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**A Trellis for Nonprofits?  
The Growth of Government Civil Society Registries\***

The RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service Working Paper  
Summer Fellowship Program, June 2010\*\*

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\* Support for this research was provided by the International Rotary Foundation; Initiatives for Women, University at Albany; the Benevolent Association, University at Albany; and the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin.

\*\* Special thanks to Peter Frumkin for his generosity in time and help with organizing and writing this working paper and to the RGK summer fellows—Lewis Faulk, Parissa Jahromi, Avishag Rudich-Cohn, Jurgen Willems and Nathaniel Wright—for their thoughtful discussions and contributions as well.

## **A Trellis for Nonprofits? The Growth of Government Civil Society Registries**

### **Abstract**

Civil society registries have emerged as a type of a government-implemented policy tool that, according to policymakers, aim to do everything from compile information, promote accountability and foster collaboration. I argue that these types of policy tools have profound consequences to the development of civil society. Drawing from literature on institutional isomorphism, policy studies, government-nonprofit contracting, and development studies and using a case study of Ecuador, this article intends to (1) explore the emerging phenomena of civil society registries; (2) examine the intentions and interpretations of such a registry; and (3) investigate its possible implications for civil society development and civil society-state relations. The article ends with a discussion on the possible implications for the development of civil society and directions for future research on civil society registries.

### **Keywords**

civil society registries, civil society organizations, regulation, civil society development, Ecuador

## A Trellis for Nonprofits? The Growth of Government Civil Society Registries

*We wanted to have a database of information.*

- Ecuadorian Ministry Official

*It is for knowledge, we don't even know how many NGOs there are, what they do, what type they are because they are not only NGOs, but also neighborhood associations, producer associations, among others. The Ministry of Coordination for Social Development is gathering the information. The Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion has the majority of these organizations, it has its own information system and we are going to consolidate it to one database, that is what the civil society registry is.*

- Jeannette Sánchez, Ecuador's Minister of Social and Economic Inclusion

### 1. Introduction

Civil society registries have emerged as a type of a government-implemented policy tool that, according to policymakers, aim to compile information, promote accountability and foster collaboration by collecting, housing and publishing information on civil society organizations. Not only an administrative, bureaucratic action, I argue that these types of policy tools have profound consequences of the development of civil society. Many contributions in the nonprofit studies literature, often rooted in the U.S., have focused on civil society relations with government. In particular, much attention is given to contracting and its' potentially detrimental effects on civil society. While these concerns are deserved, nonprofit studies and development scholars need to recognize a phenomenon that in many contexts occurs well before a nonprofit contracts with a government entity. Attention in these fields must be paid to the emerging trend of government-implemented civil society registries and their implications on civil society. In many countries, civil society registries offer civil society organizations their first interaction with government. These registries are not only administrative actions, rather they lay the groundwork for civil society-state relations, particularly in the developing country context.

In this paper, I first introduce the limited literature on what I have generically termed a civil society registry. Then, I draw from literatures that can help us understand the role of policy in shaping civil society such as scholarship on institutional isomorphism, policy studies, government-nonprofit contracting, and development studies. Through the case study of Ecuador, this article intends to (1) explore the emerging phenomena of civil society registries; (2) examine the intentions and interpretations of a registry; and (3) investigate its possible implications for civil society and civil society-state relations.

It has been argued that the collection of information on civil society organizations is critical to understanding civil society. Massive efforts have been undertaken to map civil society across countries to compare civil society's strength and effectiveness (see Salamon, 2004; Heinrich, 2007; also see discussion by Biekart, 2008). Salamon (2004) states:

Even the most basic information about these organizations—their numbers, size, activities, economic weight, finances, and role—has consequently been lacking in most countries, while deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to their growth and decline has been almost nonexistent. As a consequence, the civil society sector's ability to participate in the significant policy debates now under way has been seriously hampered and its potential for contributing to the solution of pressing problems too often challenged or ignored (p. 4).

Thus, civil society registries have become a growing recommendation by scholars, international donor organizations, and think tanks from around the world. Registries exist across diverse countries that include Hungary, United States<sup>1</sup>, Chile, Vietnam, and Kosovo, for examples.

However, there is little discussion on how data collection efforts that are implemented by governments relate to other policy goals, influence the development of civil society, and shape

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<sup>1</sup> In the U.S., the pressures to streamline and standardize the legalization process have led to registry initiatives. Government data on civil society organizations in the U.S. housed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have been noted to be out of date, and several organizations with legal status are no longer active (Lampkin & Boris, 2002). This has generated major efforts to consolidate, maintain, and make information easily available to, for example, the public, researchers and donors. The National Center for Charitable Statistics has been created with the goal to standardize (1) the data and (2) the classification system for a national nonprofit research data system (Lampkin & Boris, 2002). The initiative represents a collaborative relationship among several nonprofit umbrella organizations, the IRS and state governments (Lampkin & Boris, 2002).

broader civil society-state relations.<sup>2</sup>

In the developing country context, it is mostly international development practitioners that include the policy tool of a registry within the framework for civil society development and regulation. International development practitioners have advocated that registries foster public assurance of civil society and government transparency and accountability by providing access to information. In some cases, a civil society organization that receives public funding may be required to report more detailed financial and programmatic activities to ensure further public accountability of public resources (ICNL, 1998; ICNL, 2006b; Open Society Institute, 2004). The Open Society Institute (2004), for example, asserts that when “the public has access to the registry of [civil society organizations], it can provide additional and useful oversight and bring to light possible problems that may have been overlooked by the government” (p. 27).

A civil society registry fits within a growing trend of what Weil, Fung, Graham, and Fagotto (2006) call “regulatory transparency,” described as when “government collects information from public and private organization or from individuals about their organizational processes, services, or products and transmits that information to the general public to advance specific public policies” (p. 156).<sup>3</sup> Disclosure recommendations for a national registry include the names of the board of directors, contact information of civil society organizations, and

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<sup>2</sup> Registries that seek to collect and standardize data have their limitations and critics. For example, Smith (1997) notes that scholars examining U.S. civil society tend to ignore informal grassroots organizations. He states that scholars mis-measure civil society in the U.S. by using IRS-based data. He calls “flat earth nonprofit scholarship” when scholarship only notes nonprofits with paid staff. Often, grassroots organizations, in the U.S. and elsewhere are locally based and not formally registered (e.g. until just recently organizations with less than \$25,000 did not have to register in the U.S.). Little is known about grassroots organizations as they are often not counted within economic indicators. However, because there are so many grassroots organizations, Smith (1997) believes that if combined they would have economic significance. To be fair, Lampkin and Boris (2002) also note that using only IRS-based data limits the understanding of formal nonprofit organizations themselves, not to mention grassroots organizations.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, information can be powerful, as many advocates of a registry have argued. Providing public information is considered itself a policy tool. Weiss (2002) states that “information is a tool for eliciting desired policy outcomes” (p. 218). From one perspective, registries are what Weiss (2002) calls a top-down approach to public information. This approach is when governments collect information and “distribute [it] to actors who need or want it so that they may produce a desired outcome” (p. 217).

organizational mission and objectives (Open Society Institute, 2004).

Other recommendations include where a registry should be located. While a civil society organization might complete a legal formation process at a sub-national location, international think tanks and organizations suggest that a registry be centralized at the national government level (ICNL, 2006a; Open Society Institute, 2004). A single, centralized national registry implemented by government and housed in a single national agency is beneficial because it builds expertise by running it within a single government entity (Moore, 2005). However, when a registry is implemented by government, what are government's intentions? How are these intentions interpreted by civil society? And what implications, intended or otherwise, might the registry have on the development of civil society and government-civil society relations?

## **2. Shaping Civil Society**

Many literatures can help to understand government policy's role in shaping civil society. Policy tools—like civil society registries—can be looked at through the lens of institutional isomorphism as articulated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). Through coercive mechanisms such as the rules imposed by a registry, a registry becomes a means to encourage civil society organizations to conform to the same organizational structure. Indeed, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) predicted that institutional isomorphism in organizational theory would become important within policy fields and cautioned about the impact policymakers can have not only on organizational structure but on organizational fields as a whole. From a more critical stance, scholars Short and Wright (1997) note the act of normalization through policy and its design, similar to DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) normative isomorphism, stating that: "subjects 'normalized' through the powers of expertise, have become key resources for the modern forms of government" (Short & Wright, 1997, p. 9). They find that policies are often covert in their

intentions, masking the dimension of power and constructing citizens in concealed ways (Short & Wright, 1997).

There are several contributions in policy studies that illuminate the impacts of government policy design on the individual citizen and organizations. Scholars assert that policy design is how information is organized and presented to the public, constructing definitions to public problems using logic models and causal mechanisms (Birkland, 2005; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993; Stone, 2002). Policy design theorists argue that designs of policy tools can “exacerbate inequality in wealth, status, and power as those who already have the most tend to gain even more from public policy” creating benefits for some and burdens for others (Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 104). This is pushed forward by welfare policy analysts who examine the effects of policy design on welfare recipients (Schram, 1995; Soss, 1999). Soss (1999)<sup>4</sup> found that the design of welfare policy impacts welfare recipients’ political learning and can support or discourage engaged citizenship. Policy scholars argue that policies send messages that influence citizens’ political efficacy and political voice (Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Smith & Ingram, 2002; Soss, 1999).

In nonprofit studies, depoliticization has been discussed within the context of the sector’s professionalization process<sup>5</sup> and has been central in the literature on contracting. Smith and

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<sup>4</sup> Soss (1999) compared the experiences of two U.S. public programs’ recipients: Social Service Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). He found relationships between the recipients’ political efficacy and the differences between the policy designs of the two programs. Both recipient groups believed that collective action was possible. However, based on their experiences with individual caseworkers, a requirement in the AFDC policy design, AFDC recipients were more likely to feel that public officials do not listen to them. Soss (1999) argues that public policies can support or discourage citizen participation stating that: “policy designs are more than just government outputs. They are political forces that have important effects on the beliefs and actions of citizens” (p. 376).

<sup>5</sup> The professionalization process can be considered a process that sets forth minimum standards for, in the case of nonprofits, professional care. See Abbott’s (1988) introduction for a concise history of the concept of professionalization. A profession itself can be defined as an “occupational group with some special skill” (Abbott, 1988, p. 7). The shift from activists providing services to professional service providers provides a good example for professionalization in the nonprofit sector. For instance, shelters for battered women and rape crisis centers were originally nonprofit community organizations run by nonprofessional feminist activists, but with the increase in

Lipsky's (1993) work on nonprofit-government contracting coined the "contract regime" in the U.S. as a process where "government gradually influences the behavior of independent nonprofit contractors to accept its practices and preferred policies" (p. 45). Many U.S.-forced studies have examined issues related to contracting and its relationship to partnership (Gazley & Brudney, 2007), mutual dependence among governments and nonprofit (Saidel, 1989, 1991), management and ethics within contracting (Bernstein, 1991), and privatization (Van Slyke, 2003), for examples. In addition, many of the typologies on nonprofit-government relations in both developing and developed countries include contracting as a key component (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Coston, 1998; Najam, 2000; Salamon, 1987, 2002, 2006; Young, 2000). Lipsky and Smith (1989) articulated concerns within contracting relations stating that: "as government increasingly penetrates the nonprofit sector it undermines the civic virtues of nonprofit organizations, such as citizen participation in service development, voluntarism and community definitions of proper support for the needy" (p. 648).

Alexander, Nank, and Stivers' (1999) research pushed forward the discussion on contracting with their study on the implications of welfare reform on nonprofit organizations in the U.S. The 1996 welfare reform<sup>6</sup> changed the nature of devolved and government-financed social programs. Alexander et al. (1999) found a "bifurcation" of nonprofit organizations that competed for these newly available federal funds, that organizations noticed an increasing dependence on government funds, and that organizations were adapting in such a way that suggested a withdrawal from political and community activities. Alexander et al. (1999) state: "various public goods of research, teaching, advocacy, citizenship, and serving the poor are

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government funding and subsequent requirements, they have been encouraged—and at times mandated—to hire human service professionals (Lipsky & Smith, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA, Pub. L. 104-193, 110 Stat. 2105, enacted August 22, 1996).



progressively falling away as nonprofits push to adopt more market-oriented practices, and to meet individual client demand rather than community need” (p. 460).<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, development studies literature has examined both public programs and development trends as they relate to the evolution of civil society. For example, critical development studies have questioned why some nonprofits yield to professionalization and market demands (Srinivas, 2009). Authors recognize the similarities of language used in the projects of civil society participation and the neoliberal model (Bebbington et al., 2008; Dagnino, 2008; Leiva, 2008; Petras, 1997; Schild, 2000). A divide or “bifurcation” among civil society organizations is often related to links with the state and/or donors in the developing country context. These relationships might perpetuate what has been called a “widening rift” favoring those organizations that are more funded and supported by the state and donors in service delivery (such as larger nongovernmental organizations) while marginalizing organizations dedicated to more constituency empowerment issues (such as neighborhood groups) (Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Brysk, 2000).

Indeed, institutional isomorphism, policy scholarship and nonprofit and development studies have illuminated how policy can influence behavior and shape subjects—individuals and organizations. In particular, nonprofit studies contribute to our understanding of contracting relations and their implications on civil society. I wish to shift the focus to include other policy initiatives, one which perhaps has more relevance in developing countries. I will introduce the case of Ecuador’s civil society registry to highlight both the intentions and interpretations of the

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<sup>7</sup> Likewise, yet through a more critical lens, the U.S.-based social justice organization, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence has criticized the shift of many nonprofit organizations from advocating for radical change to a social reform agenda (INCITE!, 2007; see also Hammack, 2001). INCITE! (2007) accuses funders and the 501(c)(3) system in the U.S. of pushing the sector to professionalize and sideline grassroots mobilization. As a result organizations are derailed into looking for funding, rather than pursuing solutions to community needs, as seen also in the case of Ohio (Alexander et al., 1999).

registry and the need for more research on this policy tool.

### 3. The Case of Ecuador

This paper uses the recent implementation of a civil society registry in the South American country of Ecuador to examine the intentions and interpretations of civil society registries. Ecuador is used as an “instrumental case study” as defined by Stake (1995). That is, I use the case to understand and provide insight to the phenomena of a civil society registry. First, I will briefly discuss civil society in Ecuador. Then I will share findings based on data derived from interviews with civil society leaders and ministerial officials, news reports and civil society discourse. I introduce the government’s intentions for a registry, i.e., how the Ecuadorian government is defining the problem and setting goals for the registry. I discuss the implementation process of the registry and then its interpretations by civil society organizations.

The case study includes analysis of in-depth interviews with several civil society leaders and ministry officials conducted in Quito, Ecuador in July and August 2009. Respondents for the interviews included civil society leaders who in 2008 were among the first civil society leaders to participate in at least one capacity-building workshop that addressed the registry. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 civil society leaders in Quito, Ecuador<sup>8</sup>. The civil society interview participants represent social service, environmental, women’s, health and education<sup>9</sup>, social and popular, religious, youth, and rights organizations. In addition, one lawyer who was interviewed is not employed or affiliated to one single organization, rather she was present at the

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<sup>8</sup> Seventy-nine persons were emailed from the list of workshop participants as of July 2009 provided by the Ministry of Coordination of Social Development. Of these 79 emails, 19 bounced back and/or the emails no longer existed. Twenty-two civil society leaders responded and accepted to be interviewed. Of these 22, 2 interviews were unable to be conducted because of scheduling conflicts.

<sup>9</sup> Four organizations identified as health and education organizations all had programming in both education and health. In fact, these organizations felt that health and education were very interrelated. They all had separate health and education programs but many of the programs overlapped.

capacity-building workshops because she had several civil society organizations as clients<sup>10</sup>. Five civil society leaders represented organizations not legalized in Ecuador. Fifteen organizations interviewed are legalized and registered across several line ministries. Consistent with national data<sup>11</sup>, almost half of the organizations interviewed are legalized through the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion. I also interviewed five ministerial officials from different line ministries. Transcripts from in-depth interviews were analyzed and coded to sort data into themes that describe and explain interpretations of the registry by civil society leaders and ministerial officials.

In Ecuador, civil society organizations have played key roles in governance (Cabrera & Vallejo, 1997; Heinrich, 2007; World Bank, 2007). Like many other Latin American countries, in Ecuador civil society organizations in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were strongly tied to the Catholic Church or part of elite society. Labor unions emerged in the 1930s and by the mid century, charitable organizations began to transform into development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The newly focused NGOs, while remaining close to the Church, tackled issues such as rural technical assistance, disability services, family planning, and education (World Bank, 2007).

Since 1979, Ecuador has shifted to democracy while experiencing a severe economic crisis. Cuts in state-funded social programs and the implementation of economic reforms drove the increase of civil society organizations in the 1980s (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007; World Bank, 2007). Many of these organizations focused on new social movement themes, creating organizations for issues such as the environment, women, and indigenous rights (World Bank,

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<sup>10</sup> Also, at least one interview participant wore two hats at the workshop, this participant represented a civil society organization and was also a lawyer to several other civil society organizations.

<sup>11</sup> Currently the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion has legalized and registered almost 50% Ecuador's civil society organizations (<http://www.sociedadcivil.gov.ec>).

2007). In the late 1990s, civil society was highly involved in contesting the state and subsequently the Ecuadorian government started to lose legitimacy. Civil society mobilizations<sup>12</sup> were key factors in the ousting of three presidents (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007; Heinrich, 2007).

The Ecuadorian government, for some time, did not have a sense of how many civil society organizations existed (Carrión, 2009; World Bank, 2007). In 2007, the World Bank stated that, "...the registration process of [civil society organizations] is dispersed among different line ministries and between the national and local levels. So that it is difficult to gauge the total number of [civil society organizations] actively operating in [Ecuador]" (World Bank, 2007, p. 36). The System of Social Organizations of Ecuador was the most comprehensive database, however, participation by civil society organizations in this registry was voluntary (World Bank, 2007). The System of Social Organizations of Ecuador counted 685 civil society organizations in 2005 working in social development (Fundación Alternativas, 2005; World Bank, 2007).

Civil society organizations have not proven to be concerned with internal democracy and transparency, thus self-regulation mechanisms are rare and public accountability is generally weak (Heinrich, 2007). Furthermore, institutionalized relationships between civil society and the state are not prevalent in Ecuador, rather they "are most effectively forged through personal contacts, suggesting a more informal interaction" (World Bank, 2007, p. 34). Additionally, positive collaborations among civil society organizations themselves are not common in Ecuador. Funding is tight and competitive and is often absorbed by urban, professional NGOs (Heinrich, 2007), resulting in an often fragmented civil society (World Bank, 2007). In fact, civil

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<sup>12</sup> Despite civil society mobilization, citizen participation is considered very low and political culture in Ecuador is generally contentious. Only 28% of Ecuadorians report involvement in nonpartisan political action and only 32% in community activities (Heinrich, 2007). However, civil society has still managed to be active and vast. Ecuadorians compared with other Latin Americans, have a higher level of associational affiliation coming in second out of a twenty-one country study (World Bank, 2007).

society is said to be divided among a more organized and forceful indigenous movement and all other civil society organizations and social movements.

In sum, while civil society in Ecuador has been active in many sectors, the Ecuadorian government has been unsure how many civil society organizations are functioning in the country, the accountability and transparency of these organizations have been questioned, and their relationships with the public sector and among themselves have been considered weak and informal. These dimensions have been, for the government and some civil society organizations, driving forces for the implementation of a civil society registry in Ecuador. In the next three sections, I will examine: first, Ecuador's civil society registry and the government's intentions with its implementation; second, the introduction of the registry to civil society organizations; and third, civil society's interpretation of the registry.

#### **4. Government's Intentions**

Ecuador's civil society registry, called the Registry of Civil Society Organizations (hereafter referred to as its Spanish acronym: RUOSC), is a centralized database that keeps record of legally recognized civil society organizations and makes this information publicly available. It was created through a March 25, 2008 Decree No. 982 to enact ideas laid out in a 2002 decree<sup>13</sup> that had not been fully implemented. The Correa Administration, in office since January 2007, determined that laws toward civil society were not well defined and that new measures were needed to avoid abuses. The RUOSC was initially charged to the Ministry of Coordination of Social Development (hereafter referred to as its Spanish acronym: MCDS). The MCDS combined the registries from the previous legal formation process that were housed across different line ministries and other government entities. The RUOSC was launched online in November 2008 and since July 2009, it has been under the charge of the Secretary for People,

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<sup>13</sup> This 2002 decree was published in the Official Register No. 660 on September 11, 2002.

## Social Movements and Citizen Participation.

### 4.1 Counting and Gathering Data

In the Decree itself and in news reports, the Ecuadorian government tends to emphasize two key goals for the registry: data collection and accountability to the public. Officially, the registry aims to standardize and centralize information on civil society by combining and verifying previous registries that were housed across several ministries. As described by one ministerial official, the registry's goal is "first and foremost, to be a database of information on civil society organizations" (Minister Official, personal communication, August 2, 2009).

Through its goal to collect and standardize information, the Decree also aims to clarify the definitions of civil society organizations (foundations and corporations) by providing guidelines for their legal formation (Correa, 2008)<sup>14</sup>. Through this goal, the registry itself is woven into a civil society organization's legalization process in Ecuador. To be a foundation, an organization must be legalized, be not-for-profit, and engage in activities that promote and develop social, cultural and educational programs for the public benefit. A corporation must also be legalized and be not-for-profit but are to provide a common good for its members or a determined community. Corporations are further divided into three levels. A first-degree corporation represents a group of people of at least five members such as: clubs, committees, professional groups, and centers. A second-degree corporation is considered an umbrella group of first-degree groups like a federation or chamber. And finally, a third degree corporation is an even more encompassing umbrella group of the second-degree organizations such as confederations, national unions or similar organizations (Ministry of Coordination of Social Development, 2008a). The Decree also introduces minimum financial requirements for

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<sup>14</sup> Decree No. 982 was signed by President Rafael Correa Delgado; former Minister, Nathalie Cely Suárez, of the Ministry of Coordination of Social Development and Manuela Gallego Anda of the Secretary for People, Social Movements and Citizen Participation.

organizations. The amount of money required to obtain legal status depends on the structure of the civil society organization. A foundation must have a minimum of \$4,000 in assets. A first-degree corporation must have assets of at least \$400 while both second- and third-degree corporations, like foundations, must have assets of at least \$4,000 (Ministry of Coordination of Social Development, 2008a).

#### **4.2 Accountability to Government and the Public**

Along with more standardized information, another intention of the registry is accountability to government and the public. The Decree No. 982 itself states: “It is necessary to achieve greater transparency and accountability of public resources by establishing regulation of special entities” (Correa, 2008). In a given fiscal year, civil society organizations in Ecuador are said to manage about three billion U.S. dollars but it is unclear how much of these funds are public resources. The registry seeks to distinguish public and private resources to enable the accountability of public funds (Ministry of Coordination of Social Development, 2008c).

To create an environment with more regulation for accountability, the registry has included a process for the legal verification of a civil society organization that is based on a line ministry<sup>15</sup> legalization system. An organization first must present its documents to a line ministry that corresponds to its policy area in order that the line ministry can verify that the civil society organization is active, cross-check that it is paying taxes to Ecuador’s Internal Revenue Service and judge if the organization is completing its stated objective. By early 2010, the Secretary, with the compiled registries, determined that 45,719 civil society organizations are legalized in Ecuador, however, only 400 had been verified under the RUOSC (Sosa, 2010).

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<sup>15</sup> In Ecuador, there are several line ministries that legalize civil society organizations. Some of these include: Ministries of Environment; Agriculture; Sport; Education; Economy and Finance; Electricity and Renewable Energy; Commerce; Urban and Housing Development; Public Health; Exterior Relations; Tourism; Government and Policy; and Economic and Social Inclusion (<http://www.sociedadcivil.gov.ec>).

In addition, a line ministry must ensure that an organization does not threaten “security and interests of the state” (Correa, 2008). Once it is legally formed in a line ministry, the organization must register itself in the RUOSC online. After these two steps, an organization may wish to be ‘accredited.’ This is obligatory if the organization is currently receiving, or wishes to receive, public resources. To be accredited, the organization must present itself to the corresponding line ministry where it is legalized. Line ministries accredit civil society organizations based on criteria that includes experience, personnel, and programming activities (Ministry of Coordination of Social Development, 2008b)<sup>16</sup>.

### **4.3 Collaboration with Government and in Civil Society**

In addition to collecting, standardizing and counting data and ensuring accountability, the registry in Ecuador is seen as a means for collaboration, according to the government. This is a goal that is not outlined in the Decree itself, rather, information directed at civil society organizations and information on the registry’s website tends to focus more on this third goal or intention of the registry, i.e., to foster collaboration. In particular, the website describes the collaborative nature of relationships between government and civil society that can be fostered by the registry. It states that the objective of the registry is to synergize the efforts of both civil society organizations and the state through the information system, offering a space to link both civil society organizations and the public sector for greater opportunities in the implementation of social policies in Ecuador (<http://www.sociedadcivil.gov.ec>). Beyond fostering relationships between civil society and the public sector, the government wishes to facilitate “opportunities and encounters among people and organizations that work in different sectors to support the construction of a country with a vision of responsibility and solidarity”

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<sup>16</sup> Eight of the twenty civil society organizations interviewed for Ecuadorian case study currently receive or intend to be eligible to receive public funds, i.e., they are accredited or in the process of accreditation



(<http://www.sociedadcivil.gov.ec>).

### **5. Implementing Ecuador's Registry for Civil Society Organizations**

In 2008, when the Decree No. 982 was made public, a formal letter was received by several of the civil society interviewees of this study and, in addition, most of the organizations received emails. The government was forthcoming with its' need for the help of civil society networks and forums to spread information (<http://www.sociedadcivil.gov.ec>). For example, one civil society leader helped with information dissemination by passing along the Decree to a network of more than 400 groups that work in children's development (Social Organization 019, personal communication, August 7, 2009). Mass emails and other correspondence from civil society networks were coupled with the several workshops for civil society organizations in Quito<sup>17</sup> conducted by the MCDS. Much of the concern about the implementation by civil society leaders interviewed centered around the apparent lack of involvement from civil society leaders during the formulation phases of the Decree. Comments like "government should have involved us" were very common in the interviews and many organizations showed resentment toward government because it was at the workshops that they were first introduced to the registry. All civil society interviewees attended at least one workshop. These capacity-building workshops became the first direct, personal contact between civil society and government in relation to the registry.

During interviews with civil society leaders, the capacity-building workshops were often criticized. Civil society interviewees stated that the workshop facilitators were often unable to answer questions posed by civil society attendees. Many of the interviewed civil society leaders described the workshops as "disorganized" or that workshop facilitators were "not well

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<sup>17</sup> Starting in April 2009 to September of 2009, capacity-building workshops were also offered outside of Quito with support from the United Nations Volunteer program (Arrieta, 2009).

prepared.” In fact, the facilitators were portrayed as “uninformed” and “lacking experience.” Experiences of the interviewees offer evidence of the government’s tendency to frame the registry as an administrative and/or an information technology issue. One interviewee stated that workshop facilitators “did not know what they were doing. When they were asked a question, they stood there in silence. They then would jot it down and say they would get back to you, and did they? No!” (Social Service Organization 010, July 28, 2009). Many interviewees were aware that they were not given time for questions and the use of the time was not effective. For example, one organization said, “The workshop that I went to was in a hotel, was very short, and in fact, it seemed like a lot of food for so little information” (Voluntary Organization 012, July 29, 2009). Several of the interviewees are waiting for more information and further capacity-building workshops. One interviewee explains:

Out of ten, the workshops were a four. It seems like they were watered down, ... they were about the technical or the ‘how to’ of the new system. Those organizations attending the workshops were generally organizations that are already completing legal requirements. We wanted a *discussion about* the new changes. If I had questions, they did not know (Not Legalized Organization 006, personal communication, July 23, 2009).

Civil society leaders gave an account of how they were not given the chance to discuss what the changes meant for civil society during both the formulation and implementation stages of the registry. Many organizations wanted the government to explain and answer, “Why now?”; “For what exact purpose?” At the workshops, civil society leaders were eager to discuss how the tool might impact their programming with government officials, for example, however, no civil society interviewee discussed having this opportunity. Some interviewees suggested that, in fact, it was not just the workshops that were unprepared; rather it was the entire policy shift. One interviewee stated:

I went to a workshop by the Ministry of Coordination [MCSD]. My critique would be that [those of the MCSD] were not really prepared, that is, they were not ready. There

were a lot of questions that could not be answered. They said to register... but the website was not up... they said to get accredited... but the [line] ministries were not ready for this process. [Line] ministries were not trained in time (Social Organization 019, personal communication, August 7, 2009).

Soon after civil society organizations attended these workshops, some organizations began the process of registering in the registry while others started a public debate about its meaning and implications.

## **6. Civil Society Organizations' Interpretations**

Indeed, the workshops and their delivery, as well as increasing public debate about the registry, enabled civil society organizations to reflect and interpret the possible impact of the registry on their work and their relationships with government entities. The following sections present three overall interpretations of civil society organizations that emerged out of the interviews.

### **6.1 No Big Deal... Supportive Organizations**

While the general feelings by civil society organizations about the workshops were that they were not entirely effective nor provided a place for discussion, a few organizations felt the workshops were helpful and necessary, even if disorganized. One interviewee went to a workshop and felt that gathering the paperwork required for the registry and other related requirements in Decree No. 982 was not a problem, rather was just a matter of making copies of documents. The interviewee was a leader of a professionalized national civil society organization, self-described as “the most organized NGO in the country,” with available staff and resources (Youth Organization 007, July 24, 2009). Findings from the interviews suggest a relationship between positive reflections on the new registry and more professionalized organizations represented by some interviewees. Civil society leaders who did not have available staff on hand to prepare new requirements were more likely to feel strained by the registry and

that government officials were avoiding their questions. Thus, those organizations with more administrative infrastructure were able to adjust faster.<sup>18</sup>

Many such professionalized organizations felt that the registry's goals of data collection and public accountability were needed and related to each other. According to several organizations the registry in Ecuador seeks to sort out the organizations that are inactive or not fulfilling their objectives. The theme of 'ghost organizations' within Ecuadorian civil society emerged frequently during the interviews with civil society leaders and ministerial officials. One of the most repeated comments during the interviews was that the new registry will 'filter' out the 'ghost organizations' that do not accomplish what they are set out to do. One interviewee explains, "we need to filter—there was a time when civil society organizations proliferated, now we must filter out the bad ones" (Social Organization 019, personal communication, August 7, 2009). Specific to public accountability, some interviewees believed that it is the state that must assume the role of filtering to protect the public from abuses, specifically abuses by civil society organizations that work in service provision.

Thus, some civil society interviewees felt that more regulation is beneficial to civil society in Ecuador. For example, one interviewee said: "I would like to see us regulated more, it gives us more legitimacy and a greater sense of accountability" (Social Service Organization 003, personal communication, July 21, 2009). Likewise, another said, "I think it is a good change, I agree with the government, civil society organizations have to be regulated to some extent, there are always abuses, there are those [organizations] that are created for social development but are not really doing this or worse, they are only organizations on paper [like

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<sup>18</sup> Ecuador is cited to have a small group of professionalized NGOs that work in social development. According Brautigam and Segarra (2007) partnerships fostered by donor institutions such as the World Bank, have helped with building this core group of professionalized organizations (see also World Bank, 2007).

ghost organizations]. I think forced transparency is a good step” (Network Education Organization 004, personal communication, July 23, 2009).

Several interviewees considered that regulation will benefit civil society organizations in the end because many civil society organizations are not complying with the law which makes all organizations “look bad” (Youth Organization 007, July 24, 2009). In fact, according to some interviewees, several organizations in Ecuador are pushing for more laws to be written to regulate civil society. One organization said, “Sure, there are those organizations that are afraid of such regulation, but if you run things well, you will have no need to worry” (Health and Education Organization 014, personal communication, August 3, 2009). Another interviewee admitted: “We want regulation because we are abandoned in some respects” (Social Service Organization 003, July 21, 2009).

## **6.2 Mobilization & Opposition ... Resistant Organizations**

Despite some organizations’ positive feelings toward the registry, some civil society interviewees were aware of the threats of political interference and this concern was at the core of public debates about the registry in Ecuador. Civil society interviewees cited the very public rejection to a legalization renewal of an environmental justice organization. *Acción Ecológica* (Environmental Action) is one of the most politically active civil society organizations in Ecuador with international acclaim among those working for environmental justice. *Acción Ecológica* has been a forceful voice in many national debates in Ecuador including protecting land against oil, logging, and mining industries (Denvir, 2009). Most recently, the organization supported peasant and indigenous protests against large-scale mining in Ecuador. While in the past it had supported many of the current Correa Administration’s policies and initiatives, in the last year it had become one of the Administration’s biggest critics. *Acción Ecológica* fought the

mining law asserting that it favored transnational mining companies and deeply harmed local communities (La Prensa, 2009).

To comply with the new registry *Acción Ecológica* requested a renewal of its legalization and intended to register in the registry. Since 1989, *Acción Ecológica* had been granted legal status through the Ministry of Health. However, in 2009, the Ministry of Health refused to approve *Acción Ecológica*'s legalization, a move that shocked not only the organization itself, but also national and international networks of civil society actors. According to several news reports, the Minister of Health stated that the organization was not fulfilling its written objectives (Denvir, 2009). However, many charged that the Ministry of Health took away its legalization because the organization was not working in coordination with the government (La Prensa, 2009). National and international networks purported that it was *Acción Ecológica*'s harsh criticisms of the Correa Administration's Mining Law that led to the Ministry of Health's rejection of its legalization.

Without legalization, *Acción Ecológica* was left unable to operate. Media attention drew in the international activist community, including big names such as the award-winning journalist, columnist and activist Naomi Klein, who wrote a public letter to the Ecuadorian President (Denvir, 2009). Amidst the outcry, the Minister of Health stated that the organization was not being targeted and the reasoning for the refusal of legalization changed. *Acción Ecológica* according the Health Minister does not work in the health field, rather the environmental field (Hoy, 2009). *Acción Ecológica* was then transferred to the Ministry of Environment. At the time of *Acción Ecológica*'s founding in the late 1980s, the Ministry of Environment did not exist (Denvir, 2009). Once the organization was transferred, the Ministry of Environment approved its legalization (El Comercio, 2009).

This example was an indication, as many interviewees stated, that the ministerial officials are not well informed, that they are receiving little training on the changes outlined in Decree No. 982, and that they have significant discretion in determining the fate of civil society organizations. For example, one interviewee who contacted a line ministry for more information on Decree No. 982 found that the ministry did not know anything about it despite that the Decree had already been published by the national government and workshops for civil society were well underway. This uncertainty among some line ministries added to the lack of clarity with the policy changes. Many interviewees noted that there were several forms to fill out by civil society organizations and that questions asked on the forms were often vague. Uncertainty has continued because despite efforts to standardize process and data—a core intended goal of the registry—several interviewees felt that line ministries are still using different forms and have varying requirements.

Interviewees mentioned that some organizations were publicly resistant to the changes under the registry. In particular, organizations in the provinces outside the capital city of Quito have expressed concern. For example, a public letter to the former Minister at the Ministry of Coordination, Nataly Celi and the Minister of the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion, Jeannette Sanchez from several indigenous women's organizations in the Ecuadorian province of Chimborazo called on the government to revise the registry and its procedures. The letter circulated publically and among hundreds of civil society organizations. Since the letter, the women's groups have brought the issue to the Constitutional Court accusing that several parts of Decree No. 982 are unconstitutional. The organizations raised their concerns stating that the registry requires "... information on money and other complicated information, as if [the organizations] were an institution" (Women's Organizations of Chimborazo, 2009). While the

letter recognizes government's active role in promoting the inclusion of women, it asserts that the new registry would further marginalize women.

According to the letter by the organizations, exclusion as well as no access to technology threatens women's right to organize. They state that a registration process via Internet is discriminatory, first because rural organizations have little access and second, because a majority of the women linked with organizations do not read or write. In addition, they ask that the requirements to have a minimum dollar amounts of \$400 for first-degree and \$4,000 for second-degree corporations be eliminated. With these requirements, several organizations have abandoned the legalization process all together.

*Acción Ecológica* and the women's organizations of Chimborazo provide evidence of public objection to the recent changes. Indeed, some urban civil society leaders have created an opposing discourse expressing concerns about ministerial administrative discretion and requesting that civil society organizations are directly consulted about the new registry and changing regulations toward civil society. According to the civil society umbrella organization, Grupo Faro (2009), much of the new Decree is left open to interpretation. As mentioned above, a line ministry's functions include ensuring that an organization does not threaten "security and interests of the state." Grupo Faro (2009) argues that "state interests" as stated in Decree No. 982 is "legally undetermined" (p. 3) and proposes that there should be a process for legal-administrative sanctions or infractions rather than the threat of shutting down organizations. However, government officials have shrugged off this concern. One ministerial official was not concerned stating: "Civil society organizations are worried over nothing—the Civil Code has been in existence for hundred of years—in the Code it says the if organizations are doing something that was not in line with the objectives of the state, they can be closed—but there is



still a process of appeal if the government wants to close you. This does not change with the new legislation” (Ministerial Official, personal communication, August 3, 2009).

### **6.3 Compliant Organizations with Silent Concerns**

Along with the supportive organizations and resistant organizations, were those organizations that were mixed in their interpretation of the registry. These organizations were not convinced that the registry would bring direct benefit to civil society but that were less likely to join the public opposition to the registry. These organizations were compliant with the changes, i.e., they were fulfilling the requirements but they were still (quietly) concerned about the changes. During the interviewees, these civil society leaders were able to reflect about implications the registry might have on civil society and on civil society-state relations. For example, several organizations were unsure to what extent the state should intervene. One interviewee explained that “... it is different this time, there seems to be more control” (Rights Organization 005, personal communication, July 23, 2009). One interviewee discussed the state’s move of the civil society registry from the MCSD to the Secretary of People, Social Movements and Citizen Participation. She stated, “Secretary of Social Movements? How can the government manage, or rather control, social movements? It does not sound right to me” (Rights Organization 005, personal communication, July 23, 2009). One interviewee was sure that too much regulation hinders the social development in the country, that is, it could actually limit innovation and civil society creativity. Too much government interference might prevent people from pursuing their interests just because it is not a state priority or because the majority is not pushing for it (Not Legalized Organization 006, personal communication, July 23, 2009). As one leader put it, “I am conscience that the state wants to intervene in civil society. It says it wants to organize the sector, but many are suspicious” (Rights Organization 005, July 23, 2009).

Some of the civil society leaders supported the idea of more transparency and accountability, but there were still challenges. Organizations are requested to provide several years of budget balances in the online registry. One organization explained an issue that many organizations mentioned, she states: “One year we had a negative balance of about \$15,000. It happens, we do not always break even. But to enter this amount—the website did not accept negatives. So after calling the Ministry and talking with several people, in the end, they advised us to, well ... lie, by filling out a zero amount!—this is not transparency! It’s been five months and it still has not been fixed” (Social Service Organization 013, July 30, 2009). These examples indicate to many of these organizations that the registry was not only about being accountability and transparent. Indeed, this spurred further suspicions.

Organizations discussed the role of civil society in social development as well. While several organizations felt at ease working with the ministry that corresponded to their policy area, for example, one participant stated, “I think it is good, an organization needs to be registered with the line ministry of the policy area in which it is working ... organizations should be coordinating with the line ministry” (Social Organization 019, personal communication, August 7, 2009); others felt that social development should not be segmented so drastically. There is still ambiguity about how organizations determine which line ministry should they request legalization and the extent to which an organization can work in coordination with a several line ministries (as seen in the *Acción Ecológica* case). For example, one organization is legalized by the Ministry of Agriculture, but works in partnership with Ministry of Environment in the implementation of several programs. With the new procedures, this organization’s leader worries about its legalization being rejected by the Ministry of Agriculture. Another interviewee said: “We don’t just do education, we also do health programs. For now the Ministry of

Education has told us to just keep on doing these programs, but that eventually our health programs might need to be approved by the Ministry of Health. They are still figuring this out” (Health and Education Organization 014, personal communication, August 3, 2009).

## **7. Summary of Findings**

While the registry is still being implemented in Ecuador, the case study found two overarching versions of the registry: government intentions versus civil society interpretations. Government in Ecuador has approached the registry’s implementation as an administrative action, stressing its key goals of data collection, accountability and collaboration and offering capacity-building workshops based on the mechanics of the registry. The other version of the registry is that of how civil society organizations are interpreting and understanding the registry. This included not one understanding but variation that can be grouped into three interpretations. First, there were several civil society organizations that felt the policy shift was needed and believed that its intentions of data collection, accountability and collaboration were positive changes in government-civil society relations and achievable through the registry. These organizations were generally more professionalized and those that supported the notion that civil society organizations need to be regulated. Second, were those organizations that were mobilizing in opposition to the registry. These organizations were using public outlets to criticize and mobilize other organizations pointing to issues of ministerial discretion and discrimination.

And finally, a third version, were those organizations that were compliant to the changes, i.e., they were legalized and registered and some were pursuing accreditation to be eligible for public funding, but when probed about the registry, they were concerned and, at times, uneasy. This version is an indication that the policy tool was not shaped behavior to reach its intended goals, but also resulted in the limiting political voice and self-censorship by certain

organizations. There are other versions of the registry that are beyond the scope of this study. New requirements of the registry can demand aid from a lawyer and additional financial resources that make it difficult for smaller, more volunteer-dependent organizations to comply as the case of the women's organizations have argued. Indeed, I suspect that smaller organizations are choosing to ignore the registry. As one registered organization posited "Why should some organizations register? They are working out just fine informally organized, balancing a budget and accounting for money can require skills that many organizations do not have" (Rights Organization 005, July 23, 2009). In these cases, organizations may choose to go underground as the environmental factors persuade them to function illegally or quasi-illegally<sup>19</sup>.

Who exactly will the registry serve? Only a small number—two—of the interviewed organizations noted that they used the registry beyond the time they initially entered in their information. As one organization stated: "We have not used it, actually I don't see it being that useful. I suppose we can see some information and find organizations that work in the same areas. But overall we don't see it as useful" (Social Service Organization 003, July 21, 2009).

## **8. Discussion**

Examination of both government intentions and civil society interpretations in Ecuador illuminate several possible implications of a civil society registry that can be considered in other contexts as well. Policy initiatives like the civil society registries function as means for government to require certain behaviors and can send specific messages to groups or sub-groups, which in effect, shape their ideas about government and their roles as citizens—or in this case, their roles as civil society organizations (Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Smith & Ingram, 2002). Institutional isomorphism, policy studies, nonprofit-government relations and development

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<sup>19</sup> Lune's (2002) study of survival strategies of syringe exchange programs in New York City provides a good example of this

studies contribute to the understanding of how government policy shapes civil society. In particular, nonprofit studies and development scholars address the effects policy has on civil society by studying the professionalization process of the nonprofit sector. Because civil society registries are often civil society organizations' first encounter with government, they have profound implications on the development of civil society and deserve scholar's attention.

The implementation of a registry can bring the regulation of civil society into public debate, which in some countries, as in Ecuador, was not the case. Umbrella organizations in many countries are promoting the idea of self-regulation among civil society organizations. Increasingly, self-regulation for accountability is advocated by civil society organizations in different countries such as Vietnam (Lux & Straussman, 2004), Uganda (Kwesiga & Namisi, 2006), Indonesia (Antlov et al., 2006) and the U.S. (Bothwell, 2000; Irvin, 2005<sup>20</sup>), for examples. Regulation of civil society organizations within public debate may foster innovative ways in which to hold organizations accountable that is not reliant on government action.

Another emerging outcome of a registry is the process of the professionalization of civil society organizations. The concept of professionalization is complex. In the Ecuadorian case, findings indicate that there is a group of organizations that support professional standards for civil society as defined by the registry (such as fiscal minimums and annual reporting). Abbot's (1988) seminal work on the system of professions asserts that professions are not only organizational structures but are created by seizing control of knowledge. Organizations supportive of the registry might use the registry to help define their professional stake in, to use Abbot's (1988) term, the "jurisdiction" of social development in Ecuador and to 'filter' out those

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<sup>20</sup> Irvin (2005) studies regulation at the U.S. state level through a cost benefit analysis and actually endorses deregulation at the state level. Irvin (2005) argues that states collect information that is never used but that costs money and time for nonprofits. She suggests that states should request this information only once a complaint against a nonprofit is made, this would save the organizations that adhere to the law the trouble of producing these documents (Irvin, 2005). She notes that no nonprofit organization has advocated such deregulation.

organizations that do not meet the social development sector's emerging professional standards. As Smith and Lipsky (1993) pointed out, regulations set by government are not only driven by government as they too can be in the interest of powerful nonprofit organizations trying to corner the market. In Ecuador, many organizations are pleased of their level of expertise and professionalism and the accreditation process that is woven into the registry furthers this trend. In this regard, a government's implementation of a civil society registry may be cheered by some civil society organizations.

Of course, a registry's relationship to professionalization is not without caveats. Those organizations that do not fit into the desired organizational structure and jurisdiction as defined by government are threatened, therefore, they conform. This convergence of organizational structure could indeed threaten the diversity of civil society organizations. With the implementation of a registry, organizations may find not just their organizational structure modified, but their functions as well. This leads to questions of depoliticization and concerns for what is considered the more "expressive dimension" of civil society (Frumkin, 2002). Indeed, many of the organizations in the Ecuadorian case, for example, were apprehensive about the registry but instead of voicing publicly their concerns, they complied. This suggests absence of political voice, at a time when it is most needed as their organizational existence is at stake. Key civil society functions such as civil society's capacity in the promotion of values and faith as well as social innovation (Frumkin, 2002); its relationships to building social capital (Putnam, 1995) and its associational role, in the words of Tocqueville, as providing "schools of citizenship", among other functions, might be at risk. As a registry is often the first interaction with government, these implications are important to the development of civil society in any democratic society.

## 9. Conclusion

There is little scholarly research on the implications of civil society registries on the development of civil society. This article sought to bring attention to this growing trend and argues that nonprofit and development studies scholars in particular need to broaden their concerns about civil society-state relations, regulation, professionalization, and depoliticization of the sector to include this policy tool. I propose the following avenues of research for nonprofit and development studies scholars.

First, scholarship must address the actual design of a registry as this will vary across contexts (See Table 1). Where exactly the registry is housed is important, as some registries are created and managed only by government and others are housed in different types of entities. In Ecuador, registration in the registry is not only obligatory but also folded into a civil society organization's legalization process. This is not the case across countries. Mexico's civil society registry, for example, is voluntary and separate from the legalization process (Castro, 2005). Questions about a registry's level of automaticity are also a relevant entry point. In both Ecuador and Colombia, for example, new public offices were created to implement and house the registry<sup>21</sup>. In addition, scholars can examine the extent to which civil society was part of the formulation of the registry. In Colombia, for example, large professionalized organizations were the drivers of a sub-national level registry that sought to tease out the duplication of services and foster collaboration across sectors and within civil society (Alcaldía, 2006). Colombia's experimentation with a registry also provides an example of piloting the policy tool at the sub-national level. Furthermore, registries might be a collaborative effort by government and larger

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<sup>21</sup> The registry in Bogotá, Colombia has been bounced around. First it was housed in a created office within the Mayor's Office called The District Network of Cooperation for Development. Later the registry was named The Information System for Cooperation and handed over to the Secretary of Planning in Bogotá (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2008).

civil society organizations as seen in the case of the U.S. And, to gauge the policy tool's role in shaping civil society and civil society functions, scholars must examine how civil society organizations are defined and which organizations are then included in the registry. Furthermore, what information is required for civil society organizations to register in a registry?

**Table 1: Variables and Questions for Civil Society Registries**

Management	What entity is charged with the registry? Government? Private?
Degree of Automaticity	Is the registry housed in a previously established government body or has a new body been created?
Degree of Coerciveness	Is registration voluntary or obligatory?
Relationship to Legalization Process	Is the registry folded into the legalization process or separate?
Information Collected	What information is required for civil society organizations to register?
Definitions	How are civil society organizations defined? What types of organizations are included in the registry?
Goals	What are the stated goals of the registry?
Civil Society Participation	Did the registry's formulation involve civil society? If so how?
Level of Implementation	Is the registry at the national or sub-national levels?
Level of Civil Society Partnership	Is the operation of the registry in partnership with civil society, solely operated by government or solely by civil society?

A second avenue of further research is to ask how a registry might foster more interest in self-regulation among civil society organizations. This is something that is increasingly common across contexts, as mentioned, particularly where governments are implementing new initiatives and regulations toward civil society and fears of restrictive policies exist. Advocacy for self-regulation represents a means in which civil society organizations respond to government and public concerns for accountability and transparency. And finally, third, larger normative questions, some of which I have begun to address in the discussion section on the relationships between civil society registries and civil society's functions must be asked.

Understanding more about civil society registries and their design as well as their implications on civil society development is needed. Are registries a form of direct governmental



influence on civic society? If governments wish to shape civil society according to what they define as a civil society, how might this be at odds with other conceptualizations of civil society and its functions in a given country? Or, are registries a positive step toward organizing civil society? Future research will need to observe whether a registry (and its design) fosters or limits accountable, transparent, and collaborative relationships within democratic governance among the state and civil society and among civil society organizations themselves. Increasingly, scholars in developed and developing countries and the international development community endorse civil society registries. For nonprofit and development studies not to address the implications of these civil society registries would only be careless.

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