



# CoCo Seminar Series Fall 2020

## How Do Small Nonprofit Organizations Seek to Solve Wicked Problems? Learning from Extreme Cases of Collaborative Arrangements

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(co-authored with Dr. Susan Appe, University at Albany)



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**Online (Zoom meeting link available on <http://coco.binghamton.edu/>)**

Many nonprofit service organizations address wicked problems, which encompass those public problems that “are complex, unpredictable, open-ended, or intractable”. Therefore, organizations opt to tackle them through partnerships, strategic alliances, coalitions, cooperatives, and other collaborative agreements. While the public management literature has contributed important features about collaboration, it lacks empirical work on small service nonprofit organizations. This talk focuses on small U.S.-based nonprofit service organizations that serve communities abroad. We use Schnable’s term “GINGOs,” grassroots international nongovernmental organizations, to describe these nonprofit service organizations. GINGO focus on the wicked issue of development and, more specifically, poverty alleviation. We ask why and how do GINGOs engage in collaboration. We look at two extreme empirical examples of collaborative arrangements that include GINGOs to understand collaboration among small nonprofit organizations. Our findings imply that the critical determinants of effective collaboration among small nonprofits are: complimentary service provision, leadership, resources, and trust-building capacity opportunities. These two cases also help us to generate a model to differentiate the level of intensity of collaborative arrangements among small nonprofit organizations: basic, advanced, and intense. On the first stage, organizations with similar missions share information and provide moral support to one another. On the second stage, organizations start to think about learning from one another and improve the effectiveness of their individual practices and possibly share some resources among one another. On the final stage, organizations that provide complementary services start to work together and collectively provide integrated services to have an enhanced impact on service receivers.

Ximeng Chen is an assistant professor at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut. She earned her Ph.D. in Community and Public Affairs from Binghamton University, where she specialized in nonprofit organizations. Her current research interests include grassroots associations and diaspora philanthropy. She teaches multiple courses in the Master of Public Administration Program and on the undergraduate level. For more information, contact Hiroki Sayama ([sayama@binghamton.edu](mailto:sayama@binghamton.edu)).

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