteristics of this growth and, to a lesser extent, its meaning and implications for different countries. The book is also an excellent history teacher, particularly Chapter 3, which traces the many influences on sector growth over the last 50 years, including economic, social, political, technological, and resource shifts. Casey is successful in his goal to describe “the evolution of the non-profit sector in the broader contexts of domestic and global public affairs while offering a critical analysis of the work of nonprofits that neither overstates their importance nor uncritically makes claims about their impact” (11).

One of the reasons why the sector has experienced immense expansion is that, across the political spectrum, non-profit organizations are viewed as the answer to many challenges: “Conservatives consider them a key source of nongovernmental initiative for counterbalancing state power and introducing market forces into the delivery of public services. Progressives see them as the embodiment of grassroots activism that can help ensure that social services are effectively delivered to those most in
need” (20). For folks working in non-profit management, such a perspective helps to explain the sense we often have of being answerable to a diverse and often disparate set of stakeholders each with their own expectations. The sense of being pulled in many directions is also illuminated by Casey’s description of four main functions of non-profits: to provide services, to innovate, to uphold values, and to advocate for change. The division between service and expressive functions are “a key fault line” in discourse about the sector.

At one of our picnics, inspired by a group member’s recent travels in Cuba, we discussed the way that political and social contexts produce different kinds of non-profit sectors, and would that term even apply in Cuba? I would have been much more equipped to inform the discussion had I already read Chapter 4, “Comparing National Nonprofit Sectors” and Chapter 5, which explores how the US non-profit model is dominating the discourse and, to some extent, non-profit evolution around the world. The author offers a useful diagram that plots national non-profit sector types based on two dimensions: the influence of their civil society versus the control of the state, and income level. Canada, like the US and Australia, is a liberalist country with high incomes and an active civil society. Grouping developing, emerging, social democratic, corporatist, and authoritarian countries together, Casey illustrates how nations with similar “cultural frames” tend to give rise to non-profit sectors with similar characteristics. He concludes that the cultural frames of each nation “remain as important moorings that cannot be easily cast off” (143). While he predicts the increasing expansion of the non-profit sectors in almost all countries, the author does not expect to see the huge transfer of services nor the wide diversity of voices and contestation that are key characteristics of the American model.

Although the book draws from an extremely wide number and variety of sources, I was disappointed not to find thinkers such as Canadian Henry Mintzberg(Rebalancing Society: Radical Renewal Beyond Left, Right, and Center, 2015) included in the 25-page bibliography. Mintzberg offers a counterpoint to Casey’s growth thesis, asserting that the “plural sector” is actually weakening in comparison to the public and private sectors and needs to be revitalized in order to achieve balance in society. That said, Casey’s treatment throughout the book of critiques of the non-profit sector, such as one of the most basic, that non-profits are not necessarily good or humanistic, is excellent. Reality is much more complex than this idealized vision. I appreciated this reminder.

What is the value of a sweeping, global review of non-profit growth theory and practice? The book shakes up assumptions, including that our North American model is the only one. For practitioners, policymakers and partners that work in relation to non-profits, increasing our historical and cross-national knowledge brings greater awareness and care to our work in this vast, evolving sector. These are subjects worth study and discussion, and they go well, in my experience, with baguettes, beer, and good company.