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UNIVERSITY OF
DEBRECEN
FACULTY OF
HEALTH SCIENCES
NYÍREGYHÁZA

A review of civil society organizations concepts through content analysis

Kushtrim Vllasaj¹, György Norbert Szabados², Éva Bába-Bácsné³, Szabolcs Gergely Orbán⁴

¹ PhD student, University of Debrecen, Faculty of Economics and Business, Institute of Sport Organization and Management, ORCID: 0000-0002-7340-4941

² Associate Professor, University of Debrecen, Faculty of Economics and Business, Institute of Sport Organization and Management, ORCID: 0000-0003-3959-1963

³ Professor, University of Debrecen, Faculty of Economics and Business, Institute of Sport Organization and Management, ORCID: 000-0002-0733-6637

⁴ Head of department, HBM-RFK, ORCID: 000-0002-0063-704X

INFO

Szabolcs Gergely Orbán
drorbanszabolcsgergely@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Abstract

Day by day, civil society organizations (CSOs) are becoming an increasingly important factor in all areas of the socio-economic system. The interest in their study has also increased, although the place, role, and definition of their terminology and concepts, needs to be further clarified, as their meaning changes conditionally. Through content analysis, this article reviews the literature by addressing a sample of 136 journal articles published in the period 2015-2019 in two big databases. The findings show that CSOs literature is dominated by qualitative works of social sciences authors who mostly use the term Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This paper is also elaborated on the main themes which dominate the text of the articles. Furthermore, the main concepts of this literature, development, organizations, international, local and other words are analyzed here. The significance of this study is that it aims to provide CSOs researchers with a clearer description of the terminology and concepts the most commonly used.

Kulcsszavak

Civil társadalmi szervezetek,
nem-kormányzati, non-
profit,
tartalom
elemzés

Absztrakt

A civil társadalmi szervezetek (CSO-k) napról napra egyre fontosabb tényezővé válnak a társadalmi-gazdasági rendszer minden területén. Tanulmányozásuk iránt az érdeklődés is megnőtt, bár terminológiájuk és fogalmaik helye, szerepe, meghatározása további tisztázásra szorul,

mivel jelentésük a feltételeknek megfelelően változik. Ez a cikk tartalomelemzésen keresztül tekinti át a szakirodalmat a 2015-2019 közötti időszakban megjelent 136 folyóiratcikkből álló mintán, két nagy adatbázisban. Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy a civil szervezetek irodalmában a társadalomtudományi szerzők kvalitatív munkái dominálnak, akik többnyire a nem-kormányzati szervezetek (NGO-k) kifejezést használják. Ez az írás kitér a cikkek szövegét meghatározó főbb témákra. Elemezzük itt továbbá a szakirodalom főbb fogalmait, a fejlesztést, a szervezeteket, a nemzetközi, helyi és egyéb fogalmakat. Ennek a tanulmánynak a célja az, hogy a civil szervezetek kutatói számára világosabb leírást adjon a leggyakrabban használt terminológiáról és fogalmakról.

A publikáció megjelenését "A munkaképesség, a munka- és életminőség egyéni és társadalmi fenntarthatóságában szerepet játszó sport és testedzés kérdéseinek vizsgálata az egészséges és biztonságos társadalomért (multidiszciplináris kutatási ernyőprogram)" projekt támogatja.

1. Introduction

As an essential component of every academic research, literature review does not only serve to understand what has been researched in the past but justifies the objectives and the means of pursuing the future study. In any field of science, when a good knowledge base is established through the choice of a genuine method of systematic literature review, the continuation of further study in any subfield becomes easier, more rational, and complete. As a constituent part, the literature is reviewed in every study. Although, when it comes to a study dedicated exclusively to it, then it will be a more systematic, more accurate and substantive approach, especially when the method is content analysis.

Even in the CSOs study, literature review and content analysis of the material is essential, as they gradually change with the evolution and change of the role of these entities across countries. The importance of studying CSOs is of paramount importance now as their reach is increasing and their impact on democracy and development is becoming more apparent. However, not everything is crystal clear about them as doubts about the value, legitimacy or accountability of CSOs are increasing. The reasons for this are recent NGO scandals, the disconnection between traditional CSOs and their beneficiaries, a climate that has encouraged some CSOs to 'follow the money' and not their core mandate, social movements that can connect with and mobilize large

numbers of people (Cooper 2018). But this is the subject of another paper, while in this one it is intended to clarify more the terminology that these papers use. Although not a new topic, it should first be updated and then conceptualized the meaning of the terms to make it clearer what direction it has taken and where it is focusing.

Civil society organizations are called such, in a more general designation, when it comes to any groups outside the private business sector and government institutions. Non-governmental organizations, meanwhile, is a term not very comprehensive in the sense that it only differentiates itself from government institutions. That is, they do not serve them in any straightforward form, although they can often be supported by them. While the term non-profit organizations is more in the sense that their activity is not intended, at least not primary, to profit, and thus distances them from the business sector, even though they may also conduct business activities. Given these different terminologies or denominations it means that there are different interpretations, and consequently different concepts.

1.1. Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to review the current evolution of the study of civil society organizations concepts through content analysis in peer reviewed journal articles. Because of the nature of the study, hypotheses were not developed in this paper, but the following research questions have been raised.

1. Authors from which fields study CSOs mostly and what is their approach?
2. What is the literature content (terminologies and concepts) of CSOs and related similar terms in a five year period (2015-2019)?

This paper has been built in a way that first it has been highlighted the previous study in CSO terminology, concepts, and approach in and related to the importance of reviewing literature through rigorous methods such as content analysis. Going through the explanation of this method and choosing a particular type of content analysis, the reasoning has been made about why this method is appropriate for this study. Thereafter, the descriptive data of the selected sample is continued to be evaluated, to proceed with content analysis of the specific articles and concepts in and associated with them.

1.2. Literature review

Although the space dedicated to CSOs in the literature is narrow, the literature on CSOs has been reviewed from various approaches. During these reviews the word that is the most inherently associated with CSOs is development. The word development is used in different dimensions, but more commonly in social and economic aspect, if not both. However, this often tends to be unclear and open ended due to its relative nature and inability to measure, but the question is how it is conceptualized. In a critical literature review, Mercer (2002) argues that the role of the NGOs in the politics of development is not as simple as much of the literature on NGOs suggest and calls for a more contextualized approach as their impact is more complex. Furthermore, this is not the only issue in this regard, indeed the entire CSO context is of this nature. And what contributes most to the clarification of such concepts is precisely the literature review and the specification of the properties from which they made.

The literature on CSOs has been reviewed from other fields and subfields. In the field of management, namely human resource management, for example, Ferreira, Proença, and Proença, (2009) focus on the motivations and management factors of volunteer work in non-profits, then Studer and von Schnurbein (2012) review the literature on organizational factors affecting volunteers, while Morrison (2016) reviews the literature on measuring and evaluating organizational performance for non-profit organizations. An objective review of the literature was also done by Delalieux and Kourula (2011) in the dimension NGO-business relationship as expressed in the mainstream literature. They found that the mainstream research on NGO-business relationships was referring to a specific positive conception of civil society believing to reform society (Neo-Tocquevillian Belief) and propose an alternative concept by insisting in the limits of the ability of NGOs to mitigate the worst effects of neoliberalism.

However, the approach that is the most similar to our paper was taken by Rainey, Wakunuma and Stahl (2016), where through systematic review he collected the terms and concepts of CSOs and critically analyzed them to the definition. In the definition of the term CSO from European Union/European Commission view, the academic view, the policy view, and the working project view, the first two components of the definition in all cases were: 1. Non-government (Non-state) and 2. Non-profit (no commercial interest). The choice of one or the other of these terms depends on the different entities and

the way they see appropriate. However, it is notable that most of them use the term NGO, such as the World Bank report (1990) discussing cooperation between NGOs and the government. Anheier, Rudney and Salamon (1993) choose to use the term non-profits (NPOs) over the others, based on the United Nations (1993) terminology in the System of National Accounts. Though these two terms are often contested by many as somehow incomplete, this paper will approach the civil society organizations (CSOs) as a base term because they include a broader set of organizations, ranging from small, informal, community-based organizations to large, high-profile, INGOs working through local partners across the developing world (UNDP 2013).

To explain and explore similar terminologies, concepts, and definitions, authors have often used the content analysis method which has proved to be very successful in analyzing text. Most recently, notably, Brass et al. (2018) have done a synthesis of articles studying NGOs and international development for the whole period 1980-2014, doing a computer-based content analysis of 3336 journal articles and a qualitative analysis of 300 of them, exploring the common features between them. It was not deliberate to choose a period starting in 2015, but it justifies this research even more, although the purpose and scope of the study are not entirely the same.

With the ever-expanding reach of the internet, another topic where content analysis has found use is online communication such as websites and social media. A content analysis of United States nonprofit organizations' use of the internet, undertaken in their web sites, found that nonprofit organizations have incorporated a variety of internet communication strategies. They found that the top nonprofit organizations included copies of their annual reports, organizational goals, and mission statements (Waters 2007). Uzunoğlu and Misci Kip (2013), through this method, provide insight into the dialogic potential of 50 Turkish environmental NPOs websites, including the use of social media. The use of this method in analyzing the content of online platforms is nowadays more popular as it is more convenient for desk researchers. In this sense, studying CSOs becomes easier because they are known for their level of innovation and greater use of InfoTech.

2. Methods

Krippendorff (2004) noted that quantification is not a defining criterion for content analysis and text is always qualitative to begin with. Therefore, he

suggest that the quantitative/qualitative distinction is a mistaken dichotomy between the two kinds of justifications of content analysis designs. Following the approach ‘from texts to results’, he lists some basic components for answering research questions, which will be followed in this research as well:

- *Unitizing*: relying on unitizing schemes
- *Sampling*: relying on sampling plans
- *Recording/coding*: relying on coding instructions
- *Reducing* data to manageable representations: relying on established statistical techniques or other methods for summarizing or simplifying data
- Abductively *inferring* contextual phenomena: relying on analytical constructs or models of the chosen context as warrants
- *Narrating* the answer to the research question: relying on narrative traditions or discursive conventions established within the discipline of the content analyst

2.1. Data collection and sampling

According to Babbie (2014): „Most social researchers begin the design of a research project with a review of the literature.” The objective is to see: „what has previously been learned about a particular topic. A review of the literature is the way we learn what’s already known and not known”. In the former literature review part we intended to highlight some precedents of our topic. Regarding the researchal background of us, to study professional communication of the topic, we have applied content analysis. Content analysis method is particularly well suited to the study of communications (Babbie 2014). While the systematic literature review mostly serves the purpose of revealing and collecting knowledge already available, the content analysis usually means that „researchers examine a class of social artifacts that usually are written documents, such as newspaper editorials”. It seems that way that the distinction between the two approaches is that the former provides an insight of the precedents of a research, while content analysis offers an insight behind the communication studied, trying to answer classic questions like: „Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?” (Babbie, 2014).

Peer reviewed articles tend to represent a serious, up-to-date and unbiased form of researchers work display, which is also viewed as a form of communication. Thus, the attempt was to process articles from peer-reviewed

journals from the databases such as: Scopus (www.scopus.com) and Web of Science (www.webofknowledge.com). The sample of literature material is filtered and consists of only English language peer-reviewed articles and reviews in a five year period from 2015 to 2019. The terms "civil society organization", "non governmental organization", "non profit organization" and their acronyms "CSO", "NGO" and "NPO" were used to search for the articles. This study has limited the search only in the title of the articles and not in other text parts of the papers, in order to reduce the received material only to the focus of this paper theme.

On the first search, without filtering the search, both databases gave a result of over 7000 papers. As this resulted in a large number and our objective was to study the evolution of these concepts in recent times, more precisely in the last 5 years, the subject of the study was further specified. After this filter, Scopus returned 1347 papers and Web of Science 1327. With Scopus and Web of Science databases benefits listing items in chronological order, the most convenient method of sampling is systematic random sampling which according to Krippendorff (2004) requires selecting every kth unit from a list after determining the starting point of the procedure at random. In this paper, this method means selecting every 20th article after the first, which will ultimately result in a sample of 136 articles and reviews from both databases, which were later merged in excel. In the case when an item was in another language, was not accessible, or for any other reason did not correspond to our theme, then the next item in sequence was chosen without changing the every 20th rule.

2.2. Categorization and evaluation

To be categorized, the data were initially recorded in Excel, where each item was coded. After registration, the data were uploaded to SPSS 26, a program that served mainly to form 'cross-tabulations', a feature that is very useful in cross-tabulating data of different categories. Another software used was ATLAS.ti 8, which according to Mayring (2000) is proven successful in content analysis work. This software served exclusively for the division of categories and their coding, as the contexts meanings were extracted from each abstract/article which would result in the creation of overall themes. Furthermore, it was also used to generate a word cloud and word categorization.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptives

The study of civil society organizations is done mainly by researchers and the perspective of the social sciences. Table 1 shows that the typical authors of these themes are sociologists and economists, followed by management researchers and political scientists.

Table 1: The number and the percentage of the authors of all articles of the study (2015-2019)

Study field	Number of papers	% of papers
Sociology	23.5	17.28
Economics and business	21.5	15.81
Management	17.5	12.87
Political sciences	16	11.76
Anthropology	11	8.09
Health studies	9	6.62
Environmental studies	8	5.88
International studies	5	3.68
Information technology	4	2.94
Law	4	2.94
Education	4	2.94
Communication studies	3.5	2.57
Technology	3.5	2.57
Psychology	2.5	1.84
Agriculture	1	0.74
Applied sciences	1	0.74
Tourism	1	0.74
Total	136	100.00

Source: Formulated by the author using SPSS (Descriptive statistics), 2020

Behavioral sciences and communication sciences also belong to this category, which have more or less similar approaches to the above-mentioned sciences. Meanwhile, researchers in health studies, environmental studies, law, or international relations are fewer and mainly in collaborations with authors of social sciences. It is worth noting that only 36% of the articles had only one author, while 64% had more than one author (34.6% by two authors). Each item that has had authors with different fields is calculated by 50% for the two main fields.

Non-governmental organizations or the acronym NGO is the most commonly used term in the titles of scientific articles, but also in the text. The country of origin of the journal articles makes no exception to this, as no distinction is made as to the correlation between the term used and the place of study. The authors coming from European scientific institutes are the most productive with 47.06% of the published articles studying this theme. There is a high level of collaboration between authors, but most of them are within a region, e.g. between the two European countries, or between Canada and one of the US, both of them in North America, while only 8.82% of them, at longer distances, different continents (Table 2.).

Table 2: Percentage of the journal articles published in Scopus and Web of Science containing CSO, NGO and NPO in title (2015-2019) according to the regional origin

Region	CSO	NGO	NPO	Total
Africa	0.74	2.21	0.00	2.94
Asia	2.21	11.03	2.21	15.44
Australia	0.00	2.21	1.47	3.68
Europe	10.29	26.47	10.29	47.06
Latin America	0.00	1.47	0.74	2.21
Middle East	0.00	1.47	0.74	2.21
North America	2.21	11.76	3.68	17.65
Combined	1.47	4.41	2.94	8.82
Total	16.91	61.03	22.06	100.00

Source: Formulated by the author using SPSS (Crosstabulation), 2020

Not surprisingly, in most of the articles (54.41%) the approach was qualitative (Table 3). Using ethnographic methods, in-depth interviews, semi-structured, participant observations, field notes, or all of these often integrated into the case study, it is once again proven that CSO research is done mainly from a qualitative approach. Besides, a large part of the articles can also be added from the mixed methods section due to the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

and in some cases, other parts, to draw a more realistic view of the subtopics, context/dimension, and outcomes of how they are presented. This means that these abstracts, respectively articles have gone through a process of condensing the units, coding, categorizing, and finally summarizing themes in the following table.

Table 4: Main themes derived from the categorization of article units

Study field	Themes
Sociology	NGOs artificial power, Transnational factors in shaping CSOs, Employment experiences of women in NPOs, NGOs and Governmental institutions staff cooperation during crisis and the lack of legislation for cooperation, NGOs in turning to international donors funding in times of crisis, The possibility of being civic while being indifferent to politics, NGO programs for human-trafficking prevention, Human Rights advocates and NGOs in civil society divisions, NGOs laws impacts and consequences, Religious networks discourse in positioning as civil society initiatives, NGOs and INGOs partnership, The mnemonic role attributions of CSOs, Fundraisers in charitable giving in NPOs, CSOs influencing social innovation, Social work as professional labor in NPOs, Government-NPO relations in Service Procurement, NGO responses to the Immigration, Government social cohesion effects on CSOs, The role of women organizations in preventing radicalism, The effectiveness of NGOs in the field of child labor
Economics and business	Optimal workers market regulation with expatriate NGO workers, Innovating local governance through government-NGO collaboration, NPOs and cooperative firms distinction of ownership and control, Social innovation initiatives promoted by CSOs, The economic activity of NPOs based on their legal type, Institutional isomorphism as a developer of NGOs infrastructure, International support to civil society in a governance perspective, State strategy of keeping society under control and NPOs supervision on the state, NGOs accountability of beneficiaries, Business-NGO collaboration for creating CSR value and global value chains, Allocation of funds in NPOs, The transformation of NPOs towards the social enterprise model, Credibility and effectiveness of NGOs, Integrating economic models into the NGO service delivery systems, The incentive effects of NGOs missions, The dependence of NGOs sustainability in donors, The participation of CSOs in international standardization
Management	The impact of internal and external stakeholders in NGOs development, The struggle of NGOs to contextualize their

	intervention, Capabilities and control of boards in NPO management, The perspective of self-producing society, Managerial objectives and governance in NPOs, Corporate-NGO partnership and communication, Leadership styles in for profit and non-profit organizations, Risk management in NPOs, Tools and technologies for knowledge management in NPOs, Human resources management in NPOs, Project management approach, practices and tools in NGOs, The influence of project management offices, logical framework and cultural competence in NGO projects, Theory of constraints in improving market orientation of NPOs, Transformational leadership and followers opinions in NGOs, Leadership and Behavior in Transnational NGOs, Internal Control Practices in NPOs, Northern-Southern NGOs partnership and managerialism on organizational level, Motivation for donations to NPOs
Political sciences	Law restrictions on CSOs in different countries, Open government and citizen participation from the government and CSOs point of view, NGOs collaboration with government sector for policy-making, The unequal international funding of CSOs, Local government in capacity building of CSOs activities, NGOs scaling up challenges, Multiple realities in nonprofit sector and different interpretation of NPOs, NGO funding forms bringing diversity growth or increasing isomorphism, Describing government organized non-governmental organization (GONGO), NGOs affecting economic sanctions policies, CSOs contribution to the process of going international, The government use of youth NGOs for diplomacy and foreign relations, The weight of NGOs in the country as a replacement for the government
Anthropology	Convergences between state agents and NGO workers in deportation field, The perceptions and experiences of civil society actors receiving foreign aid, The changing relationship between the state and NGOs, NPOs and Refugee Negotiations, The relations of civil society and the state, International Development NGOs reinvention, Tensions between groups in NGOs
Health studies	Nonprofit sector among the business and government, The alternative assistance of INGOs for children support, CSOs in health project sustainability such as clean water, Community-based NGOs replacement with hybrid NGOs, The mobilization of volunteers from NGOs and CSOs to raise awareness of a virus outbreak, NGO-academic partnership to tackle diseases, CSOs in the delivery of HIV and sexuality education, Collaboration between NGOs and public services, NGO-international organizations (WHO) collaboration for health purposes (endemic)

Environmental studies	The influence of environmental NGOs for environmental effectiveness and impact assessment, NGOs in environmental sustainability through communicative labor, Environmental justice promotion of environmental NGOs, The involvement of NGOs to hydropower development, The communicate and improve conservation NGOs, NGO guidelines in fishery improvement projects, Outcomes of Government-NGO collaboration in waste management, Environmental NGOs role for species at risk, Classification of NGOs for optimizing disaster planning
International studies	NGOs power for structural changes in developing countries, The role of civil society in cooperation/conflict bilateral relations, Secular CSOs in the process of democratization
Information technology	The integration of CSOs in research projects to enhance brain computer interface, The Role of Business Intelligence in NPOs, Information and communication technologies among marginalized indigenous groups, CSOs use of social media
Law	NGOs in improving the justice system through litigation, CSOs participation and democratic representation, The Role of NGOs in the Business and Human Rights Negotiations
Education	NGO schools in addressing gender inequalities, NGOs and social enterprises contribution with jobs to the disadvantaged, Collaboration within NPOs institutional environment, The challenges of NGO research, NGOs sponsoring education for vulnerable girls
Communication studies	Different form of digital communication such as metaphoric languages in NPOs, Online platforms and communication modes of NGOs in international arena, The abuse of discursive power of transnational NGOs, NGOs empowering the public through emotional construction
Technology	Goal programing approach in NGO operation, Public funding of CSOs, NGOs role and importance in space exploration and astronautics
Psychology	Service quality perceptions through feedback in NGOs, Burnout, depression, and quality of life employees in NGOs, Job satisfaction and the intention to stay among volunteers in NPOs
Agriculture	NGOs initiatives for livestock and fodder development
Applied sciences	The collective identity influence in opportunity perceptions in NPOs
Tourism	NPOs in promotion of wine tourism

Source: Formulated by the author by coding with ATLAS.ti 8, 2020

There have been many other topics in the text, but in general, the main topics that have dominated are developed in the context of the themes in the Table 5.

Table 5: The top ten most frequently used words among three groups of articles

Titles of articles using the terms:					
1. "Civil society organization" or "CSO"		2. "Non-governmental organization" or "NGO"		3. "Non-profit organization" or "NPO"	
The top ten most common words	% of usage inside the group	The top ten most common words	% of usage inside the group	The top ten most common words	% of usage inside the group
CSOs	0.53%	NGOs	0.50%	social	0.37%
social	0.39%	development	0.30%	organizations	0.36%
society	0.37%	ngo	0.27%	management	0.33%
public	0.37%	social	0.23%	NPOs	0.33%
research	0.34%	international	0.22%	organizational	0.21%
civil	0.32%	local	0.21%	organization	0.19%
political	0.27%	public	0.20%	leadership	0.19%
organizations	0.23%	government	0.20%	public	0.17%
European	0.21%	society	0.19%	sector	0.16%
project	0.19%	project	0.19%	control	0.16%

Source: Formulated by the author by exporting from ATLAS.ti 8, 2020

Table 5 shows the top 10 most frequent words of three groups of articles analyzed. The same meaning words might be presented in different forms (for example, the acronym "NGO", which is in the singular, is also presented as "NGOs" in the plural), and the main reason for this is because Atlas.ti does not mix them but calculates them distinctively as they appear in text. Another reason why they should not add up the number of these two groups of how many times they are used in the text, is that these words are also used in different contexts. They are used in singular, usually from the internal, organizational, managerial and operational point of view, seeing the organization as a whole, while in plural, they are used from the external point of view of the organization as part of society, part of different networks or collaborations, and with other sectors. Another similar case is "organization" and "organizations", for which almost the same explanation applies.

1. Although the CSO group has fewer articles compared to others, the term Civil Society Organization or CSO is undoubtedly the most inclusive, though not the easiest to define. This group is very diverse in terms of the fields from where it is studied, but this also applies in terms of methodology, at least

compared to the other two groups. The approach of the articles in this group tends more towards a point of view which treats more the position of organizations as actors in society, their relations, their role, their effect and their contribution in relation to politics, socio-economy, education, etc. Unlike the other two groups, in the CSO group, the treatment of informal organizations such as groups of indigenous people and various political movements has been noted. The latter, based on one of the most used words "politics", is a concept that is mostly related to the introduction and push of alternative policies to the government's camp, with their well-known reprimanding role as watchdogs.

2. According to the ratio of reviewed papers, NGO acronym is undoubtedly the most popular term, usage of which surpasses even its title genesis Non-governmental Organizations. After the acronym NGO, the most used word in the text of articles in this group is "development". Some NGOs (for example, political organizations or environmental NGOs) with their conservative policies sometimes can contribute to prevent some form of development (for example, industrial). Nevertheless, NGOs are known for their developmental nature in every field in which they operate, and not coincidentally, this is undoubtedly reflected in the literature and study as the authors want to identify and describe how they achieve development. The concept of development, the articles of this group tend to raise more in the dimension of How? and What? and less in How much? and Where?. This, more or less, corresponds to the methodology used where the qualitative approach dominates and as a popular term it is widely distributed across different fields and levels. Two other words widely used in the text of this group are "international" and "local" which are opposite to each other in a general context, although they are rarely found together. They are mostly evidence of the variety of literature, although they have not always been used in the same comparative dimension.

3. Seeing that the word "organizations" in scientific articles in the NPO group is the second most used word in the text, even while reading the articles it has been noticed that the NPO group tends to lay out in the study from the internal point of view of the organization, rather than from the external point of view as a factor (entity) among other factors in the society. The study seems to have been done mostly for the components of organizations and often in a comparative sense with business firms, i.e. leaning towards "non-profit vs. for profit" study approach. A supportive argument for this is the methodology used which is mostly case studies. Based on the word "organizations", used in

various forms, we conclude that this group is more focused on the study of its interior, such as management based on the large use of the word "management", "leadership", "control", etc. In this group, the word "social" is used and is found in its secondary or tertiary meaning. Apart from being not in focus as a concept, because in most cases it is used only as a supplement, it is also used in reference titles and as an integrated word in other phrases such as civil society organizations.

2. Conclusions and limitations

In this study, the importance of literature review is expressed once again, as the basis for further study of CSOs and their conceptualization in science, and content analysis turns out to be an effective method in this regard. Scientific articles on CSOs in the last 5 years continue to come from authors of the social sciences, mainly sociologists and political scientists. Economics and management researchers are also quite preoccupied with studying CSOs, although the most common themes are mostly general, such as management or governance as a synonym. Research is mainly done on a qualitative approach using different methods but mostly unstructured or semi structured interviews. The most commonly used term associating civil society organizations in these articles appears to be non-governmental organizations or NGOs, used by the authors in more than half of the articles, both in their titles and in their text.

Not necessarily the NGO acronym should have a hidden or second meaning other than the one it stands for, being non-governmental. However, distinctive explanations can be given that distinguish it from the acronyms CSO and NPO. What the author believes distinguishes them the most is the fact that NGO as a term is more representative also when it comes to international organizations, unlike CSO and NPO. If we look at the group of articles that use the term "Non-governmental Organization" or "NGO"(Table 5), four special words that we do not find in the other two groups are: development, international, local and government. All of them are important to analyze how they are used in writing, but the most special of them at this point is the word "international" and the fact that we do not encounter this word so often in the two other groups. Undoubtedly, this is an indication that the authors who use the "NGO" term are also preoccupied with the international coloring given to the study of NGOs.

Understandably, the authors of these studies still maintain the strong connection of these organizations with the concept of development, mainly socio-economic, which is also reflected in the high frequency of use of this word. From the topics in the articles taken, in general, one can notice an approach of the nonprofit sector in relation to other sectors and actors, whether government or business. Literally, this practice most often takes the form of cooperation, collaboration, partnership but also other forms of relationship such as influence, participation, or assistance. Reasonably, this relationship is also studied in its opposite, taking into account differences, divisions, contradictions, or even criticisms and the making of difficulties of each other's work.

This study does not take into account other articles that may be developed on this topic, which do not have one of the three terms chosen in their titles. Examples are other names such as voluntary organizations, community-based organizations, non-state organizations, etc., or even those articles in which these organizations are not mentioned in the title in any form. Moreover, this study is limited because the sample is taken from only two databases, in 5 years.

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