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SOVEREIGN LIMITS AND REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA*

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Abstract: In this article, we evaluate whether Latin American participation in international arenas reinforces traditional divides between state and society in global politics or transforms state-society relations in ways compatible with the concept of global civil society. We examine the participation and interaction of Latin American nongovernmental organizations and states at three recent United Nations conferences: the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. We conclude that Latin Americans are full participants in any emerging global civil society. Their experiences at the 1990s issue conferences closely track those of NGOs of the Northern Hemisphere, notwithstanding the much more recent appearance of NGOs in Latin America. At the same time, Latin Americans bring a regional sensibility to their participation in global processes that reflects recent political developments and debates in the region.

Numerous new actors are challenging the dominance of nation-states in international politics. Some scholars have argued that those new actors constitute a global civil society that is transforming global governance (Lipschutz 1996; Wapner 1995). The contribution of Latin American actors to these processes, however, has not yet been systematically examined.¹ In this article, we will evaluate whether Latin American participation in international arenas reinforces traditional divides between state and society in global politics or transforms state-society relations in ways compatible with the

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1. Lipschutz includes case studies from three other world regions but none from Latin America, while Wapner explicitly restricts his discussion to Northern participants (Wapner 1995, 316).

concept of global civil society. To what extent does the Latin American region conform to emerging general patterns of global civil society?

Theories of domestic civil society's role in democratization have highlighted the importance of autonomous interaction among individuals, groups, and organizations in the public sphere as a counterbalance to state-dominated action (Diamond 1994; Schmitter 1997). As Michael Walzer observed, implicit in the focus on civil society is "the argument that democracy requires a strong and lively society—if not for the sake of its initial formation then for the sake of its coherence and stability over time" (Walzer 1995, 1). A well-developed civil society aggregates and expresses the wishes of the public through a wealth of nongovernmental forms of association and safeguards public freedom by limiting the government's ability to impose arbitrary rule by force (Foley and Edwards 1996). Extending this concept beyond nation-state boundaries, which are ordinarily seen as circumscribing civil societies, raises the question of whether a coherent and stable civil society is also developing at the level of global politics (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998). Such a development would transform and potentially democratize global governance, especially if it were a truly global phenomenon.

Our empirical domain is the set of recent United Nations (UN) issue conferences on the environment, human rights, and women: the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (known as UNCED, the Earth Summit, or the Rio Conference) held in 1992; the World Conference on Human Rights (the Vienna Conference) in 1993; and the Fourth World Conference on Women (the Beijing Conference) in 1995.² Each conference culminated several years of regular meetings between governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on a particular issue, including regional gatherings. Prior to the Rio Conference, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America sponsored a regional discussion among governments and NGOs in Mexico City in March 1991.³ Prior to the human rights conference, governments and NGOs met in San José, Costa Rica in January 1993. In preparation for the conference on women, the Latin Americans met in Mar de Plata, Argentina, in September 1994. Each NGO and government

2. Elisabeth Jay Friedman observed the Vienna NGO Forum, the NGO Forum of the Latin American Regional Preparatory Meeting at Mar de Plata, Argentina, and the Beijing Conference (both the NGO Forum and the official meetings). She went to the Beijing Conference as an accredited NGO representative. Kathryn Hochstetler observed four preparatory meetings of the Brazilian NGO Forum for the Rio Conference in 1990 and 1991, a Latin American NGO preparatory forum sponsored by Friends of the Earth in São Paulo, Brazil, and the official and parallel meetings of the Fourth UNCED PrepCom in New York City.

3. Following the practices at the conferences, we use the label "NGOs" throughout this article to mean a wide variety of organizations found in civil society, including social movements. Thus for our purposes here, "NGOs" include this broad variety and are not restricted to a narrower set of organizations.

drew up an official statement at the preparatory meetings on human rights and women. Prior to the environmental conference, a group of eminent Latin American environmentalists wrote a regional response to a major UN report on the global environment.⁴ Regional actors also met in the global negotiating sessions (called PrepComs) that preceded the final conferences and then reengaged while participating in the actual conferences.

The conferences were convened to discuss issues of global concern, yet governments as well as NGOs also used the conferences to express and advocate regional and national differences on questions of rights, cultural values, and economic needs. Issues, actors, and alliances regrouped and reappeared from conference to conference. Thus as a set of cases, the UN conferences offer the empirical variation necessary for a balanced assessment of the development of global civil society. The UN conference structure is as open as any international arena to the development and exhibition of the kind of state-society and global social relations that might be expected in the presence of a full-blown global civil society. At the same time, the conferences also promise political conflict and other potentially revealing variations in global and regional expectations about representation, procedures, and the development of mutual understandings. In addition, our focus on the participation of NGOs with respect to the environment, human rights, and women's rights represents a significant departure from much of the study of Latin American international relations, which has recently spotlighted regional integration and economics and is largely state-centered (see Hey 1998).

The Latin American participants in these UN issue conferences acted in a challenging political and social setting at regional and national levels. Politically, Latin America shares a recent authoritarian past with many countries, even as its more recent democratic transitions are joining it with the community of primarily Northern democratic governments.⁵ By many social and economic indicators, Latin America remains mired in severe poverty, inequality, and structural inefficiencies. The particulars of Latin America's political and economic milieu thus offer rich conditions for observing and comparing the behavior, promises, and demands of Latin American NGOs and states in international fora.

4. The environmental reports were, respectively, "Our Own Agenda" ("Nuestra propia agenda"), reprinted in Muñoz (1992, 82–113), and "Our Common Future," reprinted in World Commission on Environment and Development (1987).

5. Although the terms correspond somewhat imperfectly to global economic, geographic, and political divisions, we use *North* to refer to the relatively wealthy and industrialized countries of the Northern Hemisphere, as opposed to the *South*, which commonly refers to developing countries, located mainly in the Southern Hemisphere.

GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS REGIONAL EXPRESSION

The global politics envisioned by scholars suggesting the emergence of a global civil society differ markedly from the politics of the Westphalian nation-state system, which no one has ever described as democratic (Lipchutz 1996; Shaw 1994; Wapner 1995).⁶ According to this view, global governance is being transformed as subnational and supranational actors challenge and bypass nation-states. Such actors raise a bewildering variety of issues and perspectives that overwhelm existing structures of international governance, which were created by nation-states to help define and pursue their particular national interests.

Before evaluating whether such developments presage global civil society, it is necessary to specify the meanings of the words *global*, *civil*, and *social* in an empirical context (see Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998).⁷ To describe the social relations among nongovernmental actors as “global” suggests simply that NGO representation at the UN conferences is geographically diverse. The civil component of global civil society connotes both regularized nonstate participation in global interactions and NGOs’ free access to states and other NGOs. Building on domestic theories about civil society, the civil prerequisites of global society are found in a limited structure of governance that allows society a separate domain but still establishes codes of state-society relations and state accountability to the civil sector (Wapner 1997). Finally, the social component of global civil society presumes that members of the society (states and NGOs) act with reference to their ongoing relationships, based on the construction over time of common understandings of their identities, relations, and substantive issues.

At the international level, we found that while the presence of new actors was in itself significant, Northern NGOs dominated the process (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998). In addition, the ability of NGOs to act as if part of a fully developed global civil society was still constrained by states.⁸ States limited both civil participation and social relations in curtailing conference debate at important junctures by invoking claims of sovereignty. In particular, states often imposed arbitrary restrictions on NGOs’ ability to participate in later stages of the conference negotiations, thereby excluding them from these processes. States also asserted their national sovereignty over key concerns like choices of economic models and expectations for gender relations in contrast to more universal conceptions of those issues

6. In referring to the politics of the Westphalian nation-state system, we invoke the vision of international politics centered on the relations among competitive, interacting states that in international law (if not always in practice) possess formal equality, immunity from outside interference, and sovereign rule over territory and population within their borders.

7. This paragraph summarizes the findings of Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler (1998, 2–5).

8. See Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler (1998, p. 34, t. 3).

supported by NGOs.⁹ At the global level, NGOs also split strategically among themselves between those more interested in lobbying governments and those preferring to network with fellow NGOs. But they managed over time to construct extensive areas of substantive agreement. While Latin American governments and NGOs have participated actively in the UN issue conferences, to what extent has their participation replicated these global patterns? Do Latin America's patterns of domestic politics and economics translate into a distinct regional version of global governance?

GLOBAL, CIVIL, AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LATIN AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN UN CONFERENCES

Based on the foregoing description of the concept of global civil society, it is possible to hypothesize about the observations we would expect of Latin America if an international society that is global, civil, and social is reflected in or advanced by regional interactions. This section will specify the empirical expectations raised by the concept of global civil society within the Latin American context.

First, to confirm the global component of global civil society, NGO representation should match proportionately Latin America's share of the global population, approximately 10 percent. Economic difficulties and the comparatively recent appearance of NGOs in the region led us to expect that Latin American participation would lag behind this proportion, confirming the predominance of NGOs from wealthy Northern regions in global civil society (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998, 34).

The civil component can be seen in procedures and forms of participation and in the extent to which governments accept the legitimacy of NGO participation. We expected recent democratization in Latin America to have helped shape the identities and priorities of Latin American NGOs as international actors. More democratic governments would be expected to expand their citizens' opportunities to participate in domestic and global politics. At the same time, in all three issue areas examined here, Latin American NGOs began to organize under and in opposition to authoritarian rule. This common formative experience shaped the actions and attitudes of the groups profoundly, not least in their shared ambivalence toward cooperation with the state (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998; Jaquette 1994). Although this attitude is not uncommon among nongovernmental actors in general, the degree to which it affects groups in the region is high due to their history of state repression. In this context, evidence confirming the existence of vigorous civil relations at the global level would include regional procedures to incorporate NGO perspectives into governmental documents and to permit NGO participation in conference processes. But we also ex-

9. On sovereignty claims, see Hochstetler, Clark, and Friedman (2000).

pected Latin American NGOs to assert their autonomy from their governments at the global conferences by devoting more time to networking independently with other NGOs and by devising national and transnational strategies for confronting their own governments.

In evaluating the social component of global civil society, we noted earlier that NGOs and governments framed issues and their relationships in different ways (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998). This unsurprising tendency constitutes no inherent threat to the social aspect of global civil society. One would expect, however, that in a global conference process, some similar frames—mutually understood interpretations that form through social interaction—would develop concerning substantive issue areas to encourage productive dialogue.¹⁰ Given the broad picture formed in the earlier global study of governments defending sovereignty and their prerogatives from encroachment by NGOs and NGOs committed to monitoring state behavior, we expected the social component of our investigation to evidence a big divide between NGOs and governments in Latin America. In particular, we expected to see a pronounced split on the acceptability of the neoliberal economic model, with states supporting it and NGOs opposing it. Second, we expected that rights would be a significant issue, with governmental support for universal rights a critical measure of the degree of democratization of political practices and values in Latin America. We turn now to the individual conferences to show how they manifested the global, civil, and social dimensions of global civil society.

**THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT,
RIO DE JANEIRO, 1992**

The Rio Conference on environment and development set a number of important precedents as the first of the major UN conferences in the 1990s. Its eighteen thousand exuberant NGO participants seemed to embody an emerging concept of society at the global level. Latin American NGOs participated fully in this conference, the only one of the 1990s conferences held in the region. Their multiple forms of participation reflected ongoing regional NGO debates about the desirability of collaborating with national governments—and their assessments of the inclusiveness of regional governments also varied accordingly. Substantively, Latin American NGOs and governments alike emphasized the links between environmental degradation and regional poverty, although the most vocal NGOs believed that their governments had failed to push the issue far enough.

10. On frames, see Snow and Benford (1992, 137).

Global Dimensions of NGO Participation on the Environment

The “global dimension” of the Rio Conference was strongly affected by the fact that the conference was held in a Latin American country. After four PrepComs in other parts of the world with less Latin American participation, Latin American NGOs predominated in Rio. Latin Americans accounted for 41 percent of the participants in the Global Forum, the NGO conference held alongside the governmental conference. Their numbers nearly equaled those of North Americans (22 percent) and Europeans (20 percent) combined, while dwarfing the participation of Asians (12 percent) and Africans (4 percent).¹¹ Latin Americans also dominated the activities of the Global Forum by sponsoring 41 percent of the meetings and 52 percent of the exhibitions.¹²

Latin American participation developed slowly. Although some national-level organizations had established strong international links to Northern NGOs before the Rio Conference process, few regular contacts had occurred among environmental NGOs in Latin America before 1990. As a result, early NGO participation rarely represented the entire region. At one of the earliest meetings, for example, only sixteen South American NGOs and a Norwegian organization met in Santiago, Chile, in October 1989. One outcome of the meeting was the creation of the Pacto de Acción Ecológica Sudamericano, which sought to mobilize more regional participants. Even so, only about a hundred NGOs attended the regional governmental forum in Mexico City just four months before the Rio Conference (Ortiz Monasterio 1992). Unfortunately, this regional conference coincided with the fourth global PrepCom, and Latin American environmentalists never developed comprehensive networks or statements that spoke for the region as a whole, although they manifested several characteristic patterns of participation.

Civil Dimensions

The Rio Conference expanded a number of existing mechanisms for nongovernmental participation in UN activities. The General Assembly resolution authorizing the conference directed national governments to hold broad consultations while preparing their national reports on environmental

11. Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations Issues and Non-Governmental Organizations Programme, “Report on NGO Activities at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the Global Forum,” in *Earth Summit: The NGO Archives* (hereafter cited as *Earth Summit*), CD-ROM (Montevideo, Uruguay: NGONET, 1995). This CD-ROM contains primary NGO documents pertaining to the Rio Conference. Where possible, dates and pages are cited from the original documents.

12. *Information on the '92 Global Forum*, no. 6, p. 6.

conditions.¹³ NGOs were also allowed to lobby government negotiators during the conference process, with their access depending on the stage of the negotiations (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998, 13–19). Nonetheless, access and consultative participation were achieved unevenly among Latin American participants in the environmental conference process. NGO participation in the national reports varied widely, suggesting that not all governments in the region took the UN admonitions on broad public consultation seriously. Latin American governments were willing to include NGOs in certain stages of conference decision making, and lobbying NGOs took advantage of these opportunities. But a significant number of NGOs hesitated to enter into more sustained cooperation with their national governments on the conference issues.

An early test of the quality of Latin American state-society relations in the Rio process emerged in the writing of the national reports on environmental conditions. Experiences ranged widely. At one extreme, Central American NGOs reported playing prominent roles in preparing their national environmental reports, with the Costa Rican NGO Neotrópica composing the entire country report.¹⁴ At the other extreme, Uruguay completed its country report late and with consultation that was minimal or carried out “in the strictest secrecy” (Panario 1992). Perhaps most typically, governments consulted with NGOs selectively. The Brazilian government drew on the contributions of some seventy technical collaborators but opened the document for public comment only a week before formally submitting it (Ferreira 1992, 45). The Mexican government chose only about thirty NGOs to discuss its country report in a public forum (Salazar Ramírez 1992, 13).

During the conference negotiations, governmental openness varied similarly, according to NGOs. At the regional preparatory meeting for the Rio Conference in March 1991, Latin American governments drew up a statement setting out their regional priorities for the conference. In this document, the governments nodded toward the role of NGOs in preparing and helping to implement the conference agreements.¹⁵ NGOs applauded the intention of this conference: “It is the first time in the Latin American sub-region that NGOs have been invited to participate and contribute resolutions in a governmental meeting” (Ortiz Monasterio 1992, 7). NGOs were less satisfied with the actual conference. The primarily Mexican attendees rejected “the joke of a ‘dialogue,’” and the South American Ecological Action Alliance issued a statement supporting the Mexicans.¹⁶

Latin American NGOs took a variety of stands on their governments’

13. United Nations, “Preparations at the National Level: Guidelines for National Reports,” UN Document A/CONF.151/PC8, n.d.

14. *CrossCurrents* PC3(5), 9–11 Mar. 1992, p. 20.

15. “The Tlatelolco Platform” in Muñoz (1992, 118–27, Point 19).

16. “Acuerdo de los Andes,” *Earth Summit*, Las Leñas, Argentina, 14–20 Apr. 1991, p. 1.

efforts—or lack thereof—to include them in conference decision making. Even before the March 1991 regional governmental meeting, participants in the South American Ecological Action Alliance issued a statement noting that Latin American governments had shown little capacity to implement previous UN agreements. Such failure prompted the alliance and other NGOs to develop a strategy of action that prioritized alliances between Latin American NGOs and citizens and NGOs from all over the world. Strategies for relations with their governments, in contrast, stressed independence while maintaining a constant dialogue.¹⁷ As the PrepComs progressed, these NGOs joined in protests and joint press releases to express their dissatisfaction with the pace and content of the governmental negotiations. The protests allowed for networking with like-minded organizations of the South, such as the Third World Network/Red del Tercer Mundo and SONED (Southern Networks for Development) as well as with more radical Northern organizations.

At the same time, other NGOs interacted eagerly with their governments. Several governments, including Brazil and Venezuela, had named environmentalists to their national delegations. Many of the governments held at least occasional briefing sessions for NGOs. During the fourth PrepCom, an assortment of NGOs from Central America and the Andean region formed networks to lobby Latin American governments more effectively. They worked to develop common positions on biodiversity, climate change, poverty, financial mechanisms, debt, and the Rio Declaration.¹⁸ The lobbying NGOs worked closely with their governments as well as with other NGOs engaged in lobbying on the official conference agenda. Global NGO networks worked on a biodiversity conservation strategy, recommendations on forest principles, and the issue of transnational corporations.

Latin American NGOs drew a variety of conclusions about the openness of their national governments to NGO participation. The lobbyists tended to stress areas of congruence with their national governments. Roberto Troya of Ecuador's Fundación Natura observed, "The official delegates of each country and the national NGOs may have distinct focuses, but we come from the same region." María Eugenia Bustamante, an NGO member of the Venezuelan planning committee for the Rio Conference, concurred: "In the close collaboration between NGOs and the government, Venezuela is an exemplar of the popular participation they are discussing in the sessions of PrepCom 4."¹⁹ The more critical NGOs, in contrast, were frustrated by both fellow NGOs and their national governments. A report by Latin American NGO networkers at the fourth PrepCom complained that only nineteen persons attended their first meeting because too many NGOs were invest-

17. "Encuentro de los Andes/Taller del Cono Sur," *Earth Summit*, São Paulo, Brazil, 26–27 Feb. 1991, sections 2 and 9.

18. *CrossCurrents* PC4(3), 9–11 Mar. 1992, p. 20.

19. Both are cited in *CrossCurrents*, PC4(7), 23–25 Mar. 1992, p. 12.

ing all their energy in the governmental processes instead of the parallel process, "which is really our event." The report also noted that while official delegates came to address their group, they stayed only a short time and "in response to questions about the official position, argued that there wasn't time to give a detailed explanation, but we should be assured that this group of official delegates was progressive and they would raise sustainable development policies for the governments we were worried about."²⁰

In the final summit segment of the Rio Conference, sixteen of twenty Latin American heads of state made speeches, but most failed to acknowledge NGOs. The Brazilian, Chilean, and Uruguayan leaders credited NGOs as one of the driving forces behind the conference, but none of the Latin American leaders spoke of an NGO role beyond the summit (United Nations 1993, vols. 2–3). This silence was more than filled by statements from two different Latin American NGO fora in the final days, loudly criticizing governmental efforts. One lamented that Latin American governments had failed to include interested independent organizations, as directed by the UN, and concluded that this neglect made the governments exclusively responsible for the documents they had allowed to be written.²¹

Social Dimensions

Despite the frequent criticisms from some NGOs, areas of substantive agreement were established among Latin American governments and NGOs in the Rio process. The most consensual issue was the emphasis on poverty, debt, and lack of development in Latin America, along with the corollary argument that environmental problems could not be resolved without also addressing these development issues. In "Our Own Agenda," Latin Americans emphasized the complementarity rather than the commonality of global environmental conditions (see Muñoz 1992, 82–113). The report highlighted the role of poverty and its roots in foreign debt in creating distinct Latin American environmental problems and solutions. Governments and NGOs singled out this issue in their final analyses of the Rio Conference, concluding that it had not been adequately addressed. Only the Uruguayan and Costa Rican heads of state did not stress the importance of regional poverty in addressing environmental issues in their statements in the summit part of the Rio Conference (United Nations 1993, vol. 3).

20. "Acta de las Reuniones del Foro Paralelo de la UNCED Celebrada entre los Grupos Latinoamericanos y del Caribe," in-house document, Grupos Latinoamericanos y del Caribe (GRULAC), New York, 15 Mar. 1992. The report also admits that the official delegates had little time to state their positions because too many NGOs had talked for too long.

21. "Informe 'R'" in *Earth Summit*, "Primera Quincena de junio 1992," p. 13. See also "Declaración del Pacto Acción Ecológica de América Latina," *Earth Summit*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June 1992.

Nonetheless, most Latin American heads of state emphasized technical and economic solutions to their environmental and poverty problems, notably fairer trade, environmental technology granted on concessional terms, and new financial resources. Only Cuba's Fidel Castro cast his statement in terms of a wholesale attack on consumer societies, in terms comparable with those of many NGOs. While several leaders noted that their countries had not paid enough attention to the environmental impacts of their economic production, none of the leaders suggested that his or her country's economic model needed substantial revision.

The final statement of the NGO Global Forum, the parallel NGO conference to the governmental conference, echoed the Latin American NGO position in criticizing the official conference for insufficient attention to models of development. According to the People's Earth Declaration, "While [political leaders] engage in the fine tuning of an economic system that serves the short-term interests of the few at the expense of the many, the leadership for more fundamental change has fallen by default to the organizations and movements of civil society. We accept this challenge."²²

As this declaration makes clear, the poverty-based critique of the Rio Conference served both to unite and to divide NGOs and governments in Latin America and globally. Beneath the uniting concern about poverty, governments and NGOs continued to differ about the kinds of measures needed to overcome it. For many Latin American governments, a quantitative increase in economic resources in the region would be enough to address poverty, while the NGOs generally argued for qualitative changes in the development model as well.

Consensus was blocked on many issues by the Rio Conference's dual agenda of environment and development. NGO participants included not only environmentalists but a whole set of development-oriented actors, while governmental delegations included representatives from environmental and development agencies as well as diplomats. The divide was evident, for example, when the eight Amazon nations decided collectively to make national sovereignty the centerpiece of their regional position on the Amazon. This outcome blocked negotiation of a proposed global treaty on forests (MacDonald and Nielson 1997, 273–74), and NGOs could not speak with one voice for environmental protection. Inside the Brazilian Forum of twelve hundred organizations, some labor and development groups insisted that sovereignty and jobs were the proper lens for examining the Brazilian Amazon, thus stymying environmental and indigenous activists who wanted to reject their government's position.²³ Finally, NGOs were divided as to what their role in the process should be, as were the nation-states. Consequently,

22. "People's Earth Declaration," *Earth Summit*, Rio de Janeiro, June 1992, p. 1.

23. Participant observation of the VI Brazilian NGO Forum in São Paulo, 27–29 Sept. 1991.

the Rio Conference ended with no new regional understanding of the proper role of nonstate actors in global environmental governance.

THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, VIENNA, 1993

The human rights NGOs occupied a potentially antagonistic position toward Latin American governments because in most cases their own governments had recently sponsored large-scale abuses of human rights, and some continued to do so. Having been tested at home, Latin American actors from civil society participated forcefully on the global human rights stage. Governments shared many of the NGOs' interpretations of the sources of former and continuing human rights difficulties but did not necessarily accept the responsibility that NGOs wanted to attribute to governments for redressing human rights problems.

Global Dimensions of NGO Participation on Human Rights

Of the registered NGOs participating at the Vienna NGO Forum in the three days preceding the official conference, 15 percent of the fifteen hundred organizations came from Latin America.²⁴ During the NGO Forum, the liaison committee of NGOs that had officially facilitated overall NGO participation during the preparatory process was criticized for allowing planning to be dominated by international NGOs based primarily in Geneva and New York. The committee was consequently dissolved and reorganized to reflect stronger representation of local and regional NGOs around the globe (Azzam 1993, 96–97; Korey 1998, 282–83, 291).²⁵

Latin American human rights NGOs already shared a history of strong links to their global NGO counterparts. Some, like Argentina's Madres de Plaza de Mayo, had formed continuing relationships with human rights groups outside Argentina (Brysk 1994, 52–53). Regional federations had also formed, such as Servicio Paz y Justicia–América Latina (SERPAJ-AL), an NGO promoting concerns about human rights, and the Federación Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (FEDEFAM), a regional organization of national-level groups. Such NGOs had a good deal of experience working with other international actors, inside and outside the UN structure, and they networked in preparing for the

24. "Statistics on NGO Participation in the World Conference on Human Rights," *NGO-Newsletter*, no. 4 (July 1993), reprinted in Nowak (1994, 224). This statistic refers to organizations registered with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, which helped to facilitate NGO participation in the conference process.

25. See also Rebecca Elliot, "The NGO Forum," in "Report on the World Conference on Human Rights, 14–25 June 1993," in-house document, Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva, doc. no. 252/93, n.d.

Vienna Conference. While several NGOs had previous UN conference experience from having attended the Rio Conference, newer and smaller NGOs had less exposure to international human rights fora. Two of the larger global human rights organizations, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists, sent international-level staffers who were Latin Americans to Latin America's regional preparatory conference.²⁶ The presence of experienced Latin American staffers in global NGOs may be taken as further indicating the integration between Latin American and global NGOs.

Civil Dimensions

While the parties did not always see eye to eye, the legitimacy of procedures providing for interaction between NGOs and Latin American governments during regional preparations for Vienna was not disputed. At the preparatory meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, governments and NGOs met separately. NGOs already having consultative status with the UN's Economic and Social Council were permitted to observe the government proceedings, while those lacking such status but based in Latin America could designate accredited representatives as observers in consultation with the regional governments.²⁷ This level of access resulted from global lobbying by NGOs for inclusion from the start of the conference preparations (Korey 1998, 278–79).

NGOs also submitted written materials to the governmental conference. The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, based in San José, Costa Rica, conducted an "orientation session" for NGOs the day before the opening of the regional preparatory meeting there in early 1993.²⁸ At that session, NGOs coordinated lobbying strategies (Azzam 1993, 93).

NGOs were allowed to comment on the governments' proceedings during the San José meeting. Jointly and individually, the NGOs had prepared detailed analytical statements that were entered into the conference record. Their oral and written responses to items on the governmental agenda formed the basis of a joint NGO document to be presented at the final global PrepCom and the Vienna Conference. In a meeting with the governmental drafting committee, NGOs also commented on the draft governmental declaration.²⁹ The governments' call for a UN High Commissioner for Human

26. A detailed list of state and nongovernmental attendees can be found in United Nations, "List of Attendance, World Conference on Human Rights, Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean," UN Doc. no. A/CONF.157/LACRM/INF.1, 1 Feb. 1993.

27. United Nations, "Annotations to the Provisional Agenda, World Conference on Human Rights, Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean," UN Document A/CONF.157/LACRM/1/Add. 1 of 11 Jan. 1993, Item 3.

28. *NGO-Newsletter*, no. 2 (Feb. 1993), in Nowak (1994, 212).

29. "Preparatory Meetings: Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting, Costa Rica," in Nowak (1994, 212).

Rights, their recognition of the need to strengthen the UN Centre for Human Rights (now the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), and their acknowledgment of the need to protect vulnerable groups can all be traced to NGO input (Azzam 1993, 93). Yet the role of NGOs in protecting or advancing human rights was not mentioned in the governments' regional declaration.

Social Dimensions

A degree of shared understanding about issues was evidenced in the statements of Latin American NGOs and governments throughout the preparations and the Vienna Conference. The governments supported new requests for resources to be devoted to human rights at the international level, along with newly inclusive rhetoric. The governments also emphasized support for international human rights mechanisms but said less about their own responsibilities to investigate and prosecute abuses. Instead, they stopped with the recognition that "rupture of the democratic order threatens human rights in the country concerned."³⁰ The issue of dealing with past violations at home was thus muted by the Latin American governments.

NGOs forthrightly invoked the links between different kinds of human rights: civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. At San José, looking back on the Rio Conference and forward to the Vienna and Beijing Conferences, the NGOs stressed the need for better protection of all kinds of rights, including the rights of women and environmental considerations.³¹ With the San José meeting sandwiched between the African and Asian regional meetings that questioned the universality of human rights,³² the Latin American NGOs stood up for the importance of implementing the historical consensus on universal human rights.

But the NGOs also pushed for expanding the meaning of those rights in light of the North's impact on Latin America's economic, social, and cultural history, and they took their regional concerns to Vienna. The Latin Ameri-

30. "Final Declaration of the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Conference on Human Rights," in UN Document A/CONF.157/LACRM/15 of 11 Feb. 1993, "A Report of the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean of the World Conference on Human Rights, San José, Costa Rica, 18–22 January 1993," Item 5.

31. This paragraph draws from "Annex I: Recommendations and Proposals Submitted by the Non-Governmental Organizations Present in San José," 22 Jan. 1993, in United Nations, "Regional Meetings," UN Doc. no. A/CONF.157/PC/72, pp. 3–17.

32. For example, the Tunis Declaration (Item 5) notes, "no ready-made model can be prescribed at the universal level since the historical and cultural realities of each nation and the traditions, standards and values of each people cannot be disregarded." See United Nations, "Report of the Regional Meeting for Africa of the World Conference on Human Rights, Tunis, 2–6 November 1992," UN doc. no. A/CONF.157/AFRM/14, cross-listed as A/CONF.157/PC/57. See also "UN General Assembly Acts on the World Conference," *NGO-Newsletter*, no. 2 (Feb. 1993), in Nowak (1994, 210).

can NGOs criticized neoliberal economic models not just for marginalizing some social groups and concentrating wealth but for harming the environment. They wanted their own governments to embrace stronger domestic implementation of international commitments to human rights and measures to counter impunity for past violations. The NGOs also criticized militarism as an obstacle to the full realization of human rights, emphasizing that armed forces should submit to civilian authorities at all times and that judicial measures of habeas corpus should be upheld even during states of siege. The NGOs also wanted developed governments to work toward closing the gap between developed and developing countries, invoking the Proclamation of Tehran, which was issued twenty-five years earlier at the UN's only previous world conference on human rights. In addition, the Latin American NGOs adopted declarations on the status of women and on indigenous peoples.³³ Although a North-South split surfaced in the backlash against the NGO planning committee at the start of the conference, Southern NGOs found themselves united with their Northern counterparts in the desire to lobby governments for stronger commitments to human rights (Korey 1998, 291).

In contrast, the debate among Latin American governments in the San José meeting centered on issues of democratization and resources, such as the right to development and Latin America's history of unequal economic relations with the North (Azzam 1993, 93). In that respect, the governments were open to expanded conceptions of human rights while retaining an emphasis on implementing democratic reforms. They were also receptive to further guarantees of protection for "vulnerable social groups."

Unlike their NGO counterparts, governments protested sanctions related to human rights: "When democratic governments are making determined efforts to resolve their human rights problems, such problems should not be used for political ends or as a condition for extending assistance or socio-economic cooperation."³⁴ Governmental characterization of "obstacles to the observance of human rights" (one agenda item) emphasized the international factors, with only a nod toward domestic failings such as "the lack of genuinely independent systems of justice."³⁵ The governmental statement drawn up in San José stressed international cooperation and did not include any version of the phrase "national and regional particularities," which the other regional governmental statements used as a veiled questioning of universalism.

The NGOs at the Vienna Conference addressed their concerns in topical working groups at the NGO Forum. Five had been planned, and five

33. "Annex II: Declarations Submitted by Two Groups of Non-Governmental Organizations Present in San José," 19 Jan. 1993, in Nowak (1994, 18–22).

34. "Final Declaration of the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean," Item 12.

35. *Ibid.*, Item 10.

more were established at the site. One of the new groups addressed the connection between military forces and violations of human rights, including forms of repression such as disappearances and torture. It also addressed impunity, a major concern of the Latin American NGOs.³⁶ Even though their range of concerns had expanded from the older issues of torture and other threats to physical integrity to greater attention to the rights of the poor, women, the disabled, and indigenous peoples, the Latin American NGOs wanted to maintain external pressure on the governments of their region to investigate and punish the perpetrators of past violence. Among Latin American governments, in contrast, the issue of impunity appeared only in a list of obstacles to human rights, without comment as to where responsibility for prosecution rested.³⁷

The Latin Americans attached an addendum to the final NGO statement because the NGO Forum had not had time to deal with all their concerns. The addendum did not mention Latin America but offered a detailed analysis of the way in which the legacy of North-South economic inequality has contributed to human rights violations of all kinds: "Grave violations of human rights still occur; in past decades dictatorial regimes were mainly responsible, but in recent years they have been witnessed in restrictive neo-liberal democracies under new forms of authoritarianism engendering corruption, violence and impunity." These forms characteristically appear with "harsh adjustment policies."³⁸

Beyond the shared interpretations of the economic pressures on Latin America (despite possible disagreement about the proper solutions), a common Latin American perspective among NGOs and governments was manifested strikingly in their joint support for universal conceptions of human rights in tandem with opposition to external intervention, particularly from the United States. For NGOs, regionally shared resentments erupted when former U.S. President Jimmy Carter came to address the NGO Forum at Vienna. Although he had championed human rights in U.S. foreign policy, the Latin American NGOs remembered that U.S. security policy in Latin America had often trumped human rights rhetoric by aiding or abetting authoritarian governments in the region. Carter was shouted down and had to abandon the rostrum.³⁹

Latin American governments were less vocal than Latin American

36. "Written Report by the General Rapporteur, Manfred Nowak, as adopted by the Final Plenary Session of the NGO-Forum," UN Document A/CONF.157/7, 14 June 1993, in Nowak (1994, 87–88).

37. "Final Declaration of the Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean," Item 10.

38. "Addendum 1 to the Final Report of the NGO-Forum," Preamble, UN Document A/CONF.157/7/Add. 1, para. 4, in Nowak (1994, 95).

39. "Hecklers Stop Carter Speech at Vienna Rights Discussion," *New York Times*, 13 June 1993, sec. 1, p. 23.

NGOs in addressing intervention issues or their own complicity in human rights violations. But they did not join the overt opposition to internationally applicable concepts of human rights articulated by Asian and African governments prior to and during the Vienna Conference. Curiously, journalistic and academic accounts of the conference said nothing about the positions of the Latin American governments. In the set of government statements made on adopting the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, only Argentina and Chile were represented from Latin America, but the Chilean delegate delivered a surprisingly blunt statement indicating regrets over governments' role in limiting the procedures and substance of achievements at the conference.⁴⁰ In the end, the Latin American governments did not associate themselves publicly with the strongly universalist positions of the Western governments, led by the United States, or with those of the anti-universalist opponents.

THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN, BEIJING, 1995

Movement toward a more established global civil society, particularly by NGO representatives, was evident at Beijing. Women participated in large numbers throughout the process, with representation being a major preoccupation of Latin American organizers. NGO representatives had frequent opportunities to develop civil relations among themselves and eventually agreed to extend their efforts into the governmental realm. There they were widely accepted as legitimate participants. On the issue of gender relations, however, deep divisions among some governments and NGOs revealed an incomplete development of social understandings in Latin America.

Global Dimensions of NGO Participation on Women's Rights

It is hard to estimate how many Latin American women took part in the Beijing process, but they participated in large and fairly representative numbers throughout. The national-level preparations incorporated hundreds of women from diverse backgrounds in local and national meetings to develop national NGO documents on the status of women in each country. This widespread involvement was reflected in the twelve hundred persons attending the NGO parallel forum at the regional preparatory meeting in Mar de Plata, Argentina (NGO Forum on Women 1995, 95). Latin America and the Caribbean sent fifteen hundred women to distant Beijing, with 5 percent of those attending the NGO Forum at Huairou (NGO Forum on

40. "Declaración de la delegación de Chile," statement made on the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, n.d., Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Online at (<http://www.unhchr.ch/htm./menu5/d/statmnt/chile.htm>).

Women 1995, 16). All but one Latin American country sent 147 accredited NGOs to the official conference, 8 percent of all accredited NGOs.⁴¹

Civil Dimensions

Reflecting the historical dynamics of Latin America, the development of civil interactions among NGOs and governments was contentious although ultimately successful. During the conference process, NGOs found many opportunities to interact with each other and with governmental representatives, albeit often to debate their differing points of view. The central issue of cooperation with governments was debated among NGOs and was resolved somewhat by the incorporation of nongovernmental strategies into governmental fora.

Prior to Beijing, relations among Latin American NGOs and individual activists had been fostered in Latin America through the feminist *encuentros* held every few years for the last two decades (NGO Forum on Women 1995, 14; Sternbach et al. 1992). International ties had also grown out of Latin American exiles' experiences in Europe and the United States during the decades of repression and from Latin American women's participation in UN world conferences from the mid-1970s into the 1990s (Alvarez 1990; Lamas et al. 1995).

NGO participation in the preparatory process was regularized by implementing the regional organizing strategy developed by the UN-based NGO coordinating committee for Beijing (NGO Forum on Women 1995, 9–10). "Focal points" in each country coordinated nongovernmental evaluations of the status of women. The results were gathered first in six subregional meetings and then taken to the NGO Forum of the official regional preparatory meeting in Mar de Plata, Argentina in September 1994. Thematic networks also organized cross-nationally (Vargas Valente 1996, 45, n. 2).

Funding for such participation was debated fiercely. Due to the controversial history of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Latin America, many women's groups expressed conflicting feelings about accepting the funding proffered by the agency, which had been made financially responsible for much of the NGO regional preparatory process. This debate became especially heated in the large Brazilian women's movement, where USAID funding was eventually turned down. Meanwhile, organizers in other countries decided it was high time that the United States gave money for a worthy cause and took USAID up on its offer. Even the Brazilians found alternative external funding: their organizing group *Articulação*

41. Accredited NGOs were officially allowed to lobby and inform governmental delegates. Calculations based on "List of Accredited Non-Governmental Organizations Who Were Represented at the Fourth World Conference on Women." Online at (gopher://gopher.undp.org:70/00/unconfs/women/ngo/attendee).

was supported by forty thousand dollars from the Ford Foundation and other funding from UNIFEM (Mello 1994, 28–29; Sant’Anna 1994, 5–6).

A central goal of the nongovernmental organizing was to ensure the widest possible representation. The NGO coordinating committee’s urging to incorporate traditionally underrepresented groups such as indigenous and young women was widely heeded. “NGOs and women’s movements” were equally welcomed and usually invoked in the regional discussions in Mar de Plata. This representation drew attention to women’s different approaches to organizing, which were discussed at length throughout Latin America (Alvarez 1998, 308). Virginia Vargas, a central coordinator of the Latin American process, stressed the participation of women in all their diversity. Her goal for an inclusive global movement of women was to seek “equity in order to develop differences,” and Beijing was viewed not as an end in itself but as a way to strengthen women’s movements (Vargas n.d.).

The emphasis on hearing different women’s voices—from indigenous peasants to Catholic activists—resulted in charged discussions throughout the workshops and plenaries. Moreover, due to a sense that the dominant Argentine political party was controlling the NGO parallel conference too tightly, independent Argentine feminists as well as activists from Bolivia and Mexico held their own “parallel-to-the-parallel forum” in a set of meetings off-site.

The debate over various forms and expressions of women’s activism resulted in little effort being expended on lobbying governments at the regional meeting in Mar de Plata. This outcome could not be blamed wholly on the dynamics of the meeting. Only one of the three documents prepared for general discussion at the conference mentioned lobbying strategies. Moreover, the issue of nongovernmental-governmental cooperation was a contentious proposition. Despite movement in the last few decades from a stance of confrontation to one of negotiation vis-à-vis governments (Vargas Valente 1996, 45), many women’s rights activists in Latin America did not trust that democratizing governments were sufficiently committed to democratizing gender relations. Women in civil society therefore disagreed over the extent to which they were willing to ally with their governments during the conference preparations. Many NGO members and independent feminists cooperated with governmental women’s agencies in drawing up the national assessments of the status of women (Alvarez 1998, 303; Faccio 1995, 4; Ramírez 1995, 8). And their contribution was recognized by the governments: the regional governmental document refers throughout to the role of both NGOs and women’s movements in achieving gender equity.⁴² But other nongovernmental actors remained deeply concerned about the potential for state co-optation (Aguila 1995, 15–16).

42. UN Document E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.3, “Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean.”

By the time the Beijing Conference convened, however, Latin American activists, particularly regional leaders, had begun to focus on lobbying. They mobilized in response to the overall exclusion of NGOs from the fourth PrepCom in March 1995 (Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler 1998, 17–19; Valdés 1995) and the bracketing of language that they supported in the final document, the Platform for Action. Increased participation in “North American feminist-controlled global mega-networks” also helped bring Latin American perspectives to global organizing and to orient Latin American activists on the lobbying process (Alvarez 1998, 310; NGO Forum on Women 1995, 14; Vargas Valente 1996, 54). As the conference approached, women focused on the makeup of the official delegations. Feminists in Guatemala, Argentina, and Paraguay objected when their governments appointed to the delegations Catholic activists focused on a traditionalist gender agenda (Amado 1995, 3; Asturias 1995, 2; Rodríguez 1995, 5). By the opening of the Beijing Conference, NGO representatives had been appointed to most of the Latin American delegations (Alvarez 1998, 303; NGO Forum on Women 1995, 15).

But as became apparent in preparatory organizing, a general division had emerged between those who came to Beijing to lobby governments and those who preferred to network with fellow activists. In the Latin American and Caribbean “tent” (one of several regional meeting spaces at the NGO Forum), those identified as movement activists aired objections to lobbying (Alvarez 1998, 312–13). The distance between the site of the official conference and the NGO Forum (at least an hour by bus) exacerbated the divergent orientations of the participants. Some leaders made great efforts to be in two places at once, providing regular reports on the official conference at the regional tent. As a result of their efforts to bridge the governmental-nongovernmental divide, the closing declaration from the tent celebrated the vast efforts, historical and current, that made possible the actions taken at Beijing, particularly the growing emphasis on negotiating or lobbying.⁴³

Moreover, the techniques used at the official conference to solicit governmental response pushed the boundaries of lobbying techniques to include more movement-oriented strategies. The lobbyists found allies in many of the delegations (Hernández Carballido 1995, 4; Navarro 1995).⁴⁴ But those accredited to the official conference also took more direct action, particularly on the issue of economic justice, which they found to be neglected. After Virginia Vargas presented only the opening sentences of her prepared speech to the governmental plenary, she unfurled a banner that

43. “Declaración de América Latina y del Caribe,” 8 Sept. 1995. Online at (gopher://gopher.igc.apc.org:70/00/igc/apc/apcw/beijing/caucus/amlatcarib).

44. One official delegate who came from an NGO called this new sort of female participation *mujeres del chisme*, “gossips” who assembled to discuss the platform regularly (León 1995).

read “Transparency—New Resources—Economic Justice.” She stood holding it in silence for the rest of her allotted time. In another incident, Latin American activists took over the main escalators in the conference center, carrying placards reading “Justicia económica ya!” and chanting “Jus-ti-cia, jus-ti-cia!” Demonstrations of this kind were strictly forbidden on UN premises.

Social Dimensions

Latin American NGOs largely managed to achieve a consensus on the issues addressed by the Beijing Conference. Latin American governments shared many of their views, particularly on the need for economic development. But considerable disagreement remained between NGOs and half of the Latin American governments over the issue of how much to challenge the structure of gender relations. This conflict surfaced at the regional preparatory meeting and continued in Beijing.

The Latin American governmental document focused on eight priority areas: gender equity, development with a gender perspective, elimination of poverty, women’s equitable participation in decision making in public and private life, issues of human rights, peace, and violence, shared family responsibilities, recognition of cultural plurality, and international support and cooperation.⁴⁵ Issues of economic development were highlighted at Beijing. Government representatives from Ecuador, Venezuela, Honduras, Haiti, and Cuba used their plenary time to point out the problems stemming from structural adjustment and the insensitivity of the first world to the third world’s economic problems. Other governmental representatives drew attention to the problem of poverty in the region but did not question development policies promoted by first world governments and international and regional multilateral lending institutions.

Latin American NGO documents attest to the organizations’ agreement with many governmental perspectives, although NGO language is often stronger or more targeted. For example, at the Latin American NGO meeting, the summary document on development focused entirely on “structural adjustment”: “Periods of adjustment continue to leave women as the most beaten down [*golpeadas*] by these programs—moreover, with their capacity to fight back diminished” (Cuales 1994, 1). In the closing declaration from their “tent” at the NGO Forum in Beijing, Latin American activists acknowledged that structural adjustment policies had controlled spiraling inflation in the region but emphasized their “enormous social costs.” The document asserted that these policies “sustain the concentration of wealth and cause

45. UN Document E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.3, “Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean.”

the fragmentation and the exclusion of wide sectors of the population, weakening the social fabric."⁴⁶

Where major differences arose between nongovernmental and governmental perspectives was on the issue of gender relations.⁴⁷ Throughout the conference process, Latin American NGOs promoted a universal women's rights agenda that included aspects perceived as contravening Catholic or socially conservative beliefs, such as the protection of reproductive rights as well as gay and lesbian rights and the decriminalization of "voluntary interruption of pregnancy" (Faccio 1994, 8–10). NGOs indicated their opposition to the position of the Vatican and its allies on these issues by suggesting that Latin American states "stop the expansion, diffusion and impact of religious and political fundamentalism" (Faccio 1994, 9) and that the whole conference reconsider the fact that the Holy See holds governmental rather than nongovernmental status at the United Nations (NGO Forum on Women 1995, 88).⁴⁸

Among the allies of the Vatican, Latin American NGOs found half of their own governments. These Latin American governments joined the Holy See and governments influenced by fundamentalist Islamic thought in defending a more traditional conception of gender relations. This defense was illustrated by often amusing yet serious debate over use of the word *gender*. In the preparatory process, the Vatican objected to the feminist usage of the word, which distinguishes between biological sex and the roles, expectations, and actions of socialized men and women. Such a definition challenges Catholic doctrine on gender role "complementarity" and opens the door to acknowledging different sexual orientations. The Archbishop of Tegucigalpa and president of the Latin American Episcopal Conference, Oscar Rodríguez, went so far as to assert that the goal of the Beijing Conference was "to force society to accept five types of gender: masculine, feminine, lesbian, homosexual and transsexual" (quoted in Franco 1998, 282). At the final PrepCom, Honduras took the lead in insisting that the word *gender* be placed in brackets throughout the Platform for Action, pending a satisfactory definition.⁴⁹ Mysteriously, when Spanish-speaking delegates arrived

46. "Declaración de América Latina y del Caribe."

47. Indigenous women presented their own declaration to the official plenary, much of which focused on general demands of indigenous peoples, such as the international and national recognition and protection of their particular rights as well as increased allotment of development resources.

48. As they expressed it in their closing statement at the NGO Forum, "Put the Vatican in Brackets," in "Declaración de América Latina y del Caribe".

49. Peter Doran, Langston James Goree VI, Virginia Hulme, and Lynn Wagner, "A Periodic Report on the 39th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women," *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 14, no. 5 (3 Apr. 1995). On line at (<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/download/asc/enbl405e.txt>). This bulletin is an on-line reporting service published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development, based in Canada in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A complete

in Beijing, they found that the Spanish version of the Platform for Action had substituted the word *sex* for *gender* throughout.

Although this “mistake” and the conflict over the term were resolved in favor of keeping the term *gender* in the document, the larger debate continued throughout the conference. Plenary statements from Ecuador, Peru, and Argentina as well as reservations to the Platform for Action from the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru all affirmed that life begins at conception.⁵⁰ A plenary statement from Chile and reservations from Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Peru, and Venezuela opposed legalizing abortion or using it as a method of family planning. In the negotiations over the Platform for Action, Peru and Guatemala insisted that women leaders also be referred to as mothers.⁵¹ Argentina and Ecuador objected to language giving women “the right” to control their fertility because it would be conferring new rights on women.⁵² In their various reservations, Argentina and Peru defined the family as based on the relationship between a man and a woman; Paraguay and Guatemala declared gender to refer to both sexes; and Peru held that “sexual rights” applied only to heterosexual relationships.

Taking the entire Beijing process into account, Latin American countries divided into two groups. Argentina, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela followed “the Vatican line” on gender relations to some extent—and opposed the ideas of their own NGOs. Meanwhile, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay were either supportive of NGO stances or silent.

CONCLUSION

What do the findings about Latin American participation at the three UN conferences reveal about the existence of a global civil society? Table 1 summarizes the results of our study and compares them with our expectations about the regional findings.

index of its coverage of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Fourth World Conference on Women can be found on-line at (<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/vol14/>).

50. As a whole, Ecuador registered seven reservations; Argentina, six; the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru, five each; Nicaragua and Honduras, four each; and Venezuela, one. Reservations on the Platform for Action can be found following the Platform for Action (Document 127) in UN (1996, 723–35).

51. Peter Doran, Virginia Hulme, Yang Wanhua, Lynn Wagner, and Steve Wise, “A Daily Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women,” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 14, no. 15 (9 Sept. 1995). On-line at (<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/download/asc/enb1415e.txt>).

52. Peter Doran, Virginia Hulme, Yang Wanhua, Lynn Wagner, and Steve Wise, “A Daily Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women,” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 14, no. 12 (6 Sept. 1995). On-line at (<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/download/asc/enb1412e.txt>).

TABLE 1 *Global Civil Society: Definitions, Latin American Expectations, and Findings Based on Three UN Conferences in the 1990s*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Expectations for Latin America</i>	<i>Empirical Indicators for Latin America</i>	<i>Empirical Findings for Latin America</i>
Global	Geographically diverse and balanced representation; includes nonstate actors	Latin American NGO participation lower than share, especially compared with Northern NGOs	NGO participation proportional to regional population (10%)	Significant numerical increase but geographical representation skewed toward Northern NGOs
Civil	Regularized NGO participation in global interactions; NGO access to global forms of governance	Governmental inclusion of NGOs; NGO efforts to guard independence from governments	Inclusive regional procedures; relative independence of NGOs from governments	Mixed governmental inclusion of NGOs; cooperation among Northern and Southern NGOs; independent lobbying at all conferences; lobbying-networking debate at Rio and Beijing
Social	Existence of social regard; mutual behavioral expectations; shared substantive understandings	NGO-state differences on economic models (neoliberalism) and rights	Shared understandings of issues among NGOs and states in Latin America	Similar NGO-state frames on economic models; mixed interpretations of rights

Source: Definitions from Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler (1998, p. 3, t. 1).

Note: The conferences are the UN Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995).

First, we will consider the globality of Latin American participation. Overall, Latin American NGOs participated substantially in the set of conferences. At both Rio and Vienna, the number of Latin American participants exceeded the Latin American share of the global population. The predominance of Latin Americans (41 percent) at the NGO Forum of the Rio Conference, the one conference held in their part of the world, contrasted with their much smaller numbers in faraway Beijing (4 percent), illustrate

that practical and financial limits still constrain the ability of Latin American NGOs to participate in global fora. Nonetheless, Latin Americans made up 8 percent of the NGOs accredited to the official conference in Beijing and 15 percent of the forum representatives in Vienna. These numbers show that Latin Americans are likely to be part of any global civil society that forms.

In the civil dimension, we observed growth both in Latin American NGOs' networking during the conference processes and in their strategic alliances with other Northern and Southern NGOs. Latin American governments were somewhat accepting of NGO participation at both regional and global conferences but were more eager to incorporate NGO delegates in conference processes than to promise future collaboration. Meanwhile, NGOs in the environmental and women's sectors were split as to the degree of cooperation they sought with governments, many being more interested in talking to each other than focusing possibly futile efforts on altering governmental agendas. Some compromises were struck, with non-governmental strategies infiltrating governmental arenas at the Beijing Conference. The division over lobbying versus networking was not as deep for Latin American NGOs at Vienna, perhaps because a major goal was to achieve stronger guarantees of rights from governments, which virtually required a lobbying approach. In all three issue areas, however, Latin American governments still face a burden of proof to show that they are willing to accept actors from civil society as partners at home and abroad.

In the social component, NGO representatives sought to push issues further than more conservative governments, whether in promoting sustainable development, punishing violators of human rights, or challenging traditional gender relations. But a surprising amount of agreement was achieved among representatives of civil society and governments. At the Rio Conference, the connection between development and the environment was upheld by all, as was the need to address poverty. At Vienna, the Latin American governments did not dispute the universalism of human rights, as did governments from Asia and Africa. And at Beijing, half of the Latin American countries seemed to be not openly opposed to NGO perspectives on gender relations. Along with their NGOs, almost all Latin American governments seemed more interested in criticizing neoliberal economic models and their impacts on citizens than in supporting the recent economic changes.

What light do these findings shed on our initial questions about the extent to which Latin American participation in global fora reflect global patterns of civil society development? As can be seen in table 1, Latin American NGOs have struggled successfully to increase their representation in global civil society. Representation in global fora and access to them remain difficult for participants from developing countries, although effective regional preparatory processes can help in this regard. As to the nature and

extent of civil participation, we found (as predicted) that NGOs continued to insist on independence from their governments, partly in response to the inconsistent welcome from those quarters. But two other central patterns emerged in NGO participation: strong internal arguments over the proper focus (the lobbying versus networking debate) and the crucial support for Latin Americans' stances and actions from extraregional NGO networks. Finally, while the extent of the society created by Latin American NGOs and governments at the conferences was limited by real differences over the framing of issues, particularly on rights, more agreement was evident regionally than at the global level.

It is clear from this analysis that regional dynamics have a profound impact on participation in global civil society. The contention among NGOs over the most effective use of energy and resources can be easily traced to a history of confrontation between civil society and the state in Latin America and to uncertainties about the extent of democratization. The issues on which shared understandings are difficult to craft at the global level reflect ongoing and deep-seated regional problems that governments have proved unwilling or slow to address: environmental degradation in the context of economic inequality, impunity for violators of human rights, and lack of full equality for women.

Yet the growing numbers of participants and perhaps unexpected agreements on procedures and substance revealed in this study of Latin American participation in global civil society also tell another story. The recent political liberalization in Latin America brought state and civil society actors closer together at home and in the global negotiations, but both sides evidenced wariness as they maneuvered through a number of regional "firsts": the first time that governmental negotiators invited large numbers of nongovernmental participants to a regional conference, the first time that nongovernmental actors helped write governmental position papers, and so on. That regional sensibility produced more Latin American agreement on the substance of the conference negotiations than was present in other regions of the world.

Thus even when deeply split at home, Latin American governments and NGOs can make common cause at the global level, especially to press home issues that continue to affect the global South disproportionately. At the same time, Latin American NGOs have used their growing networks of allies in the North and the South to advocate positions that remain highly contentious at home. For regional reasons, Latin Americans' involvement in global civil society seems stronger than we anticipated. Latin Americans are participants and not just followers in the reworking of global governance. At the same time, further democratization of global governance depends on deepening democratic relations at home.

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