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# Associations, Movements, Dialogues, Social Problems and News: Voluntary Action and the Life Cycles of the Third Sector

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## Abstract

This is one of two summation papers presented at the conclusion of the 2012 Queensland University conference on the third sector, looking to the future. The focus initially is on the concept of the social imaginary as offered by the Canadian social philosopher, Charles Taylor. Much of the previous conceptual and theoretical work in third sector studies during the past few decades has been focused on questions of the best ways to imagine the community and national social configurations of increasingly large numbers of nonprofit, voluntary and nongovernmental organizations. The concepts of nonprofit organization and nonprofit sector have been most prominent figures in this evolving social imaginary, although there are other conceptions as well, notably civil society and commons. More recently, a group of European scholars has mounted a critique of the “North American Model” of the third sector as a space of nonprofit organizations defined by the non-distribution constraint. Examination of one major expression of this critique reveals a serious, thoughtful effort that deserves greater attention than it has received to date among North American scholars.

## Introduction

The purpose of this last section of the program is to look toward the future. Before looking into my own special crystal ball, I would like to reflect briefly on the past two days and what we have learned. Jon Van Til started things off with a sharply drawn argument for the importance of grounding our conception of the third sector. Ralph Brower took another whack at the difficult timber of principal-agent theory. Agnes Meinard drew a fine distinction between social enterprise and revenue-supplementation in nonprofits. Yoko Suda looked at the Japanese long-term insurance system. Eric Martin looked at the complex question of civil society in humanitarian emergencies. David Lewis called our attention – correctly, I think – to the “parallel universes” of nonprofit and development theory. Rachel LaForest and Wenjue Knutsen incited us toward more nuanced views of hybridity. Chao Guo examines the published literature on the important question of the Chinese third sector evolving in the shadow of the state. Ann Dill characterized nonprofit-state relations, correctly I believe, as “marriages of convenience”. An important issue at the moment is whether the particular *mariage de convenance* that arose in the late 1960s between various democratic governments including Great Britain, Canada, Germany and the U.S. and others, and the many and varied social worlds of

voluntary action is approaching a point of separation or even divorce. All of Session Six dealt with the social economy, modern understanding of which is one of the important Canadian contributions to the North American conversation on third sectors. Contemporary social economy perspectives on the basic unit of study originating in Canada and the European Union are different both from the American preoccupation with nonprofit sectors of tax-exempt corporations and older European social economy models. Jack Quarter and Laurie Mook offer what they term an interactive view of the social economy, while Yves Vailiancourt outlined a proposal to theoretically integrate the nonprofit, social and solidarity economies of Canada. In my presentation, I wish to play upon threads and themes from all of these papers. In this closing session, Adelbert Evers and I have been tasked with looking to the future. In his remarks, I expect that Professor Evers will enlighten us of the contested nature of the theory and practice of the third sector in relation to government, while I in my turn wish to do a bit more of the contesting. I trust that he and I see a great deal more in common in the future than he may suspect.

### **The Third Sector Imaginary**

I begin my comments with a notion first outlined by a philosopher widely regarded as the leading Canadian social philosopher of the past century: Charles Taylor. In a charming little volume entitled *The Social Imaginary* (2004) Taylor outlined a proposal to consider the role of imagination in social behavior and theory. I want to suggest to you that both present and future models of the third sector are products of the social imaginary. I do mean this in the sense of pure fiction, mythology and storytelling like my five year old granddaughter's sense of fairies, trolls and unicorns. As Taylor notes, imagining is a complex social process in which social reality – including organizations, institutions and social relations not previously noted or understood - can be established as plausible constructions of reality. I suspect, in fact, that it is caution about the powers of imagination which is behind Jon Van Til's urging that we keep the third sector reality based! To take a simple but powerful example of such reality-based social imagining, before there was an actual Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg (or someone) had to imagine it and build the necessary computer code, but before Facebook could become what it is today somewhere more than 500 million other people had to imagine themselves as part of Zuckerberg's very real construct and behave accordingly.

The third sector as it exists today is another such construction, the product not only of theorists but also for all those who knowingly participate in various ways. In seeing the third sector as an amazing recent and still incomplete collective act of collective social imagination – in Taylor's terms an imaginary – we are concerned with some very real things, an entirely new set of ideas constructed out of virtually no prior materials, and in particular with the role of imagination in social research and theory; of novel perspectives and new conceptualizations of those things.

What I want to suggest here and now, using Taylor's social imaginary as a starting point, is that the idea of a third sector of nonprofit organizations, or the nonprofit sector that Bert Evers and his collaborators have termed "the North

American” perspective, has been a wondrous construct, but that it is only a first draft; a version that sort of got things right, but that also left a great deal out and could easily become a barrier to further imaginings and conceptual developments.

The worldwide imagining of the third sector, in English at least, seems to have begun separately at about the same time in the U.S., Canada and Great Britain following an equally incredible series of preliminary imaginative exercises by a broad range of social scientists, philosophers and theorists. We need to be careful here to distinguish working knowledge of the actual existing institutions from our imaginings of the full set of their relations and interconnections in what we now call a third sector.

When I and several of you first got interested in one facet or another of this vast topic – in my case, more than 40 years ago – the laws and many of the institutions and organizations of numerous countries were a great deal like they are today. In the U.S., for example, the tax-exempt category of 501-c-3 had existed since the 1950s in pretty much the same form that it does today. Yet, no one for several decades after that was able to mouth the words “third sector” or express the idea in a meaningful way. None of us were able to imagine anything quite like the third sector in the many different versions that we see it today. No one.

There have been numerous additional and interesting developments since the idea of a third sector composed of nonprofit organizations was first imagined but that, rather than being enriched by these new developments, the first draft notion of the third sector as a nonprofit sector has essentially stalled in its original form. Its foremost advocates seem to have dug in their heels in defense against what are perceived as assorted ‘heresies’, and rather than reimagining even richer, more refined and inclusive versions of the third sector, the sector concept has weathered the storm and remained largely unchanged for more than three decades. The paradigm, it would seem, is frozen even before it is fully a paradigm.

## **Constrained Recent Imaginaries**

Reimagining the organization and composition of the third sector has been of interest to a growing number of researchers, theorists and practitioners in North America, Europe and beyond for a number of years. There have been considerable variations in interest nationally, but a number of particular dynamics have proved to be of general interest. First, a wide variety of middle range questions focused on characterizing nonprofit organizations, particularly in relation to government administration, have fitted easily within the nonprofit sector paradigm. At the same time, a set of macro-economic and political questions have focused almost exclusively on the definition and measurement of national nonprofit sectors, defined in terms of tax-exempt/tax deductible corporations. At the same time, however, third sector theory has provoked widespread interest, and a variety of criticisms from a range of different sources, including the two presenters in this session and several additional presenters at this meeting.

Smaller, but determined groups of writers, some with a strong practitioner bent, have focused on alternatives to the imagined sector of nonprofit organizations, including volunteer management, fundraising, mutual aid and self-help groups, nonprofit marketing, social capital, civil society, social movements, and deliberative democracy. Interestingly, these have broadened our understandings but without major impact on what a group of European scholars have taken to calling the North American theory of nonprofit organization and the third sector.

## The Critique

In the U.S., this focus on a sector of nonprofit organizations has ramped up an entirely new level of support for interest group liberalism (Lowi, 1969) and the heavy emphasis on quasi-commercial service delivery has warped, if not actually broken, the connection between the third sector and larger political and social considerations, like democracy, freedom and independence. In the name of an “independent sector” advocates have revived a Washington (and London, Paris, Berlin and other national capitals) centered view of associationism much like that first set forth by U.S. President Herbert Hoover in the late 1920s and sought to inculcate nonprofit corporations as part of the governing formula of democratic governance (Zunz, 2012. Chapter 5), while ignoring completely the most pernicious political effects of the nonprofit sector associated with K Street lobbying, the Citizen’s United court decision and the overwhelming degradation of the 501-c-4 category of tax exemption. Perhaps the clearest expression of this new associationism was Lester Salamon’s theory of “third party governance, but the underlying nonprofit organization paradigm is too widely espoused to be attributed only to a single author.<sup>1</sup>

Concentrating primarily on formal organization and the governance of established, functioning institutions offers a necessarily incomplete frame for viewing our growing understandings of the third sector. It also offers an oddly establishmentarian bias toward the status quo, particularly for those espousing interests in “social change”. Change from this vantage point, it seems, amounts principally to doing more of the same except with better funding. At the very least, this view runs the risk of ignoring not only a range of truly “independent” activities, but also the flesh-and-blood formative processes and actual historical dynamics of these institutions and reduces them to abstractions – rules, structures and decisions. At worst, it embraces a peculiar form of traditionalism that constrains the future to the “best practices” of yesterday.

Efforts to suggest that this nonprofit sector is a third sector of the general social, political and economic order, on par with the market order and the government (often misleadingly referred to as the state) have been largely unconvincing. There is just too much overlooked by that view, which has been particularly criticized by a current cohort of European scholars including my co-presenter (Evers, 2005; Evers

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<sup>1</sup> For a critique of Salamon’s theory see Boettke and Prychitko (2004).

and Laville, 2004). Scholars in North America would do well to heed the European concerns more carefully than has been the case up to now.

## Critiques of the North American Model

The “North American model” of national nonprofit sectors is one of quantitative aggregates of tax-exempt corporations to which taxpayers can make tax-deductible contributions safe in the assurance of legal and ethical non-distribution constraints. This model is proving to be, from the standpoint of the future, pretty much of a theoretical dead end. It has, in short, gone about as far as it can go. Although it was an interesting construct three decades ago, and a useful organizing frame for otherwise unrelated research studies, it offers no real or durable “hooks” into the social or political big picture of the place of the third sector in 21<sup>st</sup> century life. It also concentrates full attention on a single aspect of the complex, multi-dimensional space beyond government and the market order, mistaking the part for the whole.

There will always be a place for some type of large frame within which to pose research questions and frame issues, but a nonprofit sector consisting entirely of tax-exempt corporations is no longer sufficient to the task. Likewise, the nonprofit sector as a descriptor of the entire space outside government and the market order offers a seriously distorted picture; a kingdom of ends defined only by its means. Once the macro-economic methodology of measuring the aggregate economic contribution of nonprofit corporations to the GDP is standardized internationally, it is unclear that the nonprofit sector as presently framed in North America has any additional use other than as a set of rhetorical coordinates for organizing conferences and framing more detailed research questions. Theoretically, it is a sort of fun house mirror, a very limited concept that reflects an overly large image of one small portion of the much larger social realities of third spaces outside governments and markets and minimizes a great deal else.

The political imagining of a Washington DC centered and unified coalition – called an “independent sector” – of nonprofit corporations functioning as a single national voice for good has proven to be largely a phantasm. There are nearly as many diverse interests represented in national and international third sectors as there are organizational missions. The vast majority of nonprofit corporations appear interested only in securing funding to deliver services and, as a result, a large portion of them are in direct and intense competition with one another for scarce resources, and more than we may wish to acknowledge are directly opposed to one another.

Criticism of the nonprofit sector, however, does not mean that there is no further value in exploring the social and cultural spaces outside of the market order and government and the numerous third ways beyond management structures of command and control and market-oriented incentive structures. It simply means we need to look beyond the world of nonprofit service delivery closely tied to government administration in order to find the really interesting stuff. A key part of

that exploration should be to explore what we might call “the European critique” of what is perceived as the North American model of a third sector of tax-exempt nonprofit corporations subject to legal nondistribution constraints.

European colleagues like Adelbert Evers have been offering versions of the critique of this North American model for anyone willing to listen for some time now. Just recently, an EMES working paper by Evers’ co-author in that 2004 volume, Jean-Louis Laville detailed five major theoretical criticisms of the North American model (Laville, 2011). My principal disagreement with Laville’s paper would be that, unfortunately, the North American model has considerably less theoretical integration and coherence than Laville’s critique might lead one to believe. In his critique, Laville states five criticisms that I would call privileged trust, stacking the deck, excessive reliance on instrumentalism, conflict aversion, and an implied hierarchy that devalues nongovernmental and nonmarket institutions.

### *Privileged Trust*

The first criticism offered by Laville is a familiar assault of the theoretical veracity of the nondistribution constraint as what he terms “a privileged channel of trust:”

*The theory of institutional choice makes the non-distribution constraint autonomous and considers this constraint as the privileged channel of the trust of users in the services provided by non-profit organisations.*

This point is well taken, but somewhat more limited in its impact than the ire it raises among EMES members would suggest. As it relates to third sector studies, it may, in fact, be a case of seeking to kill a butterfly with a sledge hammer, due perhaps to the thickness of the semantic Atlantic fog. Clearly, there are a small minority of North American third sector scholars – particularly some nonprofit economists, management and institutional theorists who hew closely enough to institutional choice theory (c.f., Anheier, 2005) to see the behavioral significance of trust that LaVilLe projects onto them.

The vast majority of those in the multi-disciplinary community of third sector scholars in the United States, liberated by the free pass of “middle range theorizing”, have little or no awareness of, or interest in, institutional choice theory. For the vast majority of U.S. third sector participants, nondistribution constraints are a legal, not a theoretical, constraint. Because it is written into all state laws and a primary criterion for tax-exempt status from the IRS, it requires no further justification for anyone embracing a middle range view. Thus, the nondistribution constraint is for most third sector scholars simply a convenient legal marker. Further, most North American scholars are guided by their own diverse disciplinary pursuits of the two dozen or more disciplines actively working on third sector studies. While such theoretical incoherence may be mind-boggling to anyone schooled in French or continental theory traditions, the non-distribution constraint

serves only as a universal legal marker and furthers no important theoretical purpose for most of them. It is “autonomous” not in theory but in reality.

Even so, for anyone interested in actual multidisciplinary theory of the third sector, LaVille’s first point is an important one. At the same time, for anyone interested in accurate description and explanation of the space outside of government and the market order as a third sector from the vantage point of institutional choice, one aspect of the controversial nondistribution constraint that remains to be adequately described and explained is the role of law, legal practice and legal practitioners in forming and shaping the particular institutions and the choices involved. The role of law in both the U.S. and Canada offers several other interesting questions as well. Evelyn Brody, Marion

Freemont-Smith and other legal scholars have made clear, for example, that the U.S. preference for nonprofit corporations rather than trusts or other legal arrangements is more an accident of history than something more systematic. My wife and I have argued elsewhere that the U.S. government policy of awarding grants only to 501(c)3 corporations may have played an important role in this (Lohmann and Lohmann, 2002, pp.) Such gossamer considerations do not auger well as solid anchor points for a strong theoretical base.

### *Stacking the Deck*

LaVille’s second criticism of the North American perspective speaks indirectly to the “state of nature” assumptions embedded in the role ascribed to the nondistribution constraint:

*(T)his explanation details . . . the reasons why users or donators [donors?] resort to non-profit organisations, but the implicit statement is that of their pre-existence, making it possible for non-profit organisations to be chosen.*

By treating the institutional choice between markets, governments or nonprofits as purely abstract, rational choices outside time, context and history, in other words, adherents of the North American perspective appear to be assuming that the very institutions whose origins they seek to explain are available to be chosen. Seldom has there been a more succinct and accurate criticism of the assorted “failure theories” (market failure, government failure, etc) associated with the North American perspective. As noted above, for example, a government- or market-failure approach offers little insight into why institution builders might choose nonprofit incorporation rather than a trust administered by a voluntary association (committee).

### *Instrumentalism*

Laville goes on to a more familiar third criticism of the North American perspective:

*They reduce all human decisions to rational choices resulting from instrumental behaviours, i.e. behaviours oriented towards the result of action.*

To this I can say only amen. Those familiar with my own work will recognize that I have been making this and the previous point more or less continuously since my Lettuce paper was first given at the AVAS conference in 1987. I would, however, question LaVille's equating instrumental behavior with action in general. Perhaps this is a problem in language, but this seems to me to fall directly back into the same familiar trap of dichotomizing all behavior into "rational" and "irrational" categories, itself a serious reductionism.

### ***Conflict Aversion***

*The combination of market-failure and state-failure approaches "authorises a functional and pacified version of the relations between the market, the state and non-profit organisations."*

Again, I would largely agree with LaVille's critique, with one caveat. Failure hypotheses in institutional choice have most certainly offered their own friction-free and "just so" versions of peaceful accommodation largely free of all conflict, and this criticism is certainly valid at the level of general theory of the third sector. However, the particular failures of markets and governments that the North American perspective speaks to are largely historical, based on accounts of the circumstances that gave rise to the emergence and coherence of what Salamon termed "the association revolution" in the 1970s and 1980s with which we are still dealing today. There is no doubt that the world market order failed in 1929 or that the Nazi and Soviet versions of statism similarly failed. These failures may have been the original basis for the market and government failure hypotheses (Salamon, 1993). At any rate, together these failures first preceded the wide variety of mixed economies in the assorted welfare states of the postwar world, and after 1989 contributed to the "association revolution" and the rise of civil society. But if this explanation generally held up, the North American perspective should also have had more to say about the Great Recession of 2008 and the assorted revolutions of the Arab Spring, and thus far it has not. Also, in this context, the failure of American exceptionalism – about which the functionalist institutional choice theory is silent – to pose viable alternatives to the European welfare states could be accounted one of the "government failures" that gave rise to the government/nonprofit nexus in the 1960s.

### ***Implicit Hierarchy***

Finally, Laville laments:

*There is an implicit hierarchy embedded in the theory of institutional choice that "does not content itself with considering . . . the market, the state and*

*non-profit organisations as distinct entities and with placing them in separate compartments (Lewis 1997: 166); it goes further by putting forward an analytical grid in which the market and the state are apprehended as the pillars of society and non-profit organisations as complimentary.”*

In many ways, LaVille’s final criticism is the most consequential of all from a North American perspective. Anyone who has looked closely at the institutional choice literature dating at least back to Mancur Olson (1965) can readily find evidence of this hierarchy. This was, for example, the same basic institutional choice offered by Garrett Hardin (1968) at the beginning of commons theory that found its most elegant expressions in the work of Elinor and Vincent Ostrom (see Aligica and Boettke, 2009) and which I tied to the third sector in my own work (Lohmann, 1992).

This was also the fundamental choice posed by Charles Lindblom in *Politics and Markets* (1977). This is the fundamental analytic hierarchy still offered by much of contemporary institutional choice, both practically and theoretically. It is, for example, the choice between “government” and “free enterprise” solutions in the current U.S. Presidential election campaign.

One of the genuinely positive contributions of the North American perspective has been to force at least some policy makers and researchers to take note of the economic contributions of tax-exempt nonprofit corporations. Yet the market order and government are still widely perceived by too many beyond the boundaries of third sector studies as the most basic venues of institutional choice; the third sector is a derivative space of externalities, amenities and fripperies.

## **Social Economy: Canadian, European and U.S. Alternatives**

The bi-lateral vision of market and state as “the pillars of society” is by no means limited to nonprofit theory in the U.S. in third sector theory generally, nor even in institutional choice and economic development theory. The exhaustive dichotomy of public and private, and their equivalents in other languages, leaves little room anywhere in social and political theory for third sector options at anything like a basic level. Everything else is reduced to what Laville terms “complementary” status, including nonprofit organizations, but also families, religion, education (except as an adjunct of production), foundations, charity, philanthropy, arts and culture, mutual aid and self-help, civic engagement and a great deal more.

There has been a growing chorus of voices, including LaVille’s, Evers’ and my own seeing social economy as a rubric preferable to the “nonprofit sector” construct (Laville, 2011; Lohmann, 2007). As a mark of its popularity, I guess, there is already some variation in what is meant by this term. Yet, it remains true, as I noted in 2007, that the 27 kinds of organizations noted in Sections 501 and 524 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Act continue to define an official U.S. version of the social economy. It is important to note here that some of the organizations in the U.S.

version of a social economy – notably the category termed “public charities” in Section 501(c)3 – are described by the nondistribution constraint while others like cooperatives, credit unions and some nonprofit and foundation activities, are not tax exempt.

LaVille’s French version constructs a very similar theoretical space as the “social and solidarity economy” (2012). Particularly, given the role of Solidarity in the civil society revolutions of 1989-92 in central and eastern Europe it is not at all difficult to see why he chose to accentuate that latter concept. Yet the idea has appeal in North America as well. In a North American version of social economy, Quarter, Mook and Armstrong (2009) construct social economy in terms of nonprofits and cooperatives, while the official European Commission version constructs the “so called social economy” as “small and medium-sized enterprises” including “cooperatives, mutual societies, non-profit associations, foundations and social enterprises”

(expired link).

Third sector studies have taken a decidedly bifurcated perspective on that latter group, the social enterprises with important implications for LaVille’s five critiques. In a recent British contribution, for example, David Billis (2010) has coined the term hybrid organizations for something very similar to what I have termed bureaucratic firms. In his own contribution to this mélange, Antonin Wagner (2012) poses the issue in terms of third/nonprofit sector vs. civil society. In general, however, it appears to a number of us that the social economy poses an answer to the question of what nonprofit sectors are sectors of.

## II. Enlarging The Third Sector Imaginary

In the concluding section of this paper, I would like to concentrate on some connections between these assorted critiques of the North American concept of the nonprofit sector as a third sector, the social economy/solidarity economy construct and the question of where we go from here. A good bit of where I wish to go with this is wrapped up in my title. It is also the subject of a book manuscript I have just completed titled *Voluntary Action in The New Commons* (Lohmann, 2012B).

I wish to suggest first that LaVille’s criticisms are only partially addressed by his focus on the social/solidarity economy as a space of formal organizations, even in the fullest European sense of that term - nonprofit organizations, associations, cooperatives, foundations, mutuals and social enterprises. They simply fail to fully imagine what David Horton Smith likes to call “the dark matter” of the third sector, including grassroots associations (Smith, 2000) and which I prefer to call voluntary action.<sup>2</sup> They also give insufficient attention to the space completely apart from

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<sup>2</sup> The founders of ARNOVA were, in my view, quite acute in naming it the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. Any conception of a third sector as both the entire space

government that Cornuelle termed the Independent sector (Cornuelle, 1992; Lohmann, 2012B). And, finally, they fail to take into account the collective behavior of crowds, streets, “scenes”, news and social problems (Blumer, 1955; Blumer, 1971). These and other omissions are telling. More than a million people filled the public square in Cairo for weeks on end during the Arab Spring. Hundreds of thousands at a time turned out in numerous Central and Eastern European countries during the “Civil Society” revolutions of 1989-1992, including the “singing revolutions” in Estonia and the Baltic states. More than 3 million people turned out for a community parade and festival in the Bronx in midsummer this year. Every year, millions of devout Moslems participate in the *hadj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and millions of Indians make similar pilgrimages to the Ganges and other pilgrimage sites on the Indian subcontinent. Millions routinely turn out for Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Carnivals elsewhere in numerous cities prior to the start of Lent. Last year, spontaneous Occupy movements broke out in dozens of cities around the world. And an estimated billion people, including more than 200,000 formally recognized volunteers, participated in the London Summer Olympics this past summer. And these are only a tiny fraction of the examples that might be cited. Faced with the magnitude of such occurrences, it is implausible to suggest that it is only the formal organizations and institutions – e.g., the boards, organizing committees and professional staff – that make up the third sector.

A fuller and more vibrant future concept of the third sector must, in my view, be more fully cognizant of voluntary action, not only of formal volunteers and organized mutual aid/self-help but also the informal organizations, collective behavior of networks and the new social media, and of social movements, and other new and knowledge commons like social problems and news.

The list of such social organizations is long. In *The Commons* (1992) I discussed a number of such entities – clan associations, ethnic and other defensive groups, fairs and holidays, guilds and labor unions, academies and research organizations, committees, academic disciplines, scholarly and research journals, meetings and conferences like this one, fundraising and other campaigns, common places like campuses, temples, synagogues, lodge halls, churches, chapels, camp grounds, conference centers, coliseums, gymnasias and what Anderson (2011) has called “cosmopolitan canopies” – spaces like Reading Market in Philadelphia that simply emerge as safe zones for casual racial mixing.

Part of the challenge of the social economy is to address the great diversity of production of a broad range of goods across such a broad spectrum. I have previously stated my view that in addition to private and public goods, many organizations in the third sector produce what I have called common goods. One of the general types of social organization I introduced in *The Commons* was the *benefactory* – (usually formal) institutions for provision of benefits, consisting of

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outside markets and governments and consisting only of nonprofit organizations is clearly and fully an oxymoron.

patrons, their agents and clients, composing what I am now calling *philanthropods* – distinctive three-way transactions of patrons, agents and clients that cannot be reduced to binary transactions analogous to buying and selling in markets. There are at least three distinct types: In addition to *benefactories* (Lohmann, 1992), Voluntary Action in the New Commons also discusses what I am calling *performatories*, a class of formal and informal organizations that certainly includes orchestras and theater companies but also community arts programs and enactments, demonstrations and performances of many types, including parades, ceremonies and religious observances. Most performance art, organized religious activity or festivals, for example, are not immediately commercial or governmental. Much of it is, in reality, third sector activity, including the growing phenomena of organized dialogues and deliberations (Lohmann & Van Til, 2011). I have also identified *moeuratoria*. As Kahan (1998) reminds English-language readers, Alexis de Tocqueville’s concept of *moeurs* includes much more than values or mores in the conventional Sociology I sense or mores. It also includes practices, ideals, morals, customs, feelings and habits. One of the qualities of third sector entities, both formal and informal, is their remarkable ability to generate such *moeurs*.

I am currently studying one particular member of this category of *moeuratoria* for a paper to be presented at ARNOVA: the networks and social organization generated by news – the networks of nonprofit news creators, but particularly the readers, viewers, bloggers, tweeters, Facebook friends and others operating in what Katz and Lazarsfeld long ago identified as the “twostep flow of communication” (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1971;

Lohmann, 2012C). The subtitle of the (1955) Katz-Lazarsfeld book *Personal Influence is The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*. Their perspective highlighted the role of the personal influence of opinion leaders in the dissemination of news and opinion formation. In my view, this is one of the many dimensions of voluntary action in the third sector. Through *benefactories*, *philanthropods*, *moeuratoria*, *performatories* and other forms of voluntary action the third sector paradigm takes us far beyond the realm of purely instrumental action (e.g., service delivery) by nonprofit bureaucratic firms. It makes room for explicit inclusion of social movements, social problems and collective behavior such as the recent rise of nonprofit investigative news reporting (Lohmann, 2012C).

Looking at mass communication and bringing the social organization of the audience into the picture required a very creative act of social imagination. Visualizing the third sector has also required a great deal of social imagination, not to mention a good bit of time, and the project is not yet complete. We need to remain committed to the task and to visualizing the full extent of the social space beyond government and outside the market order.

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