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EDITORIAL

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The last issue of this year is a special issue addressing the challenges and perspectives of CSO governance, and put together by our guest editors Kari Steen-Johnsen, Philippe Eynaud and Filip Wijkström. It has been realized with the support of the French *Fondation Crédit Coopératif* and is part of our broader editorial ambition to publish a special issue of *Voluntas* each year on central topics at the research frontier of our field.

Organizational governance is at the heart of what constitutes the specificities of nonprofit and voluntary organizations, distinguishing them from for-profit and governmental organizations. Indeed, nonprofit and voluntary organizations can be characterized according to their particular governance structure. They may be seen as governance structures reinforcing the norm of reciprocity, making possible the pooling of resources according to the reciprocity principle and, because of these features, facilitating collective action oriented towards public or mutual interest or towards advocacy (Enjolras 2009). From a governance-structure perspective, their ability to mitigate coordination failures explains why these organizations survive in competition with other institutional forms as a result of selection and reinforcement processes. However, voluntary organizations are exposed to governance failures that might jeopardize their trustworthiness and efficiency. It is crucial—both for theoretical and practical reasons to better understand how governance structure and governance practices interact.

Having said that, the concept of governance is an ambiguous one, with multiple meanings in different academic fields. In political science 'governance' is sometimes used to signify a 'new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed' (Rhodes 1997), the common denominator clustering around what might be called a 'post-political' search for effective regulation and accountability. New ways of coordinating

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activities—through networks, partnerships, and the setting up of deliberative devices—have emerged, replacing centralized and hierarchical forms of representation. Such participatory social governance embraces a wide range of actors, including labour unions, trade associations, firms, local authority representatives, social entrepreneurs, civil society organizations and community groups. Here, the need is to enhance responsiveness to an increasingly differentiated economic and social environment.

This special issue identifies a need for a better integration of the organizational (or internal) and society-centred (or external) focus on governance. My hope is that it will contribute to the advance of our knowledge on this topic.

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