

**Gonçalves, G., & Oliveira, E. (Eds.). (2023). *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication*. Routledge.**

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Despite the importance of communication to the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and, particularly, to the nonprofit sector, this field has, until recently, left unexamined its specific features including social capital, accountability and governance, as well as effectiveness, civil engagement, and reputation from a communicative standpoint. Fortunately, recent years brought a growing scientific literature on multiple dimensions of Nonprofit Organizations (NPO) offering a thorough account of the theories, concepts and challenges that NPOs deal with in a changing, complex digital world. That's exactly what the reader will find in the latest Routledge Handbook.

*The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* is a much-needed, compact but comprehensive ready reference, designed to be easily consulted and provide a broad and clear picture of the state-of-the-art research on nonprofit communication. Although it is certainly not the first to address nonprofit organizations, it is one of the few books specifically focused on the Non-Governmental Organizations' different types of communication processes, stakeholder relationships, evolving discourses and communication campaigns. It does so from multidisciplinary and internationally diverse authors coming from communication, political science, marketing, economics, sociology and management domains.

Despite management being the dominant field of the five major journals related to the nonprofit sector, this Handbook clearly intends to go beyond it and address NPO from a communicative perspective. In "Introducing nonprofit communication and mapping the research field", the editors Gisela Gonçalves and Evandro Oliveira remark that the keywords "communication" and "nonprofit" have suffered a 50% increase in published articles (p.3). In addition, *Public Relations Review* is the first of the top five journals publishing research on nonprofit communication testifying the growing interest of studying it from a communicative standpoint. It is quite revealing- and appropriate- that both editors research on public relations and communication fields: Gisela Gonçalves is a professor and director of the Masters in Strategic Communication program at the University of Beira Interior, in Portugal while Evandro Oliveira is a public relations professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, in Spain. This is meaningful because a NPO is a social actor (formal organization, social movement, collective entity) in which its goals, purposes and mission are undoubtedly fulfilled through active communicative processes.

The book gathers a staggering number of 48 contributions structured in four parts: beginning with metatheoretical and multidisciplinary approaches to the nonprofit sector, where two chapters are about the NGO-ization of civil society (Lang)

and of solidarity in the digital age (Saéz). This first part stands out by stressing the importance of civil society to fully understand NGOs (Oliveira) and how NGOs and NPOs must be seen according to public interest communication since communication is an indispensable aspect in the coordination of practical activities (Jonhston).

The second part focuses on the organizational approaches to communication, where one can learn about a constitutive approach to nonprofit communication (Koshmann and Isbell), fundraising and relationship cultivation (Waters) or organizational change communication (Lewis), just to give a few examples. Third part deals with strategic discourse, including appraisals about lobbying (Almansa-Martinez and Castillo-Esparcia), internal branding (Liu) and positive communication on NPO (Muñiz-Velázquez and Frade). Lastly, the fourth part adds a sense of equilibrium to the Handbook by complementing the theoretical edifice previously built, providing the reader with actual nonprofit communication case studies coming from different social causes and geographies. Therefore, the reader will find case analysis of communicative practices of Farming Communities in Netherlands (Vuuren-Verkerk, Aarts and van der Stoep), the PSSS nongovernmental organization struggling to reduce vulnerability in drought-affected areas, in India (Yadav and Malik), or the 8M feminist strikes in Spain and Portugal (Farné, Cerqueira and Nos-Áldas), among many others.

*The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* is a key contribution to ponder strategic communication in NPOs. But it is also noteworthy because it does not neglect the problem of addressing the full range of conceptual and definitional delimitations around NGOs and NPOs. Although this is not an easy task, editors do help us to better understand both nomenclatures. Even if NGOs and NPOs possibly apply the same organizational forms- and both are deeply entwined with civil society- NGOs can be considered a subset of the larger category of NPOs (p.2). The distinction between both- as underscored by Gonçalves and Oliveira in the opening chapter of the Handbook- is that NGOs advocate public interest issues even if NPOs are “the fabric of civil society” contributing to the public good (p.2). As we see, it is not easy to clearly separate them. Maybe that’s why editors feel the need to suggest a working definition based on the literature on strategic communication, PR, organizational communication, and communication management: “Nonprofit communication is all the communicative processes enacted by an actor on behalf of a communicative entity in the public sphere and inside the collective, framed and governed polyphonically and according to formal and informal strategies” (p.6).

*The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* presents us with very strong points: first, it offers extremely diverse perspectives and theories at micro, meso and macro levels. By analyzing communicative processes, it enables us to better apprehend NPOs. Second, it covers new theoretical and empirical developments having a dual comprehension of NPOs that stresses actual organizations while contrasting them with key and state-of-the art theoretical concepts. Third, it does not forget to include social media and digital communication on the challenges that NPOs deal with today. Fourth, by including researchers from all around the world, the Handbook does provide an eclectic perspective on the field that sums up different academic cultures including the German, Indian, Portuguese, Spanish, North-American, South-American and British ones. Also, editors also stress this academic openness when, for instance mentioning the French-speaking academia (p.6).

Even though it is an important contribution to the field, *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* has some minor issues. If, on one hand, 34 chapters signal the richness and complexity of nonprofit communication research, on the other hand, it demands a serious commitment which the reader cannot always afford because of the fast-paced society we live in. On other hand, the handbook could be closer to a prescriptive or normative approach to nonprofit communication. Even if it is plainly stated that the objective is “to mirror the diversity that exists in nonprofit communication research and to include visions from distinct academic traditions. Nonprofit communication is a field situated at the crossroads of communication, management, marketing, organizational, and public relations studies.”(p. 2), one may feel that a more normative orientation would be useful. Before such an interdisciplinary approach and the categorization of NGOs and NPOs, a kind of overarching conceptual order could be much appreciated to establish nonprofit communication across different scientific domains.

Overall, *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* is a significant book that not only brings attention to a much-needed communicative perspective on NPOs, but also helps to inspire both the junior researcher searching for theoretical foundations, as the senior researcher looking for the ultimate explorations and nonprofit communication case studies. Whatever the need the reader may want to accomplish, this well-written book with top selected authors will certainly inspire us all to pursue the task of acknowledging the important tasks of NPOs to better communicate their practical responses to the social problems in which the corporate, profit-centered, organizations have failed.

## Biographical note

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