

Civil Society at the United Nations Through the Lens of Organizational Sociology: Exclusion and Temporariness

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Abstract: Studying the inclusion of civil society in international organizations has grown in the last decade. This article repatriates the ongoing scholarly discussions of this inclusion within organizational sociology to answer what the nature of civil society is as an organization at the United Nations. With “temporary organizations” it proposes a relational perspective whereby civil society’s temporariness induces mechanisms of exclusion and vice-versa. In practice civil society actors counter exclusion mechanisms by holding on to their autonomy.

Keywords: Inclusion, exclusion, civil society, United Nations, temporary organization

La société civile aux Nations Unies au prisme de la sociologie organisationnelle : exclusion et temporarité

Résumé: L’étude de l’inclusion de la société civile dans les organisations internationales s’est récemment développée. Avec la sociologie des organisations, on tente de comprendre la nature de la société civile en tant qu’organisation aux Nations Unies. Avec « organisations temporaires », on propose une perspective relationnelle où la temporalité de la société civile induit des mécanismes d’exclusion et inversement. Dans la pratique, lesdits acteurs combattent les mécanismes d’exclusion en conservant leur autonomie.

Mots-clés: Inclusion, exclusion, société civile, Nations Unies, organisation temporaire

Zivilgesellschaft bei den Vereinten Nationen durch die Linse der Organisationssoziologie: Ausschluss und Temporarität

Zusammenfassung: In den letzten Jahren hat sich die Forschung für die Einbeziehung der Zivilgesellschaft in internationalen Organisationen entwickelt. Mit Organisationssoziologie verstehen wir, wie die Zivilgesellschaft als Organisation in den Vereinten Nationen eingeschlossen wird. Mit « temporären Organisationen » bieten wir eine doppelte Perspektive. Die Temporarität der Zivilgesellschaft induziert Ausschlussmechanismen und umgekehrt. In der Praxis bekämpfen diese Akteure die Mechanismen der Exklusion, während sie ihre Autonomie behalten.

Schlüsselwörter: Inklusion, Exklusion, Zivilgesellschaft, Vereinte Nationen, temporäre Organisation

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1 Introduction

In terms of the Women's Major Group, I wanted to say that it is more of a space than an organization. So it's just a way to bring everyone together in terms of this process and you may or not have noticed that in the outcome document it doesn't talk about the Major Groups at all. So, there was a resolution by the General Assembly saying that the Major Groups would be this process for, you know be a vehicle in the process through this world conference. But after that there is really no clear role for the Major Groups whatsoever. So, it's kind of a confusing space, like now here we are all together and make sure to have a moment to speak in the official statements and name cards and sit and be able to be official in the negotiations and have that space, but it's not that the Women's Major Group is an organization or a group itself. (Observation notes intervention of Ellen, the Women's Major Group's coordinator, at a dinner meeting, Sendai, 16.03.15)

While the literature in international relations has acknowledged civil society's presence, impact, and role in international organizations and global governance more broadly (Charnovitz 1996; Otto 1996; Gordenker and Weiss 1997; Trent 2007; Schwartzberg 2013; Tallberg et al. 2013; Anheier 2018), the extract above points to a rather ambivalent role the United Nations (UN) maintains with civil society. If scholars have referred to the United Nations as an organization composed of three UNs – the First UN as member states, the Second UN as staff and the Third UN as civil society (Carayannis and Weiss 2021) – what is the role and nature of the organization of the latter? While civil society members are invited – and expected – to participate in international negotiations typically by suggesting policy recommendations in either written or oral statements, in practice, however, their institutional involvement remains seemingly temporary.

Emblematic of international organizations, the UN founded in 1945 is instated in a founding act (treaty, charter, legal status) and embodied in a material framework (headquarters, funding, and staff) (Smouts 1995). It constitutes a coordination mechanism between members bringing “stability, durability and cohesiveness” in international relations (Duverger quoted in Archer 2014, 2). Yet international organizations (IO) – and the UN in particular – are not solely a group of member states: they are inextricably tied to both their bureaucracies and the state or non-state actors (Weiss and Thakur 2010; Badache et al. 2023).

In this article I delve into the non-state actors, commonly referred to as civil society organizations (CSO) or non-governmental organizations depending on the time period and context in which scholars or practitioners refer to them. To answer what the nature of UN's civil society organization is and how it impacts its inclusion within the UN, I consider the Women's Major Group (WMG) as a temporary organization. Responding to increasing involvement of civil society in world poli-

tics in a post-Cold War era the WMG, alongside eight other Major Groups, were proclaimed by the UN as a channel for advocacy and became institutionalized at the Earth Summit in Rio, Brazil, in 1992. As a case study, I analyzed the nature of the WMG – in the context of the Sendai process leading to the ratification of the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction – while embedded in the group. It provided me with hands-on experience and valuable data to explore on the one hand the temporariness of the WMG as an organization and on the other the strategies the WMG's members develop to counter exclusion in practice. Such findings allow to show the extent of which civil society is included in practice by relying on its situated experience of exclusion.

The concepts I develop throughout the article are temporariness and exclusion. I introduce temporariness as the temporal condition under which Major Groups are subject in intergovernmental negotiations at the UN. I define exclusion as the outcome of mechanisms derived from UN's practices of inclusion. I hence suggest a novel way to understand the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of civil society at the United Nations understood here as the First and Second UN. On the one hand, I engage with literature in international relations especially the constructivist paradigm that considers the UN as three distinct actors (Weiss et al. 2009; Carayannis and Weiss 2021). Second, along the lines of IR scholars who long borrowed organizational sociology to deepen their understanding of IOs (Badache and Kimber, this issue), I build on the concept of temporary organizations (Lundin and Söderholm 1995) to further analyze the inclusion of civil society within the UN.

This article contributes to two bodies of literature. First, it adds to scholarship in organizational sociology by weaving into the concept of temporary organization the dimension of inclusion and exclusion which I argue needs to be understood in a relational perspective; here the temporariness of UN's civil society enables the UN to practice mechanisms of exclusion which in turn reaffirm the temporariness of its civil society. Second, it supplements the literature in the study of international organizations by using the sociology of organizations to give better insight into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of civil society; here temporariness enables civil society to counter exclusion by developing adequate strategies. In doing so, civil society retains its autonomy with respect to the more permanent structure which I understand as the First and Second UN.

2 Civil Society and the United Nations: An Uneasy Relationship

Since the paradigm shift in the 1990s which compelled international relations (IR) to acknowledge and hence theorize the presence and role of civil society actors in IOs, constructivists have recently also provided insightful perspectives on their opening up. They typically refer to the inclusion of transnational and local civil society

organizations (CSOs) in policy-making and implementation (Holthaus 2021) assuming the emergent norm commits IOs to the granting of access and participation of CSOs (Dingwerth et al. 2020). Yet despite the growing presence of CSOs in IOs after the Cold War, the chances of advocacy groups shaping political agreements tend to be limited (Tallberg et al. 2018; Lucas et al., 2019). For instance, recent examples in the literature point to collaboration strains: the United Nations (UN) and CSOs have a hard time working together due to changing geopolitical and resource environment. Innovative ways to collaborate are hard to come by (Anheier 2018); NGOs as a representation of the elites gain access to global governance and reproduce the prevailing inequalities in the international system rather than being agents of change (Hasenclever and Narr 2018).

In the following section, I discuss the most prominent theoretical approaches researchers developed thus far to analyze CSO inclusion in IOs. Complementary to Lagrange et al. (2021) who structure their book along the three axes, interdependence, representation, and mobilization to highlight the uneasy relationship IOs maintain with civil society, I present the democratic principle and approach, a macro perspective, followed by mobilization theories, a meso perspective, before addressing how IR practice theory – a micro perspective – sets a gateway to understand CSO inclusion in a more fine-tuned manner. Each perspective impacts the way scholars give an account of inclusion.

2.1 The Democratic Principle: An Encouraging Approach for Inclusion

IOs include CSOs with three main incentives (Tallberg et al. 2013): the functionalist incentive; the incentive for legitimacy; the democratic incentive. The functionalist incentive places civil society as a resourceful actor when the UN is confronted with governance problems. With access to resources and skills different from the UN, civil society actors offer first-hand information, experience, and capacity (Willetts 2006). The second incentive speaks to the organization's legitimacy. Integrating CSOs allows the UN to claim legitimacy in policy making processes for they help identify global priorities, raise new issues, and build partnerships (Cohen 2004; Schwartzberg 2013; Agné et al. 2015). The third incentive concerns democratic values where the participation of actors within global civil society promises the democratization of global governance in policymaking (Willetts 2006; Bexell et al. 2010).

The democratic approach builds on the 1990s context where a clear majority of world governments became democracies in part due to CSO's major role in mobilizing pressure for political change. Supporting the democratic norm echoes what most states have "at home" (Mercer 2002). For IR scholars, CSO inclusion is the only way to ensure the stakeholders' arguments are voiced (Steffek et al. 2007; Agné et al. 2015). IOs thus open up to CSO actors (Tallberg et al. 2013; Tallberg et al. 2018), claim "inclusiveness" and hence counter the prominent discourse

around the democratic deficit in global governance (Scholte 2004; Steffek et al. 2007; Nasiritousi and Linnér 2016).

Tallberg et al. (2013) developed a measure of CSO inclusion with two axes containing the sum of range and depth to show evidence of IOs' opening up to civil society over time. However, this measure does not mention anything about the impact access has on influence; access to decision-making does not mean influence (Dür and De Bièvre 2007). Their measure only takes stock of inclusivity from the point of view of IOs and does not bear the point of view of organizations within the realm of civil society. Little is known for instance about whether and how CSOs legitimately represent the world's "Bottom Billion" especially in intergovernmental negotiations (Sénit and Biermann 2021). The democratic legitimacy of global policies is thus at stake and disputed questioning the democratic legitimacy of global policies altogether (Sénit and Biermann 2021).

2.2 Mobilization: Acknowledging the Hurdles of Inclusion

While democratic aspirations speak to the concepts of representation, minorities and civil society, mobilization theory emerges from the study of social movements where the term interest group – and specifically international non-governmental organizations (INGO) in IO contexts – is frequently used. Historically the study of social movements analyzed motivations for mobilization and the determinants for political consequences. Combining CSO inclusion with mobilization and hence interest group theories has led scholars to shift the focus from IOs' perspective on inclusion to that of CSOs'.

At an international level interest group theories tend to focus on inclusion at international conferences for it provides a tangible context and relevant starting point to study CSOs' activities, advocacy strategies, and influence (Betsill and Corell 2008; Hanegraaff 2015a; Rauch 2018; Kimber 2020). Two main mobilization theories have been used to understand CSO inclusion in IOs. First, from a "political opportunity" approach (Amenta et al. 2010), CSO inclusion can be nuanced and broken down into various dimensions such as institutional, resource-related, and policy factors shaping interest group politics (Betsill and Corell 2008; Hanegraaff 2015a; Dellmuth and Bloodgood 2019; Dellmuth 2020). Scholars analyze CSOs' overall participation and its strategies, through the interaction with policymakers and influence at transnational conferences (Hanegraaff 2015a) whether or not reaching "goal attainment" (Keck and Sikkink 1999 25; Betsill and Corell, 2001). CSOs that mobilize earlier are usually better in ensuring effective representation at political venues in international conferences (Hanegraaff 2015b). Lucas et al. (2019) go as far as demonstrating that advocacy groups tend to be more solicited by policymakers when the latter are faced with increased levels of political pressure, hence supporting policymakers rather than providing expertise (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2017). Recently, Drieghe et al. (2021) built on Arnstein's citizen participation ladder

(1969) showing the different levels of CSO participation and inclusion in EU trade policy. With a 4-level ladder, they decipher when CSO is invited 1) to participate in the implementation process, but only to legitimize the organization; 2) to share its expertise and provide its views on the consequences of policy decisions; 3) to critically evaluate the policy decisions; 4) to actively participate in decision-making implying direct influence related to implementation. They conclude CSO is largely included at the logistics level (1) and partly at the information sharing level (2), whereas monitoring capacities remain limited (3) and impact on policymaking is quasi-absent (4) despite CSO's aim for policy impact.

Second, from a “resource mobilization and organizational forms” approach (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Minkoff and McCarthy 2005), scholars analyze CSO engagement through resources. Groups that have the resources to stay and keep close contact with policymakers (Dairon and Badache 2021; Dörfler and Heinzl 2022) experience benefits when aiming to influence policy outcomes where northern CSOs are clearly outnumbered (Hanegraaff et al. 2020).

While mobilization theory helps acquire knowledge about CSO's involvement and strategies in international conferences, it fails to analyze the organizational dynamics within an interest group because it essentially focuses on the outcome and not on the process.

2.3 Practice Theory: A Pragmatic Approach to Grasp Dynamics of Inclusion

Practice theory as the latest paradigm shift in IR scholarship (Kostova 1999; Adler and Pouliot 2011; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014; Autesserre 2014; Pouliot 2016; Bueger and Gadinger 2018; Bruneau 2022) has only recently proposed an analysis to “tease out the often power-ridden specificities of CSO inclusion” (Pouliot and Thérien 2018, 166; Holthaus 2021). Including CSO in IOs interacts with practices revolving around power, gender, race, and postcolonial legacies (Holthaus 2021). Practice theory can blend document analysis with participant observation (Cornut and de Zamaroczy 2021) allowing for an epistemological shift to explore non-Western or small IOs including country offices (Holthaus 2021).

Anderl, Daphi, and Deitelhoff (2021) analyze the reactions to the opening up of IOs by a transnational social movement. On the one hand, they show how reactions are shaped by activists' perceptions of the quality of the international opening up in conjunction with national and local context factors. On the other, they demonstrate that the perceptions significantly change over time depending on the experiences of interactions CSOs develop with IOs. Through the prism of time and space, Kimber and Maertens (2021) show how CSOs get excluded in intergovernmental negotiations at the UN according to two dimensions. On the one hand, by attributing decision-making power, chairs of negotiation sessions can for instance extend the sessions and prioritize member states' intervention over the ones intended for civil society. On the other, by sustaining hierarchical relations,

civil society cannot decide where an event takes place thus carrying the burden of resources to travel to different places. Guilbaud (this issue) demonstrates how IO staff performs tasks of classification and hierarchization that redefine the boundaries between civil society actors and IOs, and *de facto* exclude civil society.

Seized mostly with ethnographic methods, analyzing civil society's inclusion gives way to grasp the dynamics among actors. Practice theory considers the nuances at play encountered in habits, routines, and the everyday doings. Instead of focusing on the IO itself or the outcome respectively presented in the previous subsections, it gears the analysis towards the organizational processes of inclusion and exclusion.

However, despite the empirical and theoretical contributions pointing to a growing presence of CSOs in IOs, their objective and subjective inclusion remains relative (Mitrani 2013). Building on IR literature on the one hand, and the contribution of the sociology of organization on the other I draw on the concept of temporary organizations to answer an overarching question: Could CSOs' relative inclusion be understood by investigating the nature of CSO as an organization at the UN?

3 Rethinking CSO's Inclusion in Light of the Dynamics of Exclusion

Theaters and the construction sector have long been organized in a temporary fashion. Other sectors building on temporary organizational structures such as the consultancy sector have increased.

In this section I clarify the definition, nature, and the way organizational sociologists have approached temporary organizations.

3.1 Defining Temporary Organizations in Contextual and Paradigm Shifts

Back in 1976 Goodman and Goodman set the cornerstone defining the concept of "temporary systems". They investigated task effectiveness, innovation, and the professional growth in theater productions (Goodman and Goodman 1976) stating that role clarity inhibits professional growth and innovation. Along those lines, Lundin and Söderholm (1995) developed the notion of temporary organization to counter the mainstream idea, the assumption that organizations are or should be permanent. Temporary organizations have traditionally been defined in opposition to permanent organizations differentiated according to four dimensions, the 4Ts, namely time, task, team, and transition. Goodman and Goodman conceptualized temporary organizations with respect to tasks and Lundin and Söderholm emphasized the dimension of action, change, and transformation (Burke and Morley 2016).

What appears common to scholars exploring temporary organizations nowadays is twofold. First, they are defined in light of their termination point fixed either by a specific date or by the attainment of a predefined state (Burke and Morley 2016). The process is finite even if temporary does not mean short duration (Bakker et al.

2016). In contrast, “permanent” is understood as “indeterminate”, “open-ended” with the intention of remaining permanent (Bakker et al. 2016). Second, the distinct characteristic has to do with the *team* (Goodman and Goodman 1976; Lundin and Söderholm 1995). Its members may be “unfamiliar with one another’s skills” (Bechky 2006), or benefit from accumulating career capital through the mobility of teams (Burke and Morley 2016). Yet the team realizes activities and practices within a collective of interdependent individuals who pursue ex ante agreed-upon objectives (Goodman and Goodman 1976; Lundin and Söderholm 1995; Burke and Morley 2016) expecting the collaboration to terminate as agreed (Bakker et al. 2016).

Inherited by Weber’s view of bureaucracies (1968 [1922]), this rather static understanding of organizations puts the emphasis on codified rules, hierarchical order, enduring routines, procedures and programs (Sydow and Windeler 2020). By reevaluating the 4Ts, Bakker (2010) suggests adding *context* because it describes how temporary organizations relate to permanent organizations and to a wider social context (Sydow and Braun 2019). Considering the time for which they are set up reveals for example the context for which they are important. It may mean ephemeral, where “ephemeral organizations” (Lanzetta 1983) emerge in the face of disasters, in the form of complementing rescue and relief organizations, and then disappear (Bakker et al. 2016) or disposable where “disposable organization” aim at high short-term efficiency but only modest adaptability (Bakker et al. 2016). Such an addition speaks to the dynamic environment in which organizations evolve.

3.2 From Temporary Organizations to “Temporary Organizing”

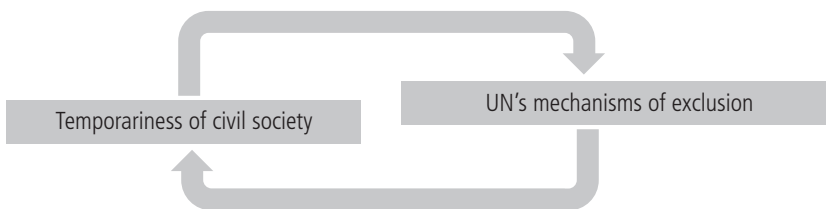
Up until the 1990s the literature tackled temporary organizations as structures (Lundin and Söderholm 1995) to seize organizational trends. Then Weick shifted the perspective from “organization” to “organizing” (1993) speaking to the network theory paradigm developed in the 1970s and 1980s used by psychologists and sociologists who examine interpersonal relations within and among organizations (Scott 2004). He set the gateway to look at organizations as a process with relations within and outside a given organization. Thereafter *temporary organizing* focuses on activities and practices enacted in processual forms over time (Bakker et al. 2016). “Permanence” and “temporariness” become rather fuzzy and intertwined, because *organizing* acknowledges impermanence (Weick 2009, 7). Since, scholars focus on the fabrication of permanence out of impermanence (Sydow and Windeler 2020). Including *context* (Bakker 2010) alongside the traditional 4Ts provides a tool to analyze *temporary organizing* in its enduring environment (Sydow and Windeler 2020) and a multi-level perspective to grasp processual understanding of relationships and inter-organizational governance (Sydow and Braun 2018).

3.3 CSOs as Temporary Organizing: Towards Practices of Exclusion at the UN

While I acknowledge the scholarly debate regarding the “strictness” of retaining the 4Ts I see its value with *context* to analyze the dynamics between CSO and the UN. Together they provide researchers with concrete and observable dimensions up against which CSO develops strategies to overcome exclusion in practice. They help shed light on CSO as a rather temporary form of organizing and the UN as a more permanent structure (Bakker et al. 2016) where “temporary systems depend more on the permanent contexts” (Sydow and Windeler 2020).

Furthermore, since the very nature of temporary organizations as *ephemeral* and *unstable* need to be reevaluated because inaccurate in practice (Bechky 2006), I suggest to re-read *temporary organizing* at the United Nations as groups subject to practices of exclusion; CSO is neither invited to take the floor, nor to attend decision-making venues, basically confined to policy arenas (Kimber 2020). *Organizing* enables to observe exclusion mechanisms in activities and practices. While the First UN (FUN) has the sole final vote, the Second UN (SUN) in agreement with FUN determines the inclusion of CSOs according to the 4Ts: 1) timeframe – predetermined time for involvement; 2) task – specific channel to advocate for specific agenda items; 3) team – accreditation through The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); 4) transition – the outcome of decisions made among FUN supported by SUN. The envisioned transitions and the project thus emerge because of the permanent structure’s work (Sydow and Windeler 2020), namely FUN and SUN (FS-UN). Yet instead of using *temporary organizing* in a unilateral sense of dependency, I suggest looking at it in a relational perspective (Figure 1) because it gives insight into the organizing dynamics which occur between FS-UN and its CSO.

Figure 1 Relational Dynamics Between Temporariness and Exclusion



Source: Author's scheme.

In sum, I argue for a mutual reinforcing approach to grasp the temporariness of CSO at the United Nations. The temporariness enables practices of exclusion which in turn reaffirm the temporariness of CSO. Building on this interdependent dynamic, I investigate how civil society members experience and navigate the UN's mechanisms of exclusion in intergovernmental negotiations.

4 Observing and Experiencing Temporariness and Exclusion at the UN

Grasping the temporariness of an organization cannot be better done than by experiencing it firsthand. I rely on data produced and collected during my PhD research in which I investigated the relative inclusion and the dynamics of exclusion of civil society in the international negotiation processes (Kimber 2020).

With this goal in mind, I integrated the Women's Major Group. Ellen who was the group's focal point accredited me in the run up to the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. At the conference, the UN member states ratified the Sendai Framework, an updated document from the previous Hyogo Framework for Action. The framework provides guidelines to mitigate, manage, and reduce the social and economic impact of disasters. The process led by the The United Nations Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) began with the Preparatory Committee meetings held on 14–15 July 2014 and was finalized on 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan.

Accompanying the WMG members as a declared PhD student in their daily tasks, carrying out participant observation (Kimber and Maertens 2023), semi-structured (Albaret and Deas 2023) and ethnographic interviews (Kimber and Dairon 2023) with each one of them allowed me to experience “at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation” (Clifford 1983, 119). I witnessed the debates, was copied to email correspondences, and experienced the role as a gender advocate at the UN. Mirroring the methods traditionally used by organizational sociologists in their fieldwork (e.g. Crozier and Friedberg 1980, pioneers in France), I was able to shed light on the objective as well as subjective sense of temporariness and perennialism of the various actors in the negotiations. I hence touched upon the relative dynamics of exclusion the WMG was subjected to.

5 Practices of Exclusion

This empirical section builds on how the WMG as temporary organizing works – in practice – around the mechanisms of exclusion set by FS-UN as the more permanent structure.

I first present the contextual dimension of the WMG's engagement in the Sendai process for it highlights the organizational dynamics and helps reveal the wider social context of civil society's involvement in IOs. Then I break down the following 4Ts and show how the mechanisms of exclusion enable the WMG members to retain their autonomy and to develop practices to counter their sense of exclusion.

5.1 Context or How the “Home Institution” Is a Resource Guarantor

With IOs evolving in their environment, institutionalizing the Major Group structure in 1992 can be read as the direct consequence of the growing presence of CSO ac-

tors in world politics. However, the opening up to civil society in IOs has not been accompanied with systematic funding opportunities be it for travel, accommodation expenses, as well as time remuneration for individuals who want an active role in negotiation processes. As a reaction, CSO retain their autonomy as members to maintain their “home institution” – namely their primary source of funding – while gaining international experience pleading for a cause they deem worthy even by participating from afar via online discussions and debates around wording and sentences.

With this first example, despite being the most basic form of exclusion – financial drawbacks – CSO members still manage to overcome their sense of exclusion.

5.2 Time or How to Instrumentalize Time Acceleration

In consultation with SUN, FUN imposes a strict calendar months, even years ahead, which CSO actors need to comply to. Echoing the literature, the WMG only integrates the process and works as such after finding out about the timeframe and timeline for involvement. An NGO representative, an academic, or a professional must register by a given date to obtain accreditation and begin work alongside other actors. The email extract below points to the calendar, the deadline for registration, and the required steps to enter the UN as CSO in the Sendai process.

Dear Leah Kimber,

Preparatory Committees in July and November 2014 in Geneva are processes leading to WCDRR in Sendai in March 2015. In order to participate in the First Preparatory Committee your organization (UNIGE) should be accredited or have Consultative status with ECOSOC. As special accreditation is only granted during meetings of the Preparatory Committee, non-accredited organizations are encouraged to join their major group, or other, delegations, in order to attend the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee. Deadline for application for special accreditation: 15th May, 2014. You may contact major group to request to be included in their delegation under their name. More information on Major groups is at <http://www.wcdrr.org/majorgroups>.

Sincerely

*A***, WCDRR Team*

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

The beginning of the process was set both with a deadline for registration as well as a date towards which all actors converged marking the start of the process (i.e. the First Preparatory Committee). Yet it was not clear nor stated ahead of time, when the Group would dismember or institutionally dissolve.

Given the finiteness hence temporariness of the process, the WMG organized itself around the given timeframe and instrumentalized the time of the process. With

the experience of both sudden intensity and deep slowness, its members transformed their daily routines depending on which speed prevailed be it amid negotiations or in between daily or monthly meetings (Kimber and Maertens 2021). At the Second Preparatory Committee in November 2014, Cassandra, a WMG member, worked through the night in her hotel room to deliver FS-UN a text on behalf of the Group. While the sense of time is slow between meetings, using deadlines to shrink this impression and getting the job done – accepting the accordion-like relation to processes – empowers the members to work around the calendar at their own pace and understanding of constraints.

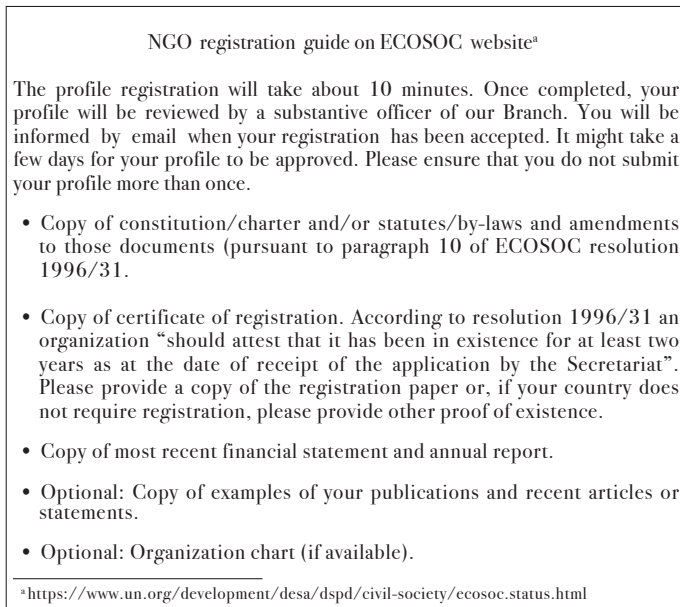
5.3 Tasks or How to Push Boundaries

The way SUN ensures CSO engages in intergovernmental negotiations is determined by the major themes it enacts. They do so with three major tasks: 1) take the floor in meetings where they are allowed to voice their concerns and opinions; 2) recommend alternative wording to various member states either via email or in person; 3) edit draft documents SUN sends out to all actors involved in the process (Kimber 2020). The WMG members primarily advocate for gender issues, such as recognizing the social impact of gender inequality and hence fighting for the implementation of equality in areas such as decision-making, economic resources, and leadership at a national and a local level. They hence collaborate according to their task-relevant knowledge by representing different specialties (Goodman and Goodman 1976; Burke and Morley 2016).

Cassandra: I've been working on editing some of the language around the zero draft ... We are also looking at the themes and making sure that all our messages are represented by insertion of ideas into that zero draft. We are making the comments in the interventions to also be consistent. (Women's Major Group meeting with SUN representative, 17 November 2014)

As political actors, the WMG frames its issues to fit the UN's remit (Littoz-Monnet 2012). Yet at times, the group – knowingly – pushes for *bolder* agenda-items such as “people in their diversity” despite the UN's conservative views on feminist perspectives. Inspired by the academic concept of “intersectionality” (Crenshaw [1989] 2018) it appears as contentious for two reasons. First, the UN needs to be consensual to encourage 193 member states to adhere to policy suggestions. For example, the status of lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex, queer, asexual actors (LGBTIQIA) is a salient issue. Second, there needs structural changes both at UN and state level to implement societal shifts. For example, the third feminist wave (Parini 2006) introduces the role of patriarchy which requires to be deconstructed in the public sphere and most importantly in the private sphere. According to civil society, the UN is consequently not bold *enough* to promote “women in all their

Figure 2 ECOSOC guidelines for civil society accreditation



Source: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/civil-society/ecosoc.status.html>.

diversity” and seems at a loss to implement a more forward-looking understanding of women’s position in societies (Kimber 2020).

Nonetheless, the leeway the team enjoys in pushing the boundaries and evaluating between safer and bolder agenda-items throughout the process, gives it hope that one day some items will become mainstream language.

5.4 Team or How to Bypass Accreditation Processes

Following strict criteria for accreditation, CSOs usually need to go through ECOSOC enabling SUN to “filter” who gets involved (Figure 2). However, bypassing ECOSOC accreditation through the Major Group structure provides the group’s coordinator slack to accredit whomever they deem worthy within their group.

FS-UN hence does not necessarily know where its CSO members have their “attachments”, what institutions hires them before, during or after. In the Sendai process members were professors at universities, professionals in NGOs or in UN organizations (Table 1).

Table 1 List of Individuals Constituting the Women’s Major Group

Name	Age	Country of Origin	Social Science Degree	“home organization”	Multi-lingual	Consistent in person attendance
Adriana	54	Fiji	BA + MA	Femlink Pacific	Yes	No
Ashley	33	USA	PhD	USAID	Yes	Yes
Cassandra	46	USA	PhD	Professor	No	Yes
Ellen	43	USA	MA	WEDO	Yes	No
Frances	48	UK	PhD	Professor	Yes	No
Gladys	46	Kenya	Unknown	Women’s Em- powerment Link	Yes	No
Katherine	62	UK	PhD	Professor	No	Yes
Leah	26	Switzerland	PhD student	University	Yes	Yes
Rosemary	46	Sri Lanka	MA	UN	Yes	Yes
Sayaka	82	Japan	Unknown	Retired	Yes	Yes
Stuti	Unknown	Pakistan	PhD	Professor	Yes	No
Vickie	39	Canada	PhD	Professor	Yes	No

Source: Author’s table.

Responding in part to the gap in the literature around team formation (Burke and Morley 2016) and in part to the literature on diversely skilled people (Goodman and Goodman 1976, 494), the WMG is actually formed by similarly skilled people who not only participate, but also shape UN’s civil society (Keck and Sikkink 1999). Its members have similar backgrounds, mostly trained at universities in the “Global North”, with master or PhD degrees in the social sciences, and a solid command of English (Kimber 2020) (Table 1).

Yet despite the quite homogenous profiles within the temporary group and hence a seeming unified identity, its members distance themselves from SUN’s imposed, pre-defined groups, which confines them to specific interests, (e.g. WMG for gender considerations). They procure themselves the latitude to think of themselves as more diverse to the extent of denouncing the obsolescence of SUN’s institutional rules.

I think we also need to think about the identity of the WMG. Is it a singular identity? I think we are very diverse around the table. It is an artificial grouping in any way set up by the UN just to deal with all these damn women. (Katherine, Observation notes, WMG meeting dinner, Sendai, 16 March 2015).

5.5 Transition or How to Recreate the Narrative Around Success

Temporary organizing concentrates on transitions by action-oriented strategies where changes need to be achieved before a predefined time-period (Lundin and Söderholm 1995). In the process, any temporary system alternates between idea-

generating and decision-making periods and the key determinant of its success is the manager's ability to orchestrate the two appropriately (Burke and Morley 2016). For Ellen and the WMG the transition was clear from the outset.

After the initial preparatory committee (PrepCom) meeting in Geneva in July 2014, the co-chairs released a pre-Zero Draft framework on disaster risk reduction, which will be an update of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The second PrepCom (Geneva, 17–18 November 2014) will take place to approve the Conference program of work as well as to continue to develop the post-2015 draft framework for disaster risk reduction – in particular focusing on the Zero Draft which is expected to be released in October. The WMG engages in the HFA2 process aiming to ensure that efforts toward and goals of gender equality are included in the new disaster risk reduction framework and that women actively participate. The WMG also aims to ensure that HFA2 is developed and implemented with the full recognition that women's rights, experiences, knowledge and leadership are crucial to reducing the risks from and coping with the aftermath of disasters, as well as that an effective, people-centered and rights-based HFA2 will mutually support realization of women's rights and gender equality. (Email sent by Ellen to the Women's Major Group, 16 October 2014)

Maximizing the mention of gender concerns in the outcome text is essential. According to her email (see above) and the advocacy efforts realized in the 8-month process, the team agreed to push for 1) gender equality, 2) women's rights, 3) women's leadership, 4) people-centered and rights-based approach, alongside 5) acknowledging that women are critical to effectively managing disaster risk. Yet the outcome document neither mentioned *gender equality*, *women's rights*, nor *rights-based approach*.

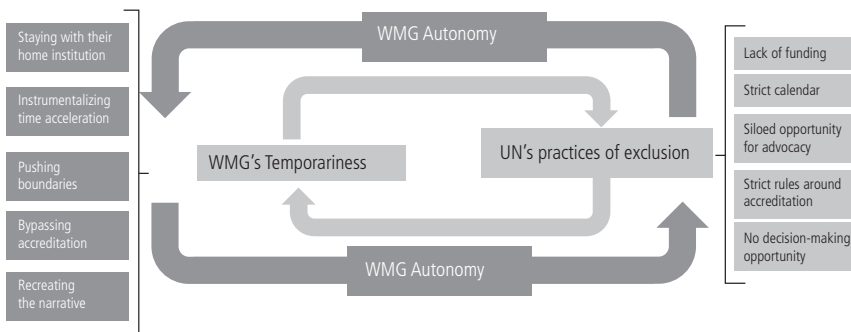
Since the WMG has no say in decision-making venues (Pralle 2010) with its positions at times neglected in negotiations, it reformulates its own narrative. Instead of focusing on the items that did not make it to the ratified document, the WMG finds pride and satisfaction in measuring the gains in Disaster Risk Reduction frameworks over the past 25 years (Kimber 2020). From a broader perspective, the gains are tremendous. While the Hyogo Framework for Action, only mentions *gender* three times, it numbered a total of six in the Sendai Framework (Kimber and Steele 2021). Recreating the narrative around success – despite FS-UN's final decisions – allowed the WMG to attain “the predefined state or condition” (Bakker et al. 2009, 203), namely maximizing gender mentions in the text, and counter the fate of exclusion.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

If the UN Charter, under Chapter X in Article 71, pledged to interact with civil society, the empirical analysis through the WMG’s case study in the lead up to the Sendai Framework points to the unmet potential civil society could hope for. Weaving in the dimension of inclusion in the theory of temporary organizing by including the 4Ts and *context* provides an innovative theoretical framework to better grasp the nature of civil society as an organization and hence offers a tool to analyze its inclusion in UN intergovernmental negotiations. With ethnographic fieldwork, the article sheds light on the complex relationship CSO and the FS-UN maintain in intergovernmental negotiations and the strategies civil society develops to counter UN’s mechanisms of exclusion.

From a relational perspective, the temporariness of CSO as its organizational nature allows FS-UN to institutionalize five practices of exclusion; with insufficient funding opportunities for engagement, a strict calendar to comply to, siloed opportunities for agenda-item advocacy, strict rules around accreditation, and no voice in final decision-makings, FS-UN manages to reaffirm the temporariness of the major groups. Yet despite FS-UN’s five practices of exclusion, the empirical data revealed how the WMG members counter their sense of exclusion. They develop strategies by holding on to their autonomy and consequently reverse the predetermined fate of exclusion (Figure 3). First, individuals participate in discussions and debates from afar using online discussions while working for their “home institution”. Second, they organize themselves at the margins either under pressure or by enjoying their time freedom depending on their own calendar, needs, and goals. Third, the group pushes for bolder agenda-items despite being siloed into a channel which contends

Figure 3 Relational Dynamics Between Temporariness and Exclusion and WMG’s Strategies



Source: Author’s scheme.

other major interests. Fourth, the major group coordinator bypasses ECOSOC accreditation allowing a greater number of actors from different backgrounds to work together under the banner of the WMG. Fifth, with no opportunity to take the floor at decision-making venues, the WMG members take advantage of recreating FS-UN's narrative around success to their own benefit highlighting their efforts for both the group and the members' "home institution".

Despite fieldwork concentrating solely on the perspective of civil society, future work could on the one hand focus on FUN and SUN, as permanent structures to investigate for instance its inability to undergo reforms (Weiss 2003). On the other, the theoretical framework could be useful to analyze the nature and role of consultants hired by the UN. Such research would echo the literature in arguing that in times of increasing temporary organizations, temporary organizing – here consultancy – contributes to the survival of more permanent structures (Sydow and Windeler 2020) instrumentalized by the UN for its own survival.

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