

Public defence Ph.D. in Applied Economics by Lore Wellens.

The public defence of the Ph.D. in Applied Economics for Lore Wellens will take place on Wednesday July 10th 2013 at 4.00pm on the Etterbeek-campus of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels in Building D, level 2, room D2.01.

The Ph.D thesis is called "Downward Accountability and Effectiveness in Nonprofit Organizations."

Promoter: Prof. dr. Marc Jegers

Please confirm your attendance by Friday July 5 2013 to [Tom Matthijs](#).

Abstract:

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are key players in the provision of numerous types of services. Whereas previously NPOs were automatically assumed to operate well, nowadays a gradually intensifying debate over these organizations' functioning is observed. Numerous practitioners and researchers propose to stop considering NPOs without any (empirical) evidence as "the perfect service providers". Resulting from this, NPOs are increasingly expected to demonstrate (high levels of) accountability and effectiveness.

There is already an abundance of scientific knowledge about NPOs' effectiveness and accountability, but what makes this dissertation innovative is that it, firstly, goes beyond the generally accepted focus on (effective) board and management governance practices, and secondly, (investigates the importance to) go(es) beyond these two stakeholder types' perspectives. To gain insight into stakeholders' perspectives on effective governance, they need to be informed about and involved in – whether or not via representation – organizational policymaking.

The accountability movement is fuelled by the belief that the NPOs' organizational effectiveness can improve substantially when these organizations are truly (encouraged to be) accountable towards their multiple groups of stakeholders.

Given the above mentioned, it seems logical that (a lot of) (empirical) attention has been paid to the beneficiaries and their value in organizational policymaking. A review of the literature however shows the contrary, in both research and practice. This is a disturbing finding, not only because of the impact beneficiaries could have on organizational effectiveness, but also because beneficiaries enjoy the NPO services and should have the (human) right to be involved in decisions that affect their daily lives.

This said, the focus of this dissertation is on the accountability challenges NPOs face when attempting to be effective. In most studies of this dissertation, the focus is on the (foreign) beneficiaries and their value in organizational policymaking.

This dissertation consists of six studies. Studies three to six are empirical in nature. One of these studies focuses on the Vietnamese beneficiaries of a Belgian NGO and one focuses on the Southern African beneficiaries of a European NGO. In the other two empirical studies, one multiple case study and one survey study, data were collected in numerous types of Belgian NPOs (e.g. schools/art institutions/nursing homes/institutions for disabled persons). Based on the research findings numerous recommendations for both researchers and NPOs are formulated.