

## Proposed Panel for ISTR 2008 Conference

# Policy Initiatives towards the Third sector in International Perspective

Convener: Benjamin Gidron

The tremendous growth, world-wide, of the third sector in size and importance created a situation in most countries, whereby existing government policies towards the third sector did no longer fit the new reality. The process of fitting the modes of relations between government and the third sector to the new reality is a complex one as it has to deal with a variety of fragmentations: Different fields of practice, different levels of government and different types of third sector organizations - engaged in service provision, advocacy, funding (foundations).

The need for a new policy (or policies) towards the sector prompted an effort in some countries to deal with this problem. A partial but certainly not exhaustive list of those includes Canada, India, Germany, Japan and Israel. A review of those cases suggests that it is dealt with by different actors, in different manners, involving different perceptions and variety of policy tools, old and new. We refer to those attempts as *Policy Initiatives*.

The processes of initiating, formulating and implementing such policy initiatives are the focus of the proposed panel, which will focus on the five countries listed above. The initiatives discussed are highly variegated - from reviewing current policies, to creating entirely new comprehensive policies towards the sector. Some of those involve enactment of new laws, creation of supervisory mechanisms and new modes of funding. Some are highly innovative while others are based on old ideas. Some are initiated by third sector organizations, others by government. The policy initiatives expose different perceptions and visions about the Third Sector, its role in society, its relationships with government, market and citizens and different means to advance them. Each of these had different consequences for the Third sector and for government and all had tremendous impact on the relationship between the two.

Each of the cases discussed is analyzed within a theoretical framework. Possible frameworks that could inform the policy making processes and initiatives that led to the changes in policy towards the Third Sector in the different countries studied are: (1) The Multiple Streams developed by John Kingdon, (2) the Advocacy Coalition developed by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith and (3) The Punctuated Equilibrium developed by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones. The panel focus will also discuss the appropriateness of the different frameworks for a comparative approach in analyzing policy initiatives.

The panel will be chaired by **Helmut Anheier**, (Heidelberg University and UCLA) and will present papers on policy initiatives in five countries: Canada (by **Kathy Brock**, Queens University), Germany (by **Rupert Strachwitz**, Maecenata Institute and Humboldt University), India (by **Lalit Kumar**, Planning Commission, Indian Government), Japan (by **Naoto Yamauchi**, Osaka University) and Israel (by **Michal Almog-Bar** – Hebrew University and **Benjamin Gidron** – Ben Gurion University).

## References

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Kingdon, J. W. (1995). *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Boston: Little, Brown

Sabatier, P.A. & Jenkins-Smith, H. C. (1999). The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Assessment. In: P. A. Sabatier. (Ed.). *Theories of the Policy process*. Boulder: Westview Press., 117 – 166.

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