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In the Shadow of World Polity: Spatial Narratives of Civil Society Organizations

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Spatial Narratives of Civil Society Organizations

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Abstract

World Polity Theory has found broad acceptance as an explanation for the worldwide spread of rationalist ideas and modern models of actorhood in and through civil society. This theory states that modern actorhood is about the representation of legitimated principals, which in many cases are abstract principles such as global notions of human rights or environmental sustainability. In our study, we add on to this by analyzing spatial narratives of CSOs located in Austria's largest metropolitan region. We identify six narratives: lococentric, home/alien, world polity, world society, glocalization and earthly/metaphysical world. We find that these narratives form a spectrum whose focus ranges from the local to the global to the metaphysical level. World polity theory is able to explain the middle of this spectrum, but has been insensitive to its outer sections, which in the case of the lococentric narrative make up a major part of what is going on in civil society. We thus show that there are remarkably large spaces for the development of CSO identities that are hardly affected by global isomorphism.

1   Introduction

Until a few years ago, it was widely taken for granted that globalization as a mega-trend has dominated societies, and globalization will continue to dominate. This expectation did not only apply to economic globalization, but also to cultural globalization: the spread of a rationalist world culture based on science and universal human rights (Meyer et al., 1997). Scholars of world polity theory have shown that international non-governmental organizations have been playing a central role in this kind of globalization (for an overview see e.g. the edited volume by Boli & Thomas, 1999). Now it seems that the pendulum has swung back, and economic protectionism as well as a cultural backlash (Norris & Inglehart, 2018) of ethnocentrism and religious fundamentalism are coining recent political developments. Serious doubts have been raised about the local embeddedness of nongovernmental organizations in the global South (Chahim & Prakash, 2014; Merz, 2012; Srinivas, 2009) as well as in Eastern Europe (Vandor et al., 2017). Parts of civil society that uphold values contrary to world culture and that could normatively be described as "uncivil" have also turned out to be relevant (Kopecký & Mudde, 2003). It has thus become apparent that world polity theory covers only a particular aspect of the role of civil society organizations in processes of cultural globalization, and that the role of these organizations can as well be characterized by localism and anti-rationalist sentiments.

The aim of this article is to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of the role of civil society organizations with regard to globalization. Specifically, we investigate how civil society organizations, through their various spatial narratives, contribute to connecting spaces at different levels – from the local to the global and even the metaphysical – in the lifeworld of their stakeholders, or how they blind these spaces out of their lifeworld. We do so by approaching world polity theory from a spatial perspective (Rumford, 2008), specifically building on the concept of spatial narratives Baynham, 2003; Petani & Mengis, 2016). Organizations use spatial narratives, i.e., particular consistent stories about space, to meaningfully define and delimit the fields in which they operate (Mohr, 2005). First, we delineate the spatial narratives on which postulates about mechanisms and trends of globalization are based in world polity theory. Then we compare and contrast these narratives with the spatial narratives told by a representative sample of civil society organizations in Austria's largest metropolitan region. By analyzing their websites with methods of qualitative text

analysis and visual analysis we delineate six distinct spatial narratives, three of which (the world polity narrative, world society narrative, and glocalization narrative) are also central to world polity theory. However, these narratives are only a part of what civil society organizations tell about space and their spatially constructed fields. As we will show, the most widespread spatial narrative focuses on the local, in a way that can hardly be described as expressing modern actorhood or referring to universal, global ideals. Also a decidedly non-globalist narrative about one's own place in the midst of an alien outside world can be found. In addition, especially in younger organizations, a religious spatial narrative can be found that regards the earthly world as globalized, but places it in strong relation to a metaphysical world.

We thus contribute to a sharper demarcation of the explanatory power of world polity theory, and open up perspectives for a more precise understanding of current changes with regard to globalization as well as the role of civil society organizations in these changes. We thereby also contribute to the young strand of organization studies that investigate spatial narrative (Ropo & Höykinpuro, 2017; Airo et al., 2012). This research has so far focused on how organizations construct their internal spaces (as has most organizational theory about spatial issues, e.g. Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Mohr, 2005). We extend the outlook to how organizations construct external spaces.

2   Theoretical Background: Reading World Polity Theory through a Spatial Lens

World polity theory has grown into a large and rather heterogeneous body of research. Wimmer and Feinstein (2016) have aptly distinguished between two versions of this theory: First, there is a strong version of world polity theory that aims to explain the rise of the nation-state model by the emergence of world culture (as postulated in the seminal article by Meyer et al., 1997). Second, they describe a weak version that explores consequences, concomitants, and self-reinforcing mechanisms of the hegemonic rise of the nation state and the spread of world culture. Both versions use the concept of world culture to designate a body of knowledge in which almost every aspect of social life is rationalized and organized according to the general principles of progress and human rights, "a universalized and secularized project developed from older and somewhat parochial religious models" (Meyer et al., 1997:163).

In our analysis, we build on the weak version of world political theory, i.e. the whole body of research that takes a phenomenological-institutional perspective to examine various aspects of rationalization, globalization, and the role of civil society organizations in these developments. Typical of this approach are numerous articles by John Meyer and his collaborators (see for example the collection of articles in Meyer, 2010a).

World polity theory has mainly focused on changing models of actorhood: Many actor models that emerged after the World War II are characterized by the fact that these actors routinely switch from agency for the self to agency for others. They routinely claim to be advocates of universal or highly collective goods such as world peace, the environment, human rights, or models of economic growth (Meyer, 2010b: 6). Modern actors tend to de-emphasize their own interests, to present themselves as advisors on the basis of general principles, and to just as readily seek advice from others. Modern actors tend to de-emphasize their own interests, present themselves as advisers based on general principles, and to just as readily receive advice by disinterested others (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000). Such new models for actorhood are particularly relevant in civil society because they are the

crucial template for national and supranational NGOs (Drori et al., 2006) as well as for professional associations (Evetts, 2003; Freidson, 2001; Greenwood et al., 2002; Suddaby et al., 2007; Wilensky, 1964).

It is noteworthy that world polity theory, although aiming to explain processes of globalization, has not included space as a distinct dimension of its analytical concepts. Spatial referents such as nation states and the global are of central interest in this theory, and yet – contrary to the thorough analysis of the social construction of actorhood – the social construction of space has not been considered. This is in stark contrast to the thorough analysis of the social construction of actorhood. Space has been understood as nothing more than the stage on which social relations and processes of institutional change unfold. The emergence of new spatial patterns is not analyzed explicitly, although research from world politics theory is rich in references to such changes.

We argue that the consideration of space as an independent dimension is a useful extension of the understanding of processes of cultural globalization. In the following, we will therefore highlight those key ideas of world polity theory that are particularly relevant with regard to changing spatial patterns. We subsume them under the concepts of world polity, world society and glocalization.

World polity and world society are for the most part used interchangeably in world polity theory. Implicitly, however, these terms contain an important distinction that was recently extracted by Cole (2017). World polity refers primarily to the state-centric dimensions of the global institutional system. It includes states, but importantly also interstate relations, intergovernmental organizations, treaty regimes, and supranational entities (such as the European Union) that states create and in which they participate. Key findings of world polity theory in this regard are that state structures have expanded worldwide, and that there is striking isomorphism among states as they emulate global norms of rationality and human rights (Meyer et al., 1997). Early work in the world polity tradition emphasized the geographical expansion and structural intensification of state structures (Meyer et al., 1987; Thomas & Meyer, 1984). After decolonialization, virtually the entire landmass of the globe was divided into mutually exclusive and exhaustive national jurisdictions, and other political arrangements such as protectorates and trusteeships became delegitimized (Strang, 1990). Nation states are understood to be mutually equal members of the international community (Cole, 2017).

World society refers primarily to the civil society dimension of the global order (Cole, 2017). It is populated by non-state entities that may advise or pressure states to conform to global norms of rationality and human rights. Those entities include epistemic communities of scientists and experts from ever-growing numbers of professions, as well as civil society organizations that claim legitimate interests and rights to speak for certain groups or issues (e.g. for the environment, women, or ethnic groups, see Meyer & Jepperson, 2000). World society coexists, intermingles and interacts with world polity, but it is not bound to the rigid structures of world polity. World society is based on a more flexible, cosmopolitan, ontologically diverse image of humankind. As world society has become more vibrant in the course of the last half century, possibilities for personhood have expanded considerably: Individuals today can assert a multitude of identities and universal rights, regardless of the states of which they may be citizens (Cole, 2017).

A third key idea with a strong spatial component is the transformation of the local, which has been referred to as glocalization. Because modern actor templates require actors to have unique identities – within global models of effective instrumental action – the unique cultural heritages of

nations and ethnic groups are celebrated, but in a merely expressive way (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000). In other words, uniqueness is appreciated in questions of expressive culture, such as variations in language, clothing, food or customs, but not in important elements of the rational world polity such as state administration, economic order, the judiciary system or the educational system. Glocalization entails "vertical" (Drori et al., 2013) moves of ideas and practices travelling back and forth between entities at different hierarchical levels (the global and the local), and co-constitutive and transformative relations between these different levels. It also entails "horizontal" (Drori et al., 2013) moves of ideas and practices across the boundaries of entities that are understood to be equivalent, such as countries or geographic regions.

Those key concepts of world polity theory that are imbued with references to space can be understood as distinct spatial narratives. As such they are an integral part of what Lefebvre (1991) has termed the "production of space": By creating representations of space such as maps, signs and naratives, actors create a basis for bringing physical spaces into existence, and assign existing physical spaces with meaning (Lefebvre, 1991).

It should be noted that – similar to models of actor hood – spatial narratives are usually not adopted deliberately. Even if they appear in official texts of organizations, they are usually agreed on implicitly. Just as there may be decoupling between what models of actorhood prescribe and what actors actually do (Brunsson, 1989), there may be a wide gap between the way a particular spatial narrative describes space and the way spatial properties actually affect actors.

Spatial narratives give meanings to spaces, divide and connect spaces, and guide us through spaces. Spatial narratives "traverse and organize places, they select and link them together they make sentences and intineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories" (Certeau, 1981:115). This particular aspect about the linking together of spaces at different levels – from the local to the global – is at the center the analysis presented in this paper.

From the above summaries of key concepts of world polity theory with a spatial dimension, it can be seen that the spatial narratives of world polity theory contain ideas about people's place in the world and about the connection of people's lifeworlds with near and far spaces. This spatial dimension complements the ideas about actorhood contained in these narratives, e.g. about disinterested otherhood (Meyer, 2010b).

However, as we will show in our following analysis, the spatial narratives of world polity theory cover only a part of the spectrum of practically relevant spatial narratives, because they are – as the name of world politics theory says – limited to a certain part of society: those who actively participate in the world polity and world culture, a cultural elite with international experience and cosmopolitan attitudes. It can lead to fatal misjudgments about future developments to focus only on this aspect of societal developments, e.g. to examine only the role of international NGOs in globalization.

We address this research gap by examining a representative sample of civil society organizations. We trace their spatial narratives and compare them with the spatial narratives of World Polity Theory. We specifically focus on how CSOs narratively construct their outreach into the environment – from the local to the global (and, as we will show, also to the metaphysical) – and on how they thereby connect more or less faraway places to the lifeworlds of their stakeholders.

3   Methods

The empirical setting of our study is the Vienna metro region. With its ca. 2.5 million inhabitants, it is the largest metropolitan region in Austria. It hosts central government institutions, national headquarters of for- and nonprofit organizations, as well as several international institutions, such as the UN, OSCE, and OPEC. Our findings are thus indicative of a rather progressive region that is home to more than 20,000 civil society organizations.

We compiled a list of the basic population of CSOs in the region (n = 20,280) from the pertinent registers, namely the company register and the register of associations.[1] From this list we drew a representative randomized sample of 400 CSOs, which we categorized according to the ICNPO scheme. We then checked which organizations have a website and found this was the case for about half of them (n = 201). These organizations form the basis for the qualitative analysis presented here. The websites were downloaded, converted into PDF format and coded using Maxqda. The coding process was done in two steps:

First, we identified all references to space made in texts as well as images (not in multimedia data, which were excluded from analysis as only a few CSOs presented this kind of data at their Webpages). Our definition of space guiding this process was built on Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu who "*use space to denote certain key characteristics of the environments or settings within which characters live and act*" (Ryan et al., 2016: 7). Hence, spaces in our definition have a physical dimension that is extensive enough to allow human action. Therefore, we have decidedly not considered molecular space, mental spaces, fictional storyworlds or spatial metaphors.

Second, we inductively coded the identified spatial references by grouping them together into emerging categories of distinct spatial narratives. Notions from world polity provided some initial orientation in this regard, but we extended on them freely to capture additional nuances in the data. Emerging categories were applied to further web-sites from the sample that had not yet been coded, and also to re-code already coded websites. We thereby constantly refined the categories until a comprehensive and parsimonious framework was achieved.

4   Results: Six Spatial Narratives

Coding the websites for spatial references resulted in six distinct spatial narratives. Each of them has its own logic and represents a specific way in which actors situate themselves in the world: Lococentric, home/alien, world polity, world society, glocalization and earthy/metaphysical world.

The narratives vary in several dimensions. Obviously, they differ in terms of the geographical scope they cover: they refer to local, national, European, global and even transcendental spaces. Moreover, their portrayed topographies have a substantially different structure: centered around a home base, based on comparison with a foreign "other", a stratified world with several interdependent layers, a strong gravitational center, a borderless world, or directed towards a metaphysical world. Hence, the different narratives not only imply different geographical scopes but also different

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[1] We did not cover foundations, as many of them are private purpose foundations in Austria. Only a small share of foundations are CSOs, and it is very difficult to extract only these from the public register. The data was provided by Compass Verlag GmbH.

institutions, power structures and actors. In other words, through their spatial narratives CSOs produce and reproduce distinct but overlapping social spaces.

Reading world polity theory through a spatial lens and comparing it with the six spatial narratives, we found that only three of them are covered by the theory. Correspondingly, we named them world polity narrative, world society narrative and glocalization narrative. The other three narratives, however, lie outside the focus of world polity theory. It thus seems that the six spatial narratives form a spectrum that ranges from the local level to transcendental spaces. World polity theory grasps the narratives in center of the spectrum but blinds out the spatial narratives at the edges.
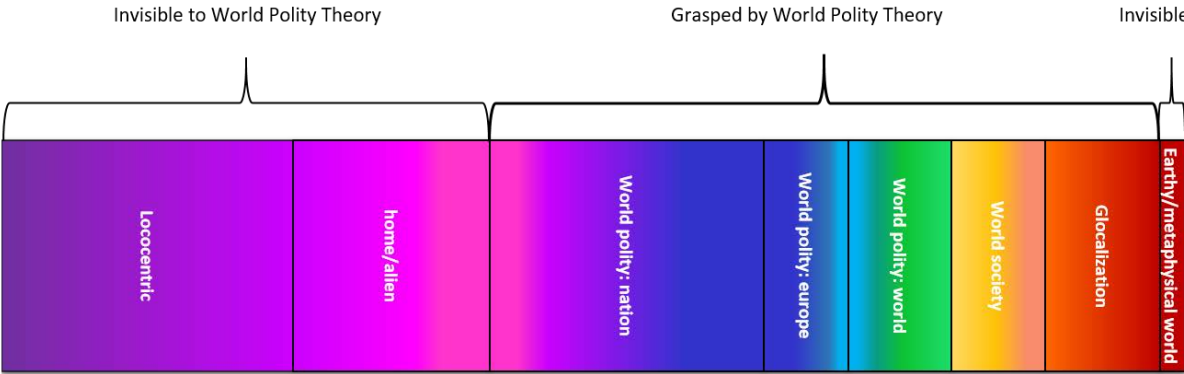

Figure 1: Spectrum of spatial narratives

The six narratives hardly ever occur exclusively. Only the lococentric narrative seems to have a certain likelihood to occur without references to spaces that transcend the local level. Moreover, it is also the most frequently used narrative (in 147 of the 201 documents), followed by the national layer of the world polity narrative (n = 138) and the home/alien narrative (n = 99). The results are thus indicative for the importance of local and national spatial levels for CSOs. References to global spaces can only be found in about a quarter of the analyzed websites (world society n = 47, world polity: world n = 52).

	Lococentric	Home/alien	World polity: nation	World polity: Europe	World polity: world	World society	Glocalization	Earthy world/metaphysical world	Documents
Lococentric	23								147
Home/alien	69	3							99
World polity: nation	102	81	5						138
World polity: Europe	28	31	37	0					43
World polity: world	32	35	45	21	0				52
World Society	30	30	31	19	27	3			47
Glocalization	46	32	41	16	23	20	1		58
Earthy world/metaphysical world	5	4	5	0	2	6	2	3	13

Table 1: Spatial narratives occurences and overlaps

Regarding CSO's median age we found that the organizations employing the earthy/metaphysical world narrative are with a median age of 9.4 years by far the youngest. From the perspective of world polity theory, this is surprising since we assume that the rationalistic spatial narratives (i.e. world polity narrative) and the narratives oriented on universal "western" values (i.e. world society) emerged out of the belief in a transcendental power. However, in our sample the opposite seems to be the case: CSOs who use the rationalistic world polity narrative are amongst the oldest.

	Lococentric	Home/alien	World polity: world	World polity: Europe	World polity: nation	Glocalization	World society	Earthy /metaphysical world
Median age in years	18.5	17.3	20.7	21.9	21.0	17.7	14.7	9.4
Standard deviation	24.0	21.6	22.0	23.8	24.0	24.1	21.2	6.8

Table 2: Median age of CSOs grouped by spatial narrative

4.1 Lococentric

The lococentric narrative describes a space that corresponds to the narrator's lifeworld. It refers to a tangible space that can be experienced with the human body, a relatively small space in which the everyday life of the narrator takes place. Emotionally charged spatial terms – such as "home", "hometown" (e.g. ID 154, ID 265), or "our neighborhood" (e.g. ID 274), or very thick descriptions of these spaces from an actor's perspective – are central to this narrative (e.g. ID 265, ID 270). The narrative has two structuring elements: (1.) the center and (2.) the spatial reference system. These two elements are dialectically related to each other; each element defines the other.

The center has a dual narrative function: It is the spatial center of the narrative, and the central point of reference for the identity of the narrating organization. In other words, it is closely interwoven with the "we" of the organization. The referenced space (the center) may almost be used synonymously with the association: "our clubhouse" (e.g. ID 109), "our stadium" (e.g. ID 154, ID 150), "our shooting range" (ID 280). Quite often, these central spaces are also related to the founding myth of the organization, as the organization emphasizes that its founding entailed settling down in a certain space (e.g. IDs 154,317, 33): "We have finally found our new home, the time of homelessness was over." (ID 265)

The spatial frame of reference around the center is defined by locally recognized geographical categories such as neighborhoods, towns, or other spatial categories frequently used by the local population, e.g. "the border region" (ID 01) or "the winegrowing region" (ID 168). This frame is the radius of action for the center; the center can exert a gravitational force and/or a radiant power within this frame. Strong gravitational centers are often found in the narratives of member associations (e.g. sports clubs, e.g. ID 261) or culture clubs whose main activities take place in the respective center (e.g. IDs 02, 261, 150, 153, 104, 397). A radiant effect of the center can typically be found in the narratives of social service organizations providing their services to beneficiaries in the vicinity of the center (e.g. ID 19),.

A stylistic element of the lococentric narrative are mentions of highly regarded local actors such as local administrations ("district chief" ID 340), local funding agencies (ID 115), schools (ID 154), or businesses (ID 115). These actors are themselves deeply rooted in the narrated space and hence usually share the same, or a similar, spatial frame of reference. Such references thus strengthen the lococentric narrative by defining additional anchor points.

Overall, the lococentric narrative constructs a locally constrained space that is defined by the interplay between the center (the organization itself) and its spatial frame of reference. In doing so it necessarily excludes spaces at other levels. In this narrative, what matters is the space that the narrator directly experiences: his lifeworld, the space of his everyday life.

The lococentric narrative is the most widely used narrative. It appears in 147 of the 201 analyzed documents. However, as the graph below indicates (see Figure 2), it mostly appears in combination with other spatial narratives. Obviously, the national layer of the world polity narrative, but also the rather egocentric home/alien narrative show substantial overlaps with this narrative. The fact that all narratives to a certain degree overlap with the lococentric narrative indicates that CSOs regardless of their field of activity are to a certain degree embedded in a local and confined environment. The local embeddedness, an issue largely ignored by world polity theory, seems to be of substantial importance for all kinds of CSOs.

Nevertheless, the narrative is archetypical for a certain kind of organizations. It is thus characteristic for small associations serving stakeholders in a confined local area such as local sports clubs (e.g. IDs 02, 12, 27), social clubs (e.g. IDs 01, 26, 134), associations which are somehow deeply entangled with a concrete local area (e.g. beekeepers: ID 104), but also smaller social service providers serving a local community (e.g. ID 19).
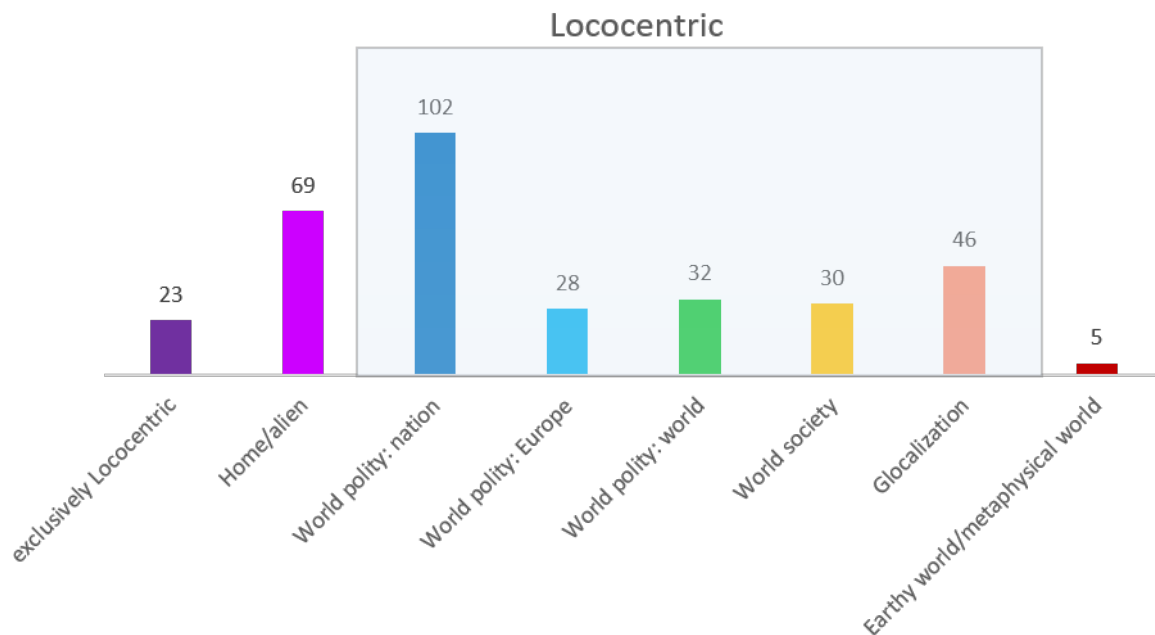
Figure 2: Lococentric narrative: overlaps with other narratives

4.2   Home/alien

The home/alien narrative builds on the contrast between a place identified as home and a specific or unspecific foreign place. The home and its counterpart, the alien place, are the indispensable elements of this narrative. These two elements are used as identity markers rather than as descriptions of spaces in a geographical sense. The narrative contains no details about the characteristics of the home or the alien place (e.g. their cultural customs or their political systems). Such things are assumed to be common knowledge of the audience.

Consequentially, both concepts – the home as well as the alien place – appear rather faint. The alien place may be a specific foreign country, an entity representing a foreign country, or even more vaguely defined (e.g. "the international" or "global": IDs 52, 143, 164). The concept of home remains ambiguous, too. Either, it is so much taken for granted in the texts that one can only guess that it somehow relates to the place where the organization is located. Its scope and borders remain unclear (e.g. whether it refers to the country of Austria, a particular region within Austria etc.). Or the place of home oscillates and remains a vanishing point, as in the narratives of CSOs of diasporic communities for whom the country of residence may not be their (only) home (e.g. IDs 203, 187). Thus the home/alien narrative does not create clarity about the characteristics of the home and the alien place; it is content with the definition that the alien is what is not home.

Therefore, the home/alien narrative takes an egocentric narrative perspective. The topography is determined by the sum of the binary relationships between the narrator and the alien units. A world beyond these relationships is non-existent, but within those relationships the narrating organization defines itself through constant comparison with the alien. The perspective is hence one of egocentric reflection. Constant comparison with the alien has various functions, depending on the narrator's prior normative judgement about the alien: identification (although they are different, they are also similar,

e.g. our foreign partners: IDs 31, 243), benchmarking and competition (they are good, we want to be like them or better than them: e.g. IDs 324, 212), or hostile distancing (they are bad, we are against them: e.g. ID 187). The alien can thus be constructed in positive or in negative terms, someone the narrator desires or detests. However, no matter how the alien is judged, the boundaries between the two opposite poles of home and alien place never melt.

The home/foreign narrative is reinforced by references to actors and artifacts, e.g. by people, goods, information, money, in case of one organization even the mortal remains of migrants (ID 203) moving from the one place to the other. When actors leave their home, they remain agents of the narrating organization and usually return home after fulfilling their mission. Artifacts (e.g. goods, money) usually leave their home for good but remain connected to their home; they remain artifacts marked as originating from that home (e.g. "Austrian development aid": ID 127).

The home/foreign narrative constructs a topography that encompasses the whole world. However, the narrative is told from the perspective of a highly subjective narrator. Consequently, the world is neither portrayed as a comprehensive system of actors sorted into orderly patterns of horizontal and vertical relationships (as in the world polity narrative), nor as a complex decentralized network of multiple actors (as in the world society narrative). Rather, the world is perceived as devoid of institutionalized structures, and the narrator interacts with other actors on a purely ad hoc basis.

This narrative is typical for lobby groups, professional and business associations (e.g. ID 118, 112, 29, 328, 238, 18), CSOs engaged in cultural exchange between two countries (e.g. ID 242), and CSOs affiliated with diasporic communities who maintain a connection with their home country (e.g. IDs 203, 187). The narrative is generally widely used across the whole spectrum of fields of activities (sports clubs, music clubs, even social service providers), and hardly ever occurs exclusively. Hence, for the narrating CSOs this narrative seems to be an important tool for situating themselves in the world through processes of identification and dis-identification (Czarniawska, 2008).

Not surprisingly, the home/alien narrative occurs most often in combination with the national level of the world polity narrative, indicating the importance of institutionalized national structures for such organizations. Moreover, a portrayed world structured through mutual relationships with "outside others" matches well with the lococentric narrative.
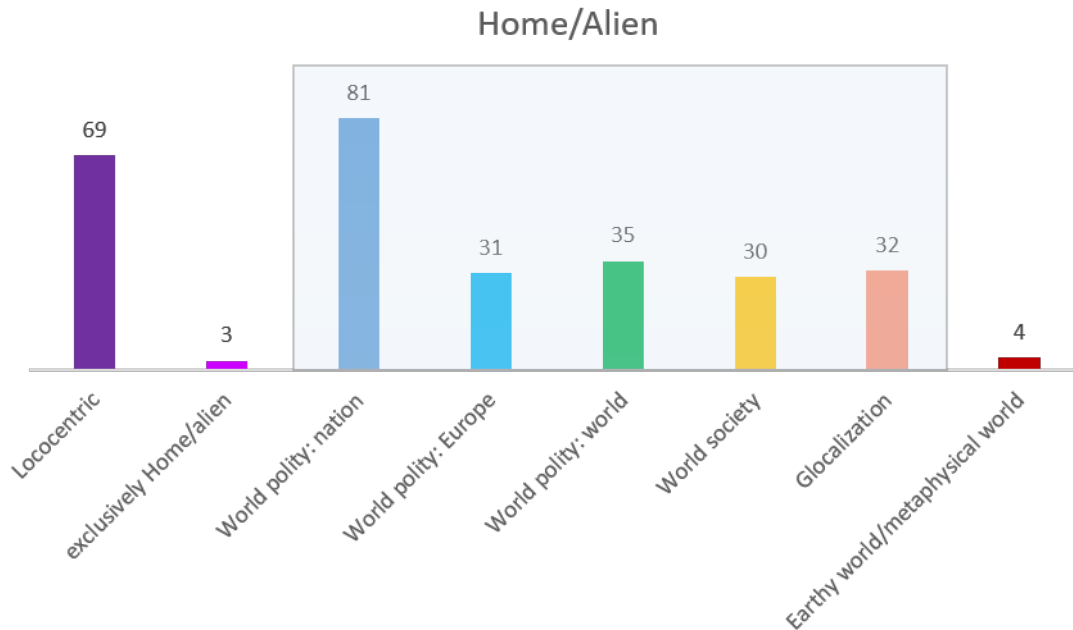
Figure 3: Home/alien narrative: overlaps with other narratives

4.3   World polity

The world polity narrative constructs a topography characterized by a hierarchical order of several interdependent layers: The higher layers constitute the frames for the lower layers, like a set of Russian dolls. All layers are characterized by formal institutions, and those are compatible with each other and somewhat mirror each other across layers. Each layer also has its own distinctive features, but all layers are connected to each other in hierarchical order. Frequent references are made to institutionalized artifacts such as awards (e.g. ID 219), (quality-) seals (e.g. ID 159), norms (e.g. ID 14), rules and regulations (e.g. ID 140) that are meant to support rational governance.

The typical manifestation of this narrative are federally structured organizations that comprise local grassroots associations, are organized as provincial associations at the level of the Austrian provinces, having an Austrian national association, and also belong to European and global umbrella organizations. Clearly, CSOs using this narrative mirror the structures of governmental organizations at the national and international level. Sometimes the narrative organizations even perform sovereign functions (e.g. licensing: ID 235).

The narrative is generally used across all sectors. An observation that hints at the importance of rational governance structures for all kinds of CSOs. Moreover, the widespread use of the world polity narrative seems to reflect the reality that all organizations are somehow embedded in institutionalized structures. It is thus indicative for the practical relevance of world polity theory. However, a more detailed analysis of the intersection points of the different layers with other narratives makes obvious that there is substantial inner variation within the world polity narrative.

The highest level that defines the framework for all other levels is the global level. Globalization is not critically questioned in this narrative, but taken for granted. The global market, driven by digitalization and technological progress, is often referred to as a key institution. Furthermore, these narrative refer to institutions that ensure the functioning of the global market (such

as the World Bank, IMO, OECD, WTO: e.g. IDs 164, 219, 331), and to institutions that have the normative function of representing values of instrumental rationality and human rights (such as the UN, international charters, conventions, rules, guidelines, standards or norms: e.g. IDs 14, 238, 294).

References to the global layer of the world polity narrative as the graph indicates often appear in combination with the national layer but interestingly also together with the more egocentric lococentric and home/alien narratives. This is particularly the case for associations who are at the same time strongly embedded in their local or national context but at the same time depend on global markets and regulations such as certain professional and business associations (e.g. IDs 238, 304, 294).
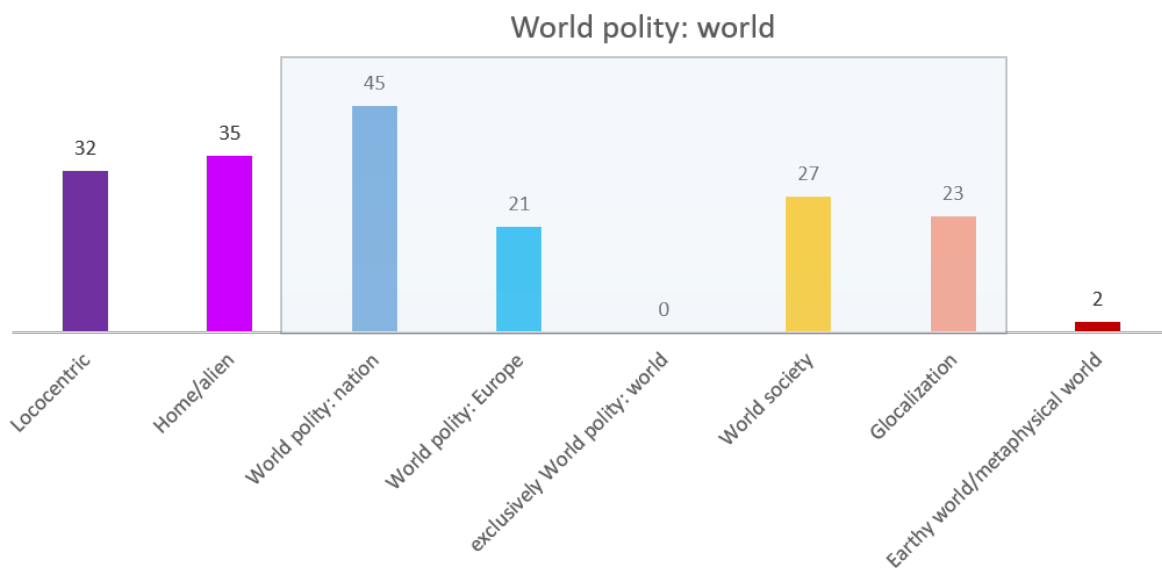

Figure 4: World polity narrative: global layer: overlaps with other narratives

The European Union is one level lower and is presented in much more detail. Two central structural elements of the EU are emphasized: The common market and the social dimension. In other words, in addition to being an economic union, the EU is portrayed as a societal, cultural and political union. Frequent references are made to the governing bodies of the European Union (the European court of justice, European commission, European parliament, European council, and the rotating EU presidency), and to specific EU regulations, guidelines, programs, standards, e.g., to "implement consistent standards within the EU" (ID 112) or campaigns (e.g. IDs 06, 112).

In our data, this narrative never appears exclusively on a website. The most frequent overlaps are with the national layer of the world polity narrative. Moreover, the home/alien and the lococentric narratives appear frequently in combination with the European layer. Again, this is particularly the case for CSOs who are dependent on developments at the European level but are nevertheless locally rooted or generally approach the world from a rather egocentric point of view (e.g. 154, 158, 29). However, a distinct feature of the European layer is that also the opposite is relevant: decidedly supranationally organized CSOs who have managed to take root locally or who have their headquarters in Austria (e.g. 152, 112, 336, 348).
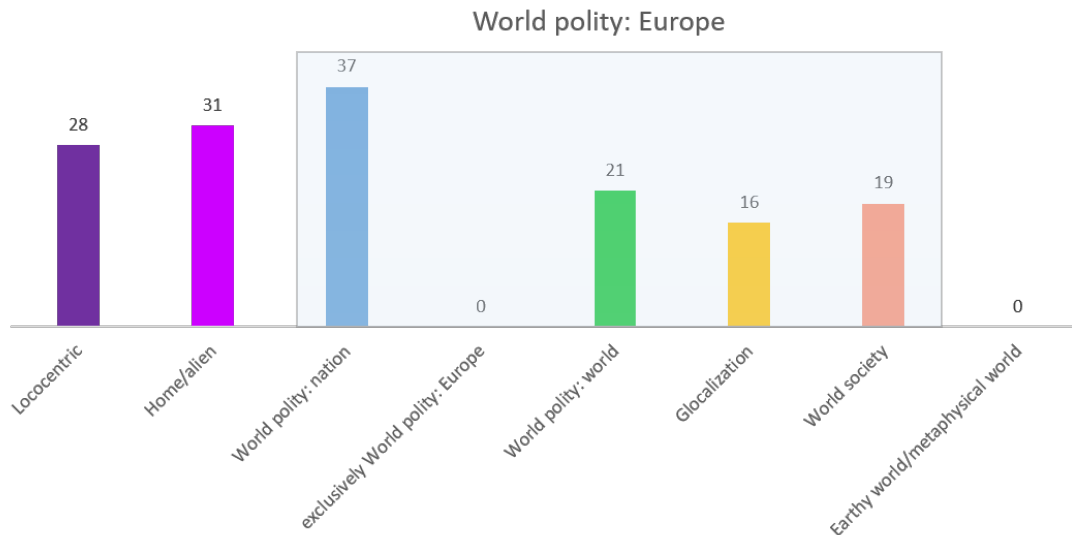
Figure 5: World polity narrative: European layer: overlaps with other narratives

The last major layer is the national layer. Here, narrators refer as a matter-of-course and in much detail to various aspects of the Austrian administration and political system (e.g. IDs 235, 353), often going down to the provincial level ("Lower Austria's security agency": ID 213). Frequent references are made to government entities such as Austrian ministries, and to highly legitimized other elements of the Austrian political system such as chambers, unions, political parties, and to Austrian universities (e.g. IDs 262, 213, 195, 90).

It is taken for granted that the political borders of the Austrian state constrain and define the organization's scope of action. Often organizations communicate the self-understanding that they have the responsibility for a particular societal subfield or issue in Austria, e.g. "the music industry" (ID 164), *"civic aviation"* (ID 235) or for a particular group of actors in Austria, e.g. "Austrian pupils" (ID 230, *"refugees in Austria"* (IDs 120, 90), or "trading partners in Austria" (ID 328).

The national layer of the world polity narrative appears often in combination with the lococentric and home/alien narratives, and less frequently, though, together with the narratives grasped by world polity theory. Hence, the connection between the rational, bureaucratic nation as referred to by the narrative and a rationalistic world polity described in theory cannot be assumed automatically.
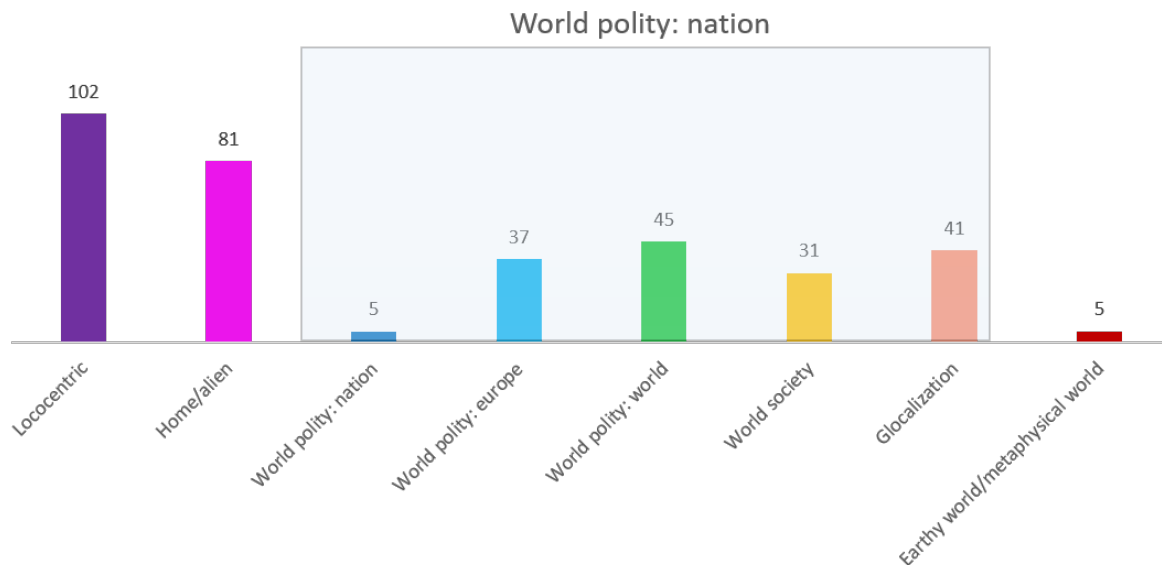
Figure 6: World polity narrative: national layer: overlaps with other narratives

4.4 World society

This narrative does not concede importance to national borders. It encompasses the whole world, but political borders are not of relevance in this world. Borders are either evaporated altogether, or drawn according to other criteria, e.g. "the German speaking world" (ID 110, ID 314), "the Global South" (ID 80). Therefore, the world is portrayed as a diffuse, highly interconnected and complex network.

A central element of this narrative is the biosphere. Humans and human societies are part of the global ecosystem and depend on it. The biosphere is more than the container of human activities; it is the stage as well as an actor: "Mother Earth" (ID 306), "our beautiful nature" (ID 319), "our oceans" (ID 394). Yet there is also frequent reference to humans or global fields, e.g. "shoe industry" (ID 90), threatening the biosphere. The discussion of global human-made threats – most prominently climate change, but also other issues such as the international wildlife trafficking (ID 156) – is characteristic for this narrative. Moreover, the narrative describes the world as a highly unequal place: Powerful and powerless actors, threats, e.g. "the timber industry" (ID 156), and threatened subjects, e.g. the ecosystem (ID 108), the poor (ID 80), and the women (ID 326). This narrative obviously has a massive moral foundation. It makes a clear distinction between good and evil. It knows exactly what should be protected and what constitutes a threat. Instead of political borders between states, it draws clear normative boundaries, e.g. "System change not climate change" (ID 326).

While the scope of the world society narrative is global, the actions that correspond to its concerns are executed at local levels: "Reef village Phillipines" (ID 394), "Orang-Utan Center" (ID 156), "activists worldwide dance and sing against violence against women and girls" (ID 326). The local is closely connected to the global. However, in contrast to the lococentric narrative, the local could be anywhere in the world. The cosmopolitan citizens of world society think global, act local, and feel at home in many places all over the world, based on their "intercultural acceptance and tolerance" (ID 326). All local points of action are representational spaces of the global ideals (*"Conference international Association for eScience [...] in Greece"* (ID 77). The local action on the ground is connected to the global phenomenon, the global fight for the universal good.

The world society narrative is characteristic for advocacy groups dealing with global issues (e.g. ID 394), uneven global development (IDs 90, 230), and women's (ID 236) and animal rights (ID 156). Moreover, it is also widely employed by cultural associations such as arts clubs, artist networks (e.g. 205) and academic/scientific associations (IDs 77, 348, 363). This narrative is thus characteristic for CSOs upholding global moral values.

Concerning overlaps with the other narratives, the world society narrative shows no particular pattern. The lococentric and home/alien narratives seem to be equally compatible with world society as the various layers of the world polity narrative. Since they both portray a borderless world, there is also some combined occurrence with the earthy/metaphysical world narrative (6 out of 13).
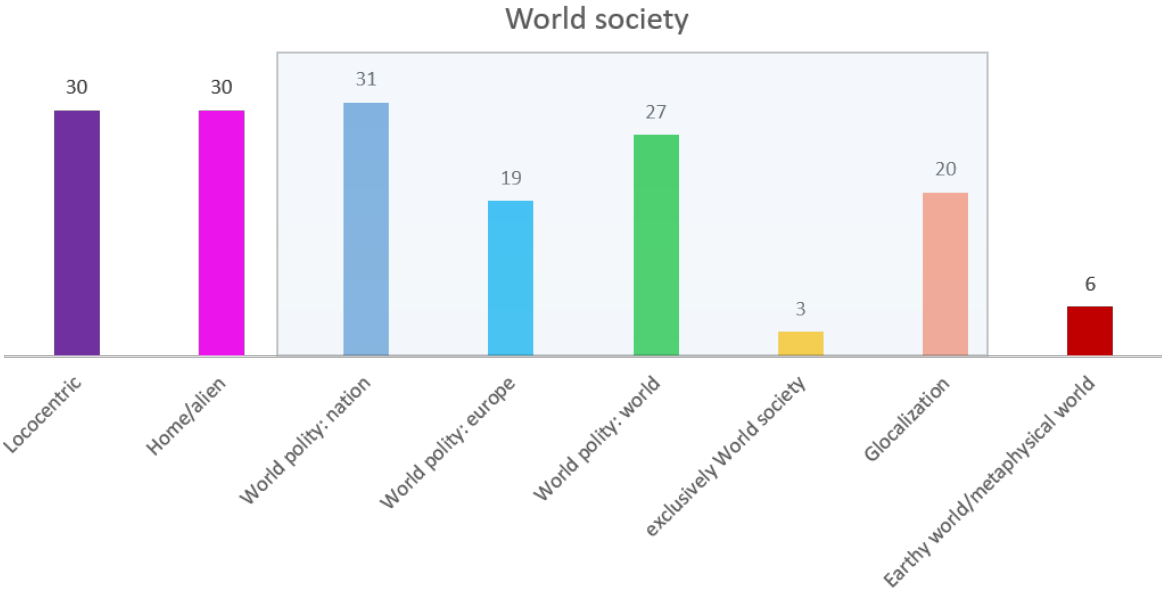

Figure 7: World society narrative: overlaps with other narratives

4.5   Glocalization

In the glocalization narrative, a particular local place is permanently or temporarily constructed as bringing together actors (e.g. experts, artists) or artifacts (e.g. goods, knowledge, movies) from all over the globe. This place then contains almost everything relevant to a specific field, e.g a "worldwide unique center of expertise" (ID 314), or encompasses the diversity of the world by offering *"products from all over the world"* (ID 199), or claiming a "world metropolis Vienna" (ID 134)). The glocalization narrative is thus based on the relationship between the center and global actors or artifacts who are attracted by the gravitational pull of the center. Global actors or artifacts come to the center and lend it their legitimacy.

The glocalized place is a gravitational center with blurring boundaries, not a clearly delineated space. Its exact boundaries are rather irrelevant. Glocalized spaces can be any type of spaces: cities, neighborhoods, buildings, squares, streets, etc. Often they are temporary, which is understandable given the ambitious claim of being a global gravitational center. For a short time, the claim can often

be maintained, for example in case of fairs, conferences, congresses or festivals (e.g. IDs 266, 277, 343).

Therefore, the narrative is characteristic for associations who are eager to create an image of uniqueness and worldliness such as shopping street associations (IDs 137, 199), organizations who organize festivals and conferences (ID 266), but also educational or medical centers (IDs 335, 314, 236). In our data, it is often employed in combination with references to the local and national environment.
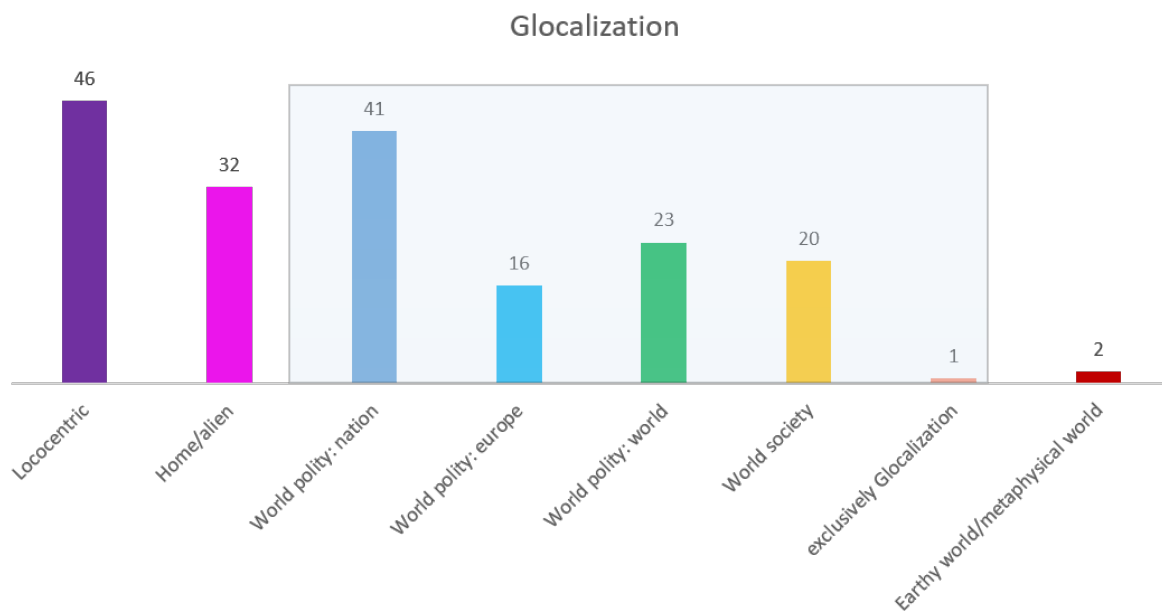

Figure 8: Glocalization narrative: overlaps with other narratives

4.6   Earthly/metaphysical world

The earthly/metaphysical world narrative relies on the binary construction between this world and a metaphysical point of reference that transcends the boundaries of human cognition (e.g. ID 46 "a piece of heaven", ID 265 "the realm of god", ID 316 "the universe"). The earthly world is understood as god's creation; political boundaries or secular administrative systems are thus irrelevant in this narrative. The outlook on the earthly world is decidedly globalist: It is one world, all people can become believers, believers worldwide are a community.

Often a highly normative tone is employed, portraying the earthly world as a sinful place (ID 265 "while the world celebrates 'Halloween' and the darkness, we want to be the light"). The narrating organization is thus speaking from the perspective of an external observer. It portrays itself as constantly connected to the metaphysical point of reference and therefore not fully rooted in earthly world.

Moreover, this narrative frequently refers to "holy" spaces. These spaces are physically existing spaces in the earthly world, but they have a metaphysical meaning to the narrator. They are understood as windows to the metaphysical world, or as representing this metaphysical world in the earthly world more than other places (e.g. ID 62 "Vatican", ID 179 "Mekka", ID 100 "the Holy Land", IDs 62, 100 "Jerusalem", ID 05 "Bethabara"). Actors routinely travel long distances to these holy places (e.g. for

pilgrimages or development aid: IDs 179, 80) or maintain contact with these places (e.g. observing the time in Mecca for fasting during Ramadan: ID 179), thus confirming the point that the world in this spatial narrative is perceived as globalized and connected beyond national borders. The narrative is therefore almost exclusively employed by religious organizations. In our sample are various Christian (IDs 05, 100, 265, 391, 46, 55, 62, 80) and Islamic (IDs 365, 179) associations. However, it can reasonably be assumed that this spatial narrative can be found across all confessions.
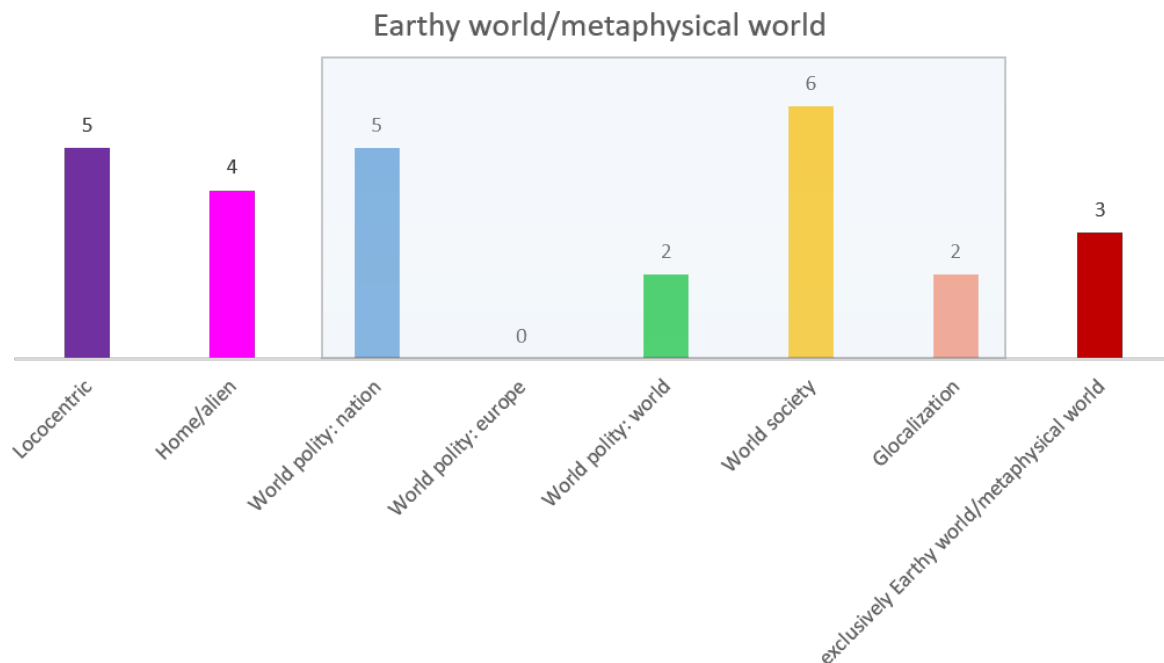

Figure 9: Earthy/metaphysical world narrative: overlaps with other narratives

5   Discussion

Our analysis shows that CSOs produce a wide range of different spatial narratives: from the lococentric narrative, to rather egocentric notions about the actor at home amidst an alien outside world, to such spatial narratives that are central to world polity theory. The narratives that conform to world polity theory refer to the nation state as an equal actor among other states, national actors hierarchically integrated into tidy international and supranational structures, the fluid and cosmopolitan world society, and glocalized spaces where the local and the global merge together. Beyond these secular spatial narratives, there is another spatial narrative that goes beyond this earthly world and sees global humanity also as located in a metaphysical realm.

CSOs produce and reproduce these spatial narratives mostly as unintended side-effects of the texts and images that they generate for other purposes. Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely because of this, spatial narratives influence spatial discourse: They create and confirm people's beliefs about the spaces in which they live. The lococentric narrative lends deep affectionate meanings to people's close living environment. The narrative creates a sharp demarcation between the actor's home and an alien environment that can never merge with the home or cooperate with it on an entirely equal basis. The narrative of the world polity conveys an image of a tidy world in which all the states of the world treat each other equally and rationally. In this narrative, an orderly solution can be found for each problem

at the appropriate level, from federal levels within states, to the national level, to cooperation in international or supranational structures. The narrative of world society, on the other hand, conveys a feeling of being citizens of one world, unrestricted by national borders. Therefore, each individual is responsible for all major global challenges and is considered capable of taking responsibility for them. The world according to this narrative becomes a small place where everyone can feel at home everywhere and feels affection for all humanity and the global ecosystem. The glocalization narrative has somewhat similar discursive effects: Actors come to understand the world as small, celebrating its unity in diversity. The earthly-metaphysical world narrative also promotes an understanding of globality. Here a global bond of brotherhood among believers is established, and a belief in holy places and a metaphysical world beyond this earthly world is endorsed.

If one considers the relative quantitative significance of all these spatial narratives, it becomes clear that even in a progressive and cosmopolitan region such as Greater Vienna, the majority of narratives about spaces produced by CSOs is not linked to places outside one's own nation. The spatial narrative that accounts for the largest portion of narration about space is the lococentric narrative, followed by the world polity narrative about the nation state with a purely inward orientation. It focuses exclusively on the internal structuring of the nation-state in provinces, districts, etc.

With the narratives of international and supranational world polity, world society, glocalization and the earthly/metaphysical world, CSOs create cognitive and emotional connections between the local place in which people live and more remote spaces. With the lococentric, home/alien, and world polity nation state narratives, CSOs imbue primarily the local or national level with meaning. Our analysis has shown that the latter is a very important part of what CSOs do. It would therefore be a serious misinterpretation of their role in globalization processes to regard them only as conveyors of globalist and universalist views.

Our study suffers from many limitations. First, it is its preliminary and explorative character. Our endeavor was to identify different spatial narratives that are employed by CSOs. We did not relate those narratives with characteristics of the CSOs, which should be a next obvious step. We have related the occurrence of the identified narratives with CSOs' age, but it would be also instructive to relate with size, field of activity, spatial range of activities, and membership. Second, the findings of our study are limited due to the particularities of our sample. Though we have studied a random sample, we focused on associations and excluded foundations and corporations, which are presumably more professional and more focused on service delivery. Furthermore, our sample was drawn in an urban region, and the distribution of spatial narratives might be different in rural regions. There might be even more CSOs that deploy lococentric narratives in the countryside. Finally, we concentrated on narratives presented on webpages, thus employing a methodology that excluded many organizations (almost a half of all CSOs in the randomly drawn sample) that do not use this communication channel. We also have to be aware that the spatial narratives analyzed are maybe only the published peak of the iceberg, and it would need much more ethnographic research to dive beneath the water line.

Beyond these limitations, the analysis of CSOs' spatial narratives offers a wide range of promising issues for further research. First, a more in-depth analysis of the spatial narratives detected might elucidate their attraction. We assume that the lococentric, the home/alien and the metaphysical narratives utilize more emotional than rational appeals, whereas the world polity, world society and glocalization narratives deploy rather rational arguments. Besides, our exploratory study should be

complemented with international comparisons. Second, there is a wide range of research questions concerning the antecedents and consequences of particular spatial narratives. Finally, as usual, the dynamics of those narratives might provide an interesting mirror of how Civil Society develops.

At any rate, our study is only a first step. Yet it is pioneering at least in three dimensions, which we consider as our major contributions: First, we added empirical research to the literature on organizational spatial narratives that has emerged only recently (Ropo & Höykinpuro, 2017; Airo et al., 2012). What we added to this literature is narratives on the spaces outside the organization, thus grasping the spatial outreach of CSOs. We consider this might also be an important part of organizational identities. Second, we contribute to world polity research by diving deeper into CSOs' logics, and by not only focusing on elite organizations like universities, public agencies, and international CSOs (Smith & Wiest, 2005). The picture that our study provides about the dissemination of global rationalities is more nuanced and shows that Civil Society is not necessarily a fertile ground for the spread of globalized actorhood referring to legitimate principles, but also a niche for resistance against globalization and an incubator of localism and tribalism. Insofar and third, our study also contributes to the research on "dark civil society" and "dark social capital" (Putzel, 1997, Van Deth & Zmerli, 2010) that is merely bonding and excluding. This strand of research is still in its infancy, but recent development of populism and tribalism in many countries strongly suggest that we have to put more effort into CSOs' role in hindering or furthering liberal democracy. Studying spatial narratives that reveal inclusion and exclusion, but also studying the narratives of actorhood, accountability and contributions to society, might offer a promising direction for a more critical research agenda on Civil Society. Because not all CSOs necessarily contribute to the common good.

"There are some who are in darkness
And the others are in light
And you see the ones in brightness
Those in darkness drop from sight."

(Bert Brecht, The Ballad of Mack the Knife)

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