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Civil Society Engagement in Regional Governance

A Network Analysis in Southern Africa

Merran Hulse
Lisa Gürth
Helena Kavsek
Verena Stauber
Daniel Wegner
Jan Weinreich

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Dr Merran Hulse is a researcher in the research programme "Transformation of Political (Dis-)Order: Institutions, Values and Peace" at the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).

Email: governance@die-gdi.de

Tulpenfeld 6, 53113 Bonn
☎ +49 (0)228 94927-0
🖷 +49 (0)228 94927-130
Email: die@die-gdi.de
www.die-gdi.de

MEMBER OF JRF Johannes-Rau-Forschungsgemeinschaft

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Abbreviations

BW	Botswana
CECAP	Coligação para Eliminação dos Casamentos Prematuros
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSO	civil society organisation
CWAO	Casual Worker's Advice Office
DfID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
E&L	employment and labour
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation / Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FDC	Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade
FOCCISA	Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
ILO	International Labour Organization
IO	international organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
OTM-CS	Organização dos trabalhadores moçambicanos – Central Sindica
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOZ	Mozambique
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NGO-CC	Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council
RO	regional organisation
ROSC	Fórum da Sociedade Civil para os Direitos da Criança
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC-CNGO	SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
SADC-PF	SADC Parliamentary Forum
SAPSN	Southern African People's Solidarity Network
SASPEN	Southern African Social Protection Experts Network
SAT	Southern African Trust
SATUCC	Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNA	social network analysis
SNC	SADC National Committee

SWZ	Swaziland
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa
ZAM	Zambia
ZCTU	Zambia Congress of Trade Unions

Executive summary

Since the 1990s, globalisation has led to international civic participation becoming a feature of international relations. Increased transnational advocacy has contributed to a greater level of demands for input legitimacy on the part of international organisations, and they have responded by widening the scope for civil society access in international governance. Today, the majority of international organisations (IOs) offer some kind of access for civil society participation. The hope is that this will make IOs more participatory, more accountable and contribute to improved governance outcomes. We observe similar dynamics at the regional level with the growth of regional civil society networks and increased demands that regional organisations (ROs) open up to civil society. Some ROs are more responsive than others. Some, particularly in contexts characterised by mixed regimes and limited state capacity, resist calls for a greater level of access for civil society. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is one of those ROs that seems to have resisted calls to open up, making it a "tough test" for civil society engagement.

Yet, even in this difficult regional context – characterised by a mix of authoritarian and democratic member states, purely intergovernmental regional institutions and a reluctance of these institutions to provide access to civil society – we still observe the existence of transnational civil society networks that aim to influence regional governance. Moreover, we also observe differences in civil society engagement across different policy sectors. For example, CSOs in the gender sector are highly involved in policy processes and credited with bringing about the SADC Gender Protocol. Other sectors are characterised by lower levels of civil society engagement, particularly in sensitive policy areas such as security or human rights. Political sensitivity and institutional accessibility of ROs aside, it seems likely that the dynamics and nature of these CSO networks would have an effect on their participation in, and engagement with, regional governance. Policy sectors characterised by the presence of a well-organised civil society network – in which CSOs share information with each other, coordinate their actions and jointly pressure decision-makers – are sectors in which we might expect to see high levels of CSO engagement and influence.

Against this background, our primary research question is: *How do the characteristics of transnational networks contribute to civil society engagement in regional governance in SADC?*

For this purpose, our research project employs a comparative case study design focussing on civil society engagement in the two policy sectors: gender, and employment and labour. Using an interview-based approach to social network analysis (SNA), we map the two policy networks surrounding the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour. We complement the SNA with semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including civil society, donors, researchers, and national and regional policy-makers in Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia.

Our qualitative findings reaffirm the state-centric nature of SADC and the difficulties for civil society to exert meaningful influence. Formal institutional access mechanisms are not

entirely functional and hardly enable civil society to make relevant contributions to SADC decision-making. On the other hand, informal modes of access are often more important, but they can be unstable and exclusionary. The SNA analysis reveals striking differences in the networks of the two policy fields. The gender sector is driven by CSOs and financed by donors, with member states playing a relatively minor role, whereas member states are central players in employment and labour. The gender network is highly centralised, with one central CSO performing a coordinating role, whereas the labour and employment network is very dense and shaped by many interactions between different actors with diverse political aims. The findings suggest a trade-off between a hierarchical, centralised network that is efficient when it comes to sharing resources, versus a dense, consensus-finding network that mitigates potential conflicts. Furthermore, information-exchange networks for both policy sectors illustrate that the SADC Secretariat is more accountable to donors than CSOs – a reflection of its donor dependence.

In general, we find that many of the challenges to civil society found at the national level in developing countries are replicated at the regional level. Questions surrounding extra-regional funding of CSOs, their representativeness and their legitimacy pose great challenges to civil society networks. Nevertheless, our research highlights several benefits to networks, including their importance for coordination, information-sharing and lesson-learning among CSOs. Transnational civil society networks also have the potential to counter negative developments at the national level, and in the past they have succeeded in bringing attention to political problems in SADC member states. In all, civil society networks have the potential to act as drivers of people-centred regionalism – particularly in policy sectors with a transboundary nature – but so long as the institutions and organisational culture of SADC remain a "closed shop", their potential will go unrealised.

Recommendations

Based on the project's finding, we offer several recommendations to civil society, external donors and policy-makers.

First, civil society should be aware of the risks and trade-offs associated with particular types of networks. It would appear that networks are more effective if they are coordinated by regional umbrella organisations that have a clear mandate and focus on coordination and information-sharing activities, as opposed to implementation activities. Informal connections with policy-makers can facilitate access but are also inherently unstable, and possibly self-censoring, as relations can be easily terminated if CSOs are perceived as being "too critical".

Second, external donors play a key role in funding civil society networks; however, their level of information exchange with each other appears to be low. Greater levels of coordination can be achieved if donors take steps to increase their information exchange with other donors working in the same policy field. Donors are also well-situated to encourage a greater level of access for civil society in the formulation and implementation of SADC policies, due to SADC's reliance on donor funding. Donors should continue to push for the adoption of the Proposal on SADC Mechanisms for Engagement with Non-State Actors. However, this should be on the understanding that engagement includes a broad range of non-state actors, not just business organisations.

Third, due to the weak institutional mechanisms for civil society access currently in place, SADC and its member states are missing out on collaborative partnerships with CSOs. CSOs have the potential to act as knowledge-brokers, service delivery agents, and monitoring and evaluating agents, and they could assist SADC in overcoming its much maligned implementation gap. Adopting and implementing the provisions of the Proposal on SADC Mechanisms for Engagement with Non-State Actors would be a first step in putting SADC-CSO relations on a mutually beneficial path towards sustainable development.

1 Introduction

Since the 1990s, civic engagement has become a feature of international relations. Civil society organisations (CSOs) increasingly build links with each other and with governance institutions to create transnational networks. As they have become networked across national borders, CSOs have become increasingly vocal that their demands be taken into account, and – consequently – given more say in global policy-making (Bexell, Tallberg, & Uhlin, 2010; Scholte, Fioramonti, & Nhema, 2016). International organisations (IOs) have responded to these demands by widening access for non-state actors in international governance, and today the majority of IOs offer some access for civil society participation (Bexell, Tallberg, & Uhlin, 2010). The hope is that this will make global governance more participatory, more accountable and contribute to improved global governance overall (Scholte, 2004; Uhlin, 2016). We observe similar dynamics at the regional level with the growth of regional civil society networks and increased demands that regional organisations (ROs) open up to civil society. Some ROs are more responsive than others and have become more open to civil society, whereas others – especially in contexts characterised by mixed regime types and limited state capacity – resist calls for more access. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), an intergovernmental organisation focussed on political and economic integration, is one of those ROs that seems to have largely resisted calls to open up to civil society, making it a "tough test" for civil society engagement and influence.[1]

Yet, even in this difficult regional context – characterised by a mix of authoritarian and democratic member states, purely intergovernmental regional institutions and a reluctance on the part of those institutions to engage civil society – we still observe the existence of transnational civil society networks that aim to influence regional governance. Moreover, we also observe differences in civil society engagement and influence across different policy sectors. For example, gender CSOs in Southern Africa are highly organised and credited with bringing about the SADC Gender Protocol, and they are highly involved in its ongoing implementation. Other sectors are characterised by lower levels of civil society engagement, particularly in sensitive policy sectors such as democracy, security and human rights. Political sensitivity and institutional openness of ROs aside, it seems likely that the dynamics and nature of these CSO networks would have an effect on their engagement in regional governance. Policy sectors characterised by the presence of a well-organised civil society network – in which CSOs share information with each other, coordinate their actions and jointly pressure decision-makers – are sectors in which we might expect to see high levels of CSO engagement and influence in regional governance, which entails participating in the shaping of regional policies and ensuring that they are adopted, ratified and implemented by member states.

Against this background, our primary research question is: *How do the characteristics of transnational networks contribute to civil society engagement in regional governance in SADC?* To answer this question, we use an interview-based approach to social network

1 SADC consists of 16 member states: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

analysis (SNA) to map the actors (CSOs, donors, regional and national institutions) involved in the adoption and implementation of regional policies, and the different relationships (information exchange, funding flows and exertion of political pressure) between them. The social network data is visualised and analysed with the software programme Gephi (see Annex I). We complement the SNA with semi-structured interviews and qualitative analysis using Atlas.ti.

Our findings indicate that network characteristics and the formality of CSO-RO relations contribute to civil society engagement in different ways. For example, CSOs in the gender network are organised in a centralised and hierarchal fashion, with a regional umbrella CSO tasked with coordinating the network and ensuring that information is shared among all stakeholders, greatly contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of the CSO network. However, the fact that relationships with decision-makers are based on informal relations means that CSO access to institutions is on shaky ground. Such informality means CSOs can be easily excluded if they are perceived to be overstepping or representing interests out of step with government interests. The employment and labour sector, on the other hand, is characterised by a more formalised network, in which the tripartite governance structure found in several member states is replicated at the regional level. This obliges SADC to consult with trade unions and the private sector in the formulation of policies, and it also makes for a dense network in which policy-making is a slow process. Trade unions are much more assured of their place at the SADC table than gender organisations, in part due to their role in the Liberation movements and long histories with post-Independence governments. However, their dominance of the network means that other groups affected by employment and labour policies (such as informal workers and traders) are marginalised from the core of the policy network.

The project contributes to the literature on transnational civil society and comparative regionalism. Typically, the literature on Comparative Regionalism focusses on the rationale for state-led institutional design, neglecting the role of non-state actors in shaping and delivering regional governance. Literature on regionalism in the Global South tends to assume that regional governance is primarily – or even exclusively – a member state-driven process, with non-state actors playing only a secondary role (see Börzel, 2016; Börzel & van Hüllen, 2015; Godsäter, 2014; Jetschke, 2015). However, our project illustrates that this is not necessarily so. In some policy sectors – such as gender – regional governance is shaped and driven by alliances of civil society and external donors, with member states often taking a back seat. On the other hand, research on international civil society and transnational activism tends to neglect regional dynamics and the potential role of regional organisations as being targets and forums for civil society activism. A majority of the studies on the relevance of transnational advocacy have focussed on networks of civil society actors that are global in nature**,** and there has been relatively scant attention paid to the peculiarities of regional civil society and their role in regional governance (Adams & Kang, 2007; Tripp, 2005).

From a policy perspective, the project generates insights into the relationships between civil society and state-led governance institutions. Understanding how state and non-state actors collaborate to produce governance outcomes is vital for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) – the primary objectives of contemporary international development cooperation. Insights into civil society networks and their engagement with governance institutions is particularly

relevant for SDG 16, which aims to promote effective, accountable and inclusive governance institutions, as transnational civil society has an important role to play in ensuring that international and regional institutions are open and accountable to citizens. Exploring the potential for mutually beneficial engagement between state and non-state actors is also relevant for SDG 17, which aims to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for delivery of the other SDGs by fostering cooperation among governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

This report is structured in seven parts. Section 2 offers a framework for the analysis of transnational civil society networks. Section 3 details our methodological choices and approach to conducting the SNA. Section 4 presents empirical findings regarding the openness of SADC to civil society and how well the various forms of formal and informal engagement mechanisms function. It also gives an overview of the main regional umbrella CSOs that aim to influence SADC policy. Section 5 details our empirical findings from the SNA and compares the characteristics of the policy networks in the gender as well as employment and labour sectors. It identifies such characteristics as the relative density and centralisation of the networks, the most central CSOs, the most important donors funding the networks and the most influential actors. Section 6 offers findings from our qualitative analysis regarding the benefits to CSOs of working within networks, as well as some of the challenges to the formation and effective functioning of civil society networks. Finally, Section 7 concludes the report by synthesising our findings and offering several recommendations to CSOs, donors, and regional and national institutions in Southern Africa.

2 Regional governance and transnational civil society: a framework for analysis

The literature on global governance and international organisations differentiates between "input" and "output" legitimacy (Steffek, 2014). Output legitimacy refers to the efficient delivery of results that are in the public interest of the respective community. Input legitimacy, on the other hand, refers to institutional arrangements that allow citizens to communicate their interests, values and preferences to political decision-makers (Steffek, 2014). Although some international and regional organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) have made efforts to increase accessibility by designing mechanisms for civil society access, and – in the case of the EU – allowing for a directly electable parliament, many other international and regional organisations continue to lack meaningful access (Risse, 2004). Organisations that restrict access tend to lack input legitimacy, leading to a "democratic deficit" in global and regional governance, which may ultimately threaten their functioning (Bexell, Tallberg, & Uhlin, 2010). Input legitimacy is especially challenged in areas where international or regional organisations are composed of undemocratic member states, and where member states have limited state capacity, as is the case in many developing countries. Nevertheless, transnational civil society networks continue to emerge and spearhead demands for greater levels of access to, and participation within, international and regional organisations. Facilitating greater levels of engagement of civil society and other non-state actors is a pathway to overcoming some of the pitfalls associated with regional governance structures in the Global South (Pevehouse, 2016). Civil society may hold regional governance structures

accountable for their decisions, act as a transmitter between the grassroots level and high-level political decision-makers, as well as provide knowledge and resources in times of dwindling support from the international community. In this way, increased civil society engagement in regional (and global) governance can contribute to both higher degrees of input and output legitimacy, in line with the aims and objectives of SDG 16.

2.1 Civil society engagement and influence

We define CSOs in line with the definition used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, in which CSOs are

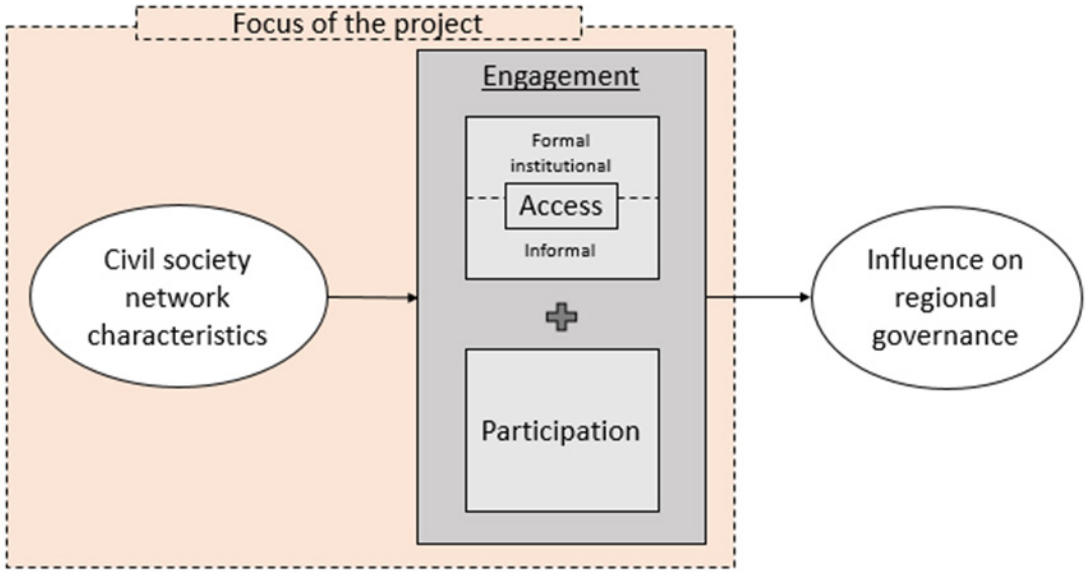
> all non-market and non-state organisations outside the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmer's associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and not-for-profit media. (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are a subset of CSOs involved in development cooperation and part of the broader landscape of civil society. The term civil society "**engagement**" is often used, but seldom clearly defined. Literature on civil society tends to use engagement as a catch-all concept to signify various types of interaction or activities, but there exists no single, clear definition of "engagement" and how it differs from other commonly used terms such as "participation" and "influence". Therefore, we clarify how we use these terms in the project. Many authors think of civic engagement as either a top-down, government-initiated process to include non-state actors, or, alternatively, as a more passive precursor to participation, in the sense that one has to be aware of, and interested in, an issue before participating in a policy process (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Rather than trying to distinguish whether engagement belongs to top-down or bottom-up processes, we conceptualise engagement as equating to access plus participation (see Figure 1).

Access refers to the institutional mechanisms that allow non-state actors to take part in the policy processes of IOs (Tallberg, Sommerer, Squatrito, & Jönsson, 2013). Tallberg et al. focus on the formal aspects of access, codified in the institutional design of international organisations. However, it is important to note, particularly in developing contexts, that access can exist on an informal basis as well. Darren Hawkins (2008) recognised this in his conceptualisation of institutional permeability of international organisations, which describes the extent to which the formal and informal rules and practises of international organisations allow non-state actors access to decision-making processes (Hawkins, 2008). Open, permeable IOs and ROs give a range of non-state actors access to the most important decision-making processes, hold open meetings and debates, issue reports that justify decisions and facilitate knowledge of their institutional procedures. Impermeable or closed ROs carefully select the actors granted access, limit access to peripheral decision-making processes and are reluctant to provide information to civil society actors, even on an informal basis (Hawkins, 2008, p. 382). Therefore, institutional permeability or accessibility is a key factor in enabling the exchange of information between international and regional organisations and CSOs and other non-state actors, and if given, enhances the

opportunities for civil society participation in regional governance (Pevehouse, 2016). When it comes to regional organisations, state–society relations at the national-level are likely to play a substantial role in determining the accessibility of ROs: Those with majority-democratic states are more likely to have institutional mechanisms for formally engaging with non-state actors, whereas majority-authoritarian ROs are likely to oppose mechanisms for non-state actor engagement, perceiving it as an attack on state sovereignty and taking measures to block or regulate non-state actor access to regional institutions (Scholte, 2004; Uhlin, 2016).

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Source: Authors

Civil society **participation** refers to the presence and activities of non-state actors making use of formal and informal avenues of access (Tallberg et al., 2013). It implies bottom-up, active involvement, with the aim to "influence others… and their decisions that concern societal issues" (Ekman & Amnå, 2012, p. 285). Participation can be said to be high if non-state actors use existing avenues of access at a high rate. High levels of access and high participation often go hand in hand, but access can exist without participation. There are a number of ways in which CSOs can participate in regional governance, depending on what stage of the policy cycle they are seeking to influence. First, they can participate in agenda-setting, bringing attention to issues and problems that need to be addressed in the region. Second, they can contribute to policy formulation by generating knowledge and presenting various solutions and strategies to tackle issues at stake. Third, they can take part in decision-making processes by lobbying decision-makers. Fourth, they can contribute to the implementation of policies through service delivery. Finally, they can help in monitoring and evaluation by collecting information on implementation and assessing whether measures have the desired outcome (Overseas Development Institute, 2006; Scholte, 2015). Tallberg et al.'s (2013) study of 50 international organisations between 1950 and 2010 find that IOs are most open to non-state actors in the monitoring and enforcement stages of the policy cycle, least open in the decision-making phase, while the stages of policy formulation and implementation typically offer a medium degree of openness.

Finally, "**influence**" on regional governance refers to the extent to which non-state actors are able to affect and shape the various stages of the regional policy-making process. Due to the varying range of access and levels of participation at different stages of the policy cycle, civil society influence may be higher at certain stages than others. As our project is focussed on how the characteristics of civil networks translates into engagement, we do not systematically examine how, or to what extent, civil society engagement translates into influence, and doing so would be beyond the scope of this paper. However, we would contend that civil society engagement is a pre-requisite for influence.

Based on the literature on comparative regionalism and transnational civil society, we theorise that there are two primary factors that contribute to the level of civil society engagement in ROs, the first being the accessibility of the RO itself, as discussed above, and the second being the nature or quality of the transnational civil society networks that seek to influence it. As our project focusses solely on SADC, we do not explore in depth how variations in access affect civil society engagement and instead focus on differences in the quality of civil society networks.

2.2 Characteristics of civil society networks

Regional civil society networks can play a valuable role in effecting change at the national level (Keck & Sikkink, 1999; van der Vleuten, 2005). Regional platforms and cross-border networks can play a particularly valuable role when channels between domestic groups and the government at the national level are hampered to the extent that they are ineffective for resolving societal conflicts (e.g. in an authoritarian regime). This has been termed the "boomerang pattern of influence" (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p. 93) and describes a scenario in which domestic groups operating in a constrained environment seek international allies to bring pressure on their governments from outside, amplifying the demands of domestic groups, and increasing the likelihood of effecting change in state behaviour. From this perspective, transnational civil society networks can not only increase the input and output legitimacy of regional institutions, but also play a vital role in fostering bonds of transnational solidarity and effecting change at the national level.

We assume that the quality of a civil society network influences the degree of civil society engagement in regional governance. The quality of any network is a function of the attributes of the actors involved, and the density and strength of their linkages (Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009). Important network features for our purposes include the attributes of CSOs involved in the network, and the overall structure of the network, including the existence of "bridging" linkages between CSOs and political decision-makers, which can be the result of formal or informal access mechanisms.

Attributes can play a role by influencing actors' positions within a network, and vice versa (i.e. the homily that "birds of a feather flock together" versus the observation that proximity over time results in similarity). The literature on civil society identifies several CSO attributes that might be relevant to their participation and/or effectiveness. These include

(but are not limited to): size and organisational resources (Jenkins, 1983; Kerbo, 1982); geographic location (Bebbington, 2004; Mercer, 2002); and the approach or strategy adopted by CSOs when engaging with decision-makers (Godsäter, 2015; Scholte, 2002).[2]

Network structure refers to the number and strength of connections between different actors in the network. Different structures have differing implications for the effectiveness of resource flows within the network or the stability of the network (Wasserman & Faust, 2006). For example, a dense network in which everyone is linked to everyone else tends to be very stable and characterised by high levels of trust and reciprocity as well as an increased possibility for joint action (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009). However, such networks are also often characterised by high levels of social control and limited input from outside the network, which can stifle innovation (Jansen, 2006). On the other hand, a highly centralised network that is organised around a single, central actor is able to quickly disseminate resources, and the risk of distortion is relatively low since the resource in question only needs to flow through a minimal number of actors to reach the entire network (Jansen, 2006). However, there is a risk that the central actor does not properly fulfil its role, prevents the efficient flow of resources through the network or otherwise creates dependencies for other actors in the network (Jansen, 2006; Schiffer & Hauck, 2010). Therefore, we expect the structure of networks, as well as the position of individual CSOs and their role within the network, to contribute to the degree of civil society engagement in regional governance. We expect more centralised networks to be better coordinated and engaged with regional organisations, and individual CSOs that have a high degree of centrality (being highly connected to many other actors) or betweenness (linking one group of actors to another group) can play a particularly important role in facilitating engagement.

On a final note, one should keep in mind that networks can be consensual or polarised (Keck & Sikkink, 2004). A consensual network is one in which most actors have shared aims and interests, whereas polarised networks consist of many actors with divergent or conflicting aims and interests. This might include a number of actors, who by themselves are not particularly influential, but collectively are able to exert pressure and block the adoption or implementation of policies advocated by others. It also includes the possibility of the existence of a sole, influential veto-player who is single-handedly able to block policies. Therefore, our analysis keeps in mind the possible presence of opposition figures or veto-players within the network, and the possibility that polarisation among stakeholders can impede the effectiveness of networks.

2 CSOs with a radical approach, that is, those that advocate for a "comprehensive change of the social order" (Scholte, 2002) are more likely to find themselves sidelined and on the periphery of policy networks than less critical, reform-orientated CSOs (Scholte, 2002; Söderbaum, 2007; Godsäter, 2015; Fioramonti, 2015).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design and case selection

To answer our research question, we employed a comparative study research design that observes two cases that were selected on a most-similar case basis.[3] As we focussed on two policy networks within the same region and on the same regional organisation, the level of institutional accessibility was similar across both cases, putting a greater amount of emphasis on the role of civil society networks.

We focussed on SADC due to its limited opportunities for non-state actors to formally engage in policy processes and decision-making (Chitiga, 2015). CSOs in the region have been trying to increase their engagement with SADC for decades, yet the continued lack of formal access mechanisms still limits the scope of their participation. SADC is therefore a "tough test" for the engagement of transnational civil society networks.

In selecting two policy fields, our starting point was the existence of a SADC protocol, signalling some minimal willingness to address the policy sector on behalf of member state governments. Secondly, we selected protocols that had been either signed or revised within the past decade, in order to ensure that the policy processes are relatively contemporaneous.[4] From the relatively small pool of protocols adopted or revised since 2008, we identified two policy sectors characterised by a similar degree of politicisation and/or technicalisation. Table 1 details the two issue areas and the attendant protocols selected.

Although neither the gender nor the employment and labour policy fields touch upon traditional areas of concern for "high politics", both fields have some issues that are highly sensitive. Activism in the gender sector often touches upon deeply ingrained, culturally sensitive issues, whereas the employment and labour field touches upon state and corporate interests, particularly in the areas of cross-border labour migration and social protection. The gender policy field is covered by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. It is a wide-ranging document that addresses many issues affecting gender equality. As the protocol is in the implementation phase, which involves a wide range of stakeholders, we decided to focus on a single issue addressed by the protocol, namely Article 8, which calls for an end to the practice of early marriage. Focussing on a specific issue has the advantage of clearly delineating the boundaries of the potential network to those stakeholders with a specific shared goal, and it prevents the network from becoming too large and difficult to map, which would likely happen if we tried to map stakeholders

3 The limitation of comparative case studies is the difficulty in selecting cases that adequately control for extraneous factors that may affect the outcome of interest. Researchers often use process-tracing to compensate for this possibility, but because this is beyond the scope of our project, we recognise that there are limitations to our ability to draw causal inferences on the basis of our two cases, and that our findings may lack generalisable insights to civil society networks in other regions.

4 There are five protocols that were adopted or revised between 2008 and 2018, including the Protocol on Finance and Investment (revised 2016), Gender and Development (revised 2016), Science, Technology and Innovation (adopted 2008), Trade in Services (adopted 2012) and Employment and Labour (adopted 2014).

involved in the implementation of the protocol as a whole. Given that almost all SADC member states have adopted the provision against early marriage into national law, and that the Southern African gender policy realm demonstrates a high level of civil society participation, we expect the civil society network to have substantially engaged in the process of adopting and implementing Article 8 of the Gender Protocol.

Table 1: Overview of policy areas

Issue area	Protocol	Status	Issue scope	Current policy stage[5]
Gender	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development	Adopted in 2008, entered into force 2013 after ratification by two-thirds of member states. The protocol was revised in 2016 in order to better align with Agenda 2030 and also to alter some provisions that raised objections from Botswana and Mauritius. Botswana signed the protocol in 2017, leaving Mauritius as the last holdout.[6]	Eleven thematic areas addressing unequal gender relations, including gender-based violence. Article 8 stipulates that no person under the age of 18 should marry.	Focus is on implementation: most countries have raised marriage age to 18, although there remain exceptions for parental consent or customary marriages. Local communities have to be sensitised, informed of the law, the negative effects of early marriage and enforcement measures taken against those who do not comply with the law.
Employment and labour	SADC Employment and Labour Protocol	Adopted by nine Heads of State in 2014. So far only one state, Zimbabwe, has begun the ratification process. Non-signatories to date include Angola, Botswana, Mauritius, Madagascar, Tanzania and Swaziland.	Aims for a decent work agenda for all, with particular focus on women, informal workers, the disabled and migrant workers.	Focus is on pursuing the ratification of the protocol according to procedures of member states.

Source: Authors

The SADC Protocol on Employment and Labour aims to implement a decent work agenda for the Southern African population, including women, informal workers, disabled persons and migrants. For the protocol to enter into force, at least two-thirds of member states have to ratify the document, but to date only one state (Zimbabwe) has begun the ratification process. There are various CSOs – including trade unions and other organisations – lobbying for the improvement of workers' rights in the region, as provided for in the protocol. Why the ratification has made little progress is not immediately obvious and may be the result of network characteristics.

5 We note the different policy stages that the respective protocols are at to highlight that civil society engagement may look different at different stages of the policy cycle, with activities such as knowledge creation and lobbying being more prevalent at earlier stages of the policy cycle, and activities such as monitoring, evaluation and service delivery being more common at later stages.

6 Botswana's objections related to provisions on affirmative action and explicit timeframes for achieving goals, whereas Mauritian objections came down to affirmative action and raising the marriage age.

3.2 Social network analysis

SNA is a methodological toolkit well-suited to the kinds of complex systems that comprise regional governance. On a theoretical and methodological level, it does not automatically privilege state actors over non-state actors, and it can capture both formal and informal relationships, making it consistent with a governance approach to regionalism. On a pragmatic level, SNA can assist stakeholders invested in a policy process to identify dependencies, marginalised actors, dysfunctional relationships, disincentives for change, structural challenges as well as assist with strategic decision-making by identifying opportunities for critical relationship-building and tapping into under-utilised resources (International Rescue Committee, 2016).

3.3 Data collection

Data for the SNA was collected using the Net-Map Tool, an interview-based "pen-and paper method" that helps both the researcher and respondents to understand, visualise and discuss situations in which many different stakeholders influence outcomes (Schiffer & Hauck, 2010). Its aim is to create "Influence Network Maps" in which stakeholders are asked to draw their own network together with the researcher in a participatory manner. Through desk research, we first identified several relevant and visible stakeholders in each policy field (i.e. a regional umbrella body or highly visible CSO) and asked them to conduct a Net-Map with us. The interviewee identified several other stakeholders, which we then approached for further Net-Map interviews, in a "snowball method"-like approach. Net-Map interviews typically lasted about 1.5 to two hours.

Net-Map interviews follow three steps. In a first step, the interviewee places themselves at the centre of a piece of paper and then names every relevant stakeholder in relation to either implementing Article 8 of the Gender Protocol or the ratification of the Protocol on Employment and Labour. Stakeholders are written on coloured Post-its, with a different colour for CSOs, national institutions, regional institutions, etc., and pinned on a large sheet of paper. In a second step, the interview partner is asked to elaborate on the various relationships between stakeholders by differentiating between three types of linkages between actors: information exchange, funding and exertion of political pressure. We map these three linkages, as they are the most relevant exchanges between actors within a policy network. Information dissemination in networks is closely connected to the concept of social capital, since information channels are a kind of social capital and can lead to the spread of ideas, norms and innovations (Jansen, 2006). Funding linkages are the "lifeblood" of networks, as the availability of financial resources is essential for the functioning of individual CSOs as well as CSO networks. Financial flows, in the context of developing regions, may also highlight donor influence on regional governance in general, and civil society networks in particular. Finally, we map political pressure linkages to observe who pressures whom when it comes to effecting political change. Applying political pressure can include activities such as lobbying, international "naming and shaming", or organising protests or media campaigns targeted at changing the minds of decision-makers. However, it is important to keep in mind that CSOs can themselves come under pressure through financial or legal restrictions, intimidation, etc. Linkages are drawn on the map, with different colours indicating information, funding or pressure exchanges, and arrows indicating the direction of exchange. In a third step, the interviewee

is asked to indicate how influential different stakeholders are in relation to the issue by assigning each stakeholder an "influence tower" made of plastic building bricks, with no bricks equating to zero influence, and no upper limit on the number of bricks that can be assigned. Once fieldwork is complete, we compile and aggregate the individual Net-Maps into a single policy network, which has the advantage of mitigating some of the subjectivity inherent in asking individuals about (perceived) power and influence within networks.[7] The Net-Map interviews were complemented with semi-structured expert interviews with respondents who were not themselves directly involved in the policy processes, but who were otherwise knowledgeable and able to provide information on civil society and/or SADC, which is valuable for contextualising our network analysis. Semi-structured interviews typically took about an hour and sought information about the political environment in which CSOs operate and the advantages and obstacles to cross-border cooperation with donors and other CSOs. Semi-structured interviews were then transcribed, coded and analysed using the software package Atlas.ti (see Annex III for coding guidelines). In total, we conducted 78 interviews (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: Breakdown of interviews

	Net-Map interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Total
Gender	21	6	27
E&L	21	8	29
General	n/a	22	22
Total	42	36	78

Source: Authors

Table 3: Types of actors interviewed

CSOs	46
Donors	11
International organisations	6
Government	5
Regional institution	3
Academia	4
Business	3
Total	78

Source: Authors

7 This required some data cleaning. For example, interviewees sometimes used unclear or differing names when referring to stakeholders, or named a superior authority rather than the specific actor. This was especially the case with the various SADC directorates or the national ministries. For simplicity, we subsumed all SADC directorates or institutions (e.g. the SADC Gender Unit, the Council of Ministers or the SADC migration directorate) under a single node called "SADC", and the various ministries mentioned (e.g. South African Department of Home Affairs) under the respective national government. We then compiled the linkages from each individual Net-Map into one dataset in which each linkage is represented. Average influence was computed using the sum of normalised influence towers divided by the number of times the actor was mentioned.

3.4 Analysis of SNA data

We used the software programme Gephi to create visualisations of the information, funding and pressure networks in the two policy fields. For the quantitative analysis, we used three of the most frequently used measures for network analysis: network density, degree centrality and betweenness centrality (Schiffer, 2007; Jansen, 2006).[8]

Network density (*including average degree*) is the ratio of actual linkages between actors to possible linkages, and it describes the "knittedness" of a network. Networks in which every actor is connected to every other actor have a density of 1, whereas sparse networks have values approaching zero. To account for the bias that the larger a network is, the lower its density is, we also checked for the average degree per node in a network. For the interpretation of the information network, greater levels of network density mean that, in theory, there is a greater amount of transparency and awareness of others, as well as a more balanced or diffused sharing of information.

Degree centrality (*including in-degree and out-degree*) describes the number of linkages an actor in the network has. In directed networks such as ours, it is possible to distinguish between in-degree centrality (number of incoming links) and out-degree centrality (number of outgoing links). These two measures are essential to get an impression of the dynamics within information, funding and pressure networks. For example, actors with high in- and out-degree centrality in information networks can be described as "knowledge hubs" and represent a valuable resource for fulfilling a coordination role in a network. They can also fulfil a "broker" role within the network, meaning that they funnel a resource from one group of actors to others that otherwise would not receive this resource. This is especially true if those actors also have a high betweenness value. In funding networks, we might expect donors with many outgoing links to have higher influence with the network, whereas CSOs with high in-degree centrality might be regarded as "donor darlings", since they receive money from many different sources. In pressure networks, we expect actors with decision-making authority to have high in-degree centrality, as they are targeted by those advocating for change.

Betweenness centrality describes the number of times a particular actor acts as a "bridge" along the shortest path between two other actors. High betweenness centrality implies a high level of influence over the flow of resources within a network. In relation to information networks, betweenness centrality indicates the potential for a "broker" or "gate-keeper" role. A broker links two subgroups of the network by channelling a resource from one group to the other, whereas a gatekeeper keeps or strategically filters resources between groups. Actors who fulfil such roles are often able to reap significant strategic benefits for themselves, but this advantage may come at the cost of reducing the efficient diffusion of a resource through a network (Centola, 2018).

8 The quantitative analysis of the networks takes into account all mentioned linkages and nodes. To check for robustness, we replicated the analysis again with the strongest linkages.

3.5 Limitations of the Net-Map approach

Although the Net-Map approach to SNA has several benefits – including its participatory nature, its ability to map both formal and informal linkages, and the possibility to generate qualitative insights into network linkages – it also has some limitations. First of all, since it is an ego-centred approach to collecting network data, it does not allow one to map the network in its entirety, increasing the likelihood of missing or incomplete data. Therefore, findings from the SNA should be contextualised with our qualitative data and checked against what we already know to avoid inaccurate results. Second, the Net-Map approach is based on the perceptions of interview partners, and therefore partial to subjective bias. At times, interviewees had different (sometimes conflicting) notions about the linkages and influence of actors. Wherever possible, we tried to probe these perceptions by asking follow-up questions to establish them in more factual terms (e.g. How and when do you exchange information?). Also, the aggregation of subjective data should minimise this reliability issue, and combining the SNA with the qualitative, Atlas.ti-driven analysis ensures there is triangulation of data. On a practical level, interviewees sometimes had trouble sticking to a limited field of their activities and focussing exclusively on the issue of child marriage or labour and employment and would sometimes try to include irrelevant actors and linkages. Again, we dealt with this wherever possible by asking probing follow-up questions, and in some cases eliminating irrelevant information from the Net-Map interviews. Lastly, the length of the interviews varied according to the time available. This led to different levels of detail, with some interviewees having more time and giving greater levels of detail than others.

4 Regional context

4.1 Domestic politics

SADC member states represent a "mixed bag" of regime types, ranging from hard-line autocracies such as the DRC and Zimbabwe to consolidating democracies such as Botswana and Namibia (see Table 4). Democratisation processes after the Cold War saw many countries transition to, or consolidate their, democratic systems (Matlosa, 2007). However, in recent years, some Southern African states have experienced democratic backsliding, including increased restrictions on civil society (Youngs, 2015). Although levels of civic participation tend to be relatively high in the more democratic states, civil society faces serious (and increasing) constraints in the less democratic regimes; the overall trend for civil society participation in the region over the past five years is negative (see Figure 2). Our field research in Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia illustrates the political heterogeneity of the region.[9] In South Africa, the environment for

9 We chose to conduct research in these four countries, both for pragmatic reasons and because they represent a mix of regime types in the region. The Johannesburg area in South Africa is a hub for many CSOs, as is Gaborone, Botswana, where the headquarters of SADC is located. Zambia and Mozambique are easy to travel to, and relatively easy to conduct research in (unlike the hardline autocracies, where research on civil society would be unwelcome), while representing some variation on regime type.

civil society is quite permissive, and interviewees did not complain about restrictions. In Botswana, interviewees from civil society expressed the view that the space for civil society has narrowed in recent years and alternative views are limited due to state control of media and financing mechanisms for CSOs (Interviews 39 and 46). In Zambia, civil society has come under increased restrictions since a state of emergency was declared in July 2017, with activists being imprisoned and accused of being "friends of regime change, imperialism, and Western influence" (Interview 21). Likewise, the situation for CSOs in Mozambique has deteriorated in past years, with interviewees reporting break-ins and other intimidation tactics (Interview 77), while the recent Association Act of 2017 has significantly restricted the work of CSOs in the country (CIVICUS, 2017).

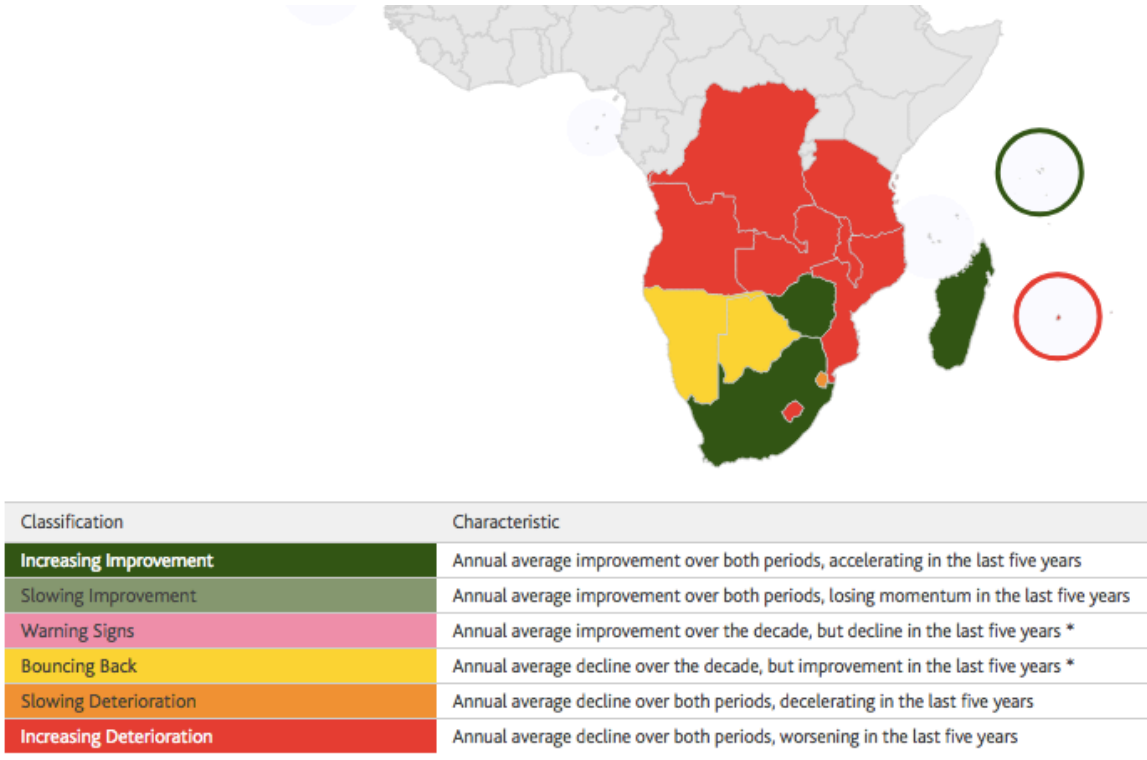
Table 4: SADC member states democracy status, 2017*

Consolidating democracy	Defective democracy	Highly defective democracy	Moderate autocracy	Hard-line autocracy
Botswana Mauritius Namibia	Malawi Tanzania South Africa Zambia	Lesotho Madagascar	Angola Mozambique	DRC Zimbabwe

* Excluding Comoros, the Seychelles and Swaziland due to their small size.

Source: Bertelsmann Transformations Index (2018)

Figure 2: Civil society participation trends in Southern Africa, 2006-2016



Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2017)

Our research highlighted that legal restrictions on CSOs at the national level may cause "knock-on effects" at the regional level. Keck and Sikkink (1999) suggested that obstacles at the national level contribute to the growth of transnational networks in a "boomerang

pattern of influence". However, we found potentially negative consequences for transnational CSOs and networks, in that restrictive national NGO laws can make it difficult to register as an entity with a regional focus. This was particularly a problem in Botswana, location of the SADC Secretariat and the obvious location for the headquarters of regionally focussed CSOs. Botswanan NGO legislation allows for two possibilities to register as an NGO:

1. Registration as a local entity under the NGO laws of Botswana, in which case NGOs must adhere to national reporting requirements, which may be difficult for entities working regionally; or
2. Registration as a regional NGO, which exempts entities from national reporting requirements but requires an official recognition letter from the SADC Secretariat.

Obtaining official recognition from the SADC Secretariat is no easy task, and to date only one regional CSO – the Southern African Trade Union Coordination Council (SATUCC) – has acquired it. Here, the state-centric nature of SADC comes into play: Whether a CSO is recognised by SADC and can register as a regional entity depends entirely on the willingness and support of SADC member states. Several regionally focussed CSOs have even moved from Botswana to South Africa, as South African NGO law is more accommodating to entities with a regional focus (Interview 48).

4.2 Institutional permeability of SADC

SADC's history and organisational culture is rooted in the region's Liberation movements. The organisation itself was born out of the Frontline States, an alliance that opposed apartheid in South Africa (Odhiambo, Ebobrah, & Chitiga, 2016). This has contributed to a strong sense of solidarity among Liberation movements, who are now ruling parties (Saunders, 2011), whereas other parts of civil society that also contributed to the Liberation movements are now considered "anti-liberation", as they are perceived to be working against the government (Interview 42). Institutionally, SADC is a purely intergovernmental organisation, with ultimate authority resting with the Summit of Heads of State. Councils of Ministers advise the Summit, while the SADC Secretariat has an administrative and coordinating role. Article 23 of the SADC Treaty commits to involving the people of the region and NGOs in the process of regional integration (SADC Treaty, 1992). SADC has implemented a handful of formal access mechanisms for non-state actors, the most important of which are SADC National Committees (sometimes also referred to as National Contact Points) and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the SADC Secretariat. However, these institutional access mechanisms are quite weak and lead civil society to rely more on informal access mechanisms.

In 2001, SADC introduced the SADC National Committees (SNCs) in order to allow government, civil society and the private sector at the national level a pathway for providing input into regional matters. SNCs are typically located in the government ministry responsible for regional integration. In theory, SNCs have a direct link to the SADC Secretariat and should have direct input into regional policy-making, thereby making them the most promising avenue for CSOs wishing to participate in regional policy-making (Interview 48). The problem is that only three countries (Mozambique, Botswana and Mauritius) have fully operational SNCs, with SNCs in other countries either lacking the

capacity to operate effectively or existing on paper only (Odhiambo et al., 2016; Interview 48). There is no mechanism to sanction member states that fail to institutionalise SNCs (Interview 59). Where SNCs are functional, only selected CSOs are invited by the government to engage (Interview 76), which may explain why the Mozambican SNC, despite being fully functional, is not much used by civil society (Interviews 47 and 48). SNCs also have the shortcoming of blocking off direct participation at the regional level, which leaves access for civil society at the mercy of national governments, making them a less-than-satisfactory mechanism for civil society in authoritarian countries, or where SNCs are inoperable.

The SADC Secretariat has signed a handful of MoUs with selected regional CSOs. These provide a legal framework for cooperation between SADC and non-state actors. CSOs with MoUs are usually invited to relevant ministerial meetings, where they may have an opportunity to give inputs. However, obtaining an MoU is a long, drawn-out process that relies on having good contacts within the SADC Secretariat (Interview 41). To date, only two of the major regional CSOs (the SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO) and SATUCC) have concluded MoUs with the Secretariat, whereas other organisations have tried for many years to obtain one, without success (Odhiambo et al., 2016).

In theory, CSOs can sometimes use regional courts and parliaments as avenues for influencing regional governance, depending on their design. However, the opportunities for CSO participation through these avenues are limited in SADC. The SADC Tribunal was suspended in 2012 and subsequently redesigned to remove individual access and is currently inoperable.[10] The SADC-PF is designed as an autonomous institution with no legislative or oversight powers and has no formal reporting relationship with the Summit. Proposals to transform the Parliamentary Forum into a regional parliament similar to that of the East African Community (EAC) have been rejected by the Summit (Odhiambo et al., 2016).

On a more informal basis, CSOs can try to engage on the sidelines of Ministerial and Summit meetings. CSOs with MoUs are invited to these meetings (although often only to the opening and closing sessions) and prepare communiqués and talking points. However, the agenda of these meetings are not published ahead of time, and CSOs have to rely on their national governments or inside contacts at the Secretariat to communicate the agenda so they can be properly prepared (Interviews 47 and 48). This kind of informal engagement on the sidelines of regional meetings has become common on political issues, with CSOs seeking meetings with senior officials of whichever member state holds the Chair of the SADC Summit (Odhiambo et al., 2016). In a more systematic effort to engage the Summit, every year CSOs come together at an annual Civil Society Forum. This takes place a few days before the Summit and culminates in a joint communiqué directed at the Summit. However, CSOs feel that the Civil Society Forum does not effectively feed civil

10 There is an ongoing civil society campaign to repeal the suspension of the SADC Tribunal. In 2018, the Law Association of South Africa sued the South African government and then-President Jacob Zuma for complicity in the suspension of the Tribunal. The South African High Court ruled that the president's actions in relation to the suspension of the Tribunal were constitutionally invalid, and the matter has been referred to the South African Constitutional Court.

society inputs into the Summit decision-making process, in part because they are not adequately informed of the Summit's agenda, and in part because the Summit simply does not listen to civil society (Interviews 47, 48 and 49).

Table 5: Overview of existing access mechanisms for non-state actors

Access mechanism	Operating principle(s)	Assessment
Formal		
SADC National Committees (SNCs)/ National Contact Points	National-level committees bringing together government, civil society and the private sector to formulate inputs for regional decision-making.	Formally, the best avenue for CSOs to exert influence, but most countries do not have functional SNCs; access is controlled by government and does not allow direct participation at the regional level.
Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)	Legal framework for cooperation between SADC and selected regional umbrella CSOs.	Gives access to SADC meetings, but difficult to obtain. Process of obtaining MoU lacks transparency.
SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF)	Brings together parliamentarians in SADC member states. Lacks legislative or oversight powers.	Relatively open to civil society but lacks real powers within SADC.
SADC Tribunal (2007-2012)	Had individual access and jurisdiction in human rights, rule of law and democracy, creating an avenue for activism via courts.	Tribunal was closed due to human rights rulings against Zimbabwe, meaning SADC no longer has a legal avenue for civic activism.
Informal		
Annual Civil Society Forum	Initiative by three regional umbrella CSOs (SADC-CNGO, FOCCISA and SATUCC). Held just before the annual Summit and aims to funnel final communiqué to Heads of State.	More of a forum for exchange between CSOs as they struggle to feed results into the Summit. Government representatives rarely attend, despite regular invitations.
Meetings on sidelines of Ministerial and Summit meetings, lobbying Chair of Summit, etc.	Ad hoc and based on personal relationships and inclinations of government representatives.	Only avenue for CSOs to provide input on political matters.
Technical engagement with directorates at SADC Secretariat	Ad hoc and based on personal contacts and inclinations of SADC bureaucrats. If CSOs can gain access, they can be invited to meetings and provide inputs in a thematic area.	Grants access to CSOs with technical or thematic expertise. Somewhat exclusionary, as many CSOs are uninformed or not invited to participate. Somewhat risky or unstable, as CSO can be terminated at discretion of SADC.

Source: Authors

For less political issues, it is more effective for CSOs to seek informal access at lower levels of decision-making through the directorates within the Secretariat. Access happens at the discretion of the Secretariat and hinges on an ability to offer technical expertise in a thematic area. This has been the approach of networks such as the Gender Protocol Alliance and the Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network, both of which have worked closely with SADC to develop and implement regional protocols. This kind of informal engagement is vitally important for CSOs to influence regional

governance, but it is somewhat unstable, as much depends on the discretion of particular technocrats within the Secretariat and fluctuates with changes of personnel within SADC, as well as being driven by the needs of particular programmes (Interviews 10 and 38). CSOs that once enjoyed informal engagement can find that their access can disappear relatively quickly.

In all, SADC is a rather impermeable institution. Existing mechanisms for civil society access are either inoperable, difficult to obtain or rely too much on the individual inclinations of decision-makers and bureaucrats. ROs similar to SADC, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the EAC, have more developed and transparent access mechanisms for civil society. SADC's major donors have long lamented its lack of civil society engagement and have encouraged SADC to open up to non-state actors (Interview 41). In response, SADC commissioned the Southern African Trust (SAT) to draft a report on how SADC could reform its mechanisms for non-state actor access. The proposals would bring SADC broadly into line with ROs such as the EAC and ECOWAS. However, the recommendations have yet to be endorsed by SADC Ministers and the Summit, whereas some CSOs and donors we interviewed questioned the representativeness of SAT and criticised the lack of broader consultations with civil society in the drafting of the proposals (Interviews 42, 48 and 59).

4.3 Regional civil society umbrella bodies in SADC

Despite the difficulties of registering as a regional entity and engaging with SADC, there are nonetheless several regional umbrella bodies representing civil society, some with MoUs, some without. There are also multiple smaller, issue-specific regional bodies that are usually not well-known outside their sector, and which we do not consider here.

There are three prominent umbrella bodies with MoUs with SADC. They represent NGOs in general (SADC-CNGO), trade unions (SATUCC) and churches (Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa – FOCCISA). Together they form an "Apex Alliance", who organise the Annual Civil Society Forum and led the "SADC We Want Campaign". All three umbrella bodies face considerable problems regarding funding, capacity, legitimacy and representativeness. At the time of our field research, SADC-CNGO was in financial difficulties and had no leadership in place. Interviewees expressed the opinion that it did not have a clear agenda or priority areas (Interview 59), was poorly managed, resulting in a loss of donor funds (Interview 49), and represented poor value for money for the national-level organisations paying for membership (Interview 77). FOCCISA seems to be hardly active in regional affairs and was barely mentioned by interviewees, except one who stated that they are never present at regional meetings (Interview 16).

SATUCC is the most active member of the Apex Alliance. SATUCC is somewhat unique among regional umbrella bodies, as its inclusion in SADC policy-making is mandated through a tripartite governance structure in the labour and employment policy field. It has an MoU with SADC, is the regional CSO registered as a regional entity in Botswana (instead of under the national NGO law of Botswana) and its chief executive officer has diplomatic status. Although it is partially funded by membership dues from its members, it still struggles financially, as members do not consistently pay their due (Interviews 9 and 28).

Opinions on SATUCC's effectiveness were mixed: Some interviewees expressed scepticism over their contribution to regional governance (Interview 41), but others were more positive, noting that they and their affiliates are very vocal on several issues (Interview 37) and "critical" for lobbying for the ratification of regional conventions (Interview 67). SATUCC is the main body coordinating trade union engagement in the labour and employment policy sector (see Section 5).

Other notable regional civil society bodies or networks include the Gender Protocol Alliance, the Southern African Social Protection Experts Network (SASPEN) and the Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network (SAPSN), none of which have MoUs and engage with SADC on an almost entirely informal basis. SASPEN is an expert network that has been advising SADC on social protection issues, mainly working through the labour and employment desk. Although their expertise is highly appreciated by the SADC Secretariat, it has not been successful in trying to secure an MoU with SADC (Interview 23). SAPSN is a regional network that brings together social movements, CSOs, churches and community-based organisations that do not fit under SADC-CNGO. It has a rather critical approach to regional governance, advocating an anti-capitalist agenda. It organises a People's Summit parallel to the SADC Summit (independent of the Civil Society Forum organised by the Apex Alliance), which involves street marches and protests.

Finally, the Gender Protocol Alliance is probably the most prominent civil society network in Southern Africa. It is coordinated by Gender Links, which is well-connected with the country networks and CSOs in all SADC member states. National-level CSOs participating in the network generally have a positive view of the network and Gender Links' role in coordination and information dissemination:

> We depend largely on their information that they produce through the regional barometer, that gives us statistics and also some of the strategies around the region that we can now use at national level to be able to engage for meaningful interaction. (Interview 26)

They are perceived as being very active and successful in influencing SADC (Interviews 19 and 59). However, Gender Links does not have an MoU with SADC, and the relationship is entirely informal; their access is based on the quality of personal relationships between civil society activists, regional bureaucrats and political decision-makers at the regional level. Although this resulted in successful collaboration in the past, a recent incident in which members of the Gender Alliance criticised government officials in the media has resulted in the working relationship between the network and the SADC Secretariat being terminated. It remains to be seen what impact this will have on the umbrella organisation itself as well as the network as a whole (Interview 38).

5 Networks in the gender and employment and labour sectors: empirical findings

5.1 Information networks

Visual and quantitative analysis of information-exchange relationships in the two policy sectors shows that the employment and labour network is denser and less centralised than the gender network (see Table 6 and Figures 5 and 6).

The gender information network is highly centralised, with the regional umbrella body, Gender Links, at its centre. It is the most central actor in the network by several centrality measures (in- and out-degree, betweenness), making it a crucial "information hub" for gender issues in Southern Africa. Its high level of centrality in the information network suggests that it performs its aim of coordinating gender CSOs in the region well, something that was confirmed by many of the CSOs we interviewed. For instance, national coordinating bodies such as the Non-Governmental Organisations Coordinating Council (NGO-CC) in Zambia and other gender CSOs at the national level stated that they rely on their alliance with Gender Links and the statistics and strategies for the ending of early marriage that they produce (Interviews 2, 19, 26 and 29). Gender Links is also the only CSO with a reciprocal connection to SADC, putting it in the position of the "broker" between SADC and broader civil society. This highly centralised network structure has several advantages. Information can spread quickly through the network, activities can be coordinated effectively by the most central node in the network, and the broker (Gender Links in this case) can efficiently collect and amalgamate information and present it to decision-makers as a cohesive civil society position. However, there are also some weaknesses, as the civil society connection to SADC depends almost entirely on Gender Links. Given that the SADC–Gender Links relationship is an informal one, there is a risk that this connection could be easily terminated, leaving civil society without a bridge to regional policy-making. Our analysis shows that the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has the second highest betweenness value, suggesting that it could serve as an alternative pathway for civil society to funnel information to SADC should the Gender Links pathway become dysfunctional. We also observe that Gender Links does not have a direct link to the Mozambican national network – a weakness we attribute to a language barrier between Anglophone and Lusophone Southern Africa. Mozambican CSO are rather connected to the Southern African network through Girls Not Brides (an international network of CSOs working against early marriage) and *Forum da Sociedade Civil Para os Direitos da Criança* (aka ROSC, a civil society forum of national and international CSOs that works closely with Girls Not Brides). This suggests that Mozambican CSOs' reference points are international rather than Southern African. Interestingly, the network illustrates that the SADC Secretariat has more outgoing information links to donors, particularly in the UN family, than to CSOs. As these linkages likely represent reporting requirements, this suggests that SADC is more accountable to donors than to local civil society.

Table 6: Comparison of information networks in gender and employment and labour		
	Gender network	**Employment and labour network**
Density of network (undirected)*	0.024	0.032
Average degree per node	4.605	4.876
Top 5 by weighted in-degree centrality (value)	Gender Links (61) UNICEF (48) NGO-CC (46) WLSA (37) National Government BW (30)	SATUCC (124) ILO (85) SADC (82) National Government SA (70) National Government ZAM (65)
Top 5 by weighted out-degree centrality (value)	Gender Links (76) NGO-CC (46) UNICEF (48) WLSA (37) Girls Not Brides (32)	SATUCC (141) ILO (96) SADC (73) National Government SA (67) National Government ZAM (55)
Nodes with highest betweenness (value)	Gender Links (4578.23) UNICEF (3085.5) NGO-CC (3045.08)	CWAO (5833.65) ILO (5155.7) COSATU (4108.53) SATUCC (4072.2)
* Network density ranges from 1 (everyone is connected to everyone) to 0 (no one is connected). Source: Authors		

The labour and employment information network is a denser network, but similar to the gender sector, the regional umbrella body (in this case SATUCC) is the most central actor by degree centrality. SATUCC both collects and distributes information from and to the national level, but overall it shares more information with others than it receives, which reflects the fact that SATUCC tries to channel the information received from its members to the SADC Secretariat and SADC member states. SADC institutions are more central to the network than in the gender sector, which is most likely the result of a tripartite structure at the regional level, in which regional representatives of workers (SATUCC), employers (SADC Private Sector Forum) and government (SADC Secretariat and Council of Ministers) are obligated to mutual consultation in the formulation of labour policies. This tripartite governance structure, at both the national and regional levels, accounts for the density of the labour and employment networks. This may be a less efficient means of sharing information compared to a centralised network, like we find in the gender network, but dense, non-hierarchal networks do have an advantage in finding or creating consensus among diverse stakeholders (Interviews 21, 23 and 44).

Trade unions are the CSOs most active in the field, particularly at the national level, even though they are not the only groups affected by labour and employment policies. Organisations that represent informal workers are on the periphery of the network (see Figure 6), despite their efforts to build connections with trade unions. The high betweenness centrality of the Casual Worker's Advice Office (CWAO) is a result of its efforts to bridge the gap between informal workers' organisations and the traditional trade unions. At the national level, the most active trade unions are the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). COSATU scores high in betweenness centrality, as it has many connections to other trade union federations and civil society organisations across Southern Africa. This speaks to

the importance of South Africa as the economic powerhouse of Southern Africa and COSATU's alliance with South Africa's ruling party. When it comes to external actors' roles in the information network, the SADC Secretariat has more outgoing links to the International Labour Organization (ILO) than to SATUCC or the SADC Private Sector Forum, again suggesting greater accountability to external actors than regional civil society. The Secretariat also receives a lot of information from the ILO, which works directly with the SADC employment and labour sector (Interview 15). The ILO provides technical support to SADC member states, while most of their funding goes into research on labour migration and social protection within the region (Interview 37). Similar to UNICEF, the ILO could serve as an alternative pathway for civil society to engage with SADC, although the need for alternative pathways is less, as SATUCC's participation in regional governance is relatively assured due to its MoU with SADC. The other active donor (but not in the top five) is the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES), which interviewees credit with being instrumental in bringing labour organisations together (Interview 21).

Overall, the gender network is more hierarchical and centralised than the employment and labour network. That implies that information can progress relatively quickly through the gender network, while information dissemination in the employment and labour network is slower, as stakeholders engage in extensive consultations to find consensus. However, CSOs representing key societal interests (namely informal workers) are marginalised from the core of the network, whereas the gender network has a wider of range of organisations with vested interests represented in the network (i.e. CSOs focussing on children's rights, women's rights and men's issues). The gender network is therefore perhaps more inclusive than the employment and labour one. The fact that member states are more active in the employment and labour network relates to the fact that the topic is higher on the national agenda and more national interests are at stake. Both sectors have one dominant regional CSO: SATUCC and Gender Links. If these regional CSOs were not functioning, or the link to SADC breaks down, there is a risk that the civil society network loses its influence in regional governance. At the same time, international organisations, in these cases the ILO and UNICEF, play a big role in both sectors. They are both connected to a broad variety of actors and could function as alternative and/or complementary pathways for civil society engagement. However, it seems that in both networks, the level of donor coordination – in terms of sharing information between donors – seems to be rather low, except among the UN agencies (International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and ILO).

5.2 Funding networks

Analysis of the funding networks illustrates that the employment and labour network is slightly denser than the gender network (see Table 7 and Figures 5 and 6). One explanation for this is the difference in funding sources between the two policy fields: Employment and labour is dominated by trade union organisations, which receive a substantial part of their funding from membership dues, in addition to donor funding and government funds. In theory, this should make the employment and labour network more self-sustaining and less dependent on external donors. However, a problem arises for the regional network when national trade unions fail to pay membership dues to SATUCC (Interviews 28, 43 and 47). Nevertheless, SATUCC enjoys high in-degree centrality, receiving funds from national trade union federations as well as donors/international

organisations such as the ILO, IOM and FES, as do the other stakeholders with many incoming funding relationships (OTM-CS, ZCTU and Federation of Unions of South Africa are all national trade union federations in Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa, respectively). SADC receives funding from multiple sources (member states, ILO, IOM, FES and the SADC Private Sector Forum) but does not disperse any funds to others. The primary funders of the employment and labour network are German political foundations with clear value systems and long histories of encouraging trade unionism (e.g. FES and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung) and – unsurprisingly – the ILO. Interviewees highlighted the important role of the ILO in the network: "The money goes through the ILO and then the ILO brings labour unions together and they have the dialogue" (Interview 21). The IOM is involved in funding the policy network due to the Protocol's aims to better regulate cross-border labour migration. Perhaps more surprising is COSATU's tendency to channel funding to other trade unions and federations, including in neighbouring countries. Both SATUCC and COSATU have high betweenness values (2.5 to 3 times higher than the third most between actor), meaning that they both receive funding and channel it to other organisations: COSATU to other trade union federations; SATUCC to research institutions in SADC member states.

Table 7: Comparison of funding networks in gender and employment and labour

	Gender network	**Employment and labour network**
Density of network (undirected)	0.009	0.016
Average degree per node	1.039	1.402
Top 5 by weighted in-degree centrality (value)	WLSA (26) NGO-CC (22) Gender Links (12) National Government ZAM (11) Sonke (10)	SATUCC (84) SADC (24) OTM-CS (18) ZCTU (17) COSATU (12)
Top 5 by weighted out-degree centrality (value)	UNICEF (28) SIDA (24) UNFPA (18) EU (17) NGO-CC (14)	ILO (60) FES (41) COSATU (25) IOM (23) National Government SA (13)
Nodes with highest betweenness	Sonke (179.2) NGO-CC (168.33) Save the Children (158.0) Progresso (128.5)	SATUCC (153.0) COSATU (134.83)

Source: Authors

Compared to the employment and labour network, the gender network is driven by a greater variety of donors, and the most prominent donors are the more traditional bilateral and multilateral donors (UN agencies, the EU, Sweden and Canada). As in the employment and labour field, external donors distribute funding to both CSOs and national governments. However, there is a major difference, in that SADC governments hardly fund gender CSOs, whereas government funding is an important financial resource for the trade unions. In interviews, the Gender Unit at the SADC Secretariat named international donors (the EU, GIZ, UNAIDS and UN Women) as funders of their agenda, as opposed to the employment and labour desk, which named member states and the

SADC Private Sector Forum as funders, in addition to external donors (ILO, IOM and FES). This suggests that the campaign to end early marriage in Southern Africa is largely donor-driven, whereas employment and labour is not. Visual analysis of the funding networks confirms this: The centre of the gender network is characterised by the presence of many donors, whereas member states, trade unions and the ILO are at the centre of the employment and labour network. CSOs with high betweenness centrality (NGO-CC particularly) play an important role in funnelling donor funds to smaller organisations, which are likely to struggle to comply with donors' reporting requirements.

5.3 Pressure networks

These networks illustrate who pressures whom to exact change. In both policy sectors, we can observe that national governments are the primary recipients of political pressure (see Table 8 and Figures 7 and 8), which reflects the intergovernmental character of SADC, where it makes sense for civil society to target their national governments in order to effect change (Interview 18).

Table 8: Comparison of pressure networks in gender and employment and labour[11]

	Gender network	**Employment and labour network**
Density of network (undirected)	0.006	0.017
Average degree per node	0.748	1.692
Top 5 by weighted in-degree centrality (value)	National Government MOZ (30) National Government BW (25) National Government ZAM (23) Parliament BW (10) National Government SA (10)	National Government SA (64) National Government MOZ (52) National Government ZAM (49) Other SADC Member States (49) National Government SWZ (42)
Top 5 by weighted out-degree centrality (value)	Gender Links (31) NGO-CC (13) UNFPA (11) FDC (11) National Government MOZ (9)	SATUCC (55) National Government SA (29) ILO (24) COSATU (22) National Government ZAM (20)

Source: Authors

In the gender sector, the governments of Mozambique and Zambia, where early marriage is a significant problem, receive the most pressure, although there is a notable difference, in that the Mozambican government receives pressure from donors *and* CSOs, whereas the Zambian government only receives pressure from CSOs. This is likely the result of reduced donor activity in Zambia since it has graduated to middle-income status. Although early marriage is not a significant problem in Botswana, we find a high degree of pressure on the Botswana government due to its failure to sign the SADC Gender Protocol in the first place. The Botswana Parliament makes an appearance in the network due to

11 We exclude betweenness centrality from this network, as political pressure is not a resource that can be hoarded or passed onto another actor in the same way as information or funding.

Botswana's political system (parliamentary republic), and the prominent role played by individual parliamentarians in liaising with and advancing the demands of gender CSOs (Interviews 58, 59 and 68). Gender Links is the actor exerting the most pressure on others, particularly national governments, but also the SADC Secretariat, the SADC-PF and the African Union. The main pressure on SADC from the civil society side comes from Gender Links. This emphasises its central role in the pressure network (and also the information network). Finally, an interesting feature of the gender pressure networks is the presence of traditional leaders in all of the countries. As ending early marriage requires a change in cultural practises at the grassroots, it makes sense that they receive pressure from government and CSOs to work towards change in their communities. Traditional leaders were perceived as playing a critical role in ensuring the implementation of Article 8 in Southern Africa (Interviews 13, 26, 72, 18 and 70), and our initial assumption that they might be impediments to implementation was found to be at least partly untrue, as traditional leaders were sometimes described as "champions" of ending child marriage (Interview 18).

In the employment and labour sector, SATUCC is again the main actor exerting pressure, mainly on member states. However, there is one striking difference to the gender network: SADC member states put pressure on each other, which is part of the reason the pressure network is denser than in the gender sector. It is a sign that there are national interests at play, as well as more heterogeneity in actors' political aims, particularly regarding the contentious labour migration provisions in the Protocol (Interviews 30, 37, 42 and 57). This explains South Africa's high out-degree: As a recipient country of labour migration, it has a vested interest in ensuring the Protocol reflects a particular set of interests compared to countries that are "senders" of migrant labour. The structure of the pressure network reflects these vested interests: National trade unions (such as COSATU) pressure governments and employers' groups in the country, whereas governments receive pressure from labour and business, and in some instances even from foreign trade unions. Given that labour and business interests often diverge, this also demonstrates the potential for more conflict in the network. Additionally, the existence of tripartite structures at the national and regional levels means that finding a consensus among these divergent interests is a necessity. Hence, the level of competition within these tripartite structures increases, raising the overall amount of pressure that is exerted within the network. Aside from trade union organisations and national governments, the ILO is an important player in the pressure network. The ILO regularly "names and shames" governments that fail to comply with international labour conventions and has used its normative power to advocate for the ratification of the Protocol (Interviews 23, 24, 31, 32 and 67). Another difference from the gender sector is that SATUCC, unlike Gender Links, receives pressure from the organisations it represents. This is because trade union federations pay dues to SATUCC and wish to see their (sometimes competing) interests and ideologies represented at the regional level, which puts SATUCC under pressure to include or exclude certain federations (Interviews 23 and 30). For example, COSATU has pressured SATUCC to deny membership to the South African Federation of Trade Unions, a trade union which broke away from COSATU in 2017 over political and ideological differences.

In all, the differences in the pressure networks of the two policy networks reflect the heterogeneity of aims and the politicisation of the sectors. Generally, the aims among CSOs in the gender sector are more homogenous, and gender CSOs do not play central roles in the politics of SADC member states in the same way that trade unions do. Aims

and interests of the various stakeholders in employment and labour are more diverse, making for higher levels of pressure, particularly on and among governments.

5.4 Influence of actors in the networks

Finally, we asked interviewees to gauge how influential different actors are in their respective policy fields, yielding some interesting results across the two policy sectors (see Table 9).

Table 9: Most influential actors in each policy sector*

Gender	Employment and labour
Girls Not Brides (92)	Government of South Africa (73)
Government of Zambia (86)	Government of Zambia (73)
Community Radio Stations MOZ (67)	Other SADC member states (71)
SADC Secretariat (66)	Government of Swaziland (71)
Traditional Leaders MOZ (66)	Government of Zimbabwe (71)
Government of Mozambique (62)	Government of Botswana (70)
SADC-PF (61)	Government of Mozambique (67)
UN Women (58)	ILO (56)
CECAP (Mozambique) (57)	ZCTU (Zambia) (56)
Other SADC member states (57)	SATUCC (54)

* Actors must be mentioned in at least three interviews so as to avoid individual biases in perceived influence.

Source: Authors

In the gender sector, a wide variety of actors (CSOs, national institutions such as the government or the parliament, traditional leaders, media, church organisations, donors and also regional institutions such as the SADC Secretariat and the SADC-PF) are perceived as being influential. Traditional leaders, local community organisations and media are seen as being influential, despite being on the periphery, because they are key to influencing hearts and minds at the grassroots level. Interestingly, neither Gender Links nor UNICEF – two of the most active and central actors in the information, funding and pressure networks – are perceived as being particularly influential actors, which rather confounds our prior expectations. On the other hand, the international network Girls Not Brides is perceived as being the most influential actor, despite not playing a particularly central role in the networks. This suggests a non-linear relationship between control of financial and informational resources and influence within networks. It could also suggest that some actors are more influential at different stages of the policy cycle, with actors that play coordination and information-dissemination roles being more influential at agenda-setting stages than implementation stages. Another interesting result is that UN Women is perceived as being more influential than UNICEF. A possible explanation is that the current head of UN Women is the former head of the Gender Unit at the SADC Secretariat, highlighting the importance of informal linkages and personal connections in policy networks (Interviews 2, 19, 38, 58 and 68).

Findings on the influence of actors in the labour and employment policy field were more in line with our expectations. The most influential actors are national governments, with the government of South Africa having the most influence, which reflects the national interests at stake and the fact that ratification of the Protocol largely rests in the hands of

governments. SATUCC and ZCTU are the most influential CSOs, and it is noteworthy that the South African trade union federations are not ranked as being influential, even though COSATU is one of the most central actors in the information, funding and pressure networks. The ILO has similar levels of perceived influence as SATUCC and the two Zambian trade union federations, confirming its important status as a broker between civil society, SADC and governments. Finally, the SADC Secretariat is not perceived as being particular influential in the policy field, which might be considered a bit surprising given its active role in the information network. However, this can be explained by its administrative and coordination function, which limits its power to exchange information with national governments.

5.5 Summary and comparison

In summary, the networks in the two policy sectors are quite different in several important aspects (see Table 10). The gender networks are highly centralised, whereas the labour networks are denser and populated by a variety of actors with sometimes different political aims. This has far-reaching implications for the ability of individual actors to act in each network. The hierarchical tree-type structure in the gender network has the advantage that information can be distributed quickly within the network, but this gives a lot of control of information flows within the network to a single organisation. This risks creating informational dependencies within the network and can prevent alternative views from being represented in policy processes. Additionally, the centralised structure makes the whole network strongly dependent on Gender Links, which is also the only CSO with a strong linkage with SADC. However, this is also an informal linkage, which could be easily terminated and has in recent years been damaged (Interview 38). Civil society may in the future wish to strengthen alternative pathways to reduce the risks for the network as a whole.

Conversely, the tripartite structures in the employment and labour sector have led to a decentralised and dense network. This leads to slow rates of information-sharing, since decisions are based on consensus and all actors have to be consulted. A more centralised structure would help with more efficient information-sharing. However, the tripartite structures are there for a reason: Consensus has a value in itself and might even mitigate conflicts between labour and business. This network feature is probably more valuable in the employment and labour sector, since the business sector – a potential veto player – is a more powerful actor than the potential opposition actors (conservative traditional leaders) in the gender sector. The latter is only relevant for the implementation stage of the policy cycle, and it can more easily be convinced or overruled by the large number of like-minded actors in the gender sector. Therefore, when it comes to sharing resources, there is a trade-off between an effective network versus a dense, consensus-finding network that mitigates potential conflicts. Important to note in the labour and employment networks is the exclusion of organisations representing informal workers, who represent the interests of a large segment of the Southern African population. This exclusion is due to the tripartite governance structures, which prioritise the interests of formal labour.

Table 10: Comparison of gender and employment and labour networks		
	Gender	**Employment and labour**
Relevant umbrella body	Gender Links	SATUCC
Information	Highly centralised network → fast information-sharing Gender Links as the main knowledge hub	Dense, decentralised and consensus-based network → slow information-sharing Three information hubs: SADC, SATUCC and ILO
Funding	More "traditional" donors present (e.g. EU, DfID) UNICEF as the dominant international organisation	Main sources of funding are the ILO, German political foundations and trade unions The ILO as the dominant international organisation
Pressure	Gender Links is the main actor exerting political pressure Member states do not pressure each other	SATUCC as the main actor exerting political pressure Member states pressure each other → national interests at play
Most influential actors	Diverse mix of influential actors at the regional, national and grassroots levels Gender Links not perceived to be among the most influential actors SADC Secretariat is relatively influential	Member States are the most influential actors SATUCC is the most influential CSO SADC Secretariat is not among the most influential actors
Formality of relations	Gender Links is the only CSO with a strong link to SADC → relatively unstable due to lack of a formalised relationship	Relations between SATUCC and SADC are formalised and replicate the tripartite governance structure found at the national level in several member states SATUCC is the only regional umbrella body with both an MoU and registered as a regional CSO → stable relationship
Source: Authors		

6 Challenges and opportunities for civil society networks in the SADC region

6.1 Challenges for regional networks

Both our Net-Map and expert interviews highlighted several challenges to the formation and effective functioning of civil society networks.

First – and perhaps common to many regions – the economic, political and cultural diversity of member states poses a challenge to the formation of networks in the first place. Regional coordination is more difficult in areas with diverse policies and interests at the national level (Interviews 13 and 25). Geographic spread and language differences limit the ability of some CSOs to engage in political dialogues (Interviews 10 and 39), and may explain why Mozambican CSOs were relatively disconnected from the gender network compared to their Anglophone counterparts.

Second, dwindling financial resources in the context of declining donor funds can pose a challenge to civil society networks. Competition for limited resources is detrimental to collaboration in regional networks (Sabatini, 2002), and we learnt of several instances in which regional umbrella bodies were competing against the national members for donor funding. Many of the problems with donor funding of CSOs at the national level are replicated at the regional level. Donors are reluctant to grant core funding and instead focus on project-based support, which creates incentives for CSOs to follow donor preferences rather than concentrating on what matters most to their constituency (Interview 39). CSOs that are successful in attracting donor funds are not always the ones with the highest levels of representativeness from a bottom-up perspective, and these issues with representativeness and legitimacy become even more problematic at the regional level, where CSOs are several layers removed from the grassroots (Interviews 41 and 47). Donors are aware of this problem of representativeness at the regional level, but seemingly less aware of their own role in contributing to that problem:

> [P]eople at the national level complain that their national umbrella organisations are not very representative – so what does that mean for SADC-CNGO? That means that SADC-CNGO is probably even less representative of what is happening on the ground. And then come in actors … which are not membership-based, who do they represent? (Interviews 41)

Lack of connection to the grassroots risks undermining the legitimacy of regional NGO networks – not only towards their own members, but also towards SADC and policy-makers more generally, who might consequently use the lack of representativeness as a reason to disregard the voice of CSOs in regional governance.

Third, we observed a lack of clarity regarding the appropriate role of regional umbrella bodies among member organisations (Interviews 10 and 21). For example, a civil society representative in Zambia stated that the regional umbrella body they are a member of

> is supposed to act as a secretariat and not an implementer. Now, when they raise money on behalf of the network members, they become an implementer rather than assigning duties to the network members. So at the end of the day, these network members become just a board to the network secretariat, which meets once in a while […]. That weakens the ownership of the network and the activeness of the network members. So at the end of the day, because of lack of serious participation from the network members, the network becomes weaker and weaker. (Interview 21)

In some cases, unclear mandates and a perceived lack of representatives of umbrella bodies have created a lack of ownership and participation on behalf of some national member organisations. Our research would suggest that is important for regional umbrella bodies to have a clear mandate and understanding of what their role in the network is. The final challenge relates to the deficiencies of SADC itself. As one interviewee put it, "more and more citizens do not see [a] direct connection and impact in their lives. Less and less, they believe in [SADC] institutions and its approaches and processes" (Interview 10). Due to SADC's lack of visibility and weak intergovernmental nature, some CSOs questioned the value of working regionally and expressed a preference to work at the national level "with the hope that all these national efforts would then be reflected at regional level" (Interview 60). This may be an option for CSOs in more democratic states, where they can funnel their views into the national decision-making process. These views will be reflected at the regional level, but they belie the importance of transnational networks for CSOs in less

democratic states, which cannot trust that national governments will take their voices into account.

6.2 Benefits of regional networks

On a more positive note, our research also identified several benefits to regional civil society networks.

First, networks amplify civil society voices and provide further reach. The aspect of bringing voices together in order to speak as one was emphasised in many interviews (Interviews 7, 11, 18, 21, 26 and 60). Networks also allow CSOs to reach out to other actors in the region and get access to various levels, "from the transnational sphere down to the provincial or district level, to civil society, even in other countries" (Interview 60). Pre-existing network structures have been an important source of transnational solidarity and in drawing attention to political issues, especially in situations where CSOs face crisis situations (Interviews 7, 11 and 21). This has been demonstrated several times in the region, for example when the government in Zimbabwe cracked down on labour unions (Interview 7).

Second, networks foster learning effects. CSOs can share lessons learnt, best practices and learn from each other's experiences through networks. Such learning effects were perceived as being particularly valuable for smaller organisations (Interviews 7, 11, 20 and 29).

Third, networks can facilitate the division of labour among different organisations according to their niches and capacities. CSOs that organise themselves in networks bring together different organisational backgrounds to one focus on which they direct their efforts. Hence, another perceived benefit is the coordination of efforts to achieve specific goals by tackling a problem on different fronts: "So that is the advantage of having different organisations in different countries that have different capacities, different organisational capabilities" (Interview 20).

Fourth, civil society networks promote integration by facilitating a bottom-up process to regional integration (Interview 10). This is particularly relevant for issues with a trans-boundary character, such as climate change, migration and shared natural resources, which can be addressed more effectively if CSOs cooperate transnationally. In these issue areas, cross-border networks can be particularly important for counter-balancing state and corporate interests. Networks then can be "the prime vehicle for social movements in the region to […] have a voice and counter negative impacts of […] what we view as neoliberal policies by governments at the national level" (Interview 36). At the same time, civil society fulfils an important role in promoting regional integration on the ground: "We work as a broker to promote that this is the only option to integrate, because […] for their voices to become impactful and influence policies, they need to coordinate and build these coalitions across borders" (Interview 10). However, it seems that civil society networks are more important in some issue areas than others: "There are some issues that are tackled more effectively at the regional level, such as advocacy, and others that are related to the national level and not necessarily across the region. It really depends on the issue" (Interview 13).

Finally, some interviewees suggested that networks could help to mitigate funding challenges. In theory, networks can assist in funnelling funds from larger, professionalised

organisations to smaller organisations, which are unable to comply with donors' reporting requirements. Networks could fulfil a crucial role in overcoming the current funding crisis for civil society in Southern Africa (Interview 60). However, interviewees also noted that declining resources can lead to increased competition among CSOs, undermining cooperative networks, so this would suggest that networks can only mitigate funding challenges under certain circumstances.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Our study set out to investigate how the characteristics of regional civil society networks contribute to civil society engagement in regional governance in the SADC region. We did this by mapping the networks of two comparable policy sectors and using social network analysis to investigate the quality of the respective networks. Our findings confirm SADC's reputation as a rather inaccessible regional organisation, in which member states are reluctant to give up sovereignty, which allows for only limited civil society participation through formalised, institutional mechanisms. Formal access mechanisms are not entirely functional and barely enable civil society to make relevant contributions to SADC decision-making. At the national level, SNCs in most member states, which are supposed to facilitate the engagement of national CSOs in SADC processes, are extremely weak. Given that SADC is an intergovernmental organisation in which ultimate power rests with member states, some CSOs expressed the view that it is better to work through the national level than the regional level. However, this is unlikely to be a workable approach for CSOs in authoritarian countries and/or CSOs in countries without functional SNCs and without privileged access to national ministries. At the regional level, the research highlighted the difficulty of CSOs in establishing formal relations with SADC institutions directly. Obtaining an MoU is a difficult process, which depends on continuous, good, personal relations with personnel at the SADC Secretariat. Further complicating matters, it is not possible to register as a regional CSO in Botswana without the approval of the SADC Secretariat, forcing most CSOs with a regional scope to register as local entities under Botswana's national NGO law, limiting their capacity to carry out regional activities. While our findings illustrated the limited scope of formal access mechanisms, they also underlined the great importance of informal access. Informal access mechanisms proved to be crucial, as personal relations play a decisive role in getting access to SADC personnel in the first place. At the same time, informal access can be somewhat unreliable. Though informal relations have proven to be highly effective in the gender sector, they rely on the continued goodwill of decision-makers to include CSOs in the policy process. Informal relationships are therefore vulnerable and can be terminated abruptly, which may have a self-censoring effect on CSOs if being overly critical risks terminating the relationship.

Regarding the characteristics of the networks in our two policy sectors, our findings reveal striking differences in the two networks under analysis. Whereas the gender network is highly centralised, with Gender Links being the central actor, the labour and employment network is very dense and shaped by many interactions between diverse actors with varying political aims. This has far-reaching implications for the ability of individual

actors to act in each network. The gender network is characterised by a hierarchical tree-type structure, which has the advantage of offering quick information-sharing, but it comes at the cost of a more balanced mix in information distribution. This structure gives Gender Links control over the network and creates a dependency on them by other CSOs. Since Gender Links is also the only CSO with informal access to SADC, the connection of the network to SADC rests on shaky grounds. This is a good illustration of both the importance and fragility of informal linkages between civil society and SADC. By contrast, the tripartite structures in the employment and labour sector has led to a decentralised and dense network. This structure is especially pronounced on the national level, while it is less developed on a regional level and leads to slow information-sharing, since decisions are based on consensus. Here, SATUCC is the dominant and only civil society actor that has a strong and formalised reciprocal linkage to SADC. However, on the plus side, consensus may mitigate conflicts between labour, business and government, which is especially important in a policy sector with heterogeneous political aims. This stands in contrast to the gender sector, where the desired outcome is the improvement and enforcement of existing laws. In both sectors, CSO political pressure is mainly exerted by the regional umbrella bodies towards the member states, and to a lesser extent towards SADC. This may be because member states are perceived to be more influential than SADC when it comes to policy-making. Moreover, in both networks, SADC shares less information than it receives, making it something of a "knowledge sink". A greater number of outgoing information linkages from the SADC Secretariat to donors than to local CSOs suggests SADC is more accountable to donors than citizens. Considering that Gender Links and SATUCC are also the only CSOs with strong linkages to SADC, this is further proof for the abovementioned conclusion that SADC can be considered a rather impermeable institution. Our findings hence suggest a trade-off between an efficient network when it comes to exchanging resources, versus a dense, consensus-finding network that mitigates potential conflicts. Lastly, in both networks, the level of donor coordination – in terms of sharing information between donors – seems to be rather low, except for coordination among the UN agencies (including the IOM and ILO).

There are several benefits for CSOs to organise in transnational networks. Among the most important ones is their role in coordination, information-sharing and knowledge-generation. The added value of transnational networks lies in their capacity to coordinate the joint action of national CSOs and national civil society networks. Civil society networks in SADC, particularly in the gender realm, have proven to be successful in sharing best practices and knowledge as well as bringing forward regional policies through coordinated lobbying activities of network members at the national level. Civil society networks are also drivers of regionalisation. In line with the new regionalism debate, networks bring along new forms of participation and inclusion of civil society in regional policy-making and foster participatory regional governance. What is more, transnational civil society networks in SADC can contribute to making the regional organisation more visible among the populations of member states. Finally, our empirical findings highlighted the importance of transnational solidarity among network members in bringing pressure to bear on national governments, not only within the context of lobbying for progressive change, but also in reacting to crisis situations, such as, for example, a crackdown on civil society by the national government. Finally, networks can provide the infrastructure for funnelling donor funds from larger, more professionalised organisations to smaller grassroots organisations. Thereby networks could help to mitigate the highly pressing funding challenge – a recurring theme in our interviews.

However, our research also highlighted that many of the challenges to civil society in developing societies are replicated (and even exacerbated) at the regional level. Legitimacy and representativeness are a great challenge for regional umbrella bodies that aim to represent CSOs at the regional level and can undermine the functionality of networks. This trade-off between mobilising at the grassroots level and mobilising through transnational, professionalised NGOs in order to impact regional governance is also much debated in the research community. Moreover, such challenges are reflected in the current struggle of the three regional umbrella organisations that we consider as being most relevant (SADC-CNGO, SATUCC, Gender Links). Whereas some face financial and organisational problems, others suffer from their reliance on personal relations, and all of them face questions over their representativeness and legitimacy.

7.2 Policy recommendations

Our findings suggest a number of possibilities for civil society, donors, states and SADC to create better partnerships. The intention of our recommendations is that civil society can exploit its transformative potential fully for the benefit of the region, and that national governments and SADC itself become more inclusive, and donors become better supporting actors.

Civil society

- Our findings suggest that civil society networks face a trade-off between an efficient network when it comes to information-sharing, and a consensus-based network that mitigates potential conflict. Centralised networks may be a better option for policy sectors in which CSOs share similar objectives, whereas dense, non-hierarchal networks may be a better option for policy fields characterised by the presence of diverse stakeholders with heterogeneous interests and objectives.

- In both policy sectors, regional umbrella bodies facilitate civil society access to SADC. However, reliance on these umbrella organisations potentially poses a challenge for the robustness of maintaining participation in regional governance, if these organisations are the only pathway to SADC. CSOs therefore might explore more potential alternative pathways to influencing regional governance by strengthening relations with other stakeholders with ties to SADC. The SADC Parliamentary Forum seems to be one of these pathways that is worth strengthening in the future, while certain international organisations may also be paths worth exploring.

- More inclusive networks can help to address some of the main criticisms of transnational networks, namely the lack of legitimacy and representativeness at the grassroots level. However, the marginal strength of a network diminishes as more stakeholders are included, since information-sharing and the diffusion of innovation likely slows down. This can be mitigated if leading organisations, such as regional umbrella bodies, take on a coordinating role (as opposed to an implementing or advocacy role) so that the network maintains efficiency.

- Collecting, coordinating and generating knowledge, and then channelling it into governance institutions seems to be a mode of civil society participation that is

relatively accepted by SADC, particularly when it is sector-specific and focussed on engaging specific SADC units. Therefore, it may be easier to achieve meaningful influence on regional policies through a very specific sectoral approach rather than a broad-based approach.

Donors

- The information-exchange networks suggest that coordination between donors seems to be on a rather low level, despite an existing forum for donors at the SADC level. This could be strengthened in the future. Donors should take care to strengthen information linkages among themselves.

- Donors should not just engage in capacity-building of CSOs, but should also consider using umbrella bodies to channel funds to the lower levels, where local knowledge about the effectiveness of measures is more necessary.

- Donors who contribute to the SADC budget should continue to press for the inclusion of civil society in the formulation and implementation of regional policies and ensure that consultations are held with an array of non-state actors that reaches beyond just business interests.

- We would also like to highlight the practical applications of SNA in assisting donors in making strategic decisions. Depending on their aims, donors may wish to work with CSOs very central to a network, or with more peripheral ones, and SNA is a method that can help donors (and indeed other stakeholders) to identify opportunities for strategic partnerships.

SADC and member states

- SADC and some of its member states could benefit from transforming attitudes towards partnerships with civil society. Currently, neither regional nor national governance institutions are engaging effectively with civil society (as can be seen in the disparity of information-sharing in the gender and employment and labour network). The accessibility of SADC institutions has to be increased, which can be achieved, in a first step, through the approval and implementation of the Proposal on SADC Mechanisms for Engagement with Non-State Actors. SADC and its member states are then better situated to profit from collaborative partnerships with non-state actors.

- Harnessing positive contributions from civil society holds the potential to reduce SADC's dependency on donor funding, as CSOs could become meaningful partners for knowledge creation and dissemination, as well as for the implementation of policy. Eventually, improved interactions between state-led governance institutions and with civil society can increase the input and output legitimacy of governance structures in Southern Africa, and thereby render the project of regional integration more effective.

- In the long run, SADC needs to open up to civil society and become more inclusive. The new engagement mechanism that has been developed and is pending approval is a promising start, but it has yet to be approved and implemented. In the short-run, the abovementioned strategies seem to be the most promising and can eventually lead to an opening-up of SADC.

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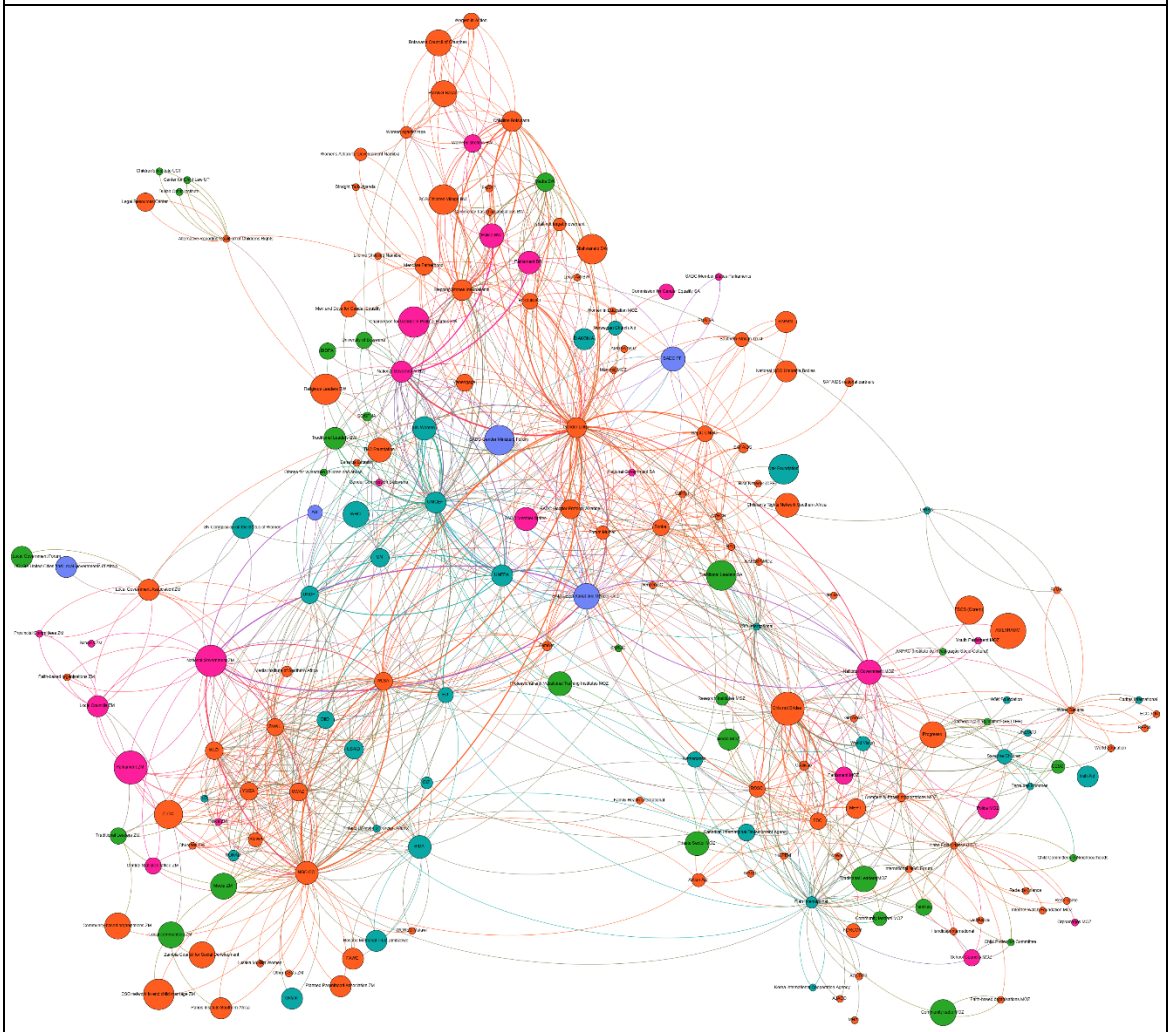
Annex I Network visualisations

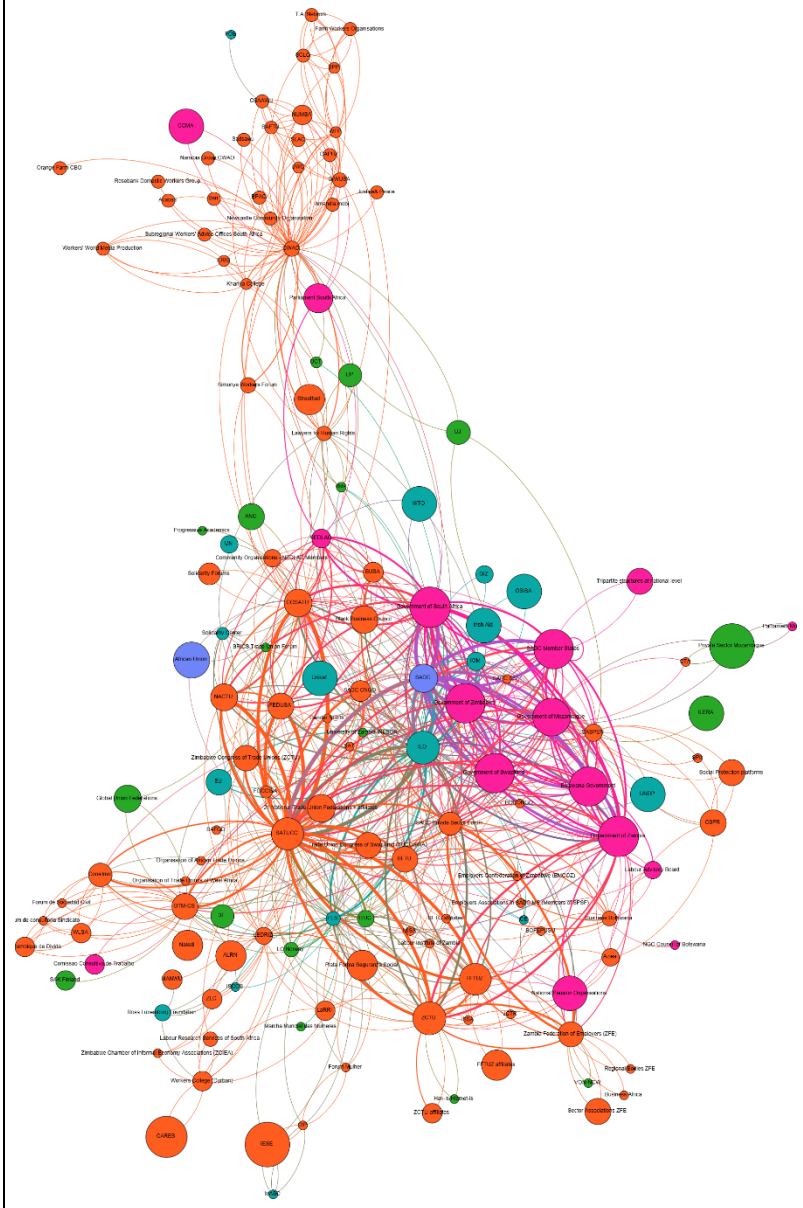
Figure 3: Information exchanges in the campaign to implement Art. 8 of the SADC Gender Protocol



Source: Authors

- CSO
- Donor / international organisation
- State institution
- Regional institution
- Other (media, research institutes, traditional leaders, etc.)

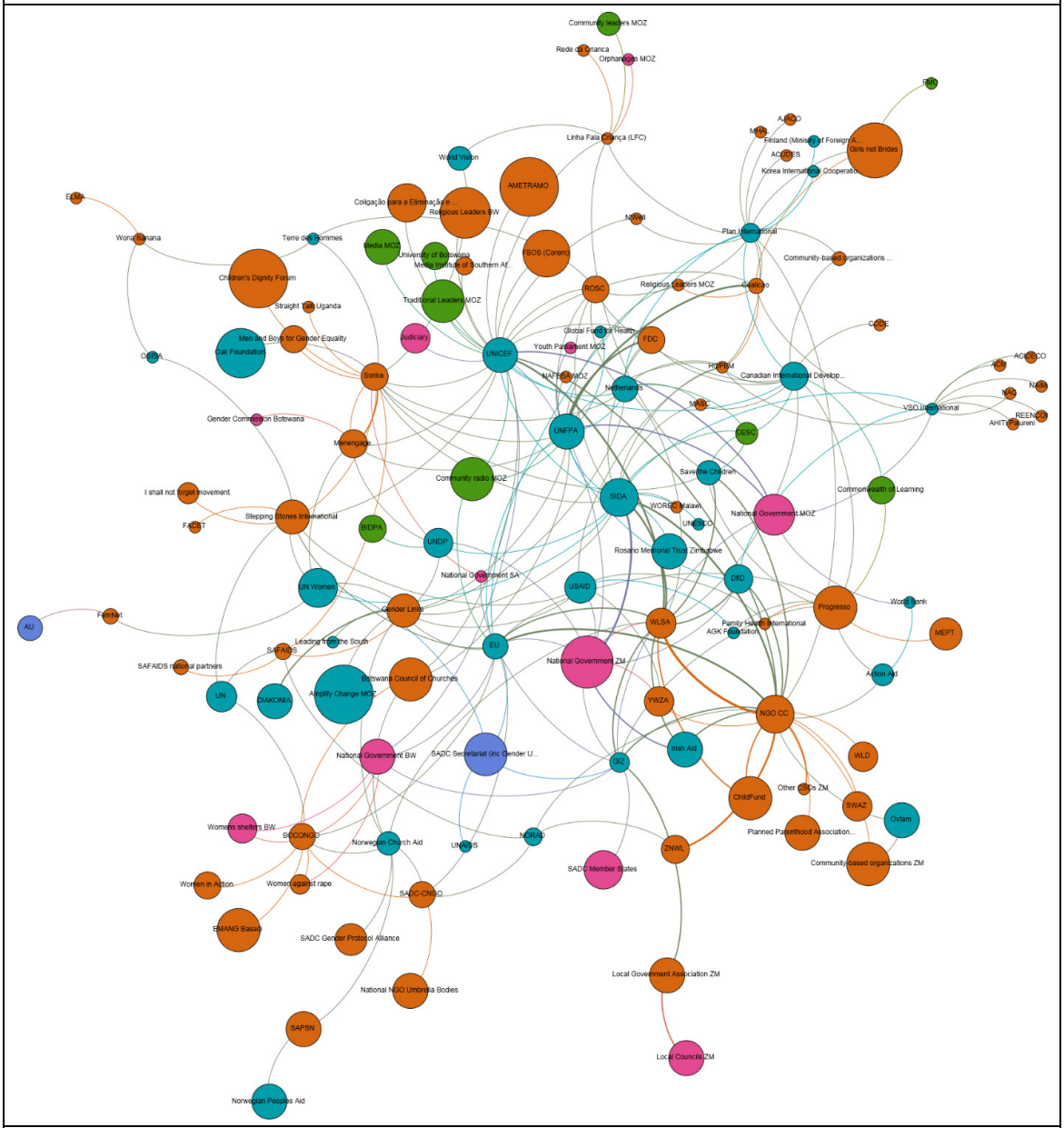
Figure 4: Information exchanges in the campaign to ratify the SADC Employment and Labour Protocol



Source: Authors

- CSO
- Donor / international organisation
- State institution
- Regional institution
- Other (media, research institutes, traditional leaders, etc.)

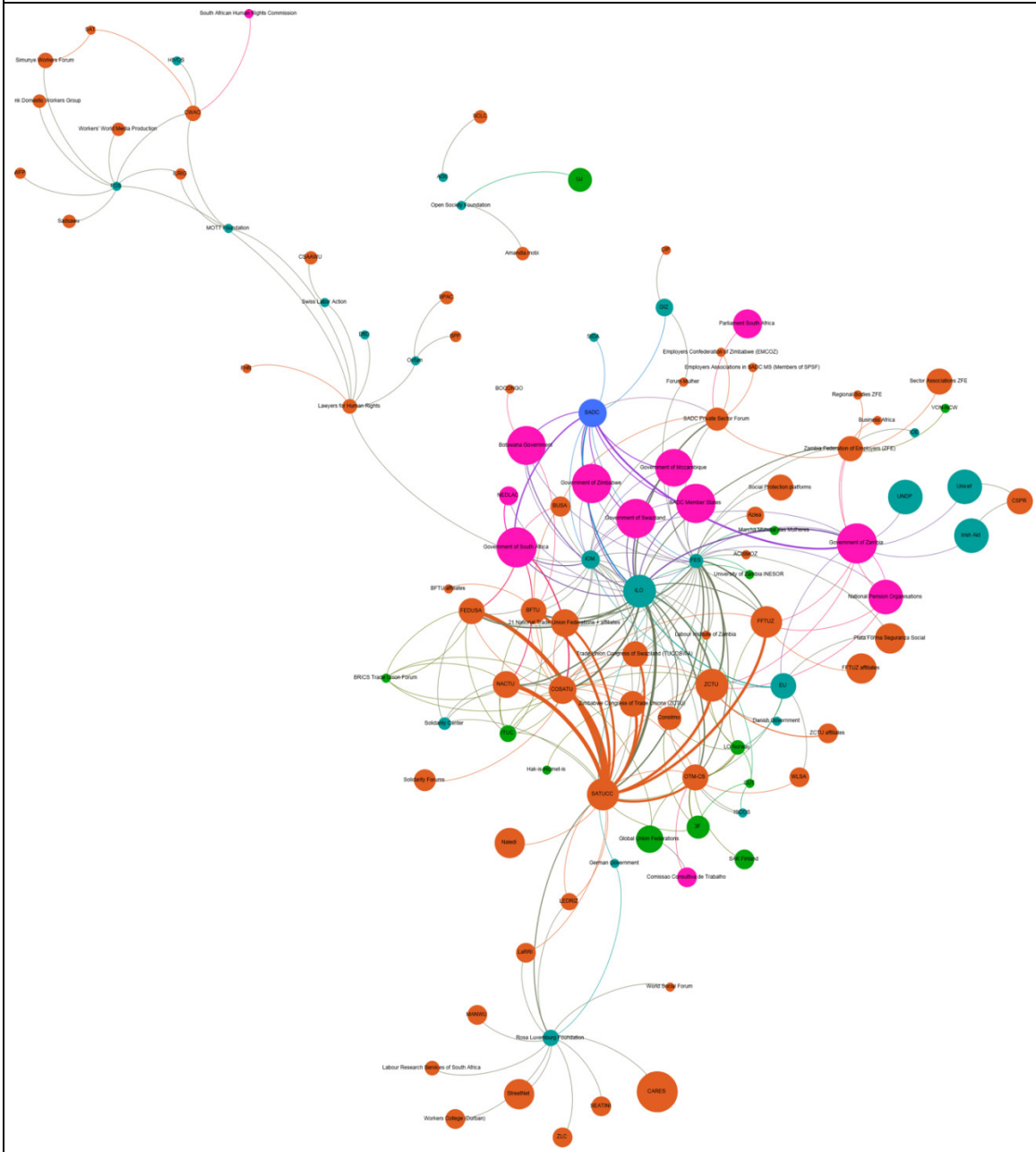
Figure 5: Funding relationships in the campaign to implement Art. 8 of the SADC Gender Protocol



Source: Authors

CSO
Donor / international organisation
State institution
Regional institution
Other (media, research institutes, traditional leaders, etc.)

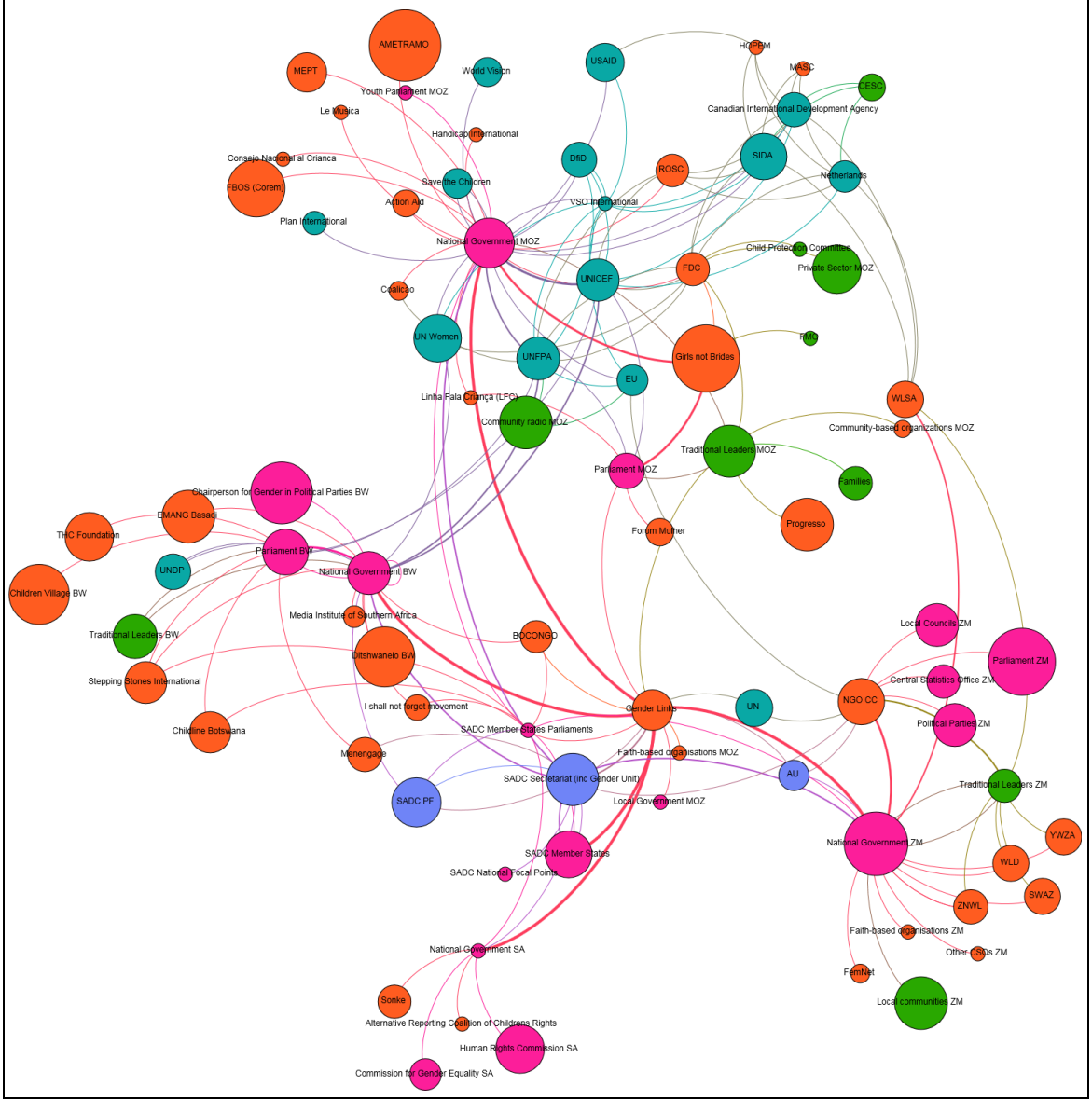
Figure 6: Funding relationships in the campaign to ratify the SADC Employment and Labour Protocol



Source: Authors

- CSO
- Donor / international organisation
- State institution
- Regional institution
- Other (media, research institutes, traditional leaders, etc.)

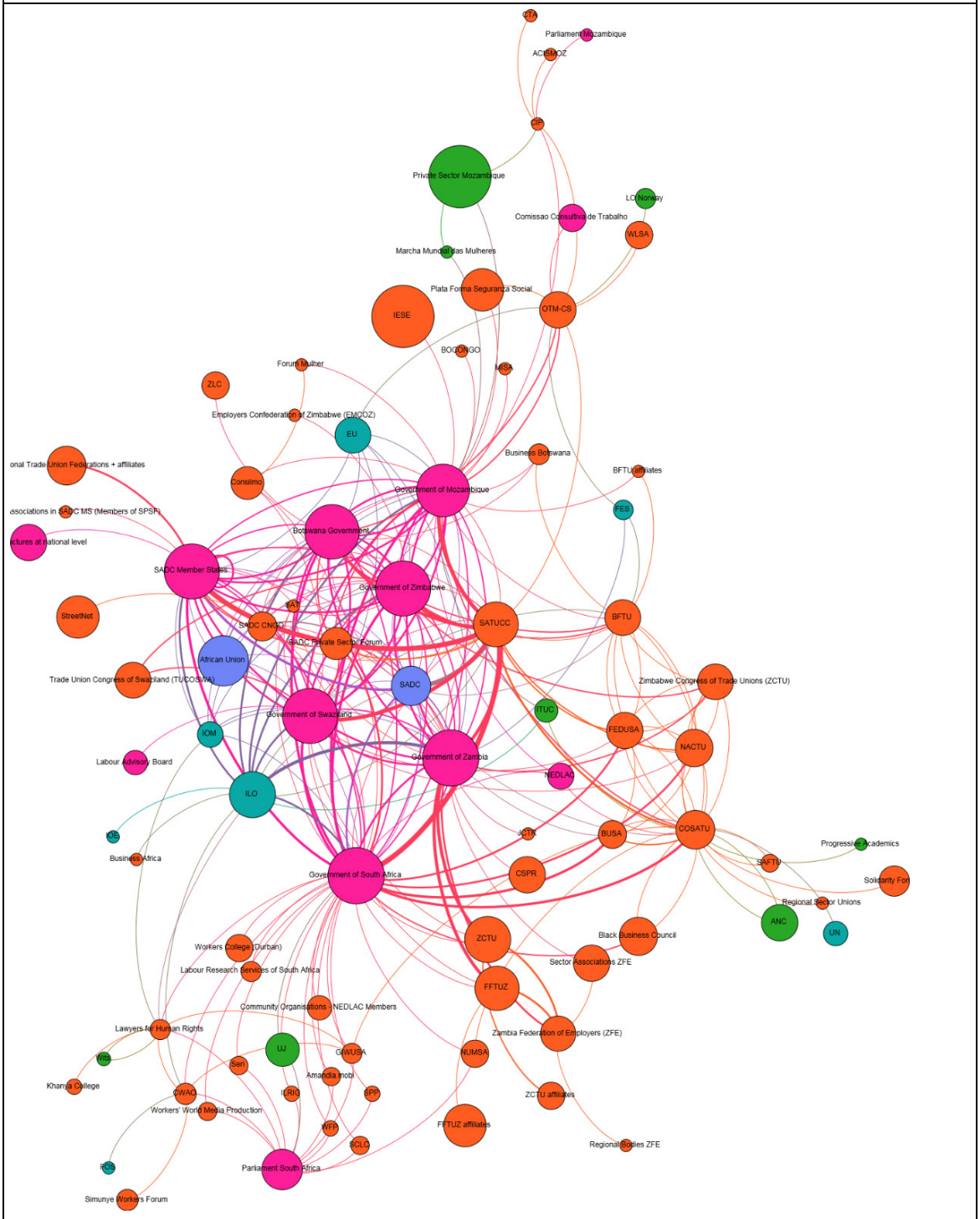
Figure 7: Political pressure in the campaign to implement Art. 8 of the SADC Gender Protocol



Source: Authors

- CSO
- Donor / international organisation
- State institution
- Regional institution
- Other (media, research institutes, traditional leaders, etc.)

Figure 8: Political pressure in the campaign to ratify the SADC Employment and Labour Protocol



Source: Authors

- CSO
- Donor / international organisation
- State institution
- Regional institution
- Other (media, research institutes, traditional leaders, etc.)

Annex II List of interviews

No.	Type of actor	Policy sector	Location of interview	No.	Type of actor	Policy sector	Location of interview
01	CSO	Gender	South Africa	**40**	Business	Employment & Labour	Botswana
02	CSO	Gender	South Africa	**41**	Donor	General	Botswana
03	Donor	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**42**	Donor	General	Botswana
04	Academia	General	South Africa	**43**	CSO	Employment & Labour	Botswana
05	Academia	Employment& Labour	South Africa	**44**	SADC	Employment & Labour	Botswana
06	CSO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**45**	Academia	Gender	Botswana
07	CSO	General	South Africa	**46**	Donor	General	Botswana
08	Academia	Gender	South Africa	**47**	Donor	Employment & Labour	Botswana
09	Donor	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**48**	CSO	General	Botswana
10	CSO	General	South Africa	**49**	Donor	General	Botswana
11	CSO	General	South Africa	**50**	CSO	General	Botswana
12	CSO	Gender	South Africa	**51**	IO	Gender	Botswana
13	CSO	General	South Africa	**52**	CSO	General	Botswana
14	Business	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**53**	CSO	Gender	Botswana
15	IO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**54**	CSO	Gender	Botswana
16	IO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**55**	CSO	General	Botswana
17	CSO	Employment & Labour	Zambia	**56**	CSO	General	Botswana
18	CSO	Gender	Zambia	**57**	Government	General	Botswana
19	CSO	Gender	Zambia	**58**	CSO	Gender	Botswana
20	CSO	Gender	Zambia	**59**	Donor	General	Botswana
21	CSO	General	Zambia	**60**	CSO	Employment & Labour	Botswana
22	CSO	Employment & Labour	Zambia	**61**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique
23	SADC	Employment & Labour	Zambia	**62**	CSO	Employment & Labour	Botswana
24	CSO	Employment & Labour	Zambia	**63**	CSO	Employment & Labour	Botswana

25	Business	Employment & Labour	Zambia	**64**	IO	Gender	Mozambique
26	CSO	Gender	Zambia	**65**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique
27	Government	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**66**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique
28	Donor	General	Zambia	**67**	CSO	Employment & Labour	Botswana
29	CSO	Gender	South Africa	**68**	CSO	Gender	Botswana
30	Government	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**69**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique
31	Government	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**70**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique
32	CSO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**71**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique
33	CSO	Gender	South Africa	**72**	Donor	Gender	Mozambique
34	CSO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**73**	CSO	Employment & Labour	Mozambique
35	CSO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**74**	Donor	Employment & Labour	Mozambique
36	CSO	General	South Africa	**75**	IO	Gender	Mozambique
37	IO	Employment & Labour	South Africa	**76**	Government	General	Mozambique
38	SADC	Gender	Botswana	**77**	CSO	General	Mozambique
39	CSO	General	Botswana	**78**	CSO	Gender	Mozambique

Annex III Atlas.ti codes

Concept	Primary code	Sub-codes
SADC's institutional permeability and/or organisational culture	**SADC Org Culture**	
SADC's relationship with CSOs, both in general and with specific regional umbrella bodies	**SADC-CSO relations**	SADC-CSO relations: in general
The approach of mentioned CSOs to engaging with government, national or regional	**CSO Approach**	CSO Approach: Critical
		CSO approach: Non-critical
How mentioned CSOs are funded, through membership dues or other "grassroots" methods, donor funding or government funds. Sub-sub-codes on donor funding for CSOs is for when respondents talk about donor funding increasing or lessening over time, also including instances of when the "middle-income trap" is discussed	**CSO Funding**	CSO Funding: Dues
		CSO Funding: Donors
		CSO Funding: Government
The functions or day-to-day activities of mentioned CSOs	**CSO Functions**	CSO Functions: Issue framing & agenda-setting
		CSO Functions: Knowledge
		CSO Functions: Watchdog
		CSO Functions: Mobilisation
		CSO Functions: Service delivery
The political environment in which CSOs operate at the national level, and whether it is getting better or worse over time (shrinking spaces). This mainly includes discussions of actions taken by national governments to shape the environment in which CSOs operate and does not include funding provided by international actors	**Environment CSOs**	Environment CSOs: Restrictive
		Environment CSOs: Permissive
The formation of regional CSO networks, the main challenges or obstacles to their formation, challenges in coordinating networks of CSOs and/or the advantages of CSOs working together in networks	**Formation Regional Networks**	Formation Regional Networks: Obstacles
		Formation Regional Networks: Advantages
Any instances in which respondents talk about how existing networks are structured – if the network is loosely coordinated, on an informal basis, if certain CSOs are central to the network etc. absent of judgement Can also include references to regional umbrella bodies and assessments of their work	**Structure Regional Networks**	
Evidence that supports or undermines the boomerang hypothesis, as described by Keck and Sikkink (1999, 2004)	**Boomerang Hypothesis**	Boomerang Hypothesis: Supports
		Boomerang Hypothesis: Undermines

Political polarisation in the policy field, or political sensitivity of the issue due to opposition from some societal actors. Veto-players are single, large, important actors who can block change entirely, whereas opposition just refers to actors who might be opposed to – but not necessarily able to – blocking the process entirely	**Political Polarisation**	Political Polarisation: Veto-players
		Political Polarisation: Opposition
Who are the influential actors in the respective networks/ policy fields? Why are they influential?	**Influence**	
Whether and how CSOs (individually or collectively) are successful in campaigning against child marriage (including getting the marriage age raised) or getting the E&L Protocol ratified. Can also include discussions on lack of success	**CSO Success**	
Any mentions of geographic location in a factor in effectiveness, or otherwise, of CSOs engaging with or influencing SADC	**Geographic Location of CSOs**	
The role of donors in influencing the agenda of CSOs, whether it is good or bad	**Role Donors**	
Any mentions of competition between CSOs at either national or regional level, regardless of context	**Competition CSOs**	
Any mentions of collaboration between CSOs at either national or regional level, regardless of context	**Collaboration CSOs**	
In Net-Map interviews, when respondents talk about how information is shared, what kind of information, etc.	**Information**	
In Net-Map interviews, when respondents talk about the context in which pressure takes place, how it is applied and how it is reacted to, etc.	**Pressure**	

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