The Professions and Public Policy: Expanding the Third Sector

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ABSTRACT. Professional associations are often seen as wholly self-interested actors, and/or as an integral, indistinguishable part of the privileged elite. As a result, the international third sector literature has tended to focus on the activities of social movements and NGOs. This article uses field research and the rich Brazilian third sector literature to assess these assumptions. The first part shows that numerous policy-relevant groups have long existed in Brazil, beyond the NGO/social movement ambit. The article then demonstrates the autonomy and policy relevance of professional associations. The final section shifts to the local level, using the activities of these groups in the state of Santa Catarina to show that the Brazilian third sector is best seen not in opposition to the state, but as part of dense policy networks including the state, business, and other nonprofit groups.

Introduction

The goal of this article is to draw on the Brazilian experience in order to broaden the focus of the international third sector literature. Though labels within the third sector are vague, and overlaps exist between the various categories, three broad groups will be referred to: social movements, NGOs, and associations. For the purposes of this article the critical defining characteristic of the two former groups has been the public-interest nature of their activities, unlike the self-interest of associations. This interest-based distinction may seem counter-intuitive, as a bairro association is as interested in gaining benefits for its constituents as are professional associations (Fontes, 1996: 45–46). The critical difference, though, has been that NGOs and social movements are seen as seeking to improve the quality of life for the most oppressed (Oliveira Neto, 1991: 131).

Because of this perceived monopoly of reformist policy potential, the international third sector literature has tended to focus on the activities of these grass
roots development organizations and NGOs, incorrectly assuming that professional and other associations are wholly self-interested actors and/or an integral, indistinguishable part of the privileged elite. The first part of this article seeks to show that numerous policy-relevant groups beyond the NGO/social movement ambit have long existed in Brazil, and introduces the reader to the professional associations that are discussed throughout the article. The next section discusses the autonomy of these professional associations by demonstrating that, contrary to the traditional elite, they have often acted in the broader public interest. The final section shifts to the local level, using the activities of these groups in the state of Santa Catarina to show that the Brazilian third sector is best seen not in opposition to the state, but as working with the state as part of dense policy networks that include business and nonprofit groups as well.

**Narrow Focus of Third Sector Literature**

The first issue which scholars of the “third sector” invariably face is its heterogeneous nature. The third sector includes a wide array of often very different organizations (see, for example, Salamon, 1994: 110 and Van Tils, 1988: 71–92). Paradoxically, it is hard to escape the impression that the international third sector literature adopts a very narrow focus. To illustrate, Naomi Chazan (1992: 288) casts one of the wider nets in identifying four key types of “voluntary organizations”: what might be termed extra-societal (such as isolated or marginalized groups), anti-state (resistance movements, opposition groups), quasi-state (with strong links to the state), and the traditional civil society (groups autonomous from the state, but which interact with it). Within this “traditional civil society,” which is the area in which almost all third sector researchers work, Landim (1993: 8, and in Rodrigues, 1997: 44) suggests a further subdivision which recognizes nonprofit organizations, associations, charitable organizations, NGOs, and foundations. Within Landim’s NGO subsector, again, the area in which most third sector researchers work, John Clark (1991: 34–35) suggests a further six-fold subdivision: relief and welfare agencies, technical innovation organizations, public service contractors, popular development agencies, grass roots development organizations, and advocacy groups and networks. The taxonomy suggested by the above is presented in Figure 1. Keep in mind that the bottom tier in the figure below presents the further subdivisions of only one of Landim’s five groups in the second tier; since this second tier, too, presents the further subdivisions of only one of the four groups listed by Chazan, the figure represents only an abridged version of a much broader tree.

![Figure 1. Narrow Focus of Third Sector Research.](image-url)
Within this diverse map of the third sector presented in Figure 1, a serious shortcoming in the current literature lies in its excessive focus on a single subsector. Research focuses predominately on Clark’s “grass roots development” sector—one of six subdivisions of Landim’s NGO sector, itself one of five subsections of Chazan’s four types of voluntary organizations. Hence for Adil Najam:

There seems to be a decided bias against efforts to study the sector as a sector (in its largest definition) and in favor of studying those particular portions in which particular scholars and agencies (especially donor agencies) are most interested. This tendency has impoverished, rather than enriched, our understanding of the sector and given the intellectual undertaking a donor-focused flavor (Najam, 1996a: 341; see also Clarke, 1998: 39).

For instance, among the recent third sector literature, Clark’s (1991) discussion of “voluntary organizations” has a wholly grass roots development focus, as do Salamon’s (1994: 110) discussion of the nonprofit sector, Bratton’s (1989: 569) and Fowler’s (1991) discussions of NGOs, and Korten’s (1990: 91) discussion of voluntary action. This is also implied in Drabek’s (1987: ix) emphasis on local development work in her introduction to a special World Development supplement dedicated to the third sector, and in Ndegwa’s (1996) focus on development-oriented NGOs with international development links.

The Brazilian third sector literature points to a similar heterogeneity. A federal government survey of 220,000 non-profits yielded groups as diverse as one of the country’s premier medical establishments and philanthropic entities created and used by politicians to obtain votes (Pontes and Bava, 1996: 134; see also Landim, 1993: 1). Ilse Scherer-Warren would agree with Najam’s characterization of much international third sector research as overly narrow. Scherer-Warren (1995: 165–167) has pointed to the political-normative orientations of the north, as well as the tendency in the north to see NGOs solely as grass roots development organizations (1995: 162). This is the irony noted earlier, as while discussions of nonprofits invariably begin with an acknowledgement of the extreme heterogeneity of the sector, the international literature on the subject reflects a homogeneous focus on grass roots development organizations with international links founded after 1960.

This presents a gross simplification of the Brazilian third sector. Philippe Schmitter’s early research (1971: 203–212) demonstrates the importance of a wide range of groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These include commercial and industrial associations, rural groups (made up of both landowners and workers), a bewildering array of social groups at all levels of society, and the organized labor groups that were the primary focus of his research. Schmitter presents both urban and rural groups among the lower classes as ineffective in policy issues, as co-option or repression from above was a constant check. However, among the general population a myriad of social organizations existed, including football clubs, mutual aid societies, charities, and others (see also Landim, 1993: 4). This rich associational life is also evident in the broader Brazilian social science literature, as even among the NGO/social movement community many are domestic, with no dependent external links, and with a history extending well beyond the 1960s. Luis Carvalheira de Mendonça’s Sociedades dos Amigos dos Bairros were founded in São Paulo in the 1950s (Mendonça, 1984: 177). Maria das Dores Costa (1988: 3) and Machado, Porto, and Vergara (1985: 6–9) refer to upsurges in activity among social movements in the 1930s and again in the 1950s. Other sources referring to older, independent groups operating in Brazil include Affonso Fortuna and João

Schmitter’s research also points to active professional associations, especially over the past century of Brazilian history. Although it had little practical relevance, the 1891 constitution was the first in Latin America to grant unrestricted freedom of association and assembly. In 1907 the right of association was explicitly extended to all professional groups (Schmitter, 1971: 110). Among professions that organized during or before this period were engineers, journalists, doctors, accountants, and others (ibid.: 149–150). The first quasi-medical association in the country was the short-lived Sociedade Científica of the 1770s, set up on a doctor’s initiative and with strong medical representation (ibid.: 247–248). Still, medicine did not develop in the country until the transfer of the Brazilian court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 created an effective demand for medical services. The first medical schools were opened, and the role of doctors in combating epidemic diseases led to the profession’s earning a high status in Brazilian society (Stepan, 1976: 47). A Sociedade Medicina was established in 1829. Schmitter (1971: 204) suggests that effective policy participation on the part of the profession can be dated from the establishment of the Associação Médica Brasileira (Brazilian Medical Association—AMB) in 1951, as a federation of a number of state level medical representative groups. However, Nancy Stepan (1976: 51) argues that the Sociedade Medicina was influential in advising the national government during health crises through the late nineteenth century.

The first engineering association was founded in 1862, but the Clube de Engenharia, founded in 1880 in Rio de Janeiro, was the first effective representative organization for the profession. Schmitter (1971: 149–150) credits the Clube with being active at the turn of the century in introducing technological innovations into the country, as well as in pressuring for industrialization. Pedro Telles (1984: 675–685) credits engineers with having been active in the campaign to abolish slavery, in urban reform planning in Rio de Janeiro early in this century, in dealing with drought in the northeast in 1907, and as prominent in urging Brazil to break its ties with the Axis powers during the Second World War . Kawamaru argues that engineers especially began to assert themselves in policy issues as the Federação Nacional de Engenharia (Brazilian Federation of Engineering Associations—FEBRAE), founded in 1935, regained its autonomy from government oversight in the early 1980s (Kawamaru, 1986: 142–144; FEBRAE, Objetivos).

Ana Maria Fernandes (1989: 22) identifies the Academia Brasileiro de Ciências, founded in 1916, as perhaps the first true scientific association in Brazil. The group was largely an elite organization, however, and had little policy impact. The Sociedade Brasileiro pelo Progresso da Ciencia (Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science—SBPC) was founded in 1948 to defend and to promote the importance of science (Fernandes, 1989: 31; SBPC, 1997). The Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil (Brazilian Bar Association—OAB) was founded in 1935, supplanting an earlier group founded in 1843 (Schmitter, 1971: 149); and the Associação Brasileira da Imprensa (Brazilian Press Association—ABI) also has roots extending back into the nineteenth century.

This simple observation concerning the narrow focus of international third sector research (and the interest of foreign development assistance agencies) has significant implications, as the focus on often made-for-foreign-aid NGOs has overlooked the rich network of indigenous organizations already there. Leaving aside the efficacy of the international NGO community, one could argue that the groups in civil society with the greatest transformative potential are those with the deepest,
most authentic roots in the societies in question. Illustrating the nature of these roots is the focus of the next section.

**Relations with the State**

The second theme to be addressed with regard to the third sector literature concerns the relation of the third sector to the state. Beyond the narrow scope that characterizes much research, understanding of the third sector in developing societies is further distorted by a tendency in the literature to posit the third sector in opposition to the state and to markets. The third sector is seen as an alternative, rather than as an equal, complementary part of the broader civil society (Najam, 1996b: 208). Tripp (1992: 221) focuses on the role of local voluntary organizations as an alternative to the state in service provision, Bratton (1989) on conflict between NGOs and the state, and Salamon (1994) on the nonprofit sector as an answer to market and government failure. Clarke (1998: 40) notes that “liberals” see the third sector as an alternative to the state, while the left sees the third sector as an agent for structurally transforming society. This study, on the contrary, seeks to provide empirical support to Chazan’s (1992: 282) assertion of a growing agreement among social scientists concerning the role of civil society in working with governments and markets in promoting development. The Brazilian literature on this subject focuses on social movements and NGOs, as the scientific and professional associations that are the subject of this article are often dismissed as part of the oligarchic elite. This section seeks to establish the autonomy of professional groups; the final section will demonstrate how professionals often work with the state in the broader public interest.

At least two plausible, and related, explanations are offered for the anti-state bias in Brazilian third sector research. The first is that many of the post-1960 generation of the Brazilian third sector groups were born as a reaction against the military government, and were thus anti-state from the start. The dictatorship of the recent military government notwithstanding, for many this was simply another chapter in Brazil’s long authoritarian, oligarchic history. Rubem César Fernandes (1994: 34) notes the role of political repression in stimulating a search for an alternative to the state from below. Maria da Glória Gohn asserts that “A relação básica da maioria daqueles movimentos com o estado era da oposição. As diferenças internas entre os movimentos se diluíam em função do inimigo comum: o regime militar, o status quo” (Gohn, 1991: 14; see also R. Cardoso, 1983: 218–225; Bombarolo, 1993: 7).

Others agree. For Castor and França (1986: 22), the exhaustion of the old state-led, authoritarian model of development of the Vargas era meant that civil society increasingly had to mobilize to manage affairs. Indeed, they argue that modern society is too complex for the centralized state, or even for a decentralized state with devolved responsibilities, to manage, so civil society should step in. Similarly, Scherer-Warren (1996: 52–53; 1994: 6–7) characterizes the role of social movements as one of strengthening civil society contra the state, creating a “new citizenship,” and redefining the “space” for citizenship. Hence comments like Maria Lucia de Oliveira’s early 1980s statement (1981: 78–80) that more political space existed than ever before, Silva and d’Arc’s characterization (1996: 46) of participation as the “magic word” in Brazilian social science, and Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos’s mid-1980s assertion (1985: 414) that after 400 years of authoritarian government Brazil finally had a chance for true citizenship.
The second explanation offered to explain the anti-state nature of much Brazilian third sector research has been that individuals who formed many of these early anti-state social movements, and certainly a strong majority of the researchers who studied them, shared a leftist political orientation. Gerardo Munck (1997: 108) suggests that this is especially so for Brazilian intellectuals working in the European, rather than the North American (or presumably, an autonomous Brazilian) tradition. In Europe, the resurgence of interest in social movements was driven largely by scholars working out of a class-based perspective (see also Sá, 1994). Maria Helena Rauta Ramos (1994: 44–46) makes this point most explicitly, pointing out that the professional practice of social assistance, and the intellectuals who studied it, had developed a strong leftist slant (see also Bombarolo, 1993: 6). Hetmut Kärner (1987: 30–32) identifies alienation among the left as a stimulus for the development of social movements as alternative vehicles for political expression. Scherer-Warren (1995: 167–170) notes the predominance of neo-Marxist, neo-anarchist, or Catholic liberation theologians in many NGOs, while Landim (1988: 45) explicitly links the leftist origins of many NGOs with their anti-state stance.

The result of this combination of leftist orientations and the anti-state nature of many social movements and NGOs was that many observers ascribed to the third sector a socially transformative role. For Arthur Ribeiro de Senna Filho, the social movements “[v]ivem o ideal de uma sociedade transformada que também os comporte como protagonistas de sua história, restando-lhes movimentar-se, para a realização de sua utopia de liberdade” (Senna Filho 1994: 44); (see also Gohn, 1991: 14; R. Cardoso, 1983: 224–225).3

These goals have been attained to the satisfaction of few on the left, hence laments like those of Pontes and Bava (1996: 140–142) and Bastos and Gomes (1994: 132–135) that the NGO and social movement community had failed. For many of these observers on the farther left, the failure of the third sector in this regard has been due at least in part to a growing trend among NGOs and social movements to cooperate with the state. For these, cooperation is typically seen as co-option, with social revolution and Senna Filho’s “utopia of freedom” foregone for a few bags of cement. To give a particularly strong example, Oliveira Neto (1991: 148–149) baldly asserts that NGOs that cooperate with World Bank programs targeting social problems in Brazil become part of the “neo-liberal project.” This can be asserted only if the World Bank is by definition “bad.”

The crux of the problem for the social transformer, however, has been the existence of an ideological gap between the leftist intellectuals who often lead or support social movements and NGOs, and the individuals who compose them. These latter often have little understanding of, or sympathy for, the ideologically-based revolutionary rhetoric of the ideologues. Ana Amélia de Silva (1993: 36–37) points to the “non-dogmatic leftism” that permeated many new social movements, while Pedro Jacobi (1990: 37–38) points out that most social movements, though reacting to the absence of channels of communications with the state during the dictatorship, did not have social transformative goals, but rather sought to pressure the state for concrete results. Further, this anti-state stance dissolved considerably on the return to civilian rule (see also Fontes, 1995). Finally, Maria Ramos (1994: 44–51) noting the French urban Marxist roots of much Brazilian leftist thought on new social movements, questions the relevance to Brazilian conditions of a theory born in a French urban milieu, and lists a number of conceptual distortions resulting from this. A consensus is thus developing, both that third sector organizations may play a significant social role through cooperation with the state, and that this cooperation is not necessarily bad.
While this may well be the case, the professions are still omitted from these discussions, dismissed as part of the elite and either not autonomous players in public policy or involved in policy only for narrow, corporatist gains. The professions have not always been viewed with such a jaundiced eye. Talcott Parsons (1939: 457–458) argued that professionals occupy “a position of importance in our society which is, in any comparable degree of development, unique in history.” For Parsons, “…the business man has been thought of as egoistically pursuing his own self-interest regardless of the interests of others, while the professional man was altruistically serving the interests of others regardless of his own.”

The difference is the technical competence that defines the professions. Professionals are bearers of the “true” knowledge of science or some other administrative specialty. As such, the universalistic nature of this expertise defines the public role of professions, rather than the personalistic motivations which drive the business world (ibid.: 463). Parsons went on to correct these naive assumptions, pointing out that while professionals strive for status, prestige, and wealth in much the same way that business people do, a significant altruistic element remains.

This duality is not recognized in the contemporary third sector literature. Alan Ware (1989: 37–72) identifies “mutual benefit associations” as a special subgroup of his “intermediate organizations,” as their purpose is to funnel benefits to their members. This lack of ambiguity is also evident among many Latin Americanists: Peter McDonough (1981: 48–56) refers to technocratic cadres as linked to the traditional elite through marriage; John Martz and David Myers (1994: 10–11) repeat the common assumption that professionals are part of the elite, and note that they enjoy high status and great privilege on the continent (ibid.: 336). This perspective is especially evident in works on Brazil. Philippe Schmitter (1971: 237) raises this issue as well, pointing to the widely held view that associations are concerned with their own self interest, rather than the broader public interest. Landim (1993: 8) differentiates associations from NGOs by defining associations on the basis of self interest (see also Scherer-Warren, 1996: 9–15; S. Costa, 1994: 44–50), while Kurt Weyland (1996: 22) has recently stated that “The elite tend to form narrow ‘distributional coalitions’ that single-mindedly pursue their own interest. These small, elite groups refuse to make sacrifices for the sake of the general interests, such as the legitimacy of the established socio-political order. They insist on maintaining their privileges and oppose equity-enhancing efforts.”

The error in these assumptions was perhaps best illustrated by the role of professionals during Brazil’s recent military government. Landim has pointed out that member-serving professional associations were among the fiercest advocates of societal interests in advocating democratization in the 1970s, while many cultural or recreational groups have often been active in, or provided a nucleus for, social movements, in which many of the groups mentioned above were prominent. In the early days of the 1964 coup, relations between the military and the SBPC were good, as the developmentalist and modernizing rhetoric of the coup manifested itself in increased funding for science (A. Fernandes, 1989: 158–160). These good relations soon waned, as funding levels dropped and as scientists became increasingly uneasy with the repressive nature of the regime and the victimization of numerous scientists (ibid.: 33–34; see also Reis, 1980; Veja, 16 July 1960). With the abertura in 1973 the organization’s social and political activism increased (A. Fernandes, 1989: 173–179; see also Veja 17 July 1974: 58; Moura, 1988: 1149), leading to formal adoption of an explicitly critical stance in 1975, then moving to a position of open conflict with the government (A. Fernandes, 1989: 33–36). The subsequent extraordinary role of the
SBPC as a forum for criticism of the military government has been widely acknowledged.\(^5\)

The ABI was early concerned at the loss of press freedoms under military censorship, and over journalists who had become “missing” at the hands of military authorities, while the lawyers were opposed to the military’s arbitrary justice and harassment of lawyers who defended dissidents (Alves, 1985: 160–167; see also Visão 13 October 1975: 19–22). The ABI and OAB worked together after the 1975 death in military custody of a popular news editor, with the OAB helping the editor’s widow file charges against the government, while the ABI launched a public awareness campaign concerning the case (Alves, 1985: 157). Two years later the OAB “vehemently opposed” a move to remove the trial of military police from civilian courts (ibid.: 149). The prominence of these two groups was evident a year later when President Geisel included the OAB and ABI, despite their anti-government positions, in early talks on easing and eventually ending military rule (ibid.: 166–167). The OAB was itself to become the subject of a high-profile terrorist attack in 1980, in the form of a deadly letter bomb attack widely attributed to hard line elements in the military (ibid.: 222; Veja 3 September 1980: 16–23; 26 November 1980: 20–25). As Alves (1985: 173) concludes: “The elite sectors of the opposition. . .played a critical role during both the Geisel and the Figueiredo governments. They open up political space by confronting the state from their positions of authority in civil society and by challenging the legitimacy that the national security state was trying to assume.”

**Development and Dense Social Networks**

This final section focuses on the local level to show how these autonomous, policy-relevant, often public-interest professional associations become involved in policy issues through working with government, business, and other groups in civil society as part of dense policy networks. Paulo Vieira da Silva and Luiz Dedone (1988: 205–206) provide a useful starting point, because of their explicit linking of the third sector with the public policy process. The authors see civil society in the pluralist sense, as composed of a wide array of social movements, civic organizations and class groupings. A traditional problem in Brazil has been the informal, irrational, particularistic, and corrupt nature of policy, which has traditionally proceeded through a submerged, invisible process characterized by rigidity and lack of participation (ibid.: 212–213). The result is the “marginalização dos que poderam contribuir e a queda a nível de eficiência, que é a pior conseqüência do caráter do regime e a principal causa da sua obsolesência.”\(^6\)

A further problem has been the statist approach that has dominated Brazilian development thought. Development, on this view, would come about as a result of a well-crafted and carefully implemented state development policy. Others have argued that a macro-level, state-directed development policy is only a part of the development puzzle, and that this part of the equation has been over-emphasized in policy and over-studied in scholarship. What has been missing is an understanding of development as a social process, as the result of the interactions of individuals and groups both outside of government plans and in the absence of profit-motivated exchange (Clark and Juma, 1987; Albuquerque, 1996: 228–231; Lima, 1996).

These concerns for “space” have been echoed more broadly since the post-ditadura explosion of activity in Brazilian civil society. The public sector is increasingly seen
as incapable of solving many of Brazil’s problems, and autonomous groups representing diverse sections of Brazilian society have increasingly cooperated both to reform the state and to solve problems within civil society itself. The international third sector literature has tended to focus on the direct provision of the latter by NGOs and social movements. With its emphasis on the policy involvement of professional groups, this article has focused on the first issue, as through bringing more voices into the policy process third sector groups this can better inform policy.

With democratization, the groups referred to earlier as opponents of the military regime at the national level have also been active locally. The OAB and SBPC both include state chapters as part of their organizational structure, with OAB local chapters especially active. Recently in Santa Catarina, for instance, the OAB has spearheaded the move to impeach sitting Governor Paulo Afonso Vieira over corruption allegations (DC, 9 October 1997: 2; DCO, 11 December 1998: Política), and has mediated an ecological planning dispute between the residents of Lagoa de Peri and the municipal government of Florianópolis (ANI, 28 March 1998: Opinião). It is serving as one of the two non-governmental representatives (along with a doctors’ group) on a body created to indemnify former political prisoners of the recent military government (ANI, 5 June 1998: Geral), and has sponsored a related congress on human rights (ANI, 1 May 1998: Opinião). Finally, the OAB is monitoring the late April 1998 investigation into the assassination of the catarinense leader of the MST, a landless persons’ group advocating land reform (ANI, 6 April 1998: Geral), and has recently launched a prison reform initiative (ANI, 18 December 1998: Geral).

SBPC policy involvement in Santa Catarina has recently centered on its regional meetings in Blumenau and Florianópolis, and on the establishment of Funcitec, a science and technology promotion and funding agency. Among diverse scientific esoterica, annual SBPC regional conferences have highlighted a range of policy issues, including Amazonian and regional deforestation (AN, 27 August 1996: A-6, 25 September 1997: 30; OE, 6 May 1996: 5), public outreach (AN, 27 August 1997: A-6) popularizing science (DC, 25 September 1997: 30), management of Brazil’s 200 mile territorial sea (OE, 2 May 1996: 9), and a new national patent law (OE, 3 May 1996: 9).

The SBPC’s highlighting of issues like the destruction of the coastal forests in its regional agenda is important for the establishment of a policy agenda for the state; its involvement in the establishment of Funcitec has gone well beyond this role. At the federal level the Conselho Nacional da Pesquisa (CNPq) is the major source of public science funding. At federal urging, a number of states have recently established similar organizations. Funcitec represents Santa Catarina’s effort in this regard. In an interview, a high-level Funcitec official reported that the movement for such an organization was initiated by the SBPC in 1987, but had lagged for years. In 1995 the universities, state government and the SBPC met to plan the organization, which was finally formally announced during the SBPC regional meeting in Florianópolis in May 1996 by Neri dos Santos, then state secretary of economic, scientific and technological development (see N. Santos, 1997: 2; OE, 13 March 1997: 2). Pedro Guerra, then head of the SBPC in Santa Catarina, commented favorably but expressed concern that the foundation be governed by scientists themselves, with funding decisions based on peer review and free from political concerns (OE, 3 May 1996: 9).

By late the same year an editorial in O Estado noted the lack of progress in realizing Funcitec, and reported that the SBPC’s regional secretary was to meet with the
state government to discuss the issue (OE, 1 November 1996: 2). Commenting on the meeting, the SBPC’s regional secretariat expressed concern that the scientific community was not being adequately consulted as Funcitec was being elaborated (OE, 10 November 1996: 15). The division between the state government and the SBPC was noted in a UFSC press release shortly afterward, which reported that Santos was opposed to SBPC involvement in the formulation of Funcitec (OE, 29 November 1996: 4). The Funcitec decree was eventually signed in January, with Neri dos Santos as its first director, and an SBPC representative on the twelve-member Superior Council. The government committed one percent, or some $20 million annually, of revenues to science and technology funding, with further funds possible in matching funds from the federal government (AN, 10 January 1997: A-5).

As is evident, the SBPC was heavily involved in this very major policy initiative, having repeatedly put the item on the state’s agenda. It has also had a hand in its eventual formulation and as a member of the organization’s board is involved in the implementation of Funcitec.

Other groups have been active in the state. The Associação Catarinense de Medicina (Catarinense Medical Association—ACM) was founded in 1950, although its origins are older than this. The ACM is the successor organization to the Sociedade Catarinense de Medicina, itself founded in 1937 as the successor to the Sindicato Médico de Santa Catarina, which was founded in 1934 (ACM: Hístoria). The Associação Catarinense de Engenheiros (Catarinense Association of Engineers—ACE) was founded in 1934. From its foundation the expressed goals of ACE have been to assemble, represent, and defend the interests of engineers, to stimulate the technical and scientific development of members, to integrate the profession through cultural, social, sporting and philanthropic activities, to stress the importance of catarinense engineering, and, overall, to promote development of the state of Santa Catarina (ACE, 1997). This social role is heavily emphasized in ACE literature, which lists, among issues in which the association has participated “decisively,” a number of infrastructure and planning initiatives in the state (ACE, 1997).

As should be obvious from the discussion thus far, it is often difficult to separate public-interested from self-interested actions of professional associations, as many nominally self-interested acts have positive social externalities. There is an obvious self-interest in ACE involvement in infrastructure planning, as the current duplication of BR-101—the major north-south road artery through the coastal region—provides jobs for engineers and income for the construction firms which they often head. At the same time, the duplication of BR-101 serves to greatly facilitate transport for broader catarinense society, and it is certainly this public-spirited aspect that ACE cites in justifying such policy involvement. The same can be said for the SBPC’s involvement in the creation of Funcitec.

Perhaps the most interesting example of nominally self-interested activity by professional groups with strong public-interest externalities concerned the catarinense medical community’s dispute with the Instituto de Previdência do Estado de Santa Catarina (Social Welfare Institute of the State of Santa Catarina—IPESC). IPESC manages a health plan on behalf of over 150,000 state public servants and their dependents, who have around 9 percent of their paychecks withheld to cover IPESC services (DC, 18 October, 1996: 36). Despite these automatic deposits, the plan had huge debts, including some $R7 million to the medical community alone (DC, 5 November 1996: 31).

A sustained campaign against IPESC resulted, led by the ACM. Links with other third sector groups were also evident. The ACM, the health industry’s business
association, and an IPESC beneficiaries group formed the *Forum Permanente em Defesa do IPESC* (Permanent Forum in Defense of IPESC), a semi-formal coordinating group (OE, 2 October 1996: 8). The ACM and two other medical professional groups met jointly with the acting governor in mid-October (OE, 17 October, 1996: 8), but the meeting apparently solved nothing, as the three groups met again later in the month to launch legal action against the government, seeking to levy fines in addition to the back-pay owed, and to agree to suspend treatment for IPESC beneficiaries (OE, 29 October 96: 8; DC, 25 October 96: 36). ACM joined with the OAB, whose members were also owed large arrears by IPESC, to criticize IPESC in November (DC, 8 November 1996: 28). An accord to normalize the situation was signed in December (OE, 12 December 1996: 7).

By early 1998 the issue surfaced again, as the ACM reported that new government debts to the medical community had developed (ANI, 10 February 1998: Geral). Hospitals in Joinville (ANI, 15 January 1998: Geral), Tubarão (ANI, 23 April 1998: Geral), Boa Vista (ANI, 27 February 1998: Cidade), Criciúma (ANI, 24 April 1998: Geral) and Brusque (ANI, 24 January 1998: Geral) reported great financial difficulties and threatened to close their doors as a result, while the ACM reported that 3200 doctors, 700 clinics and laboratories and 300 hospitals were affected (ANI, 6 March 1998: Geral). ACM hosted a meeting to discuss the issue with two provider groups—the *Associação dos Estabelecimentos de Saúde em Santa Catarina* (Association of Health Establishments in Santa Catarina—Asesc) and the *Associação dos Hospitais do Estado de Santa Catarina* (Association of Hospitals of the State of Santa Catarina—Ahesc)—in which the suspension of treatment to IPESC beneficiaries was again discussed (ANI, 6 March 1998: Geral). The ACM carried out this threat days later (ANI, 10 March 1998: Geral), then again later in the year (DCO 10 November 1998: Economia). The issue remains unresolved (ANI, 24 February 1999: Geral). While a resolution of the crisis is certainly in the self-interest of the doctors concerned, the issue has great import to broader society as well.

Beyond this ambiguous, perhaps self-interested activity with public-interest externalities, professional “interest associations” have also been involved in wholly selfless policy issues. Especially interesting was a recent anti-violence campaign led by the ACM, mobilizing twenty other catarinense professional associations, business groups, and social movements to seek solutions to the capital’s growing crime problem. No financial gain would accrue to the medical community as a result of lower crime, or the measures required to bring this about. Similar selfless policy involvement was evident in an ACE campaign concerning the threat of landslides in Florianópolis, as one suggestion put forth by ACE president Fonseca was do-it-yourself retaining walls made from old tires (OE, 23 March 1997: 16; *Jornal do ACE*, April 1997). No money would flow to the engineering community as a result. Fonseca’s other solution—greater public education on how to maintain slope stability—would have a similar effect. Finally, the *Sociedade Brasileiro de Ortopedia e Traumatologia* has campaigned to reduce traffic accidents, with the *Sociedade Catarinense de Ortopedia e Traumatologia* taking part. If successful, the campaign would reduce demand for the services of the profession (DC, 2 May 1997: 32).

The discussion also illustrates the dense networks that characterize policy involvement of professional groups in the state. The ACM cooperated with a diverse collection of professional, business, and beneficiary groups in the IPESC dispute, and developed an even broader network in the anti-violence campaign. The SBPC worked with the universities in establishing Funcitec, while the ACE has also worked with a variety of groups in its public activities. Figure 2 below presents a stylistic representation of the
Figure 2. SPA Networks in Santa Catarina.\footnote{\textsuperscript{8}}

Acronyms: ABO—Brazilian Association of Dentists; ACE—Catarinense Association of Engineers; ACIGF—Commercial and Industrial Association of Greater Florianópolis; ACM—Catarinense Medical Association; Ahesc—Association of Hospitals of the State of Santa Catarina; Asesc—Association of Health Establishments in Santa Catarina; CDL—Shop Directors’ Chamber; CREA/SC—Regional Council of Engineering and Architecture, Santa Catarina; Cremesc—Regional Council of Medicine of Santa Catarina; FCC—Catarinense Culture Foundation; FHSC—Federation of —of Santa Catarina; FIESC—Federation of Industries of Santa Catarina; Floram—Municipal Foundation for the Environment; FPDI—Permanent Forum in Defense of IPESC; FPF—Pro-Florianópolis Foundation; IPHAN—National Historical and Artistic Patrimony Institute; IPUF—Urban Planning Institute of Florianópolis; OAB—Brazilian Bar Association; SBPC—Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science; Senge/SC—Engineers’ Union, Santa Catarina; Simesc—Doctors’ Union, Santa Catarina; Sinduscon/SC—Union of the Civil Construction Industry of Greater Florianópolis; SJPSC—Professional Journalists’ Union of Santa Catarina; Unisul—State University of Santa Catarina; UFSC—Federal University of Santa Catarina; Udesc—State University of South Santa Catarina.
links between the groups discussed in this section and other groups in *catarinense* society. The lines indicate cooperation on some matters, with the boldness of the line indicating frequency. Only contacts with the professional groups that are the focus of this article are shown, so that the dense links between the industry groups, universities, other third sector groups and government are not reflected. Despite this the figure shows a dense network of formal links deemed worthy of media coverage over less than a two-year period. The wild, indecipherable nature of the figure is precisely the point that it hopes to make, in illustrating the dense web that characterizes the robust, active civil society that the *catarinense* literature discusses.

This study should not, however, be seen as anti-state, any more than it should be seen as anti-market. As discussed, one of the limitations of the third sector literature has been a tendency to see it as opposed to the state—representing the people in the face of an elite-dominated, corrupt government. And it is worth remembering that for many on the left the interest in the third sector came about as it came to be seen as a substitute for the state in the eternal battle against the market, so that the third sector was anti-market almost by definition. The figure shows, however, that these groups of technological elites have links throughout *catarinense* society: with government, business, and other professional groups, as well as with a range of NGOs and social movements. The figure represents one small part of the dense social network that constitutes *catarinense* civil society and in which, despite its imperfections, professional groups have been able to participate freely, autonomously, and often in the broader public interest.

Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1997: 6) has referred to the strengthening of third sector organizations as creating a new pattern of relations between the state and civil society. As discussed, for many third sector scholars social movements and NGOs are credited with this unfolding revolution in Brazil as they strive for their “utopia of freedom.” This article has sought to demonstrate that social movements are not alone among non-state, non-market actors in working toward these goals.

**Notes**


2. Translation: The basic relation of the majority of these movements with the state was of opposition. The internal differences among the movements were diluted due to the common enemy: the military regime, the status quo.

3. Loose translation: “[l]ive the ideal of a society transformed, and who also act as historical protagonists, remaining committed to the realization of a utopia of livery.”


6. Translation: Marginalization of those who could contribute and the decline in the level of efficiency, which is the worst consequence of the character of the regime and the principal cause of its obsolescence.

7. Art. 6, section VI, decree No. 1674, State of Santa Catarina.

8. The data were obtained from local newspapers (*Diário Catarinense, O Estado and ANoticia*) between October 1996 and September 1997, and from (ANoticia Internet and *Diário Catarinense Online* through July 1998. The data for the OAB are incomplete.
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Biographical Note

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Acknowledgements. I would like to thank Dr. Erni José Seibel and the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina for their kindness, hospitality, and intellectual guidance.