

Call for Contributions:

Going Local: A Comparative Study of the Historical Evolution of Local Civil Society Organizations

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Abstract: We are seeking interested authors to submit a 500-word proposal for contributions to an edited volume examining the origin and evolution of local civil society organizations. We are particularly interested in the perspectives of local experts who can provide deep understanding of local civil society organizations (CSO) populations and the processes by which they have historically managed both local interests and global influences.

Call: Civil society organizations (CSOs) have arisen organically in nearly every country and culture, serving vital social, political, and economic functions. Yet the origins and evolution of local CSOs remains under-researched, particularly for CSOs from the Global South. Academic research on local CSOs has often focused on the role of global philanthropy and national regulations, emphasizing the period from the 1970s to the 2000s when international donors sought CSOs as partners to deliver foreign aid, promote democracy, and advance human rights. However, local CSOs' operations long predate these trends, and CSOs' responses to these national and international trends reflect local culture and history.

For this volume, we seek to explore how local CSOs' agency has interacted over time with national and international pressures to reshape CSOs' operations and change the local population of CSOs. We are looking for country chapter contributions that will help readers better understand the origins and evolution of CSOs in eight to ten selected countries in an empirically nuanced fashion based on deep national narratives by local experts who can reveal layers of complexity and challenge unidirectional and linear accounts of civil society development. In so doing, we aim to not only expand our understanding of local civil society, but also promote a decolonized discourse in which the historical assumptions and approaches of Northern scholars can be challenged and debated.

By building locally informed, empirically grounded understandings of the historic evolution of local CSOs in low- and middle-income countries, we aim to capture the diverse array of types of CSOs, with different scales and degrees of formalization, found around the world. We consider why some organization types survive over time as others fade out while the nature of state-society relations, political and economic environments, national demographics, and the nature of international integration also change.

We propose an initial set of framing questions for each chapter to address but we will organize a collaborators meeting on Zoom among selected contributors to further refine these questions before chapters are drafted.

- How has the ecosystem or population of CSOs in your country changed over time? What did the original CSOs look like? What did CSOs look like during key historical

eras? What have been the relative numbers of formal and informal CSOs and relationships between them? What types of CSOs have survived to the present day and which have not?

- What is the relationship between the state (including any pre-colonial government or colonial government, as well as modern governments) and CSOs, and how has this shifted over time? What factors can be linked to (may have caused) these shifts?
- Are there identifiable inflection points which mark major changes in civil society in your country? Can you put approximate dates to these shifts and identify likely drivers of change? Are the changes sharp or gradual? At these inflection points, what has stayed the same and what has changed? Do you have a sense of why? How does this compare to neighboring countries or the broader region?
- What role, if any, did global political, legal, economic, or social factors play in the changes in civil society? How did local CSOs act to mitigate or adapt to international pressures or events? What local practices have had global effects or been diffused elsewhere?

We are looking for a 500-word proposal for chapters of roughly 6,000-8,000 words to be submitted to Elizabeth Bloodgood (elizabeth.bloodgood@concordia.ca). Each chapter will be a single country narrative of the historical evolution of CSOs from beginning to present. We are seeking four to six chapters of CSO evolution in low- to middle-income countries which are underrepresented in the global literature on civil society in addition to chapters on Brazil, Ghana, Nepal, and Poland. The selected contributors will help to refine and then apply a shared framework to organize the narratives. The concluding chapter of the edited volume will compare across countries to identify common and divergent themes and outcomes for civil society evolution. Chapter contributors will be selected according to country and depth of expertise CSOs in their country. Contributors will participate in two virtual workshops in late summer and early fall to receive feedback on their chapters from other participants in the volume and relevant academic communities. Once the list of contributors has been established, a complete proposal for the volume will be submitted to Georgetown University Press.

Timeline:

Author information and a 500-word proposal due April 17, 2023

Editorial collaboration will select and contact potential contributors by May 17, 2023

Zoom collaborator meeting to develop project and framework early June 2023

Draft chapters due September 30, 2023

Any questions can be sent to Elizabeth Bloodgood (elizabeth.bloodgood@concordia.ca). Brief proposals for chapters, as well as author(s) identifying information should be emailed to elizabeth.bloodgood@concordia.ca by April 17, 2023.