

UDK: 32:2(4/9)

COBISS: 1.08

The World Council of Churches as a Global Actor: Ecumenical Space as Geographical Space

Stanley D. Brunn

Department of Geography, University of Kentucky, Lexington,
KY 40506-0027, USA

»We have all become neighbours in a »global village.« black and white, rich and poor, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, followers of other faiths or atheists. Torn by our differences and tensions, we do not yet know how to live together in a world where we are bound to live together in one community.« (Aram I, Moderator, World Council of Churches Central Committee and Catholicos of Cilicia, Armenian Apostolic Church. Report to the Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 2-14 December 1998 (Aram I 2000).

Abstract

In this paper we've addressed three major themes. First, that it is important for political geographers to examine the role of NGO with interfaith and humanitarian foci and their influence on state and international political agendas. These trans-state organizations will and can assist states in resolving issues of an interstate nature, whether human rights, religious and ethnic conflict, or environmental destruction. Second, the WCC is an example of a religious NGO that addresses a wide variety of religious concerns related to the rights of refugees and indigenous peoples, the empowerment of women, the plight of children, environmental sustainability, peaceful resolution to conflicts, and the ethical values often ascribed to globalization. Third, we've introduced the concept of »ecumenical space as geographical space« to stimulate our thinking how these spaces overlap in helping us understand the successes of religious NGO at various scales.

Keywords: political geography, religious geography, NGOs, ecumenical space, World Council of Churches.

Introduction

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in an assessment of political issues that NGOs were crucial in understanding events and solving problems in the 21st century. This observation leads political analysts to consider the world political map, not only in regards to what is happening to states as major actors affecting what transpires within their boundaries and beyond, but also to an emerging group of influential and powerful actors with interests in non-state, trans-state and interstate issues. Whether those issues relate to environmental quality, human rights violations, commerce, indigenous minorities or new immigrants, the emergence of new NGOs at interregional and international scales will present challenges to states and intergovernmental organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to examine one major non-state actor with strong interests in transregional and international issues, viz., the World Council of Churches (WCC), the largest ecumenical fellowship of Christian churches. In this paper we discuss this organization, its objectives and activities within the concept of »ecumenical space,« which I expand to »geographical space. First, I examine the interfaces between political geography and religion and conclude by suggesting several topics for future research.

The Political Geography and Religious Geography Interfaces

The political geography tradition is rich and includes contributions from scholars from various backgrounds, nationalities, and interests. The collective efforts provide a rich heritage of research on state origins, core areas and capital cities, boundaries and frontiers, elections, political organization, and sovereignty. The conceptual schema used range from descriptions to world systems theory; also geographers draw from political ecology, political economy, humanistic geography, and postmodern geopolitics. The scales range from local to the nation state to international organizations. IGOs (intergovernmental organizations) and NGOs have not received much attention (Nierop 1994). Nor has there been much research on the rights of women, new immigrants and diaspora populations, children, international corporate laws and protection, conflicting judicial authorities, and the interfaces between religion and politics.

Religion as a subject studied mostly by cultural geographers, who consider it, along with settlement patterns, food, music, the built environment, and landscape creation and appreciation as legitimate topics of inquiry. Various methodologies have been used to examine the diffusion of a particular belief system or denomination, the role religion played in historical settlement, the importance of pilgrimages and sacred spaces to a culture, and distinctive religious landscape features. Few cultural studies look at church/state relations, the role religion plays in nationalism, and the role of state-sponsored missionary activities in historical or contemporary contexts. Even though political geographers have not examined the political/religion interfaces, other social scientists have (Haynes 1998; Berger 1999). Religion remains an important element in the daily fabric of many people; its impress is evident in the built landscapes (temples, churches, mosques, cemeteries, monuments). Religious institutions play key roles in the rights of majority and minority residents, the content of school texts, censorship (books, films), the licensing to publish and televise, the rights of women, and welfare programs for the disabled and poor. Examples where religion/state issues have appeared in national and international politics during the past decade are former Yugoslavia, Israel/Palestine, South Africa, India, Indonesia, China, Iran, and Turkey.

NGO as Political Actors

Geographer Marie Price (1999) described the key roles being played by NGOs on the global scale. Her discussion represents one of the first attempts to integrate NGOs into a political geography framework. She cites examples of various humanitarian, environmental, human rights, famine relief, poverty, and women's organizations, all which are emerging actors in state, interstate and global politics, including the role of the UN. While there is no detailed examination of religious NGOs, she does mention Catholic Relief Services, which »supports development projects in dozens of Third World countries through its country-based affiliates called Caritas. When a crisis situation arises, CRS uses its local contacts, often a network of churches, to distribute food, medicine, and other relief services« (p. 270). Other recent studies are by Brunn, Jones, and O'Lear (1999) who consider the role of religion in the calculus of conflicts, existing and potential, in Southwest Asia, Central Asia, and elsewhere, and Brunn (1996) who describes the role of religious cities play as sites to mediate international conflicts.

A state's social landscape contains hundreds of NGOs. Some are independent and local or grassroots, others are chapters of strong national organizations, and still others have linkages with multiple international organizations. They address issues of environmental quality, conservation and preservation, women's and children's rights, antipoverty, disaster relief, literacy, refugees and repatriation, health care and diseases, and freedoms of press, religion, and assembly. Global NGOs are the Catholic Relief Services, Red Cross and Red Crescent, CARE, World Wildlife Fund, Oxfam, Planned Parenthood Federation, Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the World Council of Churches. NGOs are often effective actors in the political landscape because they: can speak for individuals and groups on issues the state may not be addressing; can marshal support across a wide social, political, and extraterritorial spectra through benefit concerts, lobbying, letter-writing campaigns or listservs, and (c) obtain strength through the collaborative networking efforts with other transcultural, interfaith, and human empowerment organizations.

The Concept of "Ecumenical Space"

A concept that captures the international and interfaith efforts of the WCC is »ecumenical space,« which General Secretary Konrad Raiser used in reporting on the activities of the Council's Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1999. He sees this »space« as »though not itself a moral communion, it is a community of churches praying to receive the spiritual gifts which such communion in moral witnessing will require« (Raiser 1999; para. 99). He continues: »The WCC needs to mark, maintain, indeed *be* a space where the ecclesio-moral communion ... can come to expression, where language is constantly sought to express the reality more fully, where common actions are conceived which embody the needed moral witness, and where an ecumenical formation takes place which gives growing density, increasing fullness, to it« (para. 102). This thinking inspired previous WCC programs, such as JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) as »a preliminary definition of the framework and space in which people can build up confidence and trust.« In short Raiser considers »ecumenical space« in a theological, fellowship, and spiritual community context. Gnanadason (2000) uses the same concept to describe the need for women's voices and visions in faith communities.

Ecumenical Space as Geographical Space

I extend the concept of ecumenical space to embrace the geographical or place activities of the World Council of Churches. That is, where the Council has an impact on daily lives, economies, social activities of individuals, communities and environments. These may be through the activities and »top-down« linkages of local or national churches that belong to the WCC or through resolutions from its assemblies or reports to national and world media. For example, when the WCC identifies a country with human rights violations, it not only issues press releases to the world media, but also works with national member churches and interfaith groups. Thus the »ecumenical space« becomes a »geographical space« where there is a coming together or a fellowship of member churches or local grassroots groups sharing common objectives. The »geographical space« of WCC member churches would likely be more European in nature when addressing human rights violations in former Yugoslavia than addressing issues of development and sustainability in South or Southeast Asia. Some »spaces« would be one state, others regional, and still others global. We would expect that discussions on feminist theology, women and development, and violence against women would be different in theological and geographical spaces of Switzerland, Slovenia, South Africa, Sudan, Paraguay, Cuba, New Zealand, and Fiji.

The World Council of Churches

The WCC began with a conclave of ecumenical clergy and laypersons meeting in Amsterdam in 1948. There were 147 founding churches represented, mostly from Europe and North America. This was not the first international conference devoted to religious themes, as a global mission conference was held in Edinburgh in 1918. Others were the International Missionary Council in 1921, which held conferences through the 1950s; this group was integrated into the WCC in 1961 (New Delhi). The first World Conference on Faith and Order was held in Lusanne in 1927; that group and the Life and Work merged in 1937. Two other early groups were the World Student Christian Federation (met in Constantinople in 1911), and the World Sunday School Association, which was reorganized in 1924 and named the World Council of Christian Education in 1946; it was integrated into the WCC in 1971 (Van Elderen, 1990: 18-21). These early conferences were important in setting the

agenda for subsequent WCC efforts. The organization's name was proposed by U.S. ecumenist Samuel McCrae Cavert.

Those attending the Amsterdam meeting found themselves dealing not only with humanitarian and spiritual issues of devastated populations following World War II but also racism and political instability. Among the most pressing issues were those facing refugees, not only those displaced, but also those wishing to return to their homes and homelands. The »largely Anglo-Saxon origins continue to shape its profile; and its inclusiveness and »catholicity« are limited by the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is not a member and that the vast majority of the rapidly growing independent and Pentecostal churches remain outside WCC membership« (Raiser 1997, 92-93).

The Moderator of the WCC, Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, defines the WCC as »neither a programmatic instrument of the churches nor a donor agency.« Its »essential unity« is as »a fellowship of churches« (Aram I 2000, 88). Raiser (1997, 101) describes it as »a network of many centres.« Van Elderen (1990, 39) describes the fluidity of the »ecumenical map« of WCC membership as including »countless local groups and movements of peace, social justice and environmental concerns, for whom cooperating in a struggle against evil takes precedence over concern for traditional church divisions.«

The top official in the Council is the General Secretariat. There are offices of Church and Ecumenical Relations, Inter-Religious Relations, Communications, Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, and Finance. The WCC convenes an international assembly every seven years and focuses on a major theme. Assemblies were held in New Delhi, Uppsala, Nairobi, Vancouver, Canberra, and Harare. The theme for 1991 (Canberra) was »Come Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation« and in 1998 »Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope.«

The Council since its inception has been an international catalyst for social and political issues, including human rights. The CCIA (Commission on the Churches on International Affairs) was active in drafting the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and especially the language included on religious liberties and freedom of conscience. It has maintained formal relations with the UN Economic and Social Council, FAO, UNESCO, UNHCR, ILO, WHO, UNRWA, UNICEF and other committees (Van der Bent 1986, 4-5). Refugee issues, noted above, faced Europeans, but also Palestinians. In its first decades, the WCC was less oriented to global political issues, but this thinking changed with the end of colonialism during the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of Third World thinking, especially in Africa (Hudson 1977; Slack 1986; Van der Bent 1986; Webb 1994). In 1978 the WCC granted US \$85,000 for a Special Fund of the Programme to Combat Racism, which was used for

the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, which was engaged to overthrow the regime of white minority regime of Ian Smith. The WCC has been involved in trying to resolve conflicts, including Arab/Israeli in 1967, Argentina/Britain over Falklands/Malvinas in 1982, and Cyprus conflict 1982. In 1988 the WCC endorsed an Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. During the 1970s and 1980s refugee issues from Central America and Southeast Asia were paramount on the Council's agenda (Van Elderen 1990: 57-64). Anti-nuclear and disarmament policies were also debated at this time. CCIA works with other NGOs and takes »a situational and pragmatic approach to world law, institutional relations and international procedures, instead of attempting to think systematically about the theoretical bases, the evolutionary trends, the perennial problems and limitations, and emerging potentialities of international organizations, particularly those constituting the UN system« (Van der Bent 1986, 6).

The WCC has 342 fellowship churches in more than 120 countries. They are Christian churches from a variety of traditions. It includes those from Orthodox, Greek, Slavonic, and Oriental traditions, as well as evangelical, independent Protestant churches from Africa and Latin America (Raiser 1997: 91-92). The Roman Catholic Church is not a member, although there has been a Joint Working Group since Vatican II in 1965, where the churches explore a number of »practical considerations in the fields of philanthropy, social and international affairs« (Van der Bent 1986,10). Also not in the membership are a number of national evangelical and Pentecostal churches and charismatic movements, whose growth rates exceed that of Catholics in the developing world (Kärkkäinen, 556). Among the divisive theological issues are the role of women as clergy, the ordination of women and homosexuals, and inclusive liturgy.

How the WCC Promotes Itself

The WCC uses the World Wide Web to promote its missions and activities; the »welcome« page in six languages: English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian www.worldcouncilofchurches.org It has hyperlinks to the following: Who are we? What do we do? Overcoming Violence, News and Resources, Ecumenical links, and a Sitemap. On the Council's Web page, the following is provided for Who Are We? The Council's ecumenical perspective is apparent in the footnote advertising staff vacancies: »It is the intent of the Executive

Committee to redress the balance in staff – regional, sub-regional, confessional, and gender – to the extent possible in filling these vacancies.«

The Web site also provides information on the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, which offers seminars, workshops, and degrees for those from different faith traditions and experiences (Hadsell and Linder 1999). The site lists a variety of resources including study guides, interpretative books on ecumenical issues, various reference works (biblical, theological, historical, ethical, etc.), audio-visual resources, and official documents regarding WCC meetings. There is an ecumenical library with more than 100,000 books, periodicals, and pamphlets about ecumenical movements and activities worldwide. The catalog is on-line via a Virtua WebGateway; one can obtain loans long distance through an email address cmh@wcc-coe.org. Examples of recent publications include: *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices* (Michael Kinnamon and Brian Cope, eds.); *Ethnic Conflict and Religion: Challenge to the Churches* (Theo Tshuy); and *The Art of Forgiveness: Theological Reflections on Healing and Reconciliation* (Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz). Videos are also produced, including »Your Story Is Our Story: The Ecumenical Decade and Beyond,« which is based on the women who attended the 1998 assembly in Harare. The issues addressed include »full participation in church leadership, violence against women, human sexuality, and the unique role of women in the Orthodox tradition.«

The Web site includes »Photo Oikoumene,« with photos about health care, refugees, church life, development and economy, emergencies, and current events. There are photos from the Pacific, Balkans, Romania, and India. The Council issues press releases, updates and features during the course of a year; they are in English, German, French, and Spanish. Stories on the WCC website 15 March 2001 were:

- WCC calls on Pakistan government to release Blasphemy Law protestors (15.1.01)
- First visit to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by WCC/CEC delegation since the political changes (14.2.01)
- Ecumenical team calls for »radical rethinking« of the ways churches and faith communities respond to HIV/AIDS (6.3.01)

The biweekly *Ecumenical News International (ENI)* which is available at <http://www.eni.ch> and *ENI Daily* from eni@eni.ch. In the 15 March 2001 *ENI Bulletin* these stories were reported on the electronic version:

- Zimbabwe church officials Mugabe to respect judiciary and rule of law

- Churches should discover »Christ of Bangladesh,« says Catholic archbishop
- Small, rural congregations are the churches' heartlands, says US survey

The print version of the 28 February 2001 *Bulletin* listed twenty-two items, including

- Middle East violence forces Lutherans to shift meetings
- Orthodox leaders warn of the protests during Pope's visit to Ukraine in June
- 1000 nuns in Zambia go public with letter criticizing government inactions

»Ecumenical Links« lists thirty church search engines and portals, including *Annuaire de la Francophonie Religieuse et Spirituelle*, ChritiaNet.com (for churches in Argentina), Christianity Net, House of Worship (the largest church search engine in North America), Leviatan.net (in German and French), and Scottish Christian.com. It »is maintained by the World Council of Churches as a service to the ecumenical community.«

Current Global Concerns

Speaking at the 50th Meeting of the WCC Central Committee in September 1999, Aram I (2000) identified some of the »legacies of the 20th century« that need the attention of ecumenical movement. They include: the predominance of anthropomorphism, ethnicity: an unresolved issue, the emergence of a new value system, and dialogue or conflict between civilizations. These resonate with political geography. There is also much concern within the ecumenical movement about globalization and its ethical values, dialogue or conflict between civilizations, and proposed new world orders. These are familiar themes to social scientists in the West (Calame 2000; Davie 2000; Gebhardt 2000; Gerlé 2000; Robra 2000). Aram I stated, in language very familiar to political geographers, that:

»In all its dimensions and manifestations, ethnicity has forcefully re-emerged in the last quarter of the century with far-reaching consequences. Most probably the formation of nation-states, and the subsequent disappearance of multi-ethnic states will continue to raise serious problems for the world community« (p. 94).

In the same report Raiser (2000) noted that it is important for the Council to build on its commitment to the »Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidar-

ity with Women« to its new »Programme To Overcome Violence.« He also cited genocide in Rwanda, the conflict in Great Lakes in Africa, the Somali crisis, and wars in the Balkans, including Kosovo. Alternatives to violence need to be considered; calls for humanitarian intervention to prevent ethnic cleansing remain a debatable issue within Council.

The Council is directly involved in a number of major international issues. These include the campaign to ban landmines, an issue important to many denominations and organizations in Europe, North America, and elsewhere, and the ecumenical Decade To Overcome Violence. Council's web site devoted to overcoming violence has hyperlinks about ministries of reconciliation, ways to overcome the spirit and practice of violence, possible actions by communities, stories, photos, international campaigns, microdisarmament, and peace to city networks. Continued activities, stemming from the Harare assembly, relate to health and healing, including AIDS; international debt, tied in with Jubilee 2000 efforts; disarmament and the arms trade; racism and sexism; solidarity with women; child soldiers; the status of Jerusalem; a sustainable society, and the rights indigenous peoples (World Council of Churches 1998).

Summary and Future Directions

In this paper I addressed three major themes. First, that it is important for political geographers to examine the role of NGO with interfaith and humanitarian foci and their influence on state and international political agendas. These trans-state organizations will and can assist states in resolving issues of an interstate nature, whether human rights, religious and ethnic conflict, or environmental destruction. Second, the WCC is an example of a religious NGO that addresses a wide variety of religious concerns related to the rights of refugees and indigenous peoples, the empowerment of women, the plight of children, environmental sustainability, peaceful resolution to conflicts, and the ethical values often ascribed to globalization. Third, I introduced the concept of »ecumenical space as geographical space« to stimulate our thinking how these spaces overlap in helping us understand the successes of religious NGO at various scales.

Four topics merit consideration and research by political geographers and others with interests in interfaith issues: (1) to delve deeper into the concept of »ecumenical space as geographical space« and how it might enhance our efforts to improve the human condition. For example, what WCC member

churches are engaged in banning land mines, empowering women, AIDS, and working on environmental stewardship? Are they the same churches that earlier worked on refugee resettlement, disarmament, and solidarity with independence groups in Africa? Are the »ecumenical spaces« the same in Southeast Europe, Central Africa, and the Caribbean? These religious, cultural, and identity spaces are important to diaspora populations. Gerloff (2000, 286), in discussing recent African Christian diasporas to Europe, mentions the need to create an »African space« in the Catholic church and that »dynamic communities need a definite experience of geographic space.« (2) to describe and assess the »theological flows« or »the architecture of ecumenism« in global theological and political thought. For example, what are the »origins, directions, compositions, speeds and destinations« of those »flows« affecting refugee issues in Southeast Europe, Israel/Palestine, and southern Africa? What churches lead, dominate, and follow the »theological flows« and influence the »political and theological architecture« of issues related to environmental sustainability, the protection of children, and interfaith conflicts? (3) to examine the »worldviews« of WCC members in regards to their own ecumenical statements and programs. What words and phrases are included in their declarations of faith, or their WWW sites, about issues discussed in WCC assemblies? These »worldviews« could be expanded to include specific task forces, commissions, and recommendations to political leaders. (4) to evaluate the local or grassroots activities of WCC programs. For example, how are positions about banning of land mines, campaigns to halt violence against women, assistance to refugee played out at the local state? How does a global NGO, such as the WCC, affect national member churches and their own churches in rural and urban locations? Such »linkage« research will aid in our understanding how the WCC affects local-global humanitarian efforts. Research into these and related questions will assist political geographers and others to understand the importance of NGOs at local, national, and regional scales, viz., those groups with a strong spiritual and religious foundation. We would be advised to pursue our research on global NGOs with colleagues in related disciplines, including political science, anthropology, sociology, social work, law, and theology.

Bibliography

- Aram I. (1999) »Report to the World Council of Churches, Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe, 3-14 1998. *The Ecumenical Review*, 51:1 (1999), 52-79.
- Aram I (2000) »Report of the Moderator: Texts of the fiftieth meeting, 26 August to 3 September 1999 (Geneva),« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52:1 (2000), 85-97.
- Berger, P. ed. (1999) *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Brunn, Stanley D. et al. (1996) »Place, culture, and peace: treaty cities and national culture in mediating contemporary international conflicts,« *GeoJournal*, 39:4 (1996), 331-43.
- Brunn, Stanley D., Jeffrey A. Jones, and Shannon O'Lear. (1999). »Geopolitical Information and Communications in the Twenty-First Century,« in G. J. Demko and W. B. Wood, eds., *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the 21st Century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp, 292-318.
- Calame, Pierre (2000) »The Charter for a Responsible, Plural and United World: Its origin, purpose, and process,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52:4 (October 2000), 513-25.
- Davie, Grace (2000) »Prospects for religion in the modern world,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52: 4 (2000), 455-64.
- Gebhardt, Gunther (2000) »Towards a global ethic,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52: 4 (October 2000), 503-12.
- Gerlé, Elizabeth (2000) »Contemporary globalization and its ethical challenges,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52:2 (2000), 158-71.
- Gerloff, Roswith (2000) »The Significance of the African Christian Diaspora in Europe,« *International Review of Missions*, 59: 354 (2000), 281-90.
- Gnanadason, Anna (2001) »Editorial: On Being Church: Women's Voices and Visions,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 53: 1 (January 2001), 1-4.
- Hadsell, Heidi and John Linder (1999) »Bossey's Ecumenical Formation: A Methodology for a Pluralistic Age,« *Ecumenism*, 133 (March 1999), 8-10.
- Haynes, J. (1998) *Religion in Global Politics*. London: Longmans.
- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti (2000) »Ecumenism in Wonderland: Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue on Mission and Proselytism,« *International Review of Missions*, 89: 355(2000), 556-67.
- Hudson, Darril (1977). *The World Council of Churches in International Affairs*. London: Faith press, 1977.

- Kinnamon, Michael and Brian E. Cope, eds., (1997) *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*. Grand Rapids 1
- Nierop, Tom (1994) *Systems and Regions in Global Politics: An Empirical Study of Diplomacy, International Organization, and Trade: 1950-1991*. Chichester and New York: John Wiley.
- Price, Marie D. (1999). »Nongovernmental Organizations on the Geopolitical Front Line.« in George J. Demko and William B. Wood, eds., *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives on the 21st Century*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 279-91.
- Raiser, Konrad (1997). *To Be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for the New Millennium*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Raiser, Konrad, (1999) »Report of the General Secretary to the World Council of Churches's Eighth Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 51:1 (1999), 80-91.
- Raiser, Konrad (2000) »Report of the General Secretary,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52:1 (2000), 97-104.
- Robra, Martin (2000) »Affirming the role of global movements for global ethics,« *The Ecumenical Review*, 52: 4 (2000), 471-78.
- Slack, Kenneth, ed. (1986) *Hope in the Desert. The Churches's United Response to Human Need, 1944-1984*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Van der Bent, Ans J. (1986). *Christian Response in a World of Crisis. A History of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Van Elderen, Marlin (1990) *Introducing the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Webb, Pauline, ed. (1994) *A Long Struggle: The Involvement of the World Council of Churches in Southern Africa*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- World Council of Churches (1998). *Assembly Workbook*. Harare 1998. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- www.worldcouncilofchurches.org

WCC - Svetovni svet cerkva v svojstvu globalnega dejavnika: ekumenski prostor in geografski prostor

Povzetek

V tem prispevku obravnavamo tri teme. Najprej vlogo nevladnih organizacij (NGO) in njihov prispevek k razreševanju humanitarnih problemov ter njih vpliv na nacionalne države in mednarodne politične asociacije. Ta nadnacionalna združenja lahko nudijo oziroma so lahko v neprecenljivo pomoč posameznim državam na področju udejanjanja človekovih pravic, razreševanja verskih in etničnih konfliktov ali v primeru okoljskih katastrof. V nadaljevanju obravnavamo versko nevladno organizacijo, t. i. Svetovni svet cerkva (WCC), ki obravnava široko paleto verskih vprašanj, obenem pa skrbi za begunce in staroselce, zapostavljene ženske, otroke brezdomce, sonaravni razvoj, mirno razreševanje konfliktov in za etična vprašanja, ki jih s seboj prinaša globalizacija. V zaključku poudarjamo obstoj ekumenskega prostora v smislu geo-grafskega prostora. S tem želimo vzpodbuditi razmišljanja o prekrivanju teh teritorijev ter pomenu verskih nevladnih organizacij na različnih ravneh družbenega, političnega in državnega delovanja.