Macro-Regional Patterns of CSO Affiliation/Participation within the UN-Civil-Society Framework: The Underrepresentation of the Developing World

Padrões Macrorregionais de Afiliação/Participação de OSCs no Quadro ONU-Sociedade Civil: A Sub-representação do Mundo em Desenvolvimento

Patrones macrorregionales de afiliación/participación de las OSC en el marco de las Naciones Unidas y la sociedad civil: la subrepresentación del mundo en desarrollo

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Integrated Civil Society database was utilized in empirical case studies of UN-affiliated civil society organizations (CSOs) in a spatial comparison as to whether they were headquartered in developed or developing nations. The purpose was to gauge plurality / proportionality in the representation of CSOs by world region within the UN-Economic and Social Council consultative status program. Findings indicate substantial variation in regional representation of CSOs within the UN consultative status framework with developed regions represented to a greater degree proportionate to their populations. Both Africa and Asia were underrepresented relative to their proportions of global population. The findings challenge perceptions that the UN relationship with civil society reflects regional pluralism as reflected via proportional representation.

Keywords: civil society organizations; ECOSOC; nongovernmental organizations; pluralism; United Nations

RESUMO

O banco de dados da Sociedade Civil Integrada das Nações Unidas foi utilizado em estudos de caso empíricos de organizações da sociedade civil (OSCs) afiliadas às Nações Unidas em uma comparação espacial para saber se estavam sediadas em países desenvolvidos ou em desenvolvimento. O objetivo era aferir a pluralidade / proporcionalidade na representação das OSCs por região do mun-

do dentro do programa de status consultivo do Conselho Econômico e Social da ONU. Os resultados indicam uma variação substancial na representação regional de OSCs dentro da estrutura de status consultivo da ONU com regiões desenvolvidas representadas em maior grau proporcional às suas populações. Tanto a África quanto a Ásia estavam sub-representadas em relação às suas proporções da população global. Os resultados desafiam as percepções de que a relação da ONU com a sociedade civil reflete o pluralismo regional refletido por meio da representação proporcional.

Palavras-chave: organizações da sociedade civil; ECOSOC; organizações não governamentais; pluralismo; Nações Unidas

RESUMEN

La base de datos integrada de la sociedad civil de las Naciones Unidas se utilizó en estudios de casos empíricos de organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) afiliadas a las Naciones Unidas en una comparación espacial en cuanto a si tenían su sede en países desarrollados o en desarrollo. El propósito era medir la pluralidad/proporcionalidad en la representación de las OSC por región del mundo dentro del programa de estatus consultivo del Consejo Económico y Social de la ONU. Los hallazgos indican una variación sustancial en la representación regional de las OSC dentro del marco de estatus consultivo de la ONU con regiones desarrolladas representadas en un mayor grado proporcional a sus poblaciones. Tanto África como Asia estaban subrepresentadas en relación con sus proporciones de la población mundial. Los hallazgos desafían las percepciones de que la relación de la ONU con la sociedad civil refleja el pluralismo regional reflejado a través de la representación proporcional.

Palabras clabe: organizaciones de la sociedad civil; ECOSOC; organizaciones no gubernamentales; pluralism; Naciones Unidas

INTRODUCTION AND TERMINOLOGY

A diverse range of civil society organizations (CSOs) has increasingly been associated with the United Nations. This includes record numbers of CSOs also known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which hold formal consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the principle vehicle for UN interaction with international civil society. A primary goal of the UN has been to cultivate a more effective, diverse and democratic institutional culture. A key component of the latter objective has been the active inclusion of and facilitation of interaction among civil society within the UN dynamic. A primary purpose of such interaction is to augment the traditional role of states as the primary actors within the framework of the world's preeminent intergovernmental organization (IGO). Considerable progress toward increased linkage with civil society has been achieved in recent decades as the total number as well as regional and topical diversity of organizations in association with the UN has grown exponentially.

This study seeks to identify spatial patterns of association of CSOs within the UN-CSO dynamic via comparative analysis of the proportional representation of world regions. Specifically, this research seeks to determine the degree to which UN-associated CSOs headquartered in predominantly developing regions such as Africa and Asia are

underrepresented within the UN-civil society dynamic compared to such CSOs in developed regions. The research hypothesized that although substantial progress has been made, civil society organizations headquartered in developing regions remain proportionally underrepresented relative to their share of global population. Likewise, those based in developed regions are proportionally over-represented within the UN-civil society framework.

This study is significant for several reasons. The UN practice of cultivating formal association with reputable CSOs has expanded substantially in recent years and has been described as the most dynamic area of growth and change within the UN framework (Alger, 2002,p.93). In 1946 when the practice was initiated, less than 50 such organizations held consultative status with the UN, but presently the status is afforded to over 5,000 organizations of various types, representing a wide range of issues across the globe (UN, 2018   ). Yet, it remains unclear what patterns of participation exist among the diverse range of organizations which have formal status with the UN. For example, what, if any, geographical patterns of participation exist? Early in its history of direct association with CSOs the UN cultivated relationships with western organizations almost exclusively---largely reflecting a dearth of such organizations based in the developing world and also a comparatively smaller number of independent states in regions such as Africa and Asia. In recent decades, large numbers of CSOs have emerged in the developing world, many of which have pursued ties with the UN and may have at least partially eroded the dominance of the western-based organizations within the UN-ECOSOC dynamic.

Other geographical patterns may be found to exist such as disproportionate representation of some world (sub)regions relative to others---e.g. to what degree are European and/or western CSOs better represented within the UN-civil society framework than those headquartered in Africa or Asia? Such analysis of geographical and other patterns of participation among UN-affiliated CSOs is important in cultivating a general understanding of the evolving dynamic between the UN and global civil society. Importantly, most previous attempts to study such issues have focused upon one or very limited numbers of such organizations or alternatively, have been specific to a particular issue area such as human rights or development rather than seeking to understand overall patterns of civil society participation within an intergovernmental organization (Tallberg; Sommerer; Sqautrito; Jonsson, 2013,p.11). Also, there is comparatively little literature examining the degree or nature of non-state actor's influences within international relations among developing nations/regions, a gap which this analysis will in part help to address.

The concepts of civil society and civil society organizations are key to this study. Linz and Stepan (1996, p.116) offer a frequently cited description of civil society as being comprised of groups which freely self-organized independently of government influence and which seek to "articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests." Waisman (2006, p.49) defined civil society in similar light stating that it is "a slice of society, whose core is the web of voluntary

associations that articulate interests and values, and their system of interaction, as long as these units are not under the control of the state". In the broadest of senses, CSOs are all voluntarily organized associations independent of direct government and/or market control. In a tripartite division of societal activity, the realm of civil society is everything not found in the domains of government or business/commercial activity, wherein organizations pursue collective goals (Uhlin,2009,p.272). Early concepts of civil society regarded it as comprising the mediating institutions that bridged the gap between the individual and the state (Thiel, 2017, p.149). Some scholars have a broad and inclusive view of civil society as being comprised of widely diverse professional and labor associations, religious organizations and perhaps most famously via his example of bowling leagues and their decline as symptoms of broader waning of American civil society, Putnam (2001) also includes recreational-related organizations. The terms *civil society* and *CSO* may not be completely interchangeable in the minds of many in that the former is a broader, more general and inclusive reference than the latter which refers to a more formally organized constituency which also has more defined agendas.

Nongovernmental organization (NGO) was popularized as a term via its usage within the UN in the latter 20th century. The original UN charter sought to make a distinction between participation rights for countries or IGOs as opposed to non-state entities, commonly described at the time as transnational private organizations (Willetts, 1996). The term NGO presently is preferred within ECOSOC, whereas other UN bodies as well as many other IGOs and international actors continue to use the term CSO, with both terms remaining in common use and often used interchangeably. This research uses the term CSO, for the sake of consistency and clarity, while both terms are regarded as synonymous.

While the concept of CSOs and the perception of the latter as one element of democratic society slowly emerged and expanded in the late 19th century, the most substantial growth in the total number and global nature of civil society has occurred since the mid-20th century. The post-colonial era in the decades following WWII was an important time for the growth of CSOs and civil society internationally, as in the preceding colonial period, governments customarily did not encourage the growth of such groups, seeing them as threats to the traditional political power structure (Kwesiga; Namasi, 2006, p. 86). In the decades following decolonization, CSOs acquired an increasingly prominent role in developing countries via the provision of services and distribution of aid, as evidenced in the tenfold increase in developmental aid dispersed by international organizations between 1970-1985 for example (Jokic, 2013, p. 51). Whereas such organizations emerged in developing states to supplement the role of government, in much of the developing world, the emergence of CSOs was to fill a void---as a substitute for programs and services that were inadequate or that were not provided at all by governmental actors (Kajimbwal, 2006; Makoba, 2002, p.53-54)

During the late Cold War era of the 1980s and early 1990s, a significant expansion in the number and influence of CSOs occurred internationally. This upsurge---particularly in organizations related to human and

political rights or free market economic reform---is often credited with playing a role in the decline in authoritarianism and movement toward democracy characteristic of the era. Increasing numbers of CSOs with international focus were founded in many countries/regions in an effort to meet community needs or promote interests, with one estimate claiming that some 25,000 organizations could reasonably be classified as international CSOs/NGOs (INGOs---those with affiliates/programs in multiple countries) by the year 2000, up from 6,000 in 1990 and less than 400 a century earlier (Paul, 2000). The Union of International Associations' Yearbook of International Organizations lists over 38,000 active and some 30,000 dormant CSOs/NGOs that operated in 2 or more countries and obtained financial support from more than one state, their definitional criteria for being an INGO (UIA, 2016).

The UN's interest in cultivating relationships with a diverse range of CSOs was essentially twofold: (1) to increase the diversity of voices heard within international arenas beyond traditional state-actors and (2) to cultivate partnerships transcending state-actors in the implementation of UN initiatives such as aid programs. Arguably, the UN's efforts to cultivate such relationships in some regions (e.g. SubSaharan Africa) may be due to the organization's failure to facilitate adequate security and humanitarian standards and thus reflect a concomitant desire to improve its image in such regions and to at least in part accomplish through civil society partners what it has failed to achieve otherwise. The type and degree of CSO involvement with the UN has evolved over time, with the principle venue of formal interaction being the UN Economic and Social Council. Hundreds of organizations were in attendance at the conference establishing the UN at the end of WWII, setting a precedent for continuing cooperation and by 1950 formal consultative arrangements with CSOs and a framework of rules regulating such official affiliations were established (Willetts, 2011, p. 34-42). Article 71 of the UN Charter serves as the primary vehicle for UN relations with transnational civil society and as the basis of the formal CSO consultative status program. It states that ECOSOC "may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned" (United Nations, 2017).

While an in-depth examination of this issue was not the focus of this research, it would be useful to the discussion to draw a distinction between the concepts of *international* actors as opposed to *transnational* actors relative to studying CSOs and pluralism in the international arena. In both cases, the scope of activities of the institution/actor would presumably transcend the confines of a single state. In the narrowest of senses, international actors conform to the traditional state-centric dynamic and would include not just state-actors themselves, but IGOs comprised of state members and many CSOs that are direct or indirect organs of or financially dependent upon states. In contrast, transnational institutions are those that supersede and transcend the traditional state-centric

international dynamic and would include entities such as (non-state owned/directed) international MNCs and those CSOs that are truly autonomous from state control and not merely organs of state policies. It is not always clear to what degree CSOs are independent of the agendas of the states which often at least partially finance them and in which they are based. The spirit underlying Article 71 of the UN Charter and the efforts undertaken by the UN to cultivate formal relations with CSOs implies a desire to associate with *transnational* civil society organs that are independent of state control and influence, otherwise no real pluralism or diversification distinct from the traditional state-centric dynamic would be achieved.

PERSPECTIVES WITHIN THE LITERATURE

Inclusivity and the equitable distribution of power and influence within the UN and other international institutions are cornerstone concepts of pluralism within the international order. Pluralism within IGOs has been regarded as a model for democratic institutions (DeMars and Dijkzuel, 2015; Risse-Kappen, 1995; Willetts, 2011) or for the diversification and legitimization of authority (Bolin and Thomas, 1999; Gotz, 2008). Throughout much of its existence, the UN has been a forum almost exclusively for state actors, which bore near sole responsibility for agenda-setting and implementation (e.g. peace keeping) within the organization. The rapid expansion in the number and influence of CSOs with an international scope not only presented opportunities to diversify UN initiatives through collaborations with such grassroots organizations, but also to potentially diversify the sources of input received at the UN with regard to policy making and implementation. While state actors ostensibly represent the interests of their populations, they may often reflect the agendas of those who govern the state---i.e. the ruling elite. CSOs have been perceived as possessing a more "bottom-up" nature wherein the views of broader segments of society potentially including historically marginalized groups may be better represented. Additionally, pluralism within the UN ostensibly increases with a greater diversity of representation among the CSOs with which the UN affiliates.

Among other things, pluralism can entail weighing degrees of cultural and geographical diversity within egalitarian democratic institutions in that it advocates that all groups can maintain their distinctive identities and still be afforded opportunities to participate and have their voices heard without being marginalized (Abu-Laban, 2008, p. 1-2). In the latter sense, pluralism can be perceived as a principle of respect which places priority upon diversity in all its forms (GCP, 2018). The UN is a proponent of pluralism and the increasing role of evermore diverse types of CSOs within ECOSOC and other UN bodies reflects an institutionalized commitment to pluralist ideals. Specific bodies such as the UN Population Fund have invested sustained effort to actively engage a diverse range of CSOs in multilateral deliberations, advocacy including youth networks, and faith-based organizations, etc. (UN Office of the High Commissioner, 2019). The UN has sought to facilitate such pluralism

within ECOSOC via encouraging the affiliation/participation of CSOs representing the historically marginalized (e.g., developing nations, human/indigenous rights-related organizations) and in albeit limited instances providing funds to permit CSOs from developing nations/regions to participate in UN functions (Mowell, 2018, 231-232).

It remains unclear whether such efforts have actually yielded improvements in the diversity of representation in practice or whether the efforts undertaken by the UN in support of pluralism are largely symbolic in nature (Kymlicka, 2008, 152). For example, the increased profile of CSOs may be more reflective of good intentions and window dressing rather than substantive change in terms of the balance of influence which overwhelmingly remains with state actors at the UN and within other IGOs (Mowell, 2021). Civil society representation at the UN may also be more symbolic than substantive regarding the degree of CSO engagement/input. McKeon (2009), Mowell (2020) and Omelicheva (2009) contend that although the UN has ostensibly embraced international civil society, many UN bodies do not have vehicles for meaningful CSO involvement and the UN agencies which at least in theory have established programs to facilitate CSO interaction, customarily restrict the degree of access and participation afforded to CSOs. They further note that logistical obstacles such as limited financial and/or personnel resources also impede participation and due to such considerations, the UN has largely failed in efforts to effectively integrate civil society into the global political process. Such views have also been expressed by other scholars (Carpenter, 2010; Anderson, 2012; Willetts, 2000) who note that although CSO access to the UN has broadened in theory, UN access is not available to all organizations and that various obstacles such as the cost of attending UN conferences serve as significant barriers to widespread, diverse participation, particularly for CSOs in developing nations. Whether or not pluralism is being achieved would also be reflected in whether the goals and undertakings of the UN-affiliated CSOs more closely reflect the interests of the UN and developed countries or the developing states in which the CSOs are based, a question which may prove difficult to answer definitively and is beyond the scope of this research.

At the time of the UN's founding and the implementation of Article 71 facilitating formal association with CSOs, options for geographical plurality/diversity among the CSOs with which the UN could associate was limited, particularly with regard to Africa, Asia and other developing regions. In 1945, there were only 51 founding member states of the UN. Of these states, the vast majority were western nations including European colonial powers which still directly controlled much of Africa and Asia and accordingly did not desire the emergence of autonomous civil society---and a correspondingly strengthened national identity---in their possessions abroad. In the next decades, as the process of decolonization advanced, the number of sovereign states increased significantly (particularly in Africa and Asia), as did the number of UN members---144 by 1975. The rapid expansion the number of international/transnational CSOs did not begin in earnest until the 1990s and initially entailed rapid growth in the number of CSOs headquartered in developed, rather than

developing nations/regions. By around the turn of the 21st century, CSOs were growing rapidly in developing regions as well and reflecting the increasing numbers of CSOs with international scope, in recent years the UN has endeavored to expand its linkages with the organizations.

Article 71 of the UN Charter authorizes the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to form formal consultative arrangements with CSOs. This collaborative relationship established by the UN Charter serves as the primary vehicle for UN interaction with international civil society. The most substantive element of the UN-ECOSOC consultative status program are the UN conferences which intentionally place state parties adjacent to CSOs in parallel conferences in order to impart a perception of pluralism and democracy and ostensibly provide accredited CSOs with an opportunity to present input (Anderson, 2012, p. 59-60). Effort has been made by the UN to increase CSO participation in the consultative status program. For example, in 1996 CSOs with a national or sub-national scope (rather than international scope) were for the first time considered for formal accreditation with the UN, with the goal of further opening and diversifying access to UN bodies, particularly for organizations based in developing nations (McKeon, 2009, p. 152). Such efforts designed to increase formal CSO association with the UN, combined with the explosive growth in the number of CSOs across the globe, has resulted in a significant increase in the number of organizations in the consultative status program. In 1948 a modest total of 40 CSOs held consultative status with UN-ECOSOC, only increasing to 180 CSOs by 1968 and to 1,505 by the program's 50th year in 1998 with the large majority of participating CSOs headquartered in developed/western nations---primarily Europe and the Americas (Statistica, 2019). By December 2018 a total of 5,161 CSOs held formal consultative status with UN-ECOSOC and although this is the most organizations ever in formal association with the UN and also likely the most diverse in terms of their countries and regions of origin, spatial patterns reflect proportional over-representation of CSOs from developed nations/regions and under-representation of those from the developing world (UN, 2018).

This exploration of pluralism entails assessments of the degree of proportional and equitable representation by world region within the UN-CSO dynamic, particularly its main vehicle, the ECOSOC consultative status program. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the degree to which major regions of the world are represented in the UN-civil society dynamic relative to the regions' proportion of global population. The theoretical perspective underpinning this study is a critical exploration of pluralist assumptions relative to the expanding role of CSOs within the United Nations, specifically perceptions related to geographically equity and egalitarianism within the UN-civil society dynamic. Proponents of democratic pluralism within the United Nations framework regard the expansion of CSO representation and influence within the UN as an appropriate means of diversifying input and for further democratizing global governance.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

This study proposes that the expansion of the number and role of CSOs in association with the UN does not necessarily achieve the ideals of pluralism in that stark regional imbalances in proportional representation exist. Analysis of patterns of CSO participation with the UN will reveal gaps with regard to representation favoring developed regions/states and concomitantly, under-representation of developing regions/states. Previously, most empirical studies of CSOs at the UN have focused upon a limited number of organizations within a single issue area (Clark; Friedman; Hochstetler, 1998, p. 2-3). A strength of this study is that its breadth of scope in seeking to analyze macro-scale patterns of participation of CSOs in association with the UN will reveal broader patterns within the institutional dynamic. This study is organized around a research hypothesis related to substantially imbalanced spatial patterns among organs of transnational civil society with which the UN is associated: the CSOs of developed regions are better represented than those of developing regions relative to the regions' proportion of global population. To the best of the researcher's knowledge this is the first comprehensive study of macro-level spatial patterns of CSOs in association with the UN.

The research design utilizes an empirical case study involving descriptive statistics to examine the hypothesis. Data obtained from the extensive UN Integrated Civil Society Organizations (ICSO) online database is analyzed for macro-scale spatial patterns of affiliation/representation among CSOs within the UN framework. The publicly available ICSO database ostensibly lists all CSOs with connections to the UN including organizations currently or formerly a part of the UN Economic and Social Council's consultative status program and also organizations that have been directly involved with a UN initiative---distribution of UN aid, etc. The database is the most comprehensive listing of international/transnational civil society organizations with which the UN has some form of association and was deemed the best means of gauging proportional representation of world regions. The following provides a summary overview of the findings revealed via analysis of the database as related to the research hypothesis.

ICSO DATABASE ANALYSIS

As reflected in Tables 1 through 3, the UN's ICSO database contains significantly more entries for organizations headquartered in predominantly developing regions than for historically dominant higher-income regions. Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean had 9,524, 8,083 and 3,850 database entries respectively and a collective total of 21,457 entries, meaning 62.8% of all region-specific entries (34,168 entries had a regional categorization, several thousand others were categorized as "no region specified") according to organizational type were for those headquartered in developing regions. Europe, Anglo-America and Oceania had 6,096, 5,698, and 917 entries respectively for a combined total of 12,711 entries or 37.2% of all regions according to organizational type.

It appears that both in terms of total number of entries and percentage of all such entries, developing regions are better represented within the fabric of UN-civil society relations than at any prior point in history.

It is also worth noting that within the ICSO database categorizations by organizational type, developing regions have the largest total number of organizations listed in 11 of 15 categories. As reflected in Table 2, Asia leads in 6 categories: disability, foundations, institutions, media, ageing, and cooperatives. Latin America leads in 3 categories: indigenous, local government, and private sector. Africa has the largest number of entries in the 2 categories of associations and CSOs. As is illustrated in Table 1, among developed regions, Europe had the largest number of entries in the categories of associations and IGOs and Anglo America led in number of entries for academics. Oceania, with its comparatively small population, led no category in total number of entries. The remaining topical category "others" was fairly evenly divided among most world regions.

While such statistics derived from the ICSO database do not address depth or substance of participation (phenomenon which may prove difficult to analyze objectively), numerically they indicate record degrees of parity and plurality between civil society organizations among developed and developing nations and among most world regions. In short, CSOs headquartered in developing nations are at least on paper better represented within the UN framework than at any point in history and are trending toward increased levels of participation. However as indicated by the data, parity/equity does not exist in proportion to share of global population in each region and in contrasting the developed with the developing world.

As noted in Table 3, the three predominantly developed regions of Anglo-America, Europe and Oceania (the latter was classified as a predominantly developed region within this study due to the overwhelming dominance of CSOs from Australia and New Zealand within the Oceania region) collectively constitute just 15.3% of the world's population but they are headquarters to 37.2% of all institutional entries by organizational type in the ICSO database. Conversely, Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean collectively comprise 84.7% of the world's population but are home to just 62.8% of institutional entries listed in the database. Such disproportional representation was also found in other categories analyzed in the ICSO database including topical areas/fields of CSO expertise as can be seen in the data tables.

Analysis of ICSO data along regional lines revealed interesting patterns related to CSO fields of activity/expertise. As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, with 65.7% of the total, LDC regions had the largest number of overall entries and also had the most entries in each of the 11 subcategories. Entries for Asian-based CSOs led in the 4 subcategories Economic and Social, Public Administration, Social Development, and Statistics, with entries for African-based NGOs leading in all 7 remaining areas. Among both developed and developing regions, entries were most numerous for the 4 subcategories of Economic and Social, Social Development, Sustainable Development, and Gender Issues/Women. The subcategories with the smallest number of entries were also the

same for both developed and developing regions: Statistics, and the 3 region-specific subcategories of Peace/Development in Africa, Conflict Resolution in Africa, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Among developed regions, Europe had the most entries in 10 of 11 subcategories, with Anglo-America leading in entries related to Gender Issues/Women as the lone exception. In all 11 subcategories, Latin America and the Caribbean ranked 5th and Oceania last among the 6 world regions analyzed. Analysis of the scope and scale of organizational operations revealed similar regional variations/disparities.

Table 1 - ICSO Entries - Organizational Type by Predominantly Developed Region

Org. Type	Overall Total (%)[2]	Europe	Anglo-America[3]	Oceania [4]	(MDC Total/%)
Academics	1389 (3.5%)	260	405	44	(709/51.0%)
Associations	2287 (5.8%)	652	162	45	(859/37.6%)
Disability	731 (1.9%)	95	103	24	(222/30.4%)
Foundation	1126 (2.9%)	231	183	23	(437/38.8%)
Indigenous	2385 (6.1%)	116	430	135	(681/28.6%)
Institution	395 (1.0%)	73	50	9	(132/33.4%)
I.G.O.	355 (0.9%)	116	35	10	(161/45.4%)
Local Govt.	255 (0.6%)	29	21	4	(54/21.2%)
Media	172 (0.4%)	28	27	5	(60/34.9%)
N.G.O.	28361(72.2%)	4126	3922	558	(8606/30.3%)
Others	819 (2.1%)	161	158	18	(337/41.1%)
Private Sector	720 (1.8%)	135	147	21	(303/42.1%)
Trade Union	88 (0.2%)	28	7	4	(39/44.3%)
Ageing	118 (0.3%)	23	24	10	(57/48.3%)
Cooperative	128 (0.3%)	23	24	7	(54/42.2%)
Totals:	39329	6096 (15.5%)	5698 (14.5%)	917(2.3%)	(12711/32.3%)

Source: Mowell (2017).

Table 2 - ICSO Entries: Organizational Type by Predominantly LDC*[5] Region

Org. Type	Overall Total	Africa	Asia	Lat. Am. & Carib.	(LDC Total/%[6])
Academics	1389	5	233	238	(476/34.3%)
Associations	2287	753	300	375	(1428/62.4%)
Disability	731	171	217	67	(455/62.2%)
Foundation	1126	192	275	221	(688/61.1%)
Indigenous	2385	333	340	472	(1145/48.0%)
Institution	395	62	110	91	(263/66.6%)
I.G.O.	355	85	76	32	(193/54.4%)
Local Govt.	255	44	40	87	(171/67.1%)
Media	172	40	46	25	(111/64.5%)
N.G.O.	28361	7610	6111	1888	(15609/55.0%)
Others	819	132	158	134	(424/51.8%)
Pvt. Sector	720	137	103	169	(409/56.8%)
Trade Union	88	17	17	16	(50/56.8%)
Ageing	118	19	29	13	(61/51.7%)
Cooperative	128	24	28	22	(74/57.8%)
Totals:	39329	9524 (24.2%)	8083 (20.6%)	3850 (9.8%)	(21557/54.8%)

Source: Mowell (2017).

2. Overall totals and percentages include entries for which no region was specified

3. The UN ICSO Database denotes "North America" as 1 of 6 regional categories, but only provides data for the 2-country region of Canada and the United States. The geographically correct term for the Canada/U.S. sub-region of North America is "Anglo America". The database provides statistics for Mexico and the countries of the Caribbean and Central America---all of which are located on the North American continent----within the regional category "Latin America and the Caribbean".

4. The region known as Oceania is customarily regarded as being comprised of Australia, New Zealand, and numerous Pacific Island microstates and dependencies. Nearly all NGOs identified within the Oceania category of the ICSO database were in either Australia or New Zealand and accordingly data for this region was regarded as representative of MDCs rather than LDCs.

5. The terms LDC (Less/Least Developed Countries) and MDC (Most/More Developed Countries) are used in this study to draw a basic distinction between regions characterized predominantly by more highly developed economies as opposed to those primarily characterized by emerging economies. It should be stressed that such distinctions may be at least partly subjective in nature and that homogeneity does not exist within each region concerning development levels. Less developed nations exist within MDC regions (e.g., Moldova in Europe) and many countries within regions broadly classified as predominantly LDC/developing are highly developed (e.g., Japan in Asia). Also, given the rapid economic growth experienced in recent decades by many emerging nations such as China and India, the development status of many historically LDC nations has improved markedly and may be better characterized as gradations between such dichotomous classifications such as MDC vs. LDC or developed vs. developing. However, within regional studies it remains customary to classify Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean as (primarily) LDC/developing regions and Anglo-America, Europe and Australia/Oceania as (primarily) MDC regions (Getis, Bjelland and Getis, 2014).

6. Overall totals and percentages include entries for which no region was specified

Table 3 - UN-Affiliated Civil Society Organizations by World Region

World Region	Number of ICSO Database Entries by Org. Type (%)[7]	Population of World Region (% of 2016 World Pop.)[8]
Africa	9,524 (27.9%)	1,216.1 million (16.4%)
Asia	8,083 (23.6%)	4,436.2 million (59.7%)
Anglo America	**5,698 (16.7%)**	**360.5 million (4.9%)**
Europe	**6,096 (17.8%)**	**738.8 million (9.9%)**
Latin America & Caribbean	3,850 (11.3%)	641.0 million (8.6%)
Oceania	**917 (2.7%)**	**39.9 million (0.5%)**
Totals	34,168**	7,432.5 million

Source: Mowell (2017).

Table 4 - UN-Affiliated Civil Society Organizations by Fields of Activity/Expertise and Correlated by MDC Regions

Field of Activity/Expertise (Totals)	Europe	Anglo-America	Oceania	MDC Totals (%)
Economic and Social (18939)	3643	3413	501	7557
Financing for Devt. (3962)	706	570	75	1351
Gender Issues/Women (11719)	1741	1743	251	3735
Population (4016)	708	510	73	1291
Public Administration (4260)	746	592	79	1417
Social Development (14106)	2270	1986	316	4572
Statistics (2797)	451	384	47	882
Sustainable Devt. (14062)	2352	2006	336	4694
Peace/Devt. in Africa (2761)	460	431	8	899
Conflict Res. in Africa (1777)	281	252	6	539
NEPAD (2041)	278	220	14	512
Totals: (80440)	13636(17.0%)	12107(15.1%)	1706(2.1%)	27449(34.2%)

Source: Mowell (2017).

Table 5 - UN-Affiliated Civil Society Organizations by Fields of Activity/Expertise and Correlated by LDC Regions

Field of Activity/Expertise (Totals)	Africa	Asia	Lat. Am. & Carib.	LDC Totals (%)
Economic and Social (18939)	4331	4689	2056	11076
Financing for Devt. (3962)	1219	1068	331	2618
Gender Issues/Women (11719)	3869	3280	865	8014
Population (4016)	1205	1152	379	2736
Public Administration (4260)	1092	1292	468	2852
Social Development (14106)	3860	4197	1499	9556
Statistics (2797)	728	928	260	1916
Sustainable Devt. (14062)	3959	3773	1643	9375
Peace/Devt. in Africa (2761)	1587	264	36	1887
Conflict Res. in Africa (1777)	1029	205	22	1256
NEPAD (2041)	940	524	83	1547
Totals: (80440)	23819(29.6%)	21372(26.6%)	7642(9.5%)	52833(65.7%)

Source: Mowell (2017).

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AMONG REGIONS/COUNTRIES WITHIN THE UN-ECOSOC CONSULTATIVE STATUS PROGRAM

Proportionality is an element of plurality important to this study in that understanding the degree to which regions are proportionally represented is a significant reflection of the degree of spatial parity in the relationship between the UN and international/transnational CSOs. Data displayed in Table 3 illustrated that ICSO database entries organized by organizational type were proportionally imbalanced in that the number of entries for all developed regions were greater relative to their share of global population than entries for developing regions. Analysis of data specific to entries for organizations with consultative status revealed an even greater degree of disproportionate dominance of western-based organizations as reflected in Table 6.

While the predominantly developed regions of Europe, Anglo America and Oceania collectively comprise only 15.3% of the world's 2016 population, they are the headquarters of 61.2% of organizations that presently hold consultative status with UN-ECOSOC. The later statistic reflects that organizations based in predominantly developed regions are represented at a rate four times greater than their proportion of the global population. Europe comprises 9.9% of the global population yet is home to 32.5% of CSOs holding consultative status, Oceania comprises 0.5% of the population yet hosts 2.2% of CSOs with consultative status---of 96 Oceania-based organizations identified as having consultative status, 70 (73.0%) were in Australia or New Zealand, a reflection as to why Oceania was regarded as an MDC region in this study. Anglo America was the most disproportionately dominant as it constitutes only 4.9% of the global population but is headquarters to 26.5% of CSOs holding consultative status with UN-ECOSOC.

Developing regions comprise 84.7% of the world's population yet are home to only 38.7% of the organizations listed as holding consultative status. Africa constitutes 16.4% of the global population yet is headquarters to a comparable, though slightly smaller 15.3% of CSOs with consultative status. Latin America and the Caribbean comprise 8.6% of the world's population yet are home to just 5.4% of organizations with consultative status. By far the largest proportional under-representation among developing regions is for Asia which constitutes 59.7% of the global population yet was identified as headquarters to only 18.0% of those CSOs presently holding consultative status. Such findings clearly support the hypothesis that significant imbalances exist with regard to proportional parity among countries and regions and also between developed and developing areas---both within the ICSO database in general and also among the organizations within the ECOSOC consultative status program, the primary vehicle within the UN-civil society framework.

It is worthy to note that disparities also exist among developed versus developing regions with regard to the type/level of consultative status held. General consultative status is the highest level of accreditation and affords the greatest degree of access and input. Of the 6 world regions delimited within the ICSO database the 3 with the smallest percentage

of general status CSOs were all predominantly developing regions: only 1.2% of Africa-based CS organizations held general status, only 2.8% of Asia-based CS organizations, and 2.5% among those based in Latin America and the Caribbean. While no general status organizations were identified as being based in Oceania, 5.4% of Europe-based CSOs holding consultative status were accredited at the general level and 3.2% for those headquartered in Anglo America. However, the largest percentages by far among CS organizations for roster status, presumably the most restrictive accreditation level in terms of opportunities to participate in ECOSOC processes, were also for CSOs based in Europe (20.2% of CS organizations held roster status) and Anglo America (19.1%), perhaps mitigating any real or perceived dominance the latter regions potentially possess via having a greater proportion of CSOs in general consultative status. The increased prevalence of roster status organizations from developing regions also likely reflects the UN's relatively recent shift toward allowing CSOs (primarily from developing nations) with a national or sub-national scope of operations to obtain ECOSOC consultative status, though their association would presumably be restricted to this lowest level of accreditation.

Using the ICSO database, a case study analysis was undertaken to identify variations among countries in terms of degree of proportional representation/parity within the ECOSOC consultative status program. Table 7 presents data from the case study of the world's 20 most populous countries---more logistically practical than examining all of approximately 200 countries in the world---relative to the number of organizations holding consultative status headquartered in each and the percentage of the latter relative to the total (global) number of CS organizations for which a regional association was specified in the ICSO database. Of the countries, 11 were in Asia, 4 in Africa, 2 each in Europe and Latin America, and 1 in Anglo America. Many of the same patterns related to proportional equity (or lack thereof) as previously presented in Tables 3 and 6. Countries within developing regions were in general underrepresented relative to the proportion of population they contain---with Asia-based CS organizations the most underrepresented, and most countries in developed regions disproportionately over-represented.

Table 6 - Parity of ECOSOC Consultative Status Organizations by World Region and Relative to Proportion of Global Population

9. (Worldometers, 2017)

10. Number reflects those organizations holding Consultative Status identified by region within the ICSO database. Over 300 organizations with Consultative Status were classified as "no region specified" within the database.

	General Status	Special Status	Roster Status	Total / % of all CS orgs	% of World Population	
Africa	8	624	42	674 / 15.3%	16.4%	
Asia	22	704	68	794 / 18.0%	59.7%	
Europe	78	1066	289	1433 / 32.5%	9.9%	
LA/Carib.	6	198	34	238 / 5.4%	8.6%	
Anglo Am.	37	909	223	1169 / 26.5%	4.9%	
Oceania	0	83	13	96 / 2.2%	0.5%	
Total	151	3584	669	4404		

Source: Mowell (2017).

It should be noted that the under-representation of CSOs based

in developing regions is not unique to the consultative status program of United Nations Economic and Social Council. For example, the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO) was founded in 2000 to facilitate networking and collaboration among international CSOs. WANGO maintains a detailed database of over 54,000 member/affiliated organizations. As reflected in Table 7, analysis of NGO spatial distributions with affiliations to the organization revealed patterns strikingly similar to those of NGO affiliations within the UN-ECOSOC program. As of 2019, the Americas---principally the US and Canada---(45.2%) and Europe (32.9%) combined were headquarters to 78.1% of WANGO-affiliated NGOs. Despite containing the majority of the global population, Africa and Asia served as headquarters to only 8.8% and 11.9% of WANGO-affiliated CSOs respectively.

Table 7 - Regional Distributions of Organizations Affiliated with the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, 2019

Region	Number of Global Organizations	Percentage
Africa	4,778	8.8%
Americas	24,577	45.2%
Asia	6,488	11.9%
Europe	17,921	32.9%
Oceania	653	1.2%

Source: WANGO (2019).

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The total number of CSOs headquartered in developing regions has increased substantially in recent decades and many developing nations in Africa and Asia presently have large numbers of such organizations. For example, as of 2019 over 5,000 nonprofit organizations existed in Nigeria and some 200,000 in South Africa (NNNGO, 2019; ICNL, 2019). Most such organizations are small in size and local in scope of operations. Thus, the exponential growth in total number of CSOs in many developing nations does not translate to a commensurate increase in organizations with international/transnational scope or a voice or role within the international arena including the United Nations consultative status program. Such patterns concerning the proportional under-representation of the developing world among international CSOs likely reflect a combination of factors including the external and internal organizational dynamic of the organizations, as well as economic and political constraints they face.

A parallel can be drawn with the legacy of neocolonialism which has arguably left many developing states in continuing positions of economic dependency via conditional trade and aid agreements that constrain options. The dynamic between international CSOs in donor nations and many such organizations in developing regions may reflect a similar hierarchical framework in which state actors and IGOs and CSOs based in donor nations often regard CSOs headquartered in developing nations

as merely the recipients of their largess (and as dependents/subordinates) rather than as partners working in collaborative effort to address international problems. Such a dichotomous, top-down dynamic would not be conducive to empowering African or Asian-based CSOs possessing a local or national scope to strive for a more global voice or operational focus. Western-based organizations by often utilizing partner organizations in developing nations as little more than service providers for externally financed programs may have contributed to CSOs in the global south retaining identities as local or national rather than international organizations (Dicklitch, 1998, p. 16).

Economic considerations also likely factor heavily in the lack of international reach/voice of many CSOs in the developing world. Many such organizations lack the funds necessary to grow beyond the confines of the localities or countries in which they operate or to participate in conferences and training abroad. Additionally, specific economic and infrastructure barriers likely limit the scope of activities for many CSOs based in developing countries. For example, shortcomings related to logistical infrastructure including no or limited availability of high-speed internet access and impeded ability of the organizations to communicate and network remains a limiting factor for many organizations. Shumate and DeWitt (2008, p. 427) concluded that a sharp distinction remained in terms of frequency and capability of communication among organizations based in developed versus developing regions in that the organizations based in predominantly developing regions were often severely limited in their capacity to exchange information and maintain active lines of communication internationally. The degree to which communication barriers serve as limiting factors in the international growth/ effectiveness of CSOs has been addressed in other research. A 2014 study of human rights CSOs concluded most organizations based in developing countries lack the communications resources to network or to effectively get their messages out beyond a local reach and that contemporary internet access/capability was a largely ineffective vehicle for many such organizations to overcome communications barriers and evolve as anything more than a locally-based institution (Thrall; Stecula and Sweet; 2014, p. 157-158).

Political considerations likely also weigh heavily. The majority of the world's undemocratic or quasi-democratic regimes remain concentrated in predominantly developing regions. The most recent Freedom House (2019) assessment of the state of democracy globally classifies most nations in Africa and Asia as either "not free" or only "partly free". Debate remains as to whether the presence of CSOs and other vestiges of civil society serve as catalysts for facilitating democracy or whether they are the byproducts of democratic processes and institutions already established (Kamat, 2003, p. 67). What is clear is that nations with the strongest democratic institutions and traditions usually also have more vibrant civil society institutions---including the presence of CSOs with international stature/reach. Conversely, many authoritarian or quasi-democratic states place various types of restrictions upon CSOs that serve to stifle their growth and operations. For example, the Ethiopian government,

wary of foreign influences in its internal affairs, limits foreign funding of its CSOs to a maximum 10% of the organizations' total budget, a policy which starves organizations of external support and concomitantly serves to keep the organizations small, localized and limited in terms of international connections and networking (Anderson, 2017). In short, the over-representation of the world's authoritarian regimes within the developing world appears to correlate closely in terms of the proportional under-representation of civil society headquartered in those states on the international stage.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Throughout much of the 20th century what few examples existed of international civil society were principally located in developed regions, but the explosive growth of CSOs globally over the course of recent decades has facilitated improvements in the numerical balance, distribution and influence of civil society organizations. Just as the governments of developing regions have become increasingly active within civil society in recent decades, civil society in the global south has also become increasingly visible within the global arena (Tandon and Kak, 2008). By the 1990s, CSOs and other manifestations of civil society in developing regions were rapidly emerging and were becoming comparable in total number to their counterparts from more developed areas, though CSOs in the global south often remained overshadowed politically within international forums by counterparts based in western nations which were often better organized and financed (Ibid). Tandon and Kak (2008, p.80-81) elaborate on the challenges faced by CSOs based in the developing world as the organizations have attempted to obtain a voice within the UN and international community, culminating in the CIVICUS framework---an attempt at further empowering international civil society:

> Emerging civil society in Asia, Africa and Latin America (initially) had weak capacity in the areas of intellectual material, institutional capacities, and local/regional coordination, as well as a lack of regulatory frameworks in many countries. Most governments of these southern countries had a "suspicious" orientation toward CSOs and it was therefore necessary to create a modern framework of regulation for government- CSO relations…In 1991, the idea of strengthening civil society by uniting CSOs on a global stage manifested in CIVICUS: the World Alliance for Citizen Participation which (facilitated) unprecedented strength and global outreach for participating organizations.

Issues such as freedom to operate independently of government influence, political parity (I.e. clout) domestically and abroad, and funding/resource availability may in some instances continue to favor organizations based in western nations within the framework of contemporary global civil society. Yet progress toward parity has been made and the CSOs of the developing world continue to expand and may at present be more vibrant than at any previous point in history. For example, in recent decades communist China has witnessed substantial growth in the total number and variety of CSOs. Yet continued progress is needed as compared with counterparts in many other regions, Chinese-based organizations have not fully matured and many have a reputation for

corruption or perhaps more commonly, poor leadership and ineffectiveness (Xiaoguang and Li, 2006, p. 144-145). A further example can be evidenced in Indonesia in which civil society is vibrant and thriving today, in sharp contrast with the status of civil society under decades of the Soeharto dictatorship which viewed CSOs with suspicion and actively sought to control and limit their influence (Antlov, Ibrahim and Van Tuijl, 2006, p. 164-165).

Rates of progress have not been uniform, particularly when comparing circumstances in democratic versus non-democratic countries. For example, the dearth of democracy in much of the Middle East and North Africa has impeded the advance of organized civil society which has often struggled for the mere right of free association more so than working toward achieving specific policy objectives such as human rights---a situation which has not been helped by the breakdown or absence of popular movements such as organized labor, often a catalyst for civil society in other world regions (Sayed-Said, 2004, p. 61). Not only have many developing states restricted the growth and expansion of civil society internally, but such restrictions have also contributed to the isolation of groups from interacting with each other and at the international level (Samad and Mohamadieh, 2008, p. 112). Even under such circumstances an often more muted form of civil society has played an increasingly important role in observing and reporting on compliance with human rights, environmental and other initiatives in many countries around the world. Accordingly such organizations are rightly regarded as elements of the international contract helping to regulate behavior in those policy areas (Lake, 2000, p. 51-52).

Interestingly, such uneven patterns of civil society development could be seen in data gleaned from this research. Imbalances in representation and participation of CSOs were consistently visible in statistics derived from the UN's ICSO database. Civil society in developed regions was usually over-represented to a significant degree relative to proportion of population, while CSOs headquartered in developing regions were often underrepresented proportionally. At least some of the latter disparity can be attributed to contrasts in economic prowess between developed and developing regions, as organizations in developing nations may often lack the financial resources to fully participate in international conferences, etc. Other factors such as democratic versus authoritarian political climate in the host country can also be seen within the data presented in this research as potentially impacting the degree of participation of CSOs within international forums such as the UN-ECOSOC consultative status program.

Given the relative scarcity of research into the plurality of civil society representation within the UN or other IGOs, this research can be regarded as a preliminary study into the latter phenomenon rather than a comprehensive or definitive treatment. Future research into the issue could entail weighting CSO representation not merely proportional to the population of a country/region but also relative to the number of transnational organizations present in each state/region---though a clear and objective inventory of such organizations in each state may prove

logistically difficult. More detailed examination of the issue could also delve into identification of sub-regional and national patterns of participation/affiliation in order to cultivate a clearer picture of the spatial dynamic and such research would likely reveal wide variations among individual states and sub-regions. In particular, the depth and substance of the UN-civil society dynamic is worthy of study though will likely prove problematic to gauge in a comprehensive or objective manner. Research is also needed as to ways in which civil society in developing regions such as Africa and Asia can potentially value their agencies within the framework of international relations. Also, the data utilized in this study provides a snapshot of the UN-civil society dynamic at a particular point in time. The latter dynamic has evolved and expanded rapidly in recent years and this trend seems poised to continue, necessitating future efforts to reappraise the status and plurality of representation of transnational civil society within the UN framework.

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